PART ONE

THEORETICAL AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES
GLOBAL MILLENNIALISM:
A POSTMORTEM ON SECULARIZATION

Roland Robertson

[The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility]
Albert Einstein, quoted in Parsons, 1978:357

ENTRY

This chapter is an attempt to contribute both to the general theory of globalization and to the theory of religion. Specifically, the secularization thesis is dismissed here as being a modern Western myth, within the context of elaboration of ideas concerning the present phase of the overall globalization process. Since the present author’s scheme of the phases of globalization was first produced (Robertson and Chirico, 1985; Robertson, 1992; Robertson, 1995b), it has been found necessary to speak of phases other than those that occurred before the fifteenth century. In fact, during the past ten years or so the author has become increasingly convinced that there were much earlier phases of globalization (e.g. Robertson, 1998a; Robertson and Inglis, 2004; Inglis and Robertson, 2004). This will not detain us here. It should, however, be said that introducing even earlier phases has raised all sorts of questions about the place of religion in the overall globalization process.

In any case, it is argued here that the contemporary phase of globalization is one with very distinctive religious overtones, and it is in this context that the secularization thesis is strongly opposed, largely for reasons having specifically to do with globalization (Robertson, 1985a, 1987, 1993; Robertson and Chirico, 1985).

THE MILLENNIAL PHASE OF GLOBALIZATION

Elsewhere in this volume, Campbell has made an impressive attempt to map the phases of globalization and the religious aspects thereof much more specifically than I have done. In the present chapter my