



Biblical Mobilization for What?

BY RYAN SHAW

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In our previous article in the January-February issue we considered the vital need of clarifying a biblical missiology of mobilization, a core area of kingdom contribution often overlooked in today's mission movement. We also looked briefly at the potential of an explosion of focused mission mobilization emphasis across denominations, organizations and individual local ministries as the global Church rightly views mobilization from its bigger-picture, biblical perspective.

In this article we build on that biblical missiology of mobilization, considering a big-picture, four-point Spirit-led strategy with which the global Church mobilizes and equips disciples and local ministries to engage while we also look at important global systems as platforms God has prepared for mobilization and the gospel on which to progress. **History has much to reveal to help us grasp God's intent in using global systems of the day to empower the mobilization movement God seems ready to bring forth.**

Mobilized to Do What?

First, what exactly do we mobilize the global Church to do? In a global mission landscape full of often random activities and divergent focal points, it is necessary to bring biblical and missiological

emphasis. Moving beyond good ideas and hit and miss activities, embracing His direction in what the global Church is mobilized to do in mission, are there specific biblical, Spirit-led means of advancing the kingdom? Does the Spirit have a progressive plan or is God somehow piecing together all the random efforts? The answer is yes, God has particular strategies, set forth in the New Testament and confirmed by the Spirit throughout history.

Four Big-Picture Strategies of the Spirit¹

I suggest four big-picture, comprehensive strategies God has in mind. These strategies build on one another, unfolding progressively. We cannot proceed to point two, three and four without seeing the foundation of point one firmly in place, which is why mission mobilization needs emphasis across the global Church right now. The global Church best understands God's big picture intent when considering the widespread multiplication of these strategies across every people group globally, not in pockets here or there.

First, it is the will of God to multiply millions of individual local ministries across denominations, church networks and organizations emphasizing the Great Commission, putting it at the center of their local fellowships, mobilizing and equipping every disciple in their roles.

Second, it would seem that biblically the Holy Spirit wants to "scatter" at least 20 percent of these disciples from every local ministry (mostly lay leaders and lay people) to near and distant unreached peoples, geographically near and far to that local ministry.

Third, what is it that this exponentially large number of Jesus' laborers are to be doing among unreached peoples? They are to be multiplying thousands of reproducing Church Planting Movements (CPMs) within neighborhoods, villages, towns, apartment buildings, etc. in the unreached areas the Spirit guides them. **They take the Church to the people, not expecting the people to come to them.**

¹ While we can only touch on these four strategies ever so briefly in this article we spend an entire chapter developing each one biblically and historically in my new book *Rethinking Global Mobilization: Calling the Church To Her Core Identity*.

Fourth, through the witness of these exponentially increased simple, reproducing churches planted, “people movements to Christ”² are ignited across the many webs of relationships—family, neighborhood, work colleagues, universities—culminating in every subculture of every Unreached People Group globally hearing the word of Jesus and millions coming to saving faith and discipleship.

Global Systems As Platforms

Next, it is important to note how growing secular trends of the day, world systems of influence, contribute to shaping the mission, mobilization and revival thrusts of history. This understanding helps us today to effectively mobilize the global Church. Both Colonialism and Industrialization had far reaching effects on the expansion of the gospel during the “Great Century of Missions,” (1800s) opening doors among unreached peoples otherwise closed. The Industrial Revolution brought new dominance to Europe which was accompanied by a desire to exert that dominance globally. Colonialism and imperialism would soon become the common governmental policies of nations, exploiting other nations through dominance for their own financial and territorial gain.³

The Global System of Colonialism

Though in no way endorsing the morality of these systems, the mission societies of the day sent laborers to the ends of the world in the well-paved footsteps of the commercial and colonization platforms. As Patrick Johnstone concedes, “Today we abhor the competing nationalisms, arrogance and greed that drove the colonialism of the supposed civilized “Christian” nations of Europe. We see the negatives - the subjugation, enslavement and even genocide of peoples, the trading monopolies that transferred the world’s wealth to the West, the consumerism, cultural imperialism, etc. However, there were also distinct positives. The greatest benefits were religious freedom and the chance to proclaim the

2 This is a term popularized by Dr. Donald McGavran in the 1950’s. It is a crucial concept few in the mission movement discuss today. It needs resurrecting as it holds keys to seeing ministry breakthroughs among Unreached People Groups.

3 Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, p. 111.

gospel. Colonialism allowed Western missionaries to sow many seeds in many nations.”⁴ The infamous East India Company, for example, made it possible for William Carey and his band of laborers to take up residence in India (though the East India Company despised the work of the missionaries). This historic tie between Colonialism and mission history has left a bad taste among many non-western peoples, lingering to this day.

Most missionaries had no desire to exploit people as their colonizing governments or industrialized companies did. Instead, they sought to enhance social progress through the power of the gospel, the democratic approach to government, schools, hospitals, universities and political foundations.⁵ They used the open door into these countries as avenues to preach the gospel, reaching people for Christ. Though all too often, they did so with the introduction of Western culture, leading at times to the destruction of indigenous traditions.

The Pax Romana

It is not altogether different from Paul and the Roman Empire. Yes, the gospel went forth in power in the first century across the Empire, spreading far and wide in a relatively short period of time. The Roman Empire and its policies made it much easier for the early Church to multiply as it did. There were world system forces of the day which God used to contribute to the spread of the gospel across the Roman Empire.

The most prominent was the “Pax Romana,” or “Roman Peace,” put in place in 27 BC by Roman Caesar Augustus, lasting until roughly AD 180.⁶ The Pax Romana produced unprecedented peace and economic prosperity across the Empire, the government providing Roman citizens with security, law, order, engineering and unhindered travel across the Empire. To maintain their widespread empire, the Romans built an extensive system of high-quality roads, many still existing today. These elements contributed to the New Testament church expanding all over the Roman Empire,

4 Johnstone, *The Future of the Global Church*, p. 60.

5 Ibid, p. 111.

6 Wikipedia Definitions: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pax_Romana

“running swiftly and being glorified” (2 Thess. 3:1). Entrusted with the Great Commission, it is necessary that local ministries discern the wide variety of world systems at play and how God may choose to utilize these for the spread of the gospel.

In the Middle Ages, there was also a system in place, providing tracks for the small thrust of global mission in that period. It was Monasticism. Though a religious system, the Church of the Middle Ages was inextricably linked with the state. This provided protections, to some degree, to the few missionaries who scattered out in that day. Without the monastery system in place, under the protections of the Roman Catholic Church, it is almost impossible to imagine anyone having the ability to move about in that era with the gospel.



The Printing Press

The monumental invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in 1440 was an incalculable secular development through which the Reformation of the 1500s blazed forward. The explosion of the Reformation can be directly linked to the ease of widespread printing and distribution of writings across Europe. For the first time in history people could produce spiritually revolutionary writings and get them into the hands of thousands of common people. Before the printing press this task was impossible. The printing press was a track the Reformation ran on. The circulation of information and ideas transcended borders, capturing the masses during the Reformation and threatening the power of political and religious authorities. That invention is seen by many as a key turning point in the history of the world, no less Church history.

Over the last 300 years the tracks on which revival, mission and mobilization have run included continuously progressing technology. From the printing press and books to the advent of newspapers, radios, televisions and today the internet and streaming video, from anywhere to anywhere. All these enabled mission and mobilization to be done differently, spreading the message farther, faster, quicker and in a more connected way. Another track is transportation progressing from horseback and carriages until 1830 when the railroad was introduced. That gave way to the advent of the automobile in the late 1800s and a progression from ships to the airplane in the early 1900s. Though not global systems necessarily, each of these technological advancements made the world a little smaller, empowering the revival, mission and mobilization movements to more effectively spread and to have greater impact.

The Global System of Globalization

That leads us to the present. **Is there a secular world system in place now that could contribute to the spread of the gospel among all ethnic peoples much quicker than before?** The answer is a resounding YES! That world system is globalization.⁷

Globalization sprung onto the global scene following the breakdown of the Cold War global system and communism falling apart in 1989. According to global analyst Thomas Friedman, “technology accelerations and globalization accelerations mean we are now living through one of the greatest inflection points in history,” perhaps unequaled since Johannes Gutenberg launched the printing revolution in Europe in the 1400s.⁸ “Globalization is not a trend or a fad but the international world system that replaced the Cold War system. Having its own rules, logic, pressures and incentives, it affects everyone’s country, company and community, either directly or indirectly.”⁹

7 See all of Thomas Freidman’s books on this crucial subject in the Bibliography.

8 Thomas Freidman, *Thank You For Being Late: An Optimists Guide For Thriving In the Age of Accelerations* (New York: Picador, 2016), p. 3.

9 *Ibid*, p. 4.

A simple definition of globalization is the interweaving of markets, technology, information systems and telecommunications systems in a way that is shrinking the world, “enabling each of us to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper, and cheaper than ever before, and enabling the world to reach into each of us farther, faster, deeper, cheaper than ever before.”¹⁰ **Globalization connects the whole world like never before, from businesses to banking to supply chains. No one is an island unto themselves anymore, reliant on others across the world.** Smartphones have dramatically changed our lives within a 15-year period. Zoom and Skype, free global video calls, have transformed our capacity to be connected in ways only dreamt of just 10 years ago. Instant messaging, streaming video, the cloud—all are a byproduct of mind-boggling accelerations in technology that have utterly transformed how human beings do life and have been centered around warp speed development of the internet. Now you don’t have to go to physical meetings, instead you are able to meet online at no significant cost. Everyone is able to do this because of the tremendous internet technology advancements of the last few decades.

As Friedman continues, “globalization means we increasingly know how each other lives—able to read about, watch a YouTube video, Facetime across oceans, peering into one another’s worlds. When we all increasingly know how each other lives, we start to want what others have. Whether that’s a certain lifestyle, effective business, political freedoms, better education, clean water, safety and protection or much more. When we can’t get the things we see others have, we stand up for ourselves.”¹¹ The Arab Spring (2010) would not have happened apart from globalization, nor would the international pressure on the Myanmar generals to release Aung San Suu Kyi in 2010 have had impact. Through globalization and accelerated technology every country and culture are able to view the lifestyles of people around the world while

also becoming aware of every news story affecting governments around the world. **Globalization has and is changing everything. It is more difficult than ever for a government or religion to keep its people from seeing and experiencing how those outside live.**

From the end of WW II to 1989, the dominating world system revolved around the Cold War, which was based on one overarching feature—division. All threats and opportunities as a country or company tended to flow from whom you were divided. That system was symbolized by the Berlin Wall. Like the Cold War global system, globalization as a global system is also characterized by one overarching feature - integration. Instead of being divided from the world as most people were pre-1989 (end of Cold War), the world was moving toward exactly the opposite—significant integration with one another in finance, economy, business, education, media, entertainment and even ministry. In globalization, threats and opportunities flow from who you are connected to, symbolized by the Internet. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and Communism in 1989, the end of the Cold War, we’ve gone from a world of division and walls to a world of internet without walls. During the Cold War, two nations were in charge: the United States and the Soviet Union. In globalization, we reach for the Internet, a symbol to which we are all increasingly connected. The central logic of globalization mirrors the logic of the internet. We are all increasingly connected.¹²

Eighty percent of globalization is driven by technology. “The technology exists to overcome walls, tying people together, getting access to the best technology and cheapest wages of Taiwan, Mexico, or Mississippi.”¹³ **What globalization does by wiring the world into networks and removing the walls is super-empower individual people, both for good and for evil.**¹⁴

10 Globalization Webpage - <http://www.bricklin.com/albums/fpawlf2000/friedman.htm#:~:text=The%20simple%20definition%20of%20globalization,cheaper%20than%20ever%20before%2C%20and>

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Friedman, *Thank You For Being Late*, p. 33

What Does This Have to Do with Mobilization?

Globalization has paved the way for mobilization in unprecedented ways, making it possible for multitudes of small mobilization efforts and initiatives to spring up. One major impact of globalization is that it has decentralized everything. No longer is one person, leader, organization or movement in charge. No longer are there only large, mega-organizations and denominations in the world. In the last 30 years, mission has become tremendously decentralized. We have seen a shift, potentially influenced by the accelerations of technology and globalization, from large centralized mission organizations to a much flatter decentralized model of organization, church and networking. Any church, independent ministry, mission structure or mobilization effort can more easily spring into existence and multiply as a result of the globalization system. This seems to be a major factor in the explosion of independent ministries globally. Anybody can start a ministry, just like anybody can start a business, publish a book, make a movie and so on. This can pose a challenge as some independent ministries should likely not be in existence due to lack of accountability, questionable doctrine, practices and more. Yet, it can also serve in seeing multitudes of empowered, decentralized groups contribute to the fulfillment of the Great Commission like never before. Everyone now is truly enabled in ministry, if they want to be.

Globalization and the speed at which digital technology is developing has empowered multitudes of digital platforms and social media. These are being used now for mission and mobilization, yet will go to a whole new level through future insights and ideas of how to effectively reach ethnic peoples through these platforms. Globalization is empowering any mobilizer anywhere in the world to have the tools needed in an instant to mobilize churches and ministries in their area. Globalization has empowered training as now some training can be done effectively online.

As a reminder, we are not excusing immoral uses of this global system or seeking a debate as to the goodness or ills of globalization. As we considered with colonialism and imperialism in the 18th and

19th centuries, globalization of itself has moral issues attached to it. Like the mission movement of those centuries, which in no way supported the injustices of their governments, workers today ought to utilize the positives of globalization while recognizing and even fighting against the obvious dangers. It is conceded that there appears to be a growing global authoritarianism that is anti-freedom and anti-Christian and suppresses alternative voices that is also riding on the back of globalization. We are only highlighting globalization's existence, that it will only increase, and the importance of utilizing its global tracks for the glory of Jesus and the extension of His kingdom. Deep thought and careful action need to be extended, while seeing all the benefits as well. As all the global systems before it provided tracks for the gospel to run on, so does globalization.

The world system enabling the gospel to run swiftly and be glorified globally is in place, similar to the Pax Romana for the early church. The whole body of Christ being mobilized and engaging with the whole world is possible under the globalization system, where it was not during the Cold War system, with all its divisions. It is the argument of some that globalization has empowered the global Church in a way never known before in history. I believe the increasing technology and globalization system are a part of the Lord's plan to orchestrate circumstances globally that are conducive to seeing the global Church engaging in biblical, Spirit-led mobilization, activating her to reach all sub-groups of every Unreached People Group with the power and love of Christ. 📖

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AUTHOR'S NOTE—This article has been adapted from the author's new book called *Rethinking Global Mobilization: Calling the Church to Her Core Identity*. The book seeks to lay foundations of a biblical missiology of mobilization while providing a practical framework to mobilize and equip the global Church in mobilization. The publisher, IGNITE Media, has given permission for portions of the book used in this article. Find more info about the book at RethinkingMobilization.com.