

and Sermons :: Opportunities in Globalisation for God's Kingdom - OM International Director Lawrence Tong

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Opportunities in Globalisation for God's Kingdom

OM International Director Lawrence Tong,

Globalisation: Say not that it is good or bad, but that it is here. Only the technologies of our lifetime have made this phenomenon possible and, whether we embrace it or try to resist, it continues to spread and morph in ways and patterns unforeseen.

Globalisation connects a multitude of ideas, people, goods, technology, organisations, media and more. It is not a unified, straightforward or linear process but is constantly evolving. However, as we understand the implications for the Church, we can embrace globalisation for what it is in terms of the Great Commission: the gift of God to us, His people.

THE ROOT OF GLOBALISATION

God's people are on the cusp of a new era in world missions. Centuries of labour, vision and prayers by Christians – largely from the West – have come to fruition. Today, the centre of influence for world Christianity has moved from the West to the Global South and East. This phenomenal shift is the fulfilment of God's will seen throughout Scripture.

God has always thought globally. Psalm 67 begins with a prayer for blessing, "May God be gracious to us and bless us, and make his face shine on us (we like that), so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations" (the strings attached?). It closes with "all the ends of the earth will fear him" (v.7, NIV). God isn't wary of globalisation, nor should we be intimidated by the force of it in our world. His intent has always been a global Church, irrespective of world developments.

THE REALITY OF GLOBALISATION

Globalisation permeates societies, economies, cultures and politics to the degree that the smallest event someplace can have a ripple effect worldwide. John Donne's observation that "no man is an island" can be amended to include, "nor is any nation truly independent."

Missions are realising that cooperation is not a mere ideal but a necessity in sharing strategy and resources to keep pace with change. It moves us from "me" to "we", from "ours" to "everyone's", from "where to there" to "from everywhere to everywhere". Of course, this is a major shift in established ways of thinking and acting for churches and missions. Frankly, we have often neglected the command of Jesus "for the sake of His mission, no less! – to exhibit a tangible unity that even the world could understand and reflect on (John 17). And we wonder why people are reluctant to embrace the gospel (vv. 21-23).

Long-held traditional views on mission ("from the West to the rest") need recalibrating – by both Western churches and those in the Global South who desire a greater stake in a shared future.

The sheer number of believers in the South means that any strategy that does not involve them from the outset is flawed. Happily, the Church in the Global South is expanding rapidly and is beginning to embrace its shared responsibility to reach the world. They are ready to pray, give and go!

THE THIRD TABLE: SHALL WE MEET THERE?

Globalisation means that we should seek out new frontiers of mission, where millions live unnoticed by God's people. These "least reached" are essential to the Kingdom of God. As a reflection of where the growth and energy of the Church is today, people from these regions deserve and expect a greater participation alongside Westerners, who will no longer have the dominant voice. My plea is that we all – West, South, East – leave our own tables and find a new, third roundtable where we sit as equal partners, making joint decisions about our future. Since we all have been called

led by the same Master to this greatest of tasks, in God's eyes everyone's ideas and concerns matter. It is everyone's business.

CREATING THE RIGHT MINDSET

Let me suggest two steps to help churches or organisations to embrace globalisation in ethos and practice:

1. Accept that globalisation is not new. Global processes have been going on for centuries. The spread of different world empires over the past three millennia, cross-border trading, the growth of world faiths, exploration – all have the marks and effects of globalisation. Though it will never change our core message, globalisation will change its delivery. In my lifetime, the traditional missionary model – a white person sent for life to faraway lands – has evolved as short-term mission trips captivated churches' imaginations. Could our forefathers foresee the use of ships and business as genuine, powerful ways to spread the gospel?

Our response should be to discover joint opportunities in changes brought about by globalisation. We welcome the diversity that indigenous leadership in many developing OM fields brings, and must allow them to express a style and approach unfamiliar or even uncomfortable to previous stakeholders. Those coming to the non-Western world will need to align with non-Western perspectives to ensure reception of the Christian faith.

2. Patterns of the past must change for the sake of the future. What will be different as we congregate at this new third table? Consider the following examples:

(a) The value of Western standards of systems, rules and efficiency should not be discarded, but room is needed for an emphasis on people, groups, respect and other Global South values. Because most cultures esteem relationships, consensus must be respected. This need not mean giving way to paralysis in leadership; rather, it means that everyone is welcome to speak on an issue, and this feedback will weigh on final decisions made for the good of all. Westerners must learn to be better listeners, understanding that many non-Westerners are shy to be vocal in meetings. This can only change as equality of status is not merely a principle but something celebrated (and proven) by all at the table.

(b) Resource development needs to concentrate on where the Church movement is growing, and away from where it is declining, in order to insure a long and bright future for missions. This will demand faith and waiting on God, even when Western money seems relatively more accessible. Rather than being solely focused on a project to be completed or a ministry set free from bills or restraints, Global South workers need to learn that God wants the joy of giving and participating in mission to become a reality even in the poorest of nations. We may need to confess a reluctance to wait on God's timing and provision. And yet the rewards are great for a national ministry that is – home grown – and free of anything foreign – especially money.

(c) Decision-making regarding resource allocation, strategy implementation and personnel distribution should also shift to these regions. Models of self-sustenance to support non-Western missionaries need development and implementation. This will mean a change in mindset and structure to ensure they are less dependent on foreigners and better supported by local entities. We must journey alongside them, mentoring and empowering them, so that the privilege of world evangelism is also shared by them.

TURNING CONCEPT INTO ACTION

In OM, we aim to see 7,000 new workers trained, equipped and released into mission in the coming decade or so, especially from non-Western lands. To maximise this new wave of workers, we need a new generation of 900 leaders – especially younger and non-Western – who will share in the global leadership of OM.

Churches in the Global South and East must rise to their part, looking to God, not the West, to supply what is needed. Western churches must welcome all others as equals in planning and executing effective mission. This does not absolve Western churches and workers from responsibility; rather, it calls for a new way of thinking as a genuinely globalised movement. Yes, we need experience, but, every bit as much, we need innovators and those who can creatively see possibilities – regardless of where they are from or where they are going.

One of the biggest threats in any successful organisation is complacency. OM has a great legacy and an effective ministry. But our success can become our biggest stumbling block to change and growth. Our current structure has carried us well, but it is inadequate to address our future. In any church or organisation, we must be open to how the Holy Spirit is

going to lead us into the future.

I am very optimistic about the future God has in store for those who obey his mandate to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15; NIV). Globalisation is not about fitting new people into old roles, but taking our movement in new directions and developing new methods. If we fail to bring in new ideas, we are not far from failure. Let us trust younger people's passion and vision to connect with their globalised world.

<http://www.uk.om.org/om-item/r43805>

Re: Opportunities in Globalisation for God's Kingdom - OM International Director La - posted by murrcoir (), on: 20

Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. Ephesians 5:11

Quote: Globalisation is not about fitting new people into old roles, but taking our movement in new directions and developing new methods.

Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.