GLOBALIZATION: A THEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

Domenic Marbaniang

**Defining Globalization**

Globalization seems like a Loch Ness monster that evades a particular definition. There are descriptive definitions as well as normative and prescriptive ones; the descriptive varying according to the variation of approaches and the normative standing for or against a form of globalization.

**Descriptive theories** of globalisation are those that inductively define the nature of globalisation by trying to identify its essential characteristics. A few common definitions are as follows:

Globalisation can be defined as a set of economic, social, technological, political and cultural structures and processes arising from the changing character of the production, consumption and trade of goods and assets that comprise the base of the international political economy. (UNESCO)[[1]](#footnote-1)

Globalization is a transplanetary process or set of processes involving increasing liquidity and the growing multidirectional flows of people, objects, places and information as well as the structures they encounter and create that are barriers to, or expedite, those flows.. . (George Ritzer)[[2]](#footnote-2)

Globalization can thus be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. (Anthony Giddens, Former Director of the London School of Economics)[[3]](#footnote-3)

The concept of globalization reflects the sense of an immense enlargement of world communication, as well as of the horizon of a world market, both of which seem far more tangible and immediate than in earlier stages of modernity.’ (Fredric Jameson, Professor of Literature, Duke University)

Globalization may be thought of as a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions – assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact – generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power. (David Held, Professor of Political Science, London School of Economics)

Globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole. (Roland Robertson, Professor of Sociology, University of Aberdeen, Scotland)

Globalization compresses the time and space aspects of social relations. (James Mittelman, Professor of International Relations, American University, Washington)

Globalization refers to the expansion and intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-time and world-space. (Manfred B. Steger)

Scholars note that there are debates with regard to which dimension (politics, culture, environment, economics, religion, or ideology) contains the essence of globalisation, as each contender (approaching from his/her own disciplinary bias) tries to claim what he has been looking for as definitive of what globalisation actually is. Manfred has used the Oriental analogy of the blind men and the elephant to show how each interpretation is particularly compartmentalized against the holistic picture. The political expert regards globalisation as more a political phenomenon while the economic expert regards globalisation as essentially driven by economic processes. Manfred notes that like ‘the blind men in the parable, each globalization researcher is partly right by correctly identifying one important dimension of the phenomenon in question. However, their collective mistake lies in their dogmatic attempts to reduce such a complex phenomenon as globalization to a single domain that corresponds to their own expertise.’[[4]](#footnote-4) Critics of globalisation usually attack a particular dimension (‘part’) of globalization seeing it as, for instance, capitalistically driven, economically speaking or democratically driven, politically speaking. Manfred also mentions sceptics who deny globalization as anything real and compares them to those blind men who, occupying the empty space between the elephant’s front and hind legs, groped in vain for a part of the elephant and finding none, accused the others of making up fantastic stories about non-existent things, asserting that there were no such animals as ‘elephants’ at all.[[5]](#footnote-5)

While space will not permit us here to dive into the whole arena of debate, the blind men and the elephant parable (also quoted later in one of the Lausanne papers[[6]](#footnote-6) at Pattaya 2004) calls our attention to Newbigin’s critique of the same when applied to the theology of religions. We remember that when the pluralists claimed all religions as divergent approaches to the same Reality, Newbigin critiqued the pluralist claim as an arrogant claim to advantage over the ‘blind men’ whom it implicitly refers to as not having the privilege of seeing the full picture now available from the pluralist vantage point.[[7]](#footnote-7) The various claims (actually, blind claims according to the pluralist) aren’t false, but they aren’t fully true as well. They are little ‘truths’ holding substantial chunks of information regarding the totality of what Reality is. After Newbigin’s analysis, however, the pluralist position only stands as one of the many other approaches – perhaps, a syncretistic one or just merely pluralist). The Lausanne paper draws a point of wisdom in its statement:

Rather than focus on a particular strand of contemporary globalization —say, economic globalization or technological globalization — and either celebrating or condemning, we warn against the temptation to see globalization as a single manifestation or as an either/or proposition. We suggest that before choosing sides (which we agree is compelling and sometimes unavoidable), it is necessary to consider globalization as a reality with many ‘parts.’ (Remember the elephant!) The parts include and also transcend what is typically held up as ‘globalization’— namely technologically enabled, neo-liberal capitalism driven by Western-dominated international financial institutions, multi-national corporations (MNCs) and consumer markets increasingly backed by the U.S. military. This in no way denies the significance of this face of globalization, but suggests it is not the only face, nor perhaps is it the most significant in the long run.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The ‘parts’ analogy allows for the putting together of the various images of the globalisation reality captured from the various angles of approach. A syncretistic and panoramic picture may, thus, emerge without downplaying any or more points of view. The assumption would not try to identify the elephant first, but approach globalization as a mystery puzzle that one tries to solve by putting the different pieces of the puzzle together. Perhaps, coherence would only be the criteria of evaluation here. However, again, inductive descriptions will fail to agree about the various assemblages of the puzzle; since, there is no axiomatic complete theory to verify against – the paradox: if such a complete theory did exist, the differences would not.

**Normative theories** are about providing the axiomatic position, the definitive rule, and the interpretive framework to defining globalization. Scholars now refer to a normative theory of globalization as a globalism.[[9]](#footnote-9) The Lausanne paper describes these as follows:

As a byword for prominent economic, political, or religious worldviews that have fundamental assumptions about the way the world ought to be ordered, prominent examples of globalism would include nineteenth-century colonialism, early twentieth-century internationalism, communism, fascism, and post-colonialism; and to name a few of the more well-known recent forms, types of environmentalism, feminism, and Islamicism. If globalization proper is like the ocean, globalisms are like the powerful currents and undertows which push people in certain directions.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Manfred divides them into three: market globalism, justice globalism, and jihadist globalism. In his own words,

Market globalism seeks to endow ‘globalization’ with free-market norms and neoliberal meanings. Contesting market globalism from the political Left, justice globalism constructs an alternative vision of globalization based on egalitarian ideals of global solidarity and distributive justice. From the political Right, jihadist globalism struggles against both market globalism and justice globalism as it seeks to mobilize the global umma (Muslim community of believers) in defence of allegedly Islamic values and beliefs that are thought to be under severe attack by the forces of secularism and consumerism.[[11]](#footnote-11)

**Market globalists** are those who promote the concept of a consumerist, free-market world, a global marketplace that is made possible through globalization. They paint globalization in positive and optimist colours. Manfred lists the five claims of market globalism: (1) Globalization is about the liberalization and global integration of markets. (2) Globalization is inevitable and irreversible. (3) Nobody is in charge of globalization. (4) Globalization benefits everyone. (5) Globalization furthers the spread of democracy in the world. Improved ways of living and shared technological progress motivates political economies in favour of increasing globalization. One ultra-optimism of market globalism is that globalization involves the triumph of markets over governments as governments increasingly withdraw to make room for free interflow of goods and services. The ideological formula is:

Liberalization + Integration of Markets = Globalization[[12]](#footnote-12)

**Justice globalists**, on the contrary, view market globalism as promoting injustice, inequality, and economic disequilibrium. Born in the ‘social justice movement’ it emerged in the 1990s as a ‘progressive network of non-governmental organizations that see themselves as a ‘global civil society’ dedicated to the establishment of a more equitable relationship between the global North and South, the protection of the global environment, fair trade and international labour issues, human rights, and women’s issues.’[[13]](#footnote-13)

Distinguishing it from the peaceful strands of Islam, Manfred identifies **Jihadist globalism as ‘**those extremely violent strains of religiously influenced ideologies that articulate the global imaginary into concrete political agendas and terrorist strategies.’[[14]](#footnote-14) As such, the term ‘jihadist globalism’ in principle also applies to ‘the ideology of those violent fundamentalists in the West who seek to turn the whole world into a ‘Christian empire’’. This is possibly with reference to the dominion theologies of the West that would also consider governmental violence as a valid way to ensuring justice in the non-Christian world (even through war). But, Manfred doesn’t make it clear. Of course, if jihadist globalism doesn’t relate to the ‘peaceful strands’, then apologetic evangelism is not attacked in the definition. Jihadist globalism seems to be distinguished by the concrete political agendas and terrorist strategies it articulates. The Lausanne paper, however, does set the caveat that Christian evangelism is prone to be evaluated anywhere as ‘simply one more form of globalism seeking to dominate others’.[[15]](#footnote-15) However, it also maintains that the fate to which globalization delivers us **depends upon the Body of Christ.[[16]](#footnote-16)**

To Jan-Erik Lane, among the many different forms of fundamentalism, it is Islamic fundamentalism that can challenge the global open society most effectively, since it is the biggest single religion that promotes homogeneity in Muslim societies and Islamization of the world.[[17]](#footnote-17) While the vision is global, perhaps what sets jihadist fundamentalism against market globalism is that while market globalism steers towards a global open society, jihadist globalism is a movement against a global closed society (closed exclusivism).

The Lausanne paper mentions that before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the two globalisms, Soviet-style Communism and American-inspired Democratic Capitalism fought to the brink of nuclear annihilation to control the course of an entire world system. The dominant strand now is neo-liberal capitalism of market globalism.

Other terms associated with globalization are terms such as global imaginary, globality, and glocalization. The normative theories are based on certain fundamental core values that each upholds, and globalisation is considered good or evil with reference to the respective value framework. It will be the purpose of this paper to evaluate the same with reference to the Church’s global presence in a world of increasing globalization.

**Christianity’s Global Task**

The ecumenical and the evangelical movements have some points of divergence on the theology of mission.[[18]](#footnote-18) While one must guard against polarizing each into a corner (as dialogues breed mutual refinements), one can’t help perceive that the hues do stand apart at some point over the spectrum. Without digging into the historical stories behind each school of interpretation, let’s only briefly glance at the approaches here:

The **evangelical** understanding of Christian mission is best captured in the following excerpt from Billy Graham’s address at the World Congress on Evangelism, Berlin 1966:[[19]](#footnote-19)

Our goal is nothing less than the penetration of the entire world. Jesus said: ‘This Gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations’ (Matthew 24:14, RSV). Here evangelism is put into an eschatological context. We are not promised that the whole world will believe. The evangelization of the world does not mean that all men will respond, but that all men will be given an opportunity to respond as they are confronted with Christ.

Most of the illustrations of the Gospel used by Jesus—salt, light, bread, water, leaven, fire—have one common element—penetration. Thus the Christian is only true to his calling when he is permeating the entire world. We are not only to penetrate the world geographically, but we are to penetrate the world of government, school, work and home—the world of entertainment, of the intellectual, of the laboring man, of the ignorant man.

The world desperately needs moral reform; and if we want moral reform, the quickest and surest way is by evangelism. The transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only possible way to reverse the moral trends of the present hour.

There may be hyper or non-hyper strands in this line; but, they all usually are distinguished by their usage of terms such as evangelism, evangelization, reaching the unreached, etc.

We’ll turn to the WCC’s page oikoumene.org for the **ecumenical** understanding of mission:

It [the WCC] sees the mission challenges for the churches as finding a balance between a clear witness to the Gospel, the respect for people’s dignity, and solidarity with those who suffer, e.g. from exclusion, injustice or sickness. Mission emanates from worshipping churches and includes evangelism, the search for inclusive communities, various forms of healing ministries, as well as covenanting for justice. In WCC’s perspective, mission must be ‘in Christ’s way’ and strive for authentic reconciliation and peace, counting on the presence and power of God’s healing Spirit, in particular in situations of religious plurality.[[20]](#footnote-20)

The statement does seem very ecumenical in breadth and scope. But, the ideas are clear: the church must seek to balance evangelism with love of neighbor as ourselves. Thus, the mission is not evangelization alone but evangelism in context of social justice and healing. There are priority issues at stake; however, terms like ‘inclusive communities’, ‘various forms’, and ‘situations of religious plurality’ mark the breadth in consideration of the definition. John Corrie notes that the WCC vision is for unity of the church and that it has done ‘a lot to break down traditional missionary approaches, exposing imperialistic attitudes, emphasising the autonomy of the church in every land, and helping to promote that model of mission which sees it as ‘from everywhere to everywhere’.’ However, its necessity for breadth forces its theology to keep changing all the time.[[21]](#footnote-21)

The ecumenical emphasis is more on the church’s role in making a better world, on social justice, liberation, and transformation of communities. The evangelical emphasis has been on evangelism and transformation of the individual through saving faith and discipleship. While the evangelical is driven by the eschatological vision of the New Creation at the end of the age, the ecumenist is driven by the existential concern of the present age. A recent declaration of evangelicals at Tubingen has called forth the church to reaffirm its call to global evangelization against the growing emphases of the ecumenists on social transformation; but, this while not disregarding our duty towards our neighbor.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Perhaps, a better term that would theologically unify both the concepts would be ‘gospelization’. Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary (1913+1828) gives two usages of the verb ‘gospelize’:

1. To form according to the gospel; as, a command gospelized to us. Milton.

2. To instruct in the gospel; to evangelize; as, to gospelize the savages. Boyle.

The term possesses both the notions of form and instruction. ‘To gospelize’, thus could be used to mean ‘to conform the world to the Gospel’, which also involves instruction in the Gospel. For our uses, we may define ‘gospelization’ as the process of having the world proclaimed with, impacted by, and transformed by the Gospel. As such, gospelization will be understood as the task of the church to reach the world with what essentially constitutes its being – i.e., letting its essence out. Perhaps, it should be differentiated from the term ‘Christianization’ which seems more to connote themes of conversion and social transformation after a particular strand of Christianity; and, of course, it might be a term better than the instruction-oriented usages of ‘evangelization’. While ‘Christianization’ and ‘evangelization’ both bear some form of organizational connotations, gospelization is the inevitable process of the world being affected and compelled to a response by the presence of the Gospel (in person of the church) in the world. Gospelization is both personal and propositional – it is always personal. To be salt and light are the pictures of a disciple-community. While evangelization would be more proclamation-oriented, gospelization is presence-oriented. For the world to be gospelized is like for water to be salted by the presence of salt and for a room to be illuminated by the presence of light. The key lies in letting the essence out to transform the entire. It is a holistic way of looking at the presence and purpose of the church on the earth. Proselytization is not the goal; transformation is. The purpose is to glorify the Father (Matthew 5:16).

The Gospel and the church are inseparable in the same manner as humanhood and humanity are inseparable. This so, since the Gospel precedes the church as essence precedes existence. The church didn’t come to be and then began to create the Gospel; the Gospel brought the church into being. Consequently, it is impossible for the church to be alive without the pulse of the Gospel beating in its nerves. One cannot separate the proclamation of the Gospel from the proclaimer. Thus, the church becomes responsible in presence for wherever the Gospel is either present or not present.

If the church is convinced that the Gospel will bring ultimate transformation in the world, so that humanity can taste the powers of the world to come in this world now, then, evangelism becomes imperative; but, evangelism is only the temporal aspect of a lasting internal principle. The transformed are the transforming agents – the church is salt and light in the world.

Some grass needs to be cleared in order for the ground to be seen:

1. **The Great Commandment is the essential law of the church; the Great Commission is the missional task of the church.** The both cannot be confused. To love is a rule that would never cease to be; to preach is an obligation that will soon cease to be. That is one reason why caring for the poor, the orphans, and the widows is considered to be pure religion (James 1:27). The liberational causes and the cause of justice and mercy are principle causes – things that the church cannot silently ignore when it has the power not to ignore. To love one’s neighbor as oneself is an essential obligation. In most cases, one may not preach but still be a Christian, and draw others through a silent conformity to the essential Christian principle of love (1Peter 3:1). Being precedes manifestation.
2. **The ethical rule must not be confused with the ecclesiastical task.** To love is not a task; it is an essential principle. Jesus said that His disciples will be known by the love they have for one another (John 13:35). To love is not a mission that Jesus has committed to the church – to take care of the poor, orphans, and widows was a moral obligation required even in the Old Testament. When the Good Samaritan helped the wounded Jew on the road to Jericho, he was not doing social mission; he was just living out the essential principle of love. However, one must also remember that Christian mission is mission dei and ecclesiastical task proceeds from the heart of God towards God.[[23]](#footnote-23)
3. **The ecclesiastical task must flow out of the essential ethic.** To preach without love is like beating an empty drum. If one doesn’t preach the Gospel without the love of the Gospel, one has preached nothing. The Good Samaritan who loved the wounded man was better than the Levite and the priest who were faithful to their job at the temple. Service of brother preceded service of at the temple. The man who gave to the needy was better than the man who only prayed but didn’t give anything (James 2:14-17). Again, the message cannot be separated from the messenger. The messenger must himself have been transformed by the Gospel. The messenger cannot shirk off his essential obligation to love and merely preach the Gospel for the sake of a job to be done. Where the Gospel is, the church will be; and where the church is, the Gospel will be. Certainly, of course, if the mission is placed above the ethic and the ethic made to flow out of the mission, we would end up in the error of the Crusaders and the Jihadists. One recent example to quote would be the objection raised by some against the form of globalism promoted by the Christian Reconstructionists that seemed (to them) to promote anti-semitism.[[24]](#footnote-24)
4. **To posit the principle of operation as the goal of the operation is a confusion of identity.** Love is the motive of evangelism; evangelism should not be the motive of love. To love in order to evangelize is utilitarian; to evangelize out of love is conformity to principle. Love is the principle of which evangelization is only a time-bound goal – though covering eternity. Certainly, there are also things other than evangelization that the principle of love, commanded under the new covenant, covers. However, evangelization is core outreaching of the principle of love, for it aims at an everlasting result – the salvation of persons. As such it is the essential concern of being (against death for life) in opposition to the temporal concerns of the secular. Evangelization answers the ultimate existential concern of being-towards-life.
5. **The task only exists because the law of being is violated.** Mission exists because love is confused. Therefore, reconciliation is the prime goal. Spiritual reconciliation is lame where the pictures of equality, equity, compassion, and justice are not concretely visible. The mission lies lame because the law of being remains violated (both vertically towards God and horizontally towards fellow humans). Love towards God is the attitude and act of glorifying of God; it follows love of one’s neighbor (brother and sister) as oneself (1John 4:20-21).

Thus, gospelization involves letting the essence of the Gospel manifest itself in both conformity to the inner principle of love and the execution of the external task of verbal and practical witness to the truth. In principle, the church cannot gospelize without being present in faithfulness to itself (the inner principle of love) and to its task in the world (evangelism and disciple-making).

The inner principle of love is first vertical (towards God) and then horizontal (towards neighbor). The external task of evangelization and discipleship is only horizontal, but proceeding from the inner principle; it therefore involves, God outpouring Himself through the church to save the world from their sins. In evangelism, it is God who reaches out to the world to bring the lost to His fold.

God doesn’t use the angels or other means to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ because gospelization implies the presence of a Gospel birthed church impacting the world. Only the church is responsible in presence for wherever the Gospel is either present or not yet present to exert its transforming power. And, it cannot be present without conformity to its internal principle and its external task.

**Gospelization amidst Globalization**

Let’s say that globalization is the will of God for gospelization in the New Testament era (the other approach would be to regard it as anti-biblical; but, that seems less likely so for reasons that will be specified below).

Theologically, we can recognize at least four distinctions in God’s ordering of the history of humanity: the original ordering, the divisive ordering, the in-gathering ordering, and the final ordering.

1. **The Original Ordering.** In the original ordering, humanity is one. Nationalities didn’t exist because plurality of language and culture was unknown. This original ordering began to break down after sin when man first understood the sense of shame and guilt as the man and the woman hid behind trees to hide their nakedness. Later, jealousy, murder, and lustful imagination employed the original ordering to infect the entire humanity to the extent that God desired to wipe off the entire human a. A global flood became the only resolution.
2. **The Divisive Ordering.** After the Flood, humanity was given a divisive ordering. ‘Confusion’ was the word used to describe this division because humanity was ordered in such a way that each nationality wasn’t able to so much understand another. Division should have prevented any religious epidemic to be globalized irresistibly. The divisive factor was language and the barrier helped develop cultural variety. On Mars Hill, Paul understood this divisive ordering to have a singular purpose: that mankind would seek God and haply find Him (Acts 17:27). Perhaps, this divisive ordering gave birth to plurality of religions – and, it started with language. Paul’s interpretation also seems to indicate the short-term purpose of this division. It was to be till the Age of the Spirit of Grace, during which God commands all people everywhere to repent. Of course, the nations would continue to exist, but the reason for the division would not.
3. **The In-gathering Ordering.** Following the 6th and 5th centuries, empires such as the Assyrian, Babylonian, Medo-persian, Greek, and Roman tried to bring a great mass of humanity under their fold. The need for interflow of economic resources invited many various ways in which humans attempted some sort of globalization. The 6th and 5th century also mark the beginnings of the dispersion of the Jews and the anticipation of their future ingathering. Meanwhile, the dispersion helped early Christian mission as the synagogues usually became platforms of evangelism – though not always. While the anticipation for the future ingathering of the physical Israel caught hope, God did make a central move to gather in His spiritual Israel. The New Testament declares Christ as the Mediator – the one in whom all walls of division between God and man, and man and man, are broken. Man is no longer an enemy of God and the Jew has no advantage over the non-Jew. This was announced on the Day of Pentecost through the outpouring of the Spirit with the manifestation of tongues (understandable to everyone trans-linguistically). The Body of Christ was not based on a political covenant like Israel was based upon; the new covenant transcended all linguistic and cultural barriers. Interestingly, Paul describes praying in tongues as praying with the Spirit (non-understandable to anyone except God). The Great Commission calls forth the church to preach the Gospel to all nations and make disciples of them because the new covenant was no longer the property of a particular race or nation. The New Testament was written in Greek because God was not just the God of the Hebrews. The Gospel had to get global because God was global and His new covenant was global. The church at Jerusalem was not divided into a Greek Church and a Hebrew Church, despite their disagreements. The in-gathering ordering is captured in this statement of Jesus: ‘And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.’ (John 10:16 NKJ) Spiritually, this comes to be through the Holy Spirit; consequently, all bias, division, and hierarchization among believers is carnal (1Corinthians 3:1-4). It is not from the Spirit.
4. **The Final Ordering** will happen at the end of times when all things, in heaven and on earth, will be gathered together in Jesus Christ (Eph.1:10). Then, one will say that the Kingdom of Heaven had fully come.

We may point out some reasons why globalization may be justified as favorable for gospelization:

1. The new covenant of Jesus unites the ‘called out’ into one Body. People from every nation and tongue can now be one in Christ, the New Man.
2. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit brought down the national barriers of religion.
3. Hellenization helped ease barriers and the spread of the Gospel in the early period; similarly, globalization can help ease the spread of the Gospel across boundaries today.
4. Open trade routes always helped in cross-cultural evangelism.
5. Media globalization helps to make the Gospel accessible trans-nationally and trans-linguistically all over the world.
6. Economic globalization helps the church to share their economic resources with fellow believers all over the world.
7. The independent, penetrative, open, and liberating nature of truth is bold about globalization; and, one doesn’t need to be afraid of globalization as a threat to truth – it might be a threat to fundamentalism, perhaps.
8. The Holy Spirit is the Gospelizer; therefore, organic and centralized structures of unity are not the issue – in fact, organic and centralized ecumenism is still open to corruption.
9. As globalization is an inevitable process; gospelization is also an inevitable process through the presence of the Holy Spirit. But, it also involves the conscious thrust of the church towards the unchurched areas. Interestingly, the book of Acts portrays scattering (Acts 8), sending (Acts 13), and separation (Acts 13:46) as the thrust cases; while persecution, leading of the Spirit, and open doors seem to be the thrusting agents.
10. However, gospelization doesn’t necessarily lead to conversion always; though, it does compel a conscious response. This approach trumps neither for post-millenialism nor pre-millenialism; it only posits that the Gospel’s presence compels a response of either transformation or self-annihilation.

~~Globalization does have its evils, but then as the Lausanne paper indicates~~

**Christian Globalism?**

A proper Christian globalism must define the true form of gospelization. As such a true Christian globalism would provide the foundational ground or explanation for gospelization of the globe. We have already noted the two aspects of it as 1) the Gospel effects being let out through the love-acts of the Church 2) the Gospel message being let out through the proclamation of Truth. The first answers the Great Commandment and the latter, the Great Commission. In this way, the Church is both the pillar and the ground of truth (1Timothy 3:15) – its essential nature is truth of which it bears witness in the world. A Christian globalism, thus, should favor only a globalization that ensures social justice, social mercy, and the possibility of Christian discipleship globally. Any form of globalization that deprives the rights of a human is, therefore by rule, unprofitable for evangelization.

Similarly, any form of gospelization that attempts to reduce the significance of globalization is questionable. Sadly, the Christian church has been too expert about division-making. The denominational divisions apart, there are divisions also based on race, language, culture, caste, region, and civilization within the global church (West vs. East). The internal fragmentation makes the external responsibility a difficult mission to accomplish. While networking is a worthy concept, it might still preserve connotations of fragmentation. Gospelization will be hampered by the failure of the church to a true letting out of the Gospel. The internal principle is above the utilitarian method.

One wonders if the people-group and the Bible-into-every-language approaches have missed the significance of globalization. This neither speaks against the people-group approach nor against Bible translation. However, it is possible to miss the goal by focusing on the method. One must not lose sight of the other factors that render a method meaningful. People group approaches are good where group solidarity has also some ideological or religious threadline exclusive to the group alone. However, in the present situation, that is not always the case. Media and academic globalization have pulled down many semantic lines between groups today, especially among the new generation. Globalization compels intensive transformation of cultures by breaking down the barriers and allowing a free interflow of ideas and concepts. The very of idea of ‘context’, thus, becomes dynamic in the context of globalization.

This demands contextualization to check against extreme tribalization. For instance, to say that one must don the saffron robe in order to be meaningful in India is to disregard the non-Hindu groups. The saffron robe might perhaps appeal to a Hindu but certainly not to a non-Hindu. However, one can ask oneself if a Hindu evangelist wearing a robe, a cassock, and a cross would have any appeal for a Christian. Inclusivism is not unbiblical because God has been speaking to people everywhere in history; however, how far one can go or ought to go must be contextually determined – and the present context is more of globalization. Anachronous and incongruous contextualization may only produce cultural confusions and shocks.

But, what about saying that such contextualization is a form of the Gospel being glocalized? That needs to be delicately observed; yet there still remains the problem of an impression of some imported stuff being given a local flavor, only if it works – yet, the theologian is obliged to provide reasons why such import is necessary in the first place. Globalization just for the sake of globalization is idolatrous; similarly, rejection of globalization just for the sake of localization is equally idolatrous. But, where a theological basis can be provided, imports, exports, and adaptations can be enriching.

There are a few forms of globalistic variances in the Christian world. Snippets of them might not be enough for detailed analysis, but still be helpful to provoke one. Some major trends have been identified as Dominion Theology, Dominionism, Kingdom Now Theology, the 7 Mountains/Spheres Approach, and Christian Reconstructionism. These generally focus on the dominion mandate of Genesis 1, and/or the replacement theory (that the Church has politically replaced Israel as a nation), and/or the post-millennial view that the Church is responsible for the spread of the Kingdom of God in this world now. Some have pictured these as the Christian Right (Jihadist Globalists?) whose fundamentalist keenness is actually the result of an antithetical reaction to the secular dimension of globalization (or world-coming-to-itself; i.e. the world all over becoming increasingly this-worldly). Such fundamentalist overtures, it is argued, are anticipated within most religions in face of increased secularized globalization.

Jeffrey Hadden and Anson Shupe, authors of Teleevangelism (1988), a critical study of the merger of religion and modern telecommunications, tied it [rise of fundamentalism] directly to the rapid social change and disruption of social structures brought about by the onset of globalisation. They argued that globalisation is, in part, a ‘common process of secularizing social change’ and that it contains ‘the very seeds of a reaction that brings religion back into the heart of concerns about public policy. The secular... is also the cause of resacralization... [which] often takes fundamentalistic forms’. They also explain that, ironically, the fundamentalist voice of protest against global secularism is itself amplified by the same advanced technology of globalisation, a powerful tool that gives it global reach and an accelerated rate of growth.[[25]](#footnote-25)

In some cases, the reaction assumes ‘Right’ status in pure defense against rival fundamentalist forms, a reminding pointer at the ‘clash of civilizations’ theory of Huntington. Davidson and Harris note:

The theocratic Right’s view of the United States as a Christian nation coincides with the views of one of America’s most influential social theorists, Harvard University’s Samuel P. Huntington. Although Huntington is not a Christian fundamentalist, his work opens a door that connects significant sectors of the political and economic elite to the theocratic Right. Huntington’s well-known thesis concerning the ‘clash of civilisations’ sets the framework for the Christian Right’s view of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as wars against Islam. But for non-fundamentalist elites, Huntington’s thesis provides a cultural and racial explanation of conflict that neatly avoids an examination of imperialism, the political demands of self-determination or the rigours of an economic analysis.

Huntington’s ‘clash of civilisations’ thesis dovetails with Ted Haggard’s fear ‘that my children will grow up in an Islamic state’. This common ideologocial identity is further strengthened by Haggard’s preaching a ‘strong ideology of the use of power, of military might as a public service’....

Another important link between the nationalist ideology of Huntington and the theocratic Right is the defence of the US against immigration and multiculturalism, for these twin evils threaten to undermine what Huntington calls ‘our core Anglo-Protestant culture.’[[26]](#footnote-26)

The above analysis seems considerable in light of recent agitations against illegal immigrations, especially from Bangladesh, in the North East.[[27]](#footnote-27) But such interstate religious nationalisms or communalisms are globalistically irrelevant if not always anti-globalistic.

However, there are also strands that wed globalism with politics, as pointed earlier; of course, not very surprising of the post-secular nature of the present era where politics has observed a return of religion[[28]](#footnote-28) against the secular ideal of the separation of religion from politics – perhaps anticipatorily of the Hegelian dialectics of history.[[29]](#footnote-29) The following quote from Christian Reconstructionist, George Grant provides a sneak preview:

Christians have an obligation, a mandate, a commission, a holy responsibility to reclaim the land for Jesus Christ - to have dominion in civil structures, just as in every other aspect of life and godliness.

But it is dominion we are after. Not just a voice.

It is dominion we are after. Not just equal time.

It is dominion we are after.

World conquest. That's what Christ has commissioned us to accomplish. We must win the world with the power of the Gospel. And we must never settle for anything less... Thus, Christian politics has as its primary intent the conquest of the land - of men, families, institutions, bureaucracies, courts, and governments for the Kingdom of Christ.[[30]](#footnote-30)

The milder and more modest approach called the 7 Spheres/Mountains of Influence may be one example of a better golden-mean that identifies the Christian’s role not just as a global evangelist but primarily more as salt and light in the world, not as a political anti-secularist, but as a gospelizer, or one whose identity exudes the effects of transformation in society. Loren Cunningham’s identifying of the 7 spheres as Arts, Business, Church, Distribution of Media, Education, Family, and Government and YWAM’s development of the respective schools at the University of Nations exemplify this approach. But, of course, the schools are only preliminary introductions that aim to provide Christian foundations to the various spheres. Those interested still need to go to the secular campuses for more professional education in the various disciplines. And, one may not need to limit the spheres to just 7 – some have already added Health as the 8th alphabetic sphere.

However, the 7 Spheres approach also invites the assessment of the ethic-mission criteria. The essential ethic of love must be the influencing factor in the spheres – love precedes mission as discipleship precedes disciple-making.

**Conclusion**

The New Testament is not anti-globalistic. In fact, the Old Testament anticipates the Abrahamic blessing to flow to all nations as all nations flow towards God. It anticipates the possibility of the flow to be possible as barriers are historically eased. Perhaps, it is economics that compels the easing of barriers; or perhaps, it is social need for globalized humanity itself that prompts it; or perhaps, it is the intrinsic drive for knowledge that invites it. Theologians of history are divided over the nature of globalization taking place (postmillenially, premillenially, amillenially, or whatsoever); however, evidence points in the direction of increasing globalization as well as increasing gospelization. On the one hand while globalization is a historic process, there are ideological currents (globalisms) that drive the mechanism on. Christian globalism strongly pursues the goal of global transformation through the Gospel. While Dominionism represents the Right political globalism, the more general consensus is on the Influence models (Salt & Light model, 7 Spheres of Influence, etc). One must guard against nationalizing, communalizing, and tribalizing the church or Christianity itself; and, at the same time, one must also not get so hyper contextualistic that one loses foresight of the process of globalization. Gospelization and globalization go hand in hand; gospelization becoming the driving engine of Christian globalization where the Atonement of Christ brings back man to God and ingathers humanity in one Spirit, where love of God and love of neighbor leave no room or reason for humanity to be divided, theologically speaking. The Atonement of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit are the theological foundations of globalization (where crumbling of walls are no longer a threat since the presence of the Gospel through the Holy Spirit in the church presents the final choice of response towards God in the process of gospelization). In the past era, cultural boundaries obstructed perversity from spreading epidemically and reinviting a global punishment; in the present era, globalization provides opportunity for not only the Gospel to go global but also for evil to epidemically spread (or ripen) and be eliminated in the Last Judgment (Matt. 24:22; Rev. 14:14-20).

The church cannot be antiglobalistic because the Gospel is global and Pentecost transcends the barriers of all human divisions through the one Spirit poured out on us. While Pentecost doesn’t eliminate one’s socio-cultural identity, it does provide the real ground for one to be able to become all things to all men so that by all possible means one might save some (1Cor.9:22). Globalization is the process of free and dynamic international and intercultural interflow of information and resources. Is it a process towards a unicultural world? It seems less so since the antithesis of anti-globalism does stand at the other pole.[[31]](#footnote-31) Identity movements do emerge to protect the particulars from becoming generalized or be overpowered by the giant machines of globalization. For instance, looking from the perspective of religions, while pluralism has been in style among a few, religions don’t at all seem to be blending into a single soup. The plurality remains intact. In fact, we see more religions getting apologetic in the past few decades. Globalization seems to only force one to assert one’s identity and position in the world.

Even secularism (as far as anti-religion is concerned) and liberalism have seen a decline.[[32]](#footnote-32) Religious solidarity, being helped by globalization to be unmindful of geo-political-cultural barriers, is becoming a global phenomenon. There are international attempts that seek to address the religious consciousness of people trans-politically. However, some constraints get tightened as well as a result; one example would be the various filters in the visa granting procedures imposed to check religious globalism.[[33]](#footnote-33)

But, what globalization significantly accomplishes is the open interflow of ideas across borders, especially through the arts, entertainment media, and social media. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter are heavily used and quoted by celebrities who recognize the significance of these tools in an age of globalization. Their power cannot be ignored; but, wisely and skillfully handled.

What should be the response of the church? Obviously, the church must be conscious of its trans-national roots in the atoning work of Christ and His mediating presence through the Spirit in the church, the church must be aware of its internal rule of love that vertically submits to God and horizontally serves its neighbor, and the church must responsibly fulfill its role of proclaiming God’s salvific truth (the Gospel) in a pluralistic world. This also means that the church cannot vouch for a kind of market globalism that could irreparably impoverish the poor while the rich grow richer.[[34]](#footnote-34) Christian theology must address global economics in light of God’s word in order to testify of the truth.[[35]](#footnote-35) The presence of the church in the world cannot but mean gospelization amidst globalization.

**Bibliography**

**Books**

Axford, Barrie. Theories of Globalization, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.

Delić, Zlatan (ed). Globalization and Responsibility, Croatia: Intech, 2012.

Driscoll, William & Clark, Julie (eds). Globalization and the Poor: Exploitation or Equalizer? New York: IDEA, 2003.

Hedlun, Roger E. Roots of the Great Debate in Mission, Rev. edn., Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1981.

Lane, Jan-Erik. Globalization: the Juggernaut of the 21st Century, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2008.

Ritzer, George. Globalization: A Basic Text, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Sommerville, C. John. The Decline of the Secular University, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Steger, Manfred B. Globalization: A Very Short Introduction, New edn, Oxford University Press, 2009).

**Articles and Papers**

 ‘World Evangelization or World Transformation’, Trans: Mrs. Dorothea Scarborough, Cape Town and Prof. Dr. Bodo Volkmann, Stuttgart (Gomaringen, Institut DIAKRISIS, Pentecost 2013).

Claydon, David (Ed.). ‘Globalization and the Gospel: Rethinking Mission in the Contemporary World’, Lausanne Occasional Paper No.30 (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, Pattaya, Thailand, 2004), 12. Manfreds first edition of Globalization was published in 2003.

 Conradie, Ernst M. ‘Mission in a Globalised World: A New Vision of Christian Discipleship’, A keynote address delivered at the conference of the Australian Association for Mission Studies (AAMS), Sydney, 22 to 25 September 2011. http://www.missionstudies.org.au/files/aams/ConradieKeynote1.pdf, Accessed on December 8, 2013

Corrie, John ‘Models of Mission in the 21c’, Trinity College, Bristol, 2010. http://www.trinity-bris.ac.uk/assets/files/articles/corrie\_models\_of\_mission\_in\_20C.pdf.

Davidson, Carl and Harris, Jerry. ‘Globalisation, theocracy and the new fascism: the US Rights rise to power’, Race & Class, Vol. 47(3), (Institute of Race Relations, 2006), 49. http://www.metaether.org

Eilers, Franz-Josef. ‘Globalization, Local Realities and Religious Communication’, NP. ND.

Ferrara, Pasquale. ‘Globalization and Post-Secularism’, Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture, Vol. 1, No. 1 (March 2012) 61–70.

 Gohain, Rantu, et al. ‘Post-1971 Illegal Immigration from Bangladesh: A Demographic Changed Scenario of Assam’, International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications, Vol.3, Issue 3, March 2013.

Ice, Thomas. ‘Hal Lindsey, Dominion Theology, and Anti-Semitism’, http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Ice-HalLindseyDominionTh.pdf

Ice, Thomas. ‘What is Dominion Theology’, http://www.pretrib.org

Marbaniang, Domenic. ‘Religious Fundamentalism and Social Order: A Philosophical Perspective’, Paper presented at the National Seminar on Religious Fundamentalism and Social Order, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, February 26-27, 2010.

Marbaniang, Domenic. ‘The Corrosion of Gold in the Light of Modern Christian Economics’, The Journal of Contemporary Christian, Vol.5, No.3 (Bangalore: CFCC, August 2013), 61-76.

McGrath, Alister E. ‘The Christian Church’s Response to Pluralism’, JETS 35/4 (December 1992) 487-501

Singh, M Amarjeet. ‘A Study on Illegal Immigration into North-East India: The Case of Nagaland,’ IDSA Occasional Paper No. 8, (New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, Nov.2009)

UNESCO, ‘Globalisation’ (http://www.unesco.org/most/globalisation/Introduction.htm, accessed November 20, 2013).

WCC, Pontifical Council, and WEA, ‘Christian Witness in a Multi-cultural World: Recommendations for Conduct’, 28 June 2011. http://www.oikoumene.org

Wykes, Olive. ‘The Decline of Secularism in France’, Journal of Religious History, Vol.4, Issue 3 (Online 9 Oct 2007) onlinelibrary.wiley.com; John H. Hallowell, ‘The Decline of Liberalism’, Chicago Journals, Vol.52, No.3 (Apr.1942), 323-349

1. UNESCO, ‘Globalisation’, <http://www.unesco.org/most/globalisation/Introduction.htm>, accessed November 20, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. George Ritzer, Globalization: A Basic Text (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This and the following quotes in this section are from Manfred B. Steger, Globalization: A Very Short Introduction (New edn; Oxford University Press, 2009), 31-32. [First edn. 2003]. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Manfred, Globalization, 30 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Manfred, Globalization, 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. David Claydon (Ed.), ‘Globalization and the Gospel: Rethinking Mission in the Contemporary World’, Lausanne Occasional Paper No.30 (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, Pattaya, Thailand, 2004), 12. Manfreds first edition of Globalization was published in 2003. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Alister E. McGrath, ‘The Christian Church’s Response to Pluralism’, JETS 35/4 (December 1992) 487-501 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. ‘Globalization and the Gospel: Rethinking Mission in the Contemporary World’, 14 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Barrie Axford, Theories of Globalization (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 26 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. ‘Globalization and the Gospel: Rethinking Mission in the Contemporary World’, 18 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Manfred, Globalization, 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Manfred, Globalization, 86 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Manfred, Globalization, 90 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Manfred, Globalization, 96 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. ‘Globalization and the Gospel: Rethinking Mission in the Contemporary World’, 19 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. ‘Globalization and the Gospel: Rethinking Mission in the Contemporary World’, 24 (italics and bold as emphasized in the original paper). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Jan-Erik Lane, Globalization: the Juggernaut of the 21st Century (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2008), 220. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. John Corrie, ‘Models of Mission in the 21c’, Trinity College, Bristol, 2010, <http://www.trinity-bris.ac.uk/assets/files/articles/corrie_models_of_mission_in_20C.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. As reprinted in Roger E. Hedlun, Roots of the Great Debate in Mission, Rev. edn. (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1981), 194 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. http://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/mission-and-unity [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. John Corrie, ‘Models of Mission…’, 3,5. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. ‘World Evangelization or World Transformation’, Trans: Mrs. Dorothea Scarborough, Cape Town, and Prof. Dr. Bodo Volkmann, Stuttgart (Gomaringen, Institut DIAKRISIS, Pentecost 2013). The joint document of the WCC, Pontifical Council, and WEA begins with the words ‘Mission belongs to the very being of the church. Proclaiming the word of God and witnessing to the world is essential for every Christian. At the same time, it is necessary to do so according to gospel principles, with full respect and love for all human beings.’ WCC, Pontifical Council, and WEA, ‘Christian Witness in a Multi-cultural World: Recommendations for Conduct’, 28 June 2011, http://www.oikoumene.org [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ernst M. Conradie, ‘Mission in a Globalised World: A New Vision of Christian Discipleship’, A keynote address delivered at the conference of the Australian Association for Mission Studies (AAMS), Sydney, 22 to 25 September 2011, 5. http://www.missionstudies.org.au/files/aams/ConradieKeynote1.pdf, accessed on December 8, 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Thomas Ice, ‘Hal Lindsey, Dominion Theology, and Anti-Semitism’, http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Ice-HalLindseyDominionTh.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Carl Davidson and Jerry Harris, ‘Globalisation, theocracy and the new fascism: the US Rights rise to power’, Race & Class, Vol. 47(3), (Institute of Race Relations, 2006), 49, http://www.metaether.org [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Carl Davidson and Jerry Harris, ‘Globalisation, theocracy and the new fascism..’ 57-58 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Rantu Gohain, Pranami Hadique, & Abhiji Borpuzari, ‘Post-1971 Illegal Immigration from Bangladesh: A Demographic Changed Scenario of Assam’, International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications, Vol.3, Issue 3, March 2013. & M Amarjeet Singh, ‘A Study on Illegal Immigration into North-East India: The Case of Nagaland,’ IDSA Occasional Paper No. 8, (New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, Nov.2009) [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Pasquale Ferrara, ‘Globalization and Post-Secularism’, Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture, Vol. 1, No. 1 (March 2012) 61–70. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Domenic Marbaniang, ‘Religious Fundamentalism and Social Order: A Philosophical Perspective’, Paper presented at the National Seminar on Religious Fundamentalism and Social Order, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, February 26-27, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. George Grant, The Changing of the Guard (Dominion Press, USA, 1987), 50-1 as cited by Davidson and Harris, ‘Globalisation…’ 63 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Manfred B. Steger, Globalization: A Very Short Introduction, 66-68 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. C. John Sommerville, The Decline of the Secular University (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Olive Wykes, ‘The Decline of Secularism in France’, Journal of Religious History, Vol.4, Issue 3 (Online 9 Oct 2007) onlinelibrary.wiley.com; John H. Hallowell, ‘The Decline of Liberalism’, Chicago Journals, Vol.52, No.3 (Apr.1942), 323-349 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Cp ‘Anyone with a Muslim sounding name or Middle Eastern appearance can expect heavy scrutiny upon arrival in American Samoa, and could be refused entry. Citizens of 25 predominantly Muslim countries are banned from the territory unless they have the personal approval of the Attorney General of American Samoa.’ http://americansamoa.southpacific.org/travel/visas.html, accessed on December 9, 2013; similarly, Christian missionaries also find difficulties in obtaining visas to enter certain communist, non-Christian, and secular countries. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. William Driscoll & Julie Clark (eds), Globalization and the Poor: Exploitation or Equalizer? (New York: IDEA, 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Domenic Marbaniang, ‘The Corrosion of Gold in the Light of Modern Christian Economics’, The Journal of Contemporary Christian, Vol.5, No.3 (Bangalore: CFCC, August 2013), 61-76. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)