Review

Globalization and the Good

Peter Heslam, ed.

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Reviewed by Mark R. Kreitzer, D. Miss., Ph. D.
Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies and Missions
Montreat College, North Carolina

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Because of our implicit adoption of Greek dualism in much of our thought life, evangelicals often fail to develop a biblically sound social theology and social ethic. I am convinced that such a sound theology is inescapably part of a covenantal science of mission (missiology). Christianized Greek dualism, with its explicit emphasis upon human epistemological autonomy and its nature-grace distinction, fails in its goal to create a Christian response to such contemporary human dilemmas as globalization, world poverty, and economics. All of these issues are discussed in this collection of articles mostly by British evangelicals. The articles, with a couple of exceptions, however, fail to break out of dualism, human autonomy, and the subsequent captivity to a more or less conservative form of modernity.

UK evangelicals in academia seem to be enamored with a modernity-bound, socialist economics. Among US evangelicals, however, there remains a strong minority who teach another Enlightenment-based economic theory, Christian Libertarianism. Former missionary to India and social ethicist, Christopher J. H. Wright in *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (IVP) correctly faults the social agenda of such Reconstructionist libertarianism as "oddly selective in what it says modern civil rulers must apply and enforce from Old Testament law and what it says they must not" (Wright 2004, 408), and which "betrays . . . its ideological bias toward unfettered, free-market economic capitalism" (Wright 2004, 408).

Globalization and the Good, which developed out of the Capitalism Project which Peter Heslam directs at the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity betrays an opposite ideological bias. Its bias is not to the Many but to the One, that is toward statist, social market economics. Certainly, a sound social theology and social ethic must be part of a culture transformational, covenantal missiology. Yet at the same time we must reject an autonomous, lower story realm of "nature" in which little specific biblical content from Hebrew toranic wisdom is allowed both at the system level and micro-economic level. Christian social market teaching is excellent at large principles of kindness to the poor, sick and marginalized. These are inescapable themes of the Law and the Prophets, and our Lord. Christian Libertarianism is excellent with applying some specifics toranic wisdom into the market, the state, and family.

Ironically, Christianized socialism is also a form of "practical Marcionism" (Wright 2004, 401), an epitaph which Wright correctly pins upon US dispensationalism with its

captivity to Capitalism. Both the bias toward the One and the bias toward the Many refuse to take seriously the whole covenantal system given to the Israelite people as a light to the nations (see Dt 4:5-8, Wright 2004). The solution of this dilemma is reached if we carefully listen to both the individualists' exposition of Scripture and the exposition of those with a bias toward the state and the social collective. Reading both with Trinitarian eyes is a must, because the Scripture itself balances the One and the Many. This balance between the two should be incarnated as a society emphasizing the "equal ultimacy of the one and the many" (C. A. Van Til), resulting in a *Trinitarian theistic* civil society. The unity of a wholistic society with many diverse spheres under the Triune God's sovereignty is the goal. Christian social theorists, Abraham Kuyper, Herman Dooyeweerd, and several of their disciples have led the way in this (e.g., C. A. Van Til, R. J. Rushdoony, Francis Schaeffer, E. Calvin Beisner, Michael Schluter, and Chris Wright). Each, of course, has his strengths and weaknesses, balance and bias.

Michael Schluter's article, "Risk, Reward, and Responsibility: A Biblical Critique of Global Capital Markets" sets out part of his plan for the reinstitution of biblical principles from a wholistic application of OT covenantal law into society. He believes that the state should return to the medieval ban on all interest and ought to reform laws allowing limited liability corporations, both of which lead to the enslavement of whole third world countries and most individuals in the West to giant, unaccountable multi-national corporations and banks. Here Gary North's Christian Libertarianism is at one of its weakest points. At first he agreed with Schluter on this topic but has since reversed himself. (Schluter and the early North have a good idea which is now so social revolutionary that it has little chance of occurring short of a massive economic collapse). Suggesting a return to the ban on interest, however, is a weakness with Schluter's article. Interest ("usury" in AV) in the Hebrew society was for loans to the poor who have come upon hard times due to famine, war, disaster, and so forth. This should be continued and mandated by law. But most business loans are an investment in a company by a lending institution. The problem with interest on loans—especially consumer loans—is much deeper, something which few if any of the authors in this volume address except Schluter (and that only in a footnote, n. 1 [66, 77]). There is much too much money being created out of nothing because of the lack of a precious metal based currency. The Scripture expressly forbids such debasing of the currency as the Heidelberg and Westminster catechisms explicitly discuss under the eighth commandment.

Cynthia Moe-Lobeda'a article, "Offering Resistance to Globalization: Insights from Luther," in fact, rejects a 100% precious metal backed currency as part and parcel of an oppressive classic liberal (i.e., individualistic) economic system. She implies that it's 18-19th century and its present "neo-liberal globalization" forms (95) inevitably lead to subjugation of the poor and the exaltation of the rich. In actual fact, however, a return to a pluralistic civil society, with a 100% precious metal backed currency, the abandonment of limited liability corporations, and the reestablishment of the right and responsibilities of the Decalogue will return societies to a much more just distribution of wealth. The rights and responsibilities of the Law were secularized by John Locke, a classic liberal, to that of life, liberty, and property. He ignored the rights and responsibilities of family, equal protection of a single legal standard protected in court, and liberty under God that

are also protected by that Law. Moe-Lobeda's solution seems to invite a strong centralized world State. Only this can create the two "Christian moral norms" which she sees will addresses the question of world poverty: "'justice-making, self-respecting, neighbour-love' and 'regenerative Earth-human relations'" (95). Such a world-State is one of the projects of several utopian Enlightenment ideologies, but is not a Christian project. These two biblical norms, however, are absolutely essential and we *must* listen to these more collectivist social theorists. However, the best way to apply these norms is not forming a highly centralized State. This is the Tower of Babel solution and is not built on the wholistic social ethic of the "law and the prophets" which Jesus came to correctly interpret and fulfill. Christ then fulfill that ethic through His people by the Spirit through the discipling of multitudes of families and the building of a decentralized order in obedience to His commands (Mt 28:18-20). This new order must be based upon the rebuilding of the extended family, a *mandatory* ten percent social tax (not administered by the state), and mandatory constitution-bound welfare structures. Again these structures should not be state run. Biblically the state's job is the administration and enforcement of retributionary justice. Private individuals, extended families, and churches can then build redistributionary welfare schemes for the poor, marginalized, alien, and oppressed (see Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, 1992).

Michael Schluter's social-covenantal "relationalism" points a better way forward (see http://www.jubilee-centre.org). His desire to reform the structural evils of the present "neo-liberal globalist" system along the lines of the wholistic Hebrew is commendable (66) (see Wright 2004, Walter Kaiser, *Towards Old Testament Ethics*. Zondervan, 1991; George Grant, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, 1995). . Only through this means can we build and re-build multitudes of non-profit Christian hospitals, crisis pregnancy centers, and faith based social restoration projects such as Habitat for Humanity. Schluter would rather that Christians not merely tinker with "social action," which addresses symptoms, but deal with the root cause. This is commendable. But much social service is necessary as we will always have the poor with us (Dt 15).

Timothy Gorringe, "The Principalities and Powers: A Framework for thinking about Globalization," goes wrong, however, at this point of reforming social structures at the root. This is discovered in his exegesis of the term "principalities and powers" as social structures rather than demonic personal beings owing allegiance to the Prince of Darkness is his first mistake. Clinton Arnold's classic works on Ephesians and Colossians show that the background of these terms is not a neo-Leninist view of society but the occult-animistic background of Greco-Asian religion. Gorringe bemoans the "laissez faire capitalist economics" behind the collapse of the Eastern European economies after the fall of the Berlin wall (rather than socialism itself). He complains that "profit" is the problem, while the solution is for societies to exist for the "common good"—a code word for the European socialist-market regimen.

The present system dominating the EU and US economic systems is sadly much closer to statist Fascism than the laissez faire capitalism of the classic liberal age. Fascism is the control by the state of the total social system in alliance with big business. Ideologically, Fascism is much closer to Socialism than to classic liberalism. In statist systems such as

Fascism, social market socialism, and welfare-state capitalism, big business gains immense power and wealth as a direct consequence of such things as the rejection of precious money backed currency, limited liability corporations, state deficit spending, and progressive taxation. All of these policies were propounded by Socialist and Social-Market economists such as Marx and Engles, J. M. Keynes, and their contemporary followers. However, in claiming that the Euro-American economies possess deep structural injustices such as what I just mention, does not deny what Gorringe is claiming concerning profit. The Christian ethic certainly puts "service" of others before profit. Service always looks out for the other first by providing excellent products, customer service, benefits and salaries for the employees and so forth. Those companies that inculcate this ethic do indeed prosper. J. C. Penney and Truett Cathy's Chick-fil-A® are two prime examples of companies founded and run by these evangelical principles, while their founders lived. These men were not anti-capitalist, anti-globalist social marketers.

Michael Woolcock, "Getting the Social Relations Right: Towards an Integrated Theology and Theory of Development," is another author whose ideological bias toward the collective is explicit. He defends "justice" as equality ("decrying global economic inequalities . . . 'just' – that is to say fair, transparent, equitable – world" [42]). Igor Shafarevich, the tortured Soviet Russian social theorist, exposed this definition as the basis for all social revolutionary movements throughout the ages (see *The Socialist Phenomenon*; see also Norman Cohn *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*). Woolcock commends Marcus Borg's call for a "'radical egalitarianism' of love, grace and compassion – that being in right relationship matters more than obeying rigid, divisive rules" (43-44). However, this means that loving homosexual or pre-marital sexual relationships could also be so defined in contrast to Jesus' way of grace and the Spirit's love which fulfills the socially divisive law. This again belies a reliance on Greek dualism rather than biblical-creational wholism. True, the law is both divisive and particular. Yet in Christ it's love it is inclusive and gracious. God does have "a special bias for the poor, the marginalized, the disenfranchised, as Luke . . . reminds us" (46). We *must* again listen. This is a biblical theme so often lacking from individualistic evangelicalism. But it is a theme fulfilled within a wholistic covenantal system of property rights, freedom in a market place with just precious metal backed currency, *and* social structures in place for the poor (e.g., gleaning laws, distribution of the land into all citizens' hands, anti-usury laws for the poor, mandatory tithe to the poor, alien, widows, and orphans every third year, and so forth).

Clive Mather, Chairman of Shell UK, points a further way forward in "Combining Principle with Profit: A Business Response to Challenges of Globalization." His positive example of this policy is Shell's engagement with apartheid bound South Africa is good. Having lived in South Africa during the revolutionary years (1983-1992), I experienced the good and evil of that policy. The good was that Shell treated every person with dignity and respect, surely a Christian ethical principle. However, Shell under Mather's watch also helped finance and support an virulently humanist, neo-Marxian movement in the press, universities, and political parties. South Africa of 2005 is bearing the rotting fruit of that support.

David Held also betrays his bias toward the One in the article: "Becoming Cosmopolitan: The Dimensions and Challenges of Globalization." Held claims that his model of "cosmopolitan multilateralization" must reject the "American" model of global unilateralism and accept the vision of the "European Union, based on social democratic values and collaborative governance." Though admitting that there is a growing rift between the "elite" and "the popular will," Held is merely accepting a watered down and Christianized form of Babel. A better way forward is promoting a decentralized, and compassionate civil society modeled on the one God designed for the Hebrews. Incidentally, the *original* federal-covenantal American constitution mirrored this more or less. I find it ironic that one of the symbols of the EU is a poster using Abel Grimmer's early 17th century painting of the building of the Tower of Babel, but now surrounded with Masonic five-pointed stars. Surely the spirit behind the EU is a radical, atheistic, humanism seen in the French and then the Russian Revolutions. That *Zeitgeist* remains today but is now incarnating itself in other social forms. Do we need a multilateral world forum, as Helms suggests, which mutually decides on common issues? Absolutely. But should not the model be that of Isaiah 2:1-4 and not Genesis 11?

Finally, Brian Griffiths, a key economic advisor to former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher adds a very much needed fresh breeze with his biblical input. He shows that one of the most important facts of both Testaments is that "the God of the Bible is the God of the poor" (17). This means in practice that the Christian ethic has spread five crucial teachings around the world. First, each human individual, born, aged, or pre-born has immense the dignity and worth as a creature in God's image. Second, Christians have an obligation to respond to the needs of the poor; the poor are "individuals, each with a story to tell," not some abstract social class as in Marxism (19). Third, "tackling poverty" is more than mere economics. The whole civil society beginning with the family, then wholistic Christian schools, hospitals, charities, must be built and re-built, while and developing "robust and caring" Christian ecclesial and missional communities (20). Lastly, care first and foremost must be for the spiritual needs of humanity through the Gospel of our Lord (20). Many of Griffiths' practical solutions to Two-Thirds world poverty are excellent. Most are founded on a "Judeo-Christian framework" (21). For example, he suggests removing EU and US trade tariffs on African agricultural products (free trade is often vilified as "out-sourcing"). This is absolutely just and necessary. Furthermore, he believes that a new monetary fund which finances the Two-Thirds world's private sector instead of state to state foreign aid is foundational. State to state aid always ends up in dictators' militaries and foreign bank accounts. Aid to individuals and families is crucial to development. But must it be from state treasuries, that is tax-payer funded revenues (see Rom 13:4-5)? There are other better alternatives.

In conclusion, many of the themes of this volume are essential for all of us to hear. But because of the insufficient worldview framework, most of the specifics are very weak except for the couple of exceptions as noted.