



Book Reviews

Globalization and the Good. Edited by Peter Heslam. Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, Eerdmans 2004. Pp. 138. \$20.00. Paper.

The increasing power of the metanarrative of economic globalization means that the church must address globalization as it considers its mission. In many ways this metanarrative opposes the biblical story centered in the Gospel of the kingdom to which the church is called to bear witness. Faithful witness will mean understanding this globalizing story and engaging it with the insight and power of the Gospel, and *Globalization and the Good* is a welcome resource to equip the church for that mission.

This book contains ten essays by leading thinkers on the issue of globalization with an introduction and epilogue by the editor. The ten essays are divided into three sections. The first describes major features of globalization and assesses the positive potential of globalization for the poor. Two of the authors in this section, Brian Griffiths and Clive Mather, are Christian leaders in multinational business and finance. One gets a glimpse of Christians in the trenches struggling with issues of justice. While these essays offer the encouragement of what some business leaders are attempting in the way of a more just global economy, I wonder whether they address the depth of injustice in the structures of the global economy.

The essays in the first section assume a desire to reform the present system, with its creational goods, to reform it so that it might be a blessing rather than a curse to the poor and the natural environment. A tone of prophetic critique, however, characterizes the essays in the second section, many of whose authors believe a more radical solution is needed. These address various aspects of structural injustice that color the global economy, producing debt, poverty, and ecological injustice. Some even approach Ulrich Duchow's position that the global economy is so riddled with injustice that opposing it is a confessional issue. This section culminates in Timothy Gorringer's essay, which uses the biblical categories of "principalities and powers" to elaborate the spirituality and worldview underlying global capitalism.

The final three essays address practical change. Helpful insights are offered, and at times one is inspired toward action, but it remains rather general. Perhaps

the most concrete suggestions for a more just global economic structure are offered in Heslam's brief but helpful epilogue. Some of his suggestions approach the concrete program spelled out more fully in Bob Goudzwaard's excellent *Beyond Poverty and Affluence: Toward an Economy of Care*.

Most of these essays arise from conferences organized by initiatives associated with the editor, Peter Heslam. He directs the Capitalism Project (CP) at the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC), which is developing a multidisciplinary response to globalization. This project has also spawned JustShare, a consortium Heslam convenes of denominations and agencies that explore issues of global economic justice.

Globalization has a history in missiology. In the mid-20th century, Hendrik Kraemer and others advocated the formation of study centers to analyze political, social, and economic issues in light of the Gospel. He believed this was essential to equip the church for its mission in the public square. The LICC and CP are outstanding examples of this needed organ in the church's mission. The book displays the kind of high-level Christian analysis coming from various sectors of the church that is needed to offer a faithful and relevant witness in today's world.

These essays primarily deal with the economic side of globalization, addressing less the political, technological, and worldview-religious aspects of globalization. This is to be expected in light of the focus of the CP and JustShare. Moreover, the economic dimension dominates globalization. Yet in a book where Christian faith shapes the analysis, I would have liked to see more reflection on the spiritual, religious, and worldview foundations of globalization. I am reminded of Lesslie Newbigin's comment that we must probe behind the structures and assumptions of modernity and uncover the hidden credo on which they are founded. What is the unstated confession and creed on which economic globalization is founded? In my judgment this is an urgent need in Christian discussions of globalization.

Many possible missiological questions arise in light of globalization. What is the role of the church in the public square? Is prophetic critique sufficient? Is not the church also part of culture and thus responsible for shaping a more just economic system, as Michael Taylor urges in his essay? Can there be a transformation of the present system? Or does it need to be completely overhauled? Either way, how does one engage the present economic system? If one wants to work within the structures for reformation, is not power essential to this task? Does this mean compromise with idolatrous power? And how does this relate to the mission of Jesus, who suffered and identified with those at the margins? As one engages the insightful essays in this volume, these questions

and many more will arise for the Christian concerned for a faithful witness to Christ's Lordship over economic life.

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