

However, Seldon's unforgiving tone should itself be forgiven. His generation faced and overcame a hard challenge that took their civilization to the brink, only to witness later how Britain slowly became "the sick man of Europe." He was also part of what changed all that. Seldon is one of the foremost applied economists of the twentieth century. It is fitting that he be honored.

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## Globalization and the Good

**Peter Heslam (Editor)**

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This book is primarily about the impact of global trade on the world's poorest people. While many of the issues covered in the book's ten contributed chapters are familiar to the ongoing debate, the writers have created the foundations of a Christian response. It is a Christian response that rests almost entirely upon a social justice lens, and it is a meaningful contribution that will nonetheless be more uncomfortable in some ways to evangelicals than it will be to many non-Christians.

I summarize briefly below the key ideas of each essay, recognizing that it is the very existence of the book and its diverse thoughts, and not so much a conclusive story, that is most meaningful.

David Held, in "Becoming Cosmopolitan," presents cosmopolitanism as an alternative to the political nationalism that he blames for many of the ill effects of globalization. Cosmopolitanism is not explicitly defined but seems best captured in Held's call for "a socially backed, cosmopolitan multilateralism" (13). Sensitive American readers will definitely feel the sting of Held's anti-American tone throughout the chapter, although he is certainly not alone in this leaning. While the concept of cosmopolitanism is interesting, readers may be surprised that the chapter offers no apparent Christian insight or perspective.

For those looking for explicitly Christian insights, Brian Griffiths' "The Role of Trade, Aid, and Domestic Reform in the Fight Against Poverty" begins the parade of social-gospel oriented essays. Noting that "one of the unmistakable facts of the Old Testament and the New Testament is that the God of the Bible is the God of the poor" (17), Griffiths is unusually hopeful and optimistic that various proposals can transform globalization into a force for alleviating the pain of poverty. He sees globalization as an instrument that is consistent with Christian ideals and responsibilities.

Clive Mather has written what amounts to a cheerleading essay for Shell UK and its African transactions ("Combining Principle with Profit"). In a refreshing turn, this prominent CEO acknowledges that multinational corporations can no longer be *solely* focused on shareholders and profits. Mather strives to promote Shell UK's principled approach to dealing with African problems, though it is curious that he then states, "we are not embracing a commitment to sustainable development out of the goodness of our

heart,” adding that sustainable development makes business sense, differentiates from competitors, and creates competitive advantage (33). Mather also notes that Shell’s principled approach to dealing with bribery and corruption leads to competitive advantage. It is not clear whether the principle involved is anything other than competitive advantage (nor is it clear whether that is problematic).

Leading off part 2, Michael Woolcock’s tremendously uplifting essay (“Getting the Social Relations Right”) lays out three biblical traditions of glory and then argues that poverty stemming from globalization diminishes the glory of human beings, stating, “there can be little glory where there is destitution and exclusion ...” (46). Woolcock calls for the transformation of social relations in the midst of globalized economics, presumably by way of mechanisms that promote the benefits of global trade at the interpersonal level (e.g., micro-lending), although it is never quite clear what Woolcock has in mind here on a grander scale.

Ann Pettifor chronicles the rise of major financial and creditor institutions and their role in perpetuating the problems of poverty (“Preparing for a Great Transformation”). She has argued that the major global crediting institutions (e.g., IMF, World Bank) have enlisted the aid of Western democratic governments in ensuring global deflationary policies that transfer assets from debtors to creditors. Pettifor’s passion is for programs such as Jubilee 2000. Pettifor presents this idea well, but two problems emerge in the essay. First, the tone of the essay suggests a sinister conspiracy perpetrated against the nonrich for decades. For example, Pettifor states, “there are spooks in the anarchic global financial forest—a forest that has been carelessly, if deliberately, cultivated, deregulated and then allowed to run riot by respected central bankers ...” (58). The second problem is that Pettifor places no responsibility on the governments or people who choose to borrow funds in a deflationary economy. At some point, debtors must accept responsibility for having signed on the dotted line.

In perhaps the strongest essay of the volume (“Risk, Reward and Responsibility”), Michael Schluter addresses two specific injustices facilitated by global capitalism. Basing his arguments on the idea that “Christianity is a faith in which the ultimate reality is relational” (67), Schluter boldly states that the charging of interest and limited liability are institutions that harm human relations and run counter to Christian principles. Without hesitation, he writes, “According to the Bible, the charging of interest is unacceptable to God” (68) and then proceeds to show precisely how interest charging ruins relationships that ought to be nurtured. In attacking the limited liability associated with corporate ownership, Schluter notes that such protection leads to the nonpayment of debts and the avoidance of responsibilities that Christians ought not shirk. He goes on to lay out possible solutions to these problems, admitting that there are no simple answers.

In a most thought-provoking essay (“The Principalities and Powers”), Timothy Gorringer claims that globalization is nothing short of imperialism. Citing Ephesians 6:12, Gorringer sees modern global corporations (among other institutions) as the powers warned against in Scripture. He eloquently elaborates on their danger, and then

turns to considering their redemption. Noting, “Economics is not fate. It can be changed” (90), Gorringer spurs Christians to throw off the consumeristic mentality that is bred by modern corporations (powers) and consider whom they will serve. In essence, he argues for repentance, a change of mind, a metanoia—“Celebrating the eucharist week by week ... must be understood as a detox, the creation of a counter-culture” (90).

The third and final part of the volume begins with Cynthia Moe-Lobeda’s “Offering Resistance to Globalization: Insights from Luther.” Of all the chapters, Moe-Lobeda’s is the most denominational, which is understandable because it was solicited as a specifically Lutheran insight. Her operating assumption is that “neo-liberal globalization” is a force that must be resisted by Christians. Moe-Lobeda is extremely well versed in Luther’s writings, and she explores his “eucharist economic ethics,” as well as several other Lutheran principles. Although the essay offers much fuel for moral and economic courage, Moe-Lobeda begins by depicting modern global economics as a strawman without ever really making the case that it is an evil that must be resisted. In one of several essays in the volume that focus on the biblical principle of neighbor-love, Moe-Lobeda ultimately calls for a love that is faithfully subversive.

Recognizing that Christians can *all* be concerned about combating poverty while disagreeing about the role of globalization in creating and eliminating poverty, Michael Taylor calls for an approach that creates workable Christian solutions (“Campaigning Against Injustice and the Appeal to Self-Interest”). He then sets out to demonstrate that human self-interest leads to divisions among well-intentioned people. As Taylor puts it, regarding differing theologies and theological solutions, “what divides us in favor of one or the other is where our self-interest lies: for the rich it lies in the status quo; for the poor in radical change” (110). Taylor suggests that a Christian solution is not one that leads to a change in power but one that leads to shared power. He concludes with a call to campaigning strategies that are evangelical in nature.

The final essay comes from American social activist Jim Wallis, who challenges the Christian community to be a force for prophetic witness in the face of social injustice (“Changing the Wind”). Wallis notes of the Christian gospel, “whatever else it does, if it is not good news to poor people it is simply not the gospel of Jesus Christ” (119). Wallis goes on to suggest that a social-gospel-driven campaign against poverty and inequality is one that requires a street fight—one impelled by spiritual motives, such as can come from the Christian churches and the body of Christ. Although he mentions specific objectives, such as debt cancellation and living wages, Wallis does not offer specific mechanisms of engagement. Instead, his role is that of preacher and fiery evangelist, motivating Christians to engage the problem through the power of the Spirit and the church.

Ultimately, the compact volume’s ten essays are encouraging, although the essays carry highly politicized undertones that seem to be taken for granted among all of the contributors. It is an undertone that demonizes the political right and seems to assume that a social justice agenda (itself a politicized ideology) and Christianity are equivalent.

Reviews

The distinctions among Western Christians regarding how the gospel is understood have not gone away in the twenty-first century, and many evangelicals will not perceive the problems of (and/or solutions to) poverty through the same lens as those who “have” a social gospel. In the end, one must wonder whether it is possible to be on the Western political right (Christian or not) and feel a kinship with the ideas presented by the volume’s authors. There is no doubt, however, that this volume puts into print many ideas from which others may build.

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