

One World or Many? Globalisation and world mission

Introduction

Richard Tiplady

“Globalisation has, with just reason, become a dirty word. Still, it’s important to distinguish between the multinational might that force-feeds the world Kylie and Britney, and the healthy cross-pollination of the global village”.

In two short sentences, music journalist Neil Spencer¹ sums up the different understandings of globalisation that underpin this book. On the one hand, globalisation is a dirty word. Memories of the protests and riots at the World Trade Organisation meetings in Seattle in 1999, and the G8 summit in Genoa in 2001, conjure in our minds a sense that globalisation is just another word for empire. Western corporations are taking over the commercial and cultural spheres just as effectively as did the empires of previous centuries. Western music and clothing styles are becoming a global norm. And yet, on the other hand, globalisation allows singers and musicians such as Colombia’s Shakira, India’s Mithila Pundit, and Senegal’s Labi Siffre to reach previously unreachable Western audiences.

OK, so this is not a book about music. It is a book about globalisation and world mission. But we should nail a couple of myths right at the start:

1. globalisation is not the same as Westernisation
2. globalisation is not just about economics

True, it includes both these things. But it also includes much more. So what do we mean by “globalisation”? It’s a word that is thrown around easily, a code-word for the state of the world today, a cypher for contemporary trends. Those who have written chapters in this book were asked to think of globalisation in the following terms:

Globalisation refers to increasing global interconnectedness, so that events and developments in one part of the world are affected by, have to take account of, and also influence in turn, other parts of the world. It also refers to an increasing sense of a single global whole.

This global interconnected whole manifests itself in many different areas of human life. We are probably most familiar with it in terms of economics. Global trading arrangements, negotiated through GATT and its successor the WTO, shape the financial destiny of every nation. It is not just mission that is “from everywhere to everywhere” – so is the distribution of products to the markets of the world. The financial capital markets move billions of dollars around the world each day, not because they are paying for anything that might be called “real” goods, but simply to take advantage of marginal differences in interest and currency exchange rates. National and regional governments court large foreign corporations, hoping through tax breaks and other incentives to attract their capital and their factories, and the jobs and income that accompany them. We are also familiar with globalisation in political terms. The United Nations is (sometimes) seen as a suitable debating chamber for the world’s nations to reach mutually-acceptable decisions and to govern their actions. But the impact of globalisation is also evident in many other areas of human life – in the huge unstoppable migrations of humanity around the globe; in the

¹ The quotation comes from Neil Spencer, “World Round-Up”, London : The Observer Review, 15th December 2002, p13.

ubiquity of global brands like Nike, McDonalds and Coca-Cola, in the global reach of the media, and the far-reaching impact of technological developments like the internet and mobile (cell) phones.

Right here, right now

So globalisation includes a lot of things. But how has this single interconnected world arisen?

Estimates of when globalisation started vary. Some suggest it has been developing since the dawn of history, as human societies first learned to trade and exchange both goods and ideas. Others argue that it is closely tied to the emergence of capitalism and the modern era. A further contention is that it is much more recent than that, and that globalisation is a characteristic of a post-industrial era, a phenomenon of disorganised and highly-mobile capital. But whichever may be the case, all arguments accept that there has been a sudden recent acceleration in globalisation in recent years.

Why the acceleration? Probably because of a variety of factors. Technological developments have created the opportunity. Travel is not quite instantaneous yet, but I can be anywhere in the world within 24 hours of writing these words. The words themselves can be anywhere in the world in seconds, thanks to email and the web. Economic factors have taken advantage of the possibilities provided by technology. Corporations have expanded into new and emerging markets, and have shifted production around the world, in the cause of increased profits and a higher share price. Politically, the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s signalled the end of the bi-polar worldview created by the Cold War, and allowed the emerging multidirectional "new world order" to become more visible. Some have suggested that we have moved from the Berlin Wall to a No Walls world, although I'm not sure it is as simple as that. Overall, we can say that there is no one single driver of globalisation. It is rather the outcome of a combination of factors, working together to produce this new sense of global interconnectedness.

Some would dispute whether it is that new. The so-called 'world' religions of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism linked together major regions of the world in the early Middle Ages and before, creating civilisations far larger than most of today's nation states. The European empires of the 'high' colonial period of 1880-1920 oversaw a massive amount of global trade that declined considerably during the first half of the twentieth century, the era of Depression and protectionism. But medieval civilisations like Christendom knew very little of what was going on elsewhere in the world, and the nineteenth-century colonial empires were controlled and dominated by European nation-states. We should draw a distinction between 'internationalisation', which includes mechanisms to facilitate communication and cooperation between nation-states (which remain dominant), and 'globalisation', wherein the nation states are but one group of 'players' in the world, alongside transnational corporations, financial capital markets, free-trade areas and agreements, transnational political entities like the United Nations and the European Union, and the many informal and less-visible networks of global connectedness that shape our lives.

Excerpt from Richard Tiplady, "World Of Difference : Global Mission at the Pic'n'Mix Counter", Carlisle : Paternoster Press, 2003

One world or many?

The book's title reflects a key question with regard to globalisation. As I have already noted, it is often assumed that globalisation is simply the latest form of Western or (even worse?) American domination by another name. This is held to be the case whether we are talking about economic or cultural domination.

This is undoubtedly an aspect of globalisation. Several of the chapters in this book make this point very effectively. But what makes globalisation more than just a handy synonym for Westernisation is that it includes other things as well. Globalisation is about global interconnectedness, not global American-ness. It includes the global anti-capitalist protest movements that oppose economic globalisation, not just the transnational corporations and Western governments that are trying to take advantage of it.

The now-famous term "Jihad Vs McWorld" symbolises part of this reality. The spread of Western values and culture is not welcome in many parts of the world, and local cultural resources are drawn on to resist the perceived intrusion of foreign ways of thinking and behaviour. This can be manifested in religious fundamentalisms of various sorts (just as Christian fundamentalism attempt to resist an encroaching modernity in earlier generations). Ethnic identities can also be reinvigorated as suitable means of resistance.

But the situation is more complex than the simple 'either/or' suggested by the term "Jihad vs McWorld". Globalisation is not a one-way street, running from the West to the Rest. An interconnected world allows ideas and products from every part of the world to reach every other part of the world. And when they get to their new destination, ideas are not imbibed wholesale. They are adapted to fit the local situation. This phenomenon has been terms "glocalisation".

Baltis and Bollywood, Pokémon and Panasonic, Feng Shui and Falun Gong

As well as localising reactions, the idea that we are seeing the emergence of a bland, uniform commercial culture based on Western ideas is further undermined by the observation that other cultures are also using the processes of globalisation to expand their reach. Non-Westernisation is as much a feature of globalisation as Westernisation is.

So the most popular meal ordered in restaurants in the UK is the Chicken Tikka Masala. The popularity of Indian food in the UK is shown by the existence of the "Curry Mile" in Manchester, and similar large groups of restaurants in cities around the UK. The Chinese takeaway is ubiquitous. And this movement and adaptation of food styles is not new. Consider that symbol of quintessential Englishness, the cup of tea. Tea is of course not grown in Britain, but came from China and India (where the British began farming it in 1835 to break the Chinese monopoly, so it's not that Indian either). Maybe in future a curry will be called an "English", not an "Indian"?

The Indian film industry, "Bollywood", is not only bigger than Hollywood, it has plans for global expansion, as shown by the success of recent films like "Monsoon Wedding" and the Oscar-nominated "Lagaan". Ang Lee's film "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" was a massive international hit, despite being a Chinese language film with subtitles. Chinese cultural influence on the West can be seen in the popularity of *feng shui*² in interior and garden design, and the interest shown in the persecuted Falun Gong religious movement. Even Hollywood itself, the ultimate visual purveyor of the American Dream, shows signs of

² There is no truth in the claim that *Feng Shui* is Chinese for "tidy your room!".

sharing in this re-shuffle of cultural influence, as some of its biggest studios are now foreign-owned, such as Sony (Japanese) and Vivendi Universal (French).

Pokémon, a cartoon whose rise to global domination of children's imaginations in 1999-2001 was spearheaded by a yellow, electric-shock-inducing mouse called Pikachu, is Japanese in style and origin from start to finish. Movies, computer games, trading cards and figurines tumbled over one another in a marketing *blitzkrieg* that swept children's allowances and parent's credit cards before it. Japanese goods also dominate the home-entertainment market, and their cars are produced and bought worldwide.

Glocalisation describes the way in which ideas and structures that circulate globally are adapted and changed by local realities. So while Wal-Mart sells Heinz and Del Monte products in its stores worldwide, it also pays close attention to local tastes. The Wal-Mart store in Shenzhen, China, for example, sells chicken feet, Ma-Ling brand stewed pork ribs, and Gulong brand pickled lettuce. About 85% of the products come from 14000 Chinese suppliers³.

McDonalds, that supposed pioneer of homogenised consumption, shows similar approaches to its local marketing. One finds numerous examples of adaptation to local tastes, such as the McBurrito in Mexico, McLlahua sauce in Bolivia (a local chilli sauce found on every meal table), beer on sale in French McDonalds restaurants, and the Maharaja Mac in India (a vegetarian version of the Big Mac for a country where beef or pork consumption is risky to say the least). McDonalds recognises that it is viewed by many as an example of American cultural and economic imperialism, and asserts in response that it is instead a confederation of locally-owned companies. It even ran adverts in France that poked fun at Americans and their food choices, emphasising that its food was made in France, by French suppliers, using French products⁴. Even when the American identity of McDonalds is undeniable, it produces reactions that reinforce local identities. When McDonalds first entered the Philippines, Filipino hamburger chains responded by marketing their products on the basis of local taste (whereas they had previously promoted them on the basis of their Americanness)⁵.

Now global corporations like Wal-Mart and McDonalds don't adapt to local preferences because of a philosophical commitment to global diversity. They do so because they have discovered that local tastes are not easily changed or homogenised, but instead show considerable resilience in the face of 'global' flows of ideas and products. So it is possible to conclude that "neither global processes nor modernisation are expressions of a westernisation that removes cultural differences localisation is an essential feature of global processes and modernisation" and that what we see are "multiple manifestations of global forces operating in local worlds"⁶.

Excerpt from Richard Tiplady, "World Of Difference : Global Mission at the Pic'n'Mix Counter", Carlisle : Paternoster Press, 2003

³ Newsweek, 20 May 2002, p46

⁴ New York Times, 14 Oct 2001

⁵ Malcolm Waters, "Globalization", London : Routledge, 2001 (2nd edn), p 226.

⁶ Both quotations taken from Sverker Finnström, *Postcoloniality and the Postcolony- theories of the global and the local*, Working Paper on Anthropology #7, University of Uppsala, Sweden. Available at <http://65.107.211.206/post/poldiscourse/finnstrom/finnstrom2.html>

Many voices

The book aims to embody the principles of global missiology. Different writers from different parts of the world are included in this book. If globalisation includes the whole world, then by definition any Christian response to globalisation has to include voices from different parts of that world. This book is not perfect in this regard. Too many still remain disenfranchised, without a voice. But it is offered as our best attempt. I hope that you will forgive any shortcomings.

But there are not just different cultural perspectives on globalisation. There are different theological perspectives too. Different writers within this book have different opinions about the nature of globalisation, and its ethical and missiological implications. We have not harmonised these views, but include them within the book as testimony to these divergences. As the one who led the Missions Commission Working Group that looked at the issue of globalisation and mission, and who edited the various chapters, my view of globalisation is probably more sanguine than some of those represented in here. Both their voices and those that incline more to my own views need to be heard and understood.

This diversity of views might trouble some of us, those who believe that there must be a single 'biblical' response to globalisation. Our discussions as a group showed us that there are different theological themes that can be applied to our subject. Perhaps our pre-existing theological perspectives have shaped our view of cultural and historical trends. Perhaps our pre-existing cultural preferences have shaped the theological themes we wish to emphasise. Perhaps it's a bit of both. The outcome is that within this book you will find different views expressed, passionately held, but motivated throughout by a desire to be true to the Bible, to honour God and his intention for his creation. You will probably find yourself nodding in agreement with those whose sentiments coincide with your own. Try to spend some time engaging with those whose views don't sit so easily with your own.

If you come from a tradition that is suspicious or hostile to "the world", that sees all historical trends as manifestations of the "spirit of the age", or which views globalisation as neocolonialism (and all empires as "Babylon"), then you're going to have a hard time seeing anything good in globalisation. You will probably concentrate on the negative aspects of globalisation (and, as this book illustrates, there are many to focus on), and it will be seen as something to be resisted. This will be especially true for those who equate globalisation with Western domination. Evangelicals have worked hard in the last 30 years to become more sensitive to the cultures of those among whom we work, and rightly so. Likewise, those who see globalisation as something that God is doing to make world evangelisation easier, probably need to curb your enthusiasm a bit. Globalisation is a complex set of phenomena that defy easy analysis.

My own theological understanding of culture has shaped how I have edited and produced this book. As human beings made in the image of God, we are capable of cultural innovations that are good. As fallen people, all our actions and thoughts are corrupted throughout by sin. But the image of God remains. We may be entirely in need of redemption, but we are not entirely evil. Human cultures are no different to this – as products of human thought and action, they are both good and evil, reflecting both God's image and also our sinfulness. And just as Jesus said that the weeds would be left with the wheat until the harvest, so will good and evil co-exist until the end of history. Some contributions within this book concentrate on the fallenness manifested in globalisation, identifying things to be resisted in the name of Jesus Christ. Other writers take a less judgemental view, simply observing the trends and considering how we should change in response. There is no easy answer to whether resistance or adaptation is correct. It probably depends on the context and the circumstances. Jesus is both saviour and judge, of

globalisation as much as of any other culture. Individual chapters may emphasise one aspect or another. Hopefully the whole presents a more nuanced picture.

Navigating this book

Globalisation impacts every part of human life. This includes our cultural and religious existences. As whole human beings embedded in communities, globalisation has an effect on every aspect of our lives. And so this book aims to take account of this breadth of impact. Some chapters look at broad social trends that all people everywhere are being affected by. Others consider the impact of globalisation on specific regions or issues, trying to embody or en flesh the big issues into specific sets of circumstances or situations. And still others consider the implications of globalisation on issues that we usually think of as 'missiology' or 'theology'. Not that we want to reinforce this distinction unnecessarily. The whole of life is missiological, since the whole of life should be directed to the service of God. There is no part of human life over which Christ is not Lord. Every chapter in this book is missiological, even if not every topic addressed is usually considered as missiology 'proper'.

Following this introduction, Section 1 identifies the main features of globalisation. Ruth Valerio looks at the central economic aspects, and discusses the concerns this should raise for anyone concerned about issues of poverty and justice. The "McWorld" and "Jihad" polarities are neatly repackaged by Sam George as "technoculture and "terrorculture", which as he notes can both be seen as characteristic of youth culture around the world. The final chapter in this section, by David Lundy, explores the pluralisation that results from globalisation, neatly sidestepping the easy association of globalisation with increased Westernised homogeneity.

Section 2 looks at how globalisation is reflected in specific issues or areas of the world. Miriam Adeney makes a plea that concerns for ethnicity should not be seen simply as a reaction to the dominance of Western culture, but as a crucial element in the God-intended diversity of creation. Ruth Valerio provides a second chapter, this time looking at the impact of globalisation on the environment. Steve Fouch looks at health as a global issue, and presents a strong case for a re-emphasis on the historical missionary commitment to health and medical work. Rose Dowsett looks at "those who hold up half the sky", and the ways the women, who are often marginalised in their societies, are especially affected by globalisation. Wanyeki Mahiaini provides a useful analysis of the impact of globalisation on one particular continent, Africa, showing how the macro-issues we have identified are working out in one particular region. To conclude this section, Fiona Wilson presents the results of a survey undertaken by Tearfund of its partners around the world, looking at grassroots perceptions of the impacts of globalisation.

Section 3 looks at the implications of globalisation for areas usually included under the heading of "mission". Bulus Galadima reflects on the place of religion in a globalising world, and the implications for Christian mission. Marcelo Vargas makes a strong plea for local contextual sensitivity in response to global homogenising pressures. We have two chapters on the implications of globalisation for the church. Alex Araujo asks the church to present itself as an alternative to that offered by globalisation, and Ros Johnson looks at the opportunities that globalisation offers to local churches in terms of their own missionary activity.

The concluding chapter by David Tai-Woong Lee and Steve Moon asks us to consider God's own globalising intentions, a diverse world united in praise to him. This will only come about through world evangelization, and a strong commitment to global missiology. The ultimate aim of this book, and of all who worked to bring it into being, is that we might be privileged to play a small part in bringing this about.

Listing the usual suspects

Bill Taylor of WEA Missions Commission provided more support and help than anyone could reasonably ask or expect. He's a true friend and an 'older brother' who gave me an opportunity to contribute to the global missionary movement, and I hope that this book justifies his trust. Rose Dowsett leads the MC Global Missiology Taskforce. Her advice and gentle guidance, and her sacrificial attendance for 4 days at our Chicago meetings in March 2002, at the end of a month-long trip away from home, have been of inestimable value. Much of the planning for this book was done while I worked as a director of Global Connections (UK), and Stanley Davies deserves thanks and appreciation for the financial contribution that made this possible, but much more for his friendship and guidance over 6 years of a working partnership that was second to none.

I knew some of the people who wrote for this book before we got together in the Globalisation Working Group. Others I got to know as we worked together. We began as colleagues but finished (I hope) as friends. Thanks to them for a stimulating and exciting time as we grappled with trying to define and understand one of the biggest issues of our time. Globalisation is in danger of being a theory of everything, a multi-headed hydra that won't lie down. I think we managed to chop off the main heads.

But most of all, my love and appreciation go to my wife, Irene, and son, Jamie, without whom life would be shallow and empty. They are the ones who do without their husband and father, while I swan off around the world, doing things like producing this book. Their contribution to this book is as important as anyone.