

## **GLOBALISATION AND ECONOMICS: a world gone bananas**

Writing this chapter makes me reflect on the countries that I have touched today. My jeans come from Morocco and my computer keyboard was made in Germany whilst the screen is from China. We have a Japanese woman staying with us, taking a break from work to travel round the world, and I talked today to friends who are moving to Tanzania. My t-shirt comes from Portugal; my coffee from Costa Rica and my banana from the Windward Islands.

All of these products have a story to tell: who they were made or produced by and how they travelled round the world to reach my house. Each one opens us up to different aspects of the complicated world of economic globalisation: my society's move from producer to consumer and the benefits that has brought; Export Processing Zones; the role of technology in economics; the flight of companies chasing the 'bottom dollar'; the mobile global elite; the intensification of winners and losers... . However, perhaps the one with the greatest story to tell is the humble banana.

Bananas are one of the basic foods of today: indeed the banana is the world's most popular fruit.<sup>1</sup> Yet, my parents' generation almost never ate them, so what has happened in the world to make bananas such an ordinary part of life in the UK?<sup>2</sup>

Traditionally, Britain and the rest of the European Union bought their bananas from their former colonies, particularly the Windward Islands which have become almost totally reliant on the industry. Britain invested into the original plantations and Geest, the company that buys and sells most of the bananas, is a British company. The Lome Convention in 1975 formalised the EU's commitment to continue to import bananas from the Windward Islands.

However, 80% of the bananas involved in international trade are controlled by the big three American companies: Chiquita, Dole, Del Monte. Not liking the EU protectionist policy on bananas, America complained to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) who ruled in favour of the USA. When the EU refused to back down the US struck back and put import tariffs, in the end worth \$191.4m, on EU exports. The American complaint to the WTO came just days after Chiquita donated \$500,000 to the Democratic Party and that the tariffs were enforced by the Republican-controlled Congress after Chiquita donated \$350,000 to them... .

The situation today is one where the overwhelming majority of the bananas produced for export are done so in appalling circumstances. The plantation workers live in poverty. In Ecuador, for example, the workers are paid just \$1 a day and some independent producers get only 3 pence per pound, which does not even cover costs. On average, the producer gets only 5% of the price of a banana.

Vast quantities of chemicals are used to treat the banana during production. Plantations in Central America apply 30kg of active ingredients per hectare per year – this is more than ten times the average for intensive farming in industrialised countries. In Costa Rica, three-quarters of banana workers suffer from skin lesions and 20% of the male workers became sterile due to handling pesticides whilst entire communities suffer from indiscriminate aerial crop spraying.

The impact on the environment need hardly be stated, let alone the fact that massive deforestation has taken place to provide the land for the plantations. The effect that all these chemicals have on those of us who eat them is something many worry about. It is interesting to note the response of a banana worker in Guatemala on a Chiquita plantation on being asked if he ever ate the bananas he produced: "Good Lord, no!... People in places like this don't eat the fruit they cut. I guess we know better".

The story of the banana sitting in my fruit bowl gives a helpful insight into the complex web of economic globalisation. Whilst leading to inevitable oversimplifications, it is useful at this juncture to outline its main facets and begin to explore some of the implications for mission.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Worth £5bn a year in the UK they are the most valuable food product in supermarkets, outsold only by petrol and lottery tickets (Fairtrade Foundation). Globally, more bananas are sold than any other fruit.

<sup>2</sup> Much of the following information on bananas comes from The New Internationalist (NI) (October 1999).

## **1. Economic globalisation is based on the principle of free trade, market capitalism.**

This will hardly be news for most of us reading this, but, in case it is, let us explore it further. Economic globalisation works on the policies of trade liberalisation, privatisation and financial market deregulation. It is believed that free trade between nations, with no protective barriers, is the most effective way of increasing global wealth and lifting poorer countries out of their poverty.

This global system only works where there is growth and so the economics of globalisation is profit-driven to the extreme.<sup>4</sup> This drive towards continual growth has led to the emergence, and now dominance, of the Trans National Corporations (TNCs) so that, now, of the world's 100 largest economies, fifty are TNCs. Corporate mergers and acquisitions have thus become a familiar feature of the globalisation landscape. Indeed, the annual number of such mergers and acquisitions doubled between 1990 and 1997 when the total value reached \$236 billion.<sup>5</sup>

Another aspect of this growth-driven economy is currency speculation and foreign direct investment (FDI). Some say a billion, some say 2 trillion, dollars is turned over each day on the currency markets. As Giddens says, "in the new global electronic economy, fund managers, banks, corporations, as well as millions of individual investors, can transfer vast amounts of capital from one side of the world to another at the click of a mouse. As they do so, they can destabilise what might have seemed rock-solid economies – as happened in East Asia".<sup>6</sup> Flows of foreign direct investment (FDI) in 1995 reached \$315 billion, almost a six-fold increase over the level for 1981 – 85: over the same period world trade increased by little more than a half.<sup>7</sup>

Before going any further let us stop and ask ourselves how far the values of globalisation are impacting our churches and missions work. Chester summarises it well:

It is tempting in the face of globalisation to suppose that the church requires corresponding global structures. It is tempting to suppose that the priority of the hour is to strengthen global institutions and create global networks. With globalisation concentrating power in transnational corporations and international institutions surely we need powerful transnational Christian agencies. We need access to the national and global media. We need influence in the halls of power. We need national evangelistic campaigns, mega-churches and a powerful political voice. We want to think big.<sup>8</sup>

How we judge success is a question we must all grapple with in the face of our society's tendency to judge everything numerically and financially. It can be all too easy to listen too much to the influential and disregard the views of those on the margins.

There is much discussion in mission circles about the increase in short-term work. Undoubtedly it can give rise to many opportunities. A friend said to my husband recently, "I'm putting off coming with you

---

<sup>3</sup> The following economic information is taken from R. Valerio, Globalisation and Poverty.

<sup>4</sup> As Clinton said, "I do not believe that a country with 4.5% of the world's people can maintain its standard of living if we don't have more customers". (J. Bruges, The Little Earth Book (LEB), 81)

It is important to say here that I am not against profit per se and clearly businesses need to make a profit to survive. As I will go on to say later, the problem is where excess profit is the goal, regardless of the consequences to people or planet. The same is true for the need for capital flows. Its important to point out the need for the foreign exchange market to operate smoothly and efficiently before talking about the recent inflation of capital flows and the instability they can bring about.

<sup>5</sup> NI (Jan/Feb 2000), 24.

<sup>6</sup> Giddens, Reith Lectures.

<sup>7</sup> As with profit, I am not against a foreign exchange market per se and, where operating smoothly and efficiently, see the benefits that can bring. However, one of the current results of currency speculation and the recent inflation of capital flows is that prices of commodities are at the mercy of market forces and are on a generally downward trend. For example, coffee is currently going through a crisis with prices at their lowest since the 1930s. Despite this, the price of a cup of coffee in a coffee house is increasing and the big coffee roasting houses, such as Sara Lee and Nestle, are reporting big profits (Nestle saw a rise in profits of 20% in 2001). As we have seen with bananas, 90% of the price of a commodity stays in the North and is never seen by the producer. The problem of financial volatility caused by currency speculation could be solved by the introduction of the so-called 'Tobin Tax': a small worldwide tariff (less than 0.5%) that major countries would levy on foreign-exchange transactions.

<sup>8</sup> A. Chester, "Christ's Little Flock: Towards an Ecclesiology of the Cross", 6.

to Africa because I know that, once I've seen it, my whole life will have to change". These 'trips of perspective', as Mike Schut calls them, can be extremely valuable as northerners travel to the south to engage in volunteer work, hear from local organisations and stay with local people ready to go with an attitude of learning and prepared to return and use their experiences to effect policy or lifestyles in the north. However, those engaged in mission work also have to resist globalisation's short-term values whereby if we do not see instant 'success' we move on to the next exciting project (which will of course be bigger, brighter and better).

Another thing to consider is the way those of us in the wealthier countries see ourselves as customers and have grown used to expecting certain rights as a part of that. What impact will that have on mission agencies, and how will we deal with it, as people join who see themselves as customers and thus are more demanding?

## **2. The rules for how economic globalisation works are governed by the World Trade Organisation.**

The WTO hit the headlines in 1999 when its meeting in Seattle was thrown into disarray by protestors and its trade round stopped by leaders from the South. Up until this time it was a little known organisation that gained little attention.

The WTO has within its constitution the potential for working to benefit those who are poor. Its Generalised System of Preferences does, at least on paper, recognise that the poorest and least developed nations need positive discrimination, even if recognition alone is not enough.<sup>9</sup> WTO decision-making is via consensus and so is potentially more democratic.

However...

## **3. The WTO has problems**

The reality is that it is dominated by the wealthy countries, particularly the US, Canada, Japan and the EU. Its headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland, which has one of the highest costs of living in the world. There are mountains of paperwork and legal documents attached to any negotiation and a country needs a host of specialised experts and lawyers to be able to deal with these. The wealthy countries are able to have people there permanently whilst poorer countries cannot afford anyone. For example, Japan has 25 representatives while Bangladesh has only one and over half the least developed country members have none at all.<sup>10</sup> Discussions are thus weighted from the start.

Perhaps the WTO's most significant weakness is that free trade is its sacred cow (as with the IMF and World Bank) and is given priority above all else, at the expense of issues such as the environment and human rights.<sup>11</sup> Joseph Stiglitz, the former Chief Economist at the World Bank, has said that they take "privatisation and trade liberalisation as ends in themselves, rather than means to more sustainable, equitable and democratic growth".<sup>12</sup> WTO rulings can even go against laws that are adopted to comply with international agreements.<sup>13</sup> Other examples are where it has prevented legislation to ban cosmetics testing on animals; protected companies trading with Myanmar and prevented Thailand, concerned at the increase in young smokers, from banning cigarette imports.<sup>14</sup> It is a sad fact that the WTO has only once upheld a ruling in favour of social or environmental issues.

The meaning given to 'free trade' though seems to change chameleon-like according to the interests of the wealthy. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is a major example and the main reason why the

---

<sup>9</sup> In contrast, The IMF and World Bank still very much reflect the political situation after World War 2. For example, seven countries (the US, UK, Germany, France, Japan, Italy and Canada) control nearly half the votes at the World Bank and the US holds nearly 20% of the total votes in the IMF.

<sup>10</sup> Christian Aid, "Trade for Life" material.

<sup>11</sup> Mofid in Globalisation for the Common Good puts the blame for this on the way economics is taught, with its narrow focus on 'self interest' and 'competition' as the sole motivating factors in economic activity.

<sup>12</sup> Cited in Oxfam Policy Paper on globalisation.

<sup>13</sup> For example, when it ruled American regulations to protect turtles to be illegal, even though they were done in accordance with CITES which was signed by 146 nations.

<sup>14</sup> LEB, 85.

WTO might yet collapse. CAP gives enormous subsidies to European farmers whilst demonstrating great reluctance to open up markets to agricultural produce from the developing world. As the subsidies encourage over-production, excess produce is dumped on other, poorer countries who then see the price of their national produce slump, which affects the livelihoods of the farmers. UNCTAD predicts that the elimination of agricultural subsidies would result in developing countries being better off by around \$19.8 billion.<sup>15</sup> So far as free trade is concerned, the wealthier countries fail to practice what they preach.

#### **4. Economic globalisation is dominated by the TNCs.**

Our case study of bananas gave us an obvious example of how this works, but this domination affects producers the world over. TNCs are often larger, financially, than the countries in which they operate and hence can control how they do things. This leads to the 'race for the bottom dollar', which pushes aside human rights and environmental concerns.

This is demonstrated by Klein who exposes the free-trade zones in countries such as Indonesia, China, Mexico, Vietnam and the Philippines.<sup>16</sup> These Export Processing Zones (EPZs) are the areas in which consumer goods are made and they operate tariff-free: no import or export duties and sometimes no income or property taxes either. It is thought that there are around 1000 EPZs operating in seventy countries, employing roughly 27 million workers. The workday is long (up to sixteen hours) and the workers are mostly young women working for contractors from Korea, Taiwan or Hong Kong who are usually filling orders for companies based in the USA, UK, Japan, Germany or Canada. The working conditions are very much below standard, with the minimum wage seldom reached, and trade unions are banned. The EPZs are designed to attract foreign investors with the hope that they will contribute to lasting development in the chosen country. Thus the tax-free incentives are offered, as well as other things such as, sometimes, the cooperation of a military to suppress any labour unrest. The reality, of course, is that foreign investment rarely touches the country and the EPZs operate as "off-shore" tax havens benefiting only the companies involved; companies which fly-off to another country as soon as conditions in the EPZs turn against them.

With the WTO only interested in free trade, there are no internationally respected laws to govern TNCs and ensure they are putting people and the environment before their profit-driven shareholders.

Although not all TNCs are American, in the minds of many globalisation equals Americanisation: the creation of a 'one Disney McWorld'.<sup>17</sup> This is certainly true of the church. As Peter Harris says, "when you go to a church in a major world city, chances are you could be in LA for all the cultural distinctiveness there is to the theology or forms of worship, whatever the language".<sup>18</sup> The tools of the internet have enabled Americans to disseminate widely their own literature and courses, often at the expense of other people developing their own material that would reflect their individual cultures more adequately. Northern thinking thus dominates the church because, to put it crudely, they have the money and resources to be able to do that.<sup>19</sup>

This inevitably affects mission thinking and practice since priorities largely come out of that agenda. So, a South African friend living and working in a township told me of the frustrations he had with the 'AD2000 and Beyond Movement'. He saw the push from northern mission centres as being of a globalising order, carrying the implication that the rest of them had to accept the priority of AD2000 missiology. The economics of it made it difficult to resist or ignore and countries in the south tended to lose the theological space to frame their own questions and make their own contribution to global mission. He spoke of contending against the hegemony of AD2000.

---

<sup>15</sup> DFID, "Making Trade Work for Poor People", 2.

<sup>16</sup> Klein, *No Logo*, 195 – 229.

<sup>17</sup> As discussed in this book's Introduction, Giddens, Huntingdon and Berger would see globalisation as more than just Americanisation.

<sup>18</sup> P. Harris (A Rocha International) in a personal email.

<sup>19</sup> The WEA globalisation group that this book comes out of wrestled with this continually.

The mission scene as we have it today has developed under the old system when the economically wealthier countries today were the big mission senders. However, the church is now strongest in the predominantly poorer countries and we need to provide a new economic system in the worldwide church that encourages missionaries from poorer countries whose churches cannot afford to send them. Perhaps one way would be to change from the colonial system, whereby missionaries were supported by the sending church, and adopt Paul's principle of being supported by the receiving church.<sup>20</sup>

The other side of the 'trips of perspective' that we saw earlier are, what Schut calls, 'reverse missions': when Christians from poorer countries live and teach in the wealthier nations. It is imperative that those from poorer countries are heard and that those from more wealthy churches/mission agencies find the humility to sit at the feet of these others and let themselves be taught by them. This would enable us to discover the positive side to globalisation. David Smith expresses this well when he says that, "globalisation allows the opportunity for the wisdom of the whole church to be brought together. The contribution of the church from the south will bring great wisdom and insight to the global church. Various cultural perspectives will always add refreshing ways of looking at God and the Gospel"<sup>21</sup>

### **5. The shape of the workplace is changing**

After work today, my mother-in-law will come round to join us for dinner and help with bathing my daughter. I know how she will respond when I ask how her day has been: she's tired; her work is piling up; she's doing the work of two people... . The workplace today has become, for many, a place of increasing pressure. Whereas before there would be periods of respite and stability ('pitstops') now the pace is relentless and there is continual uncertainty and turmoil. There is increasing pressure on productivity and decreasing resources. Decision-making and problem solving are now often done on one's feet with little time to think or reflect properly.<sup>22</sup>

Hence it is not enough simply to bemoan those in the wealthy nations and assume that they suffer no ill effects from globalisation. Tom Sine has written extensively on the damage that globalisation does in that arena and the intense pressure that it brings with people working longer and harder to keep up in the competitive global economy.<sup>23</sup> A church leader told me recently of the problems of finding others in her congregation who would shoulder some of the responsibility of leadership with her. As people find themselves with less time and less money, our churches are suffering as there are fewer people ready to take on the demands of being fully involved in a church.

Economic globalisation is thus changing the context in which families are raised, churches are operated and mission done in the wealthier countries (and increasingly so elsewhere too). Mission agencies working in these contexts are finding that it is essential to counteract the culture of consumerism that is endemic in these societies. As Sine writes, "as the marketers of McWorld redefine what is of importance and of value, those who are engaged in mission find themselves in a battle for the hearts and minds of those whom McWorld are targeting".<sup>24</sup>

How mission agencies are involved with this is another question. Too often they have been perceived as poachers, taking people away from local churches. Instead they must become partners, using their knowledge of Gospel communication in other cultures to help its communication in their own culture.

It has long been recognised that people are often more open to the Gospel when they are in another country. Global mobility is coming from two angles. Firstly, there is the mobility of the wealthy: those who can travel to the UK (for example) to study and just visit.<sup>25</sup> Secondly, there is the mobility brought by displaced peoples: economic refugees and asylum seekers. This mobility brought by economic

---

<sup>20</sup> This seems to have happened, for example, in Macedonia and Philippi.

<sup>21</sup> D. Smith, "Emerging Paradigm".

<sup>22</sup> My thanks to Mike Perreau for these points.

<sup>23</sup> T. Sine, Mustard Seed Vs. McWorld.

<sup>24</sup> Thanks here to Tom Sine, in a personal email.

<sup>25</sup> So, Japan Christian Link gave us advice on how to talk about the Gospel with the Japanese woman we have staying with us.

globalisation, whether positive or negative, allows for many opportunities and mission agencies are well placed to help local churches through their knowledge of people's homelands.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, a clear feature of the global workplace is that English is becoming increasingly important, making it the key language to learn. This, again, provides opportunities for English-speaking mission organisations to capitalise on and strategies can be put in place for using English as a tool for mission.<sup>27</sup>

## **6. Those who do not have the resources to participate are pushed into poverty**

- 1.3 billion people have to live on less than \$1 a day and more than 800 million people do not have enough to eat.<sup>28</sup>
- A Nike quilted jacket costs £100 in a London shop, but only 51p of that goes to the Bangladeshi women who make it.<sup>29</sup>
- In 1976 Switzerland was 50 times richer than Mozambique. In 1997 it was 500 times richer.
- The top 1% of households in the US has more wealth than the entire bottom 95%.<sup>30</sup>
- Whilst financial transactions have been growing fast, 2/3 of them are between the few already rich countries of the OECD.<sup>31</sup>

A key debate focuses on how far economic globalisation can be blamed for the appalling situation our world is in today.<sup>32</sup> It is inarguable that market capitalism has led to increasing global wealth as the proportion of GDP traded internationally has risen from 5% in 1946 to 25% now.<sup>33</sup> The Sachs/Warner study from Harvard University found that developing countries with open economies grew by 4.5% a year in the 1970s and 1980s, while those with closed economies grew by 0.7% a year.<sup>34</sup>

There are those, therefore, who believe that markets are the way of creating wealth and that those who would stop markets acting efficiently (by making a special case for poor countries) will in the end destroy the wealth of those nations. Take, for example, flower growers in Uganda, producing flowers for export to Europe which has now reduced its subsidies. It is hard work, but it pays better than subsistence farming. Not only do Europeans get flowers in winter but the Ugandans eat better and are able to school their children.<sup>35</sup> In other words, it may be a tough option but in the long run joining world markets is the only way to create wealth.<sup>36</sup> Such people also argue that many countries are held back not by unfair terms of trade, but by internal corruption or by the lack of an economic infrastructure which would allow them to deliver the goods in world markets (e.g. education, communication systems, trained labour force etc.). This side of the debate wants markets to do all the work and no government interference.<sup>37</sup>

As we look at the positives brought by economic globalisation, it is good also to recognise the positives that it can bring to mission. One such benefit is the greater links with, and knowledge of, the world and the worldwide church. Whereas, in previous centuries, a person's life revolved round their small village and travel outside of it was rare, now the world truly is our village and people are familiar with many aspects of it. As it is easier to gain knowledge about other countries, so a church's awareness of Christians outside their own country can be stimulated, leading to a greater interest in mission and in being an outward-looking congregation.

---

<sup>26</sup> A number of churches in the UK are working with asylum seekers and would benefit with cultural help from mission agencies.

<sup>27</sup> TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) courses are an obvious example.

<sup>28</sup> Cafod briefing.

<sup>29</sup> Cafod briefing.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> NI (Nov. 1997), 18,19.

<sup>32</sup> My thanks to Roy McCloughry for clarifying the sides of the debate for me.

<sup>33</sup> LEB, 81.

<sup>34</sup> M. Moore, "Trade Rules for Global Commerce", *Global Future* (First Quarter 2001), 2.

<sup>35</sup> The Economist, "Of Celebrities, charities and trade", 1.6.02.

<sup>36</sup> The UK Department for International Development would be an excellent example of this view.

<sup>37</sup> For a very good defence of this position, see Micklethwaite and Wooldridge, *A Future Perfect*.

This has an impact on those engaged in mission too as those 'far-flung places' do not now seem quite so distant.<sup>38</sup> For many missionaries, email has revolutionised their lives and enabled communication with friends, family and their mission agency or 'home' church much easier than previously, helping reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness. Another reason for this is that travel times have shrunk so remarkably.<sup>39</sup>

Another interesting opportunity brought by economic globalisation is that mission agencies and their personnel now have a very marketable product to sell: their cultural knowledge and know-how. For example, my father, who lectures in cross-cultural communication, has recently found doors opening up to him in secular disaster-response agencies who might have highly skilled medics or engineers but little idea how actually to relate into the local culture they are sent into and hence how to be most effective. The same is true for businesses looking to work on an international scale: mission agencies carry lots of cultural awareness and international knowledge that can be most useful for such businesses. Mission agencies should not be scared to look outside of the traditional boxes and may well find that interesting partnerships exist out there.<sup>40</sup>

However, returning to our economic debate, there are also those who see poverty and increased inequality as endemic to globalisation. These people think in terms of power. They see the gap between rich and poor widening and blame the growth of global capitalism for that gap. In the case of our Ugandan flower growers they would question whether, overall, they are better off. Yes, they might have more money, but they now have to buy the basic goods they would have grown, which are now sold more expensively since demand is high. They are now at the mercy of market prices and the chemicals being used to grow the flowers are threatening both their lands and their health. They might also ask why there was subsistence farming in the first place.

People on this side of the debate point out that the collapse of communism has led to a much more ruthless kind of capitalism. They see that the way to change the operation of multinationals is by exposing their practices in the press and protesting publicly about their power. This side of the debate wants massive intervention to stop poverty caused by capitalism and partnerships between nation-states, NGO's, Multinationals and Global Agencies to bring about reform.<sup>41</sup>

The debate remains polarised and the arguments are often highly complex and technical. However, one thing is clear: in our increasingly globalised world, the different issues involved in the problem must be seen as part of the wider whole, rather than as separate. As Heslam says, "the interests of the environment, economic growth, security and democracy are diverse but also interconnected and therefore need to be treated together, rather than in isolation".<sup>42</sup>

Technology has ensured that globalisation is here to stay, even if the economically wealthier countries become increasingly protectionist in outlook, as some future scenarios predict.<sup>43</sup> Capitalism seems to be the best way forward for generating wealth and no viable alternatives are being proposed. The key seems to be in channelling globalisation, rather than demanding its demise: channelling it so that the rights of local people and their environment come before the rights of shareholders to increase their profits. Two

---

<sup>38</sup> This does not, of course, mean that the need for good cross-cultural communication skills is not essential and the reality of culture shock should never be underestimated. Those 'far-flung places' can seem a lot further away than initially thought!

<sup>39</sup> When my great-great-grandfather went to India in 1846, it took him four months by sea. By the time my parents sailed to Singapore in 1960 they were able to do it in only three weeks and now my husband can fly to Ethiopia in ten hours. This, too, can cause problems with missionaries never quite 'leaving home' and hence never committing fully and settling into their new place.

<sup>40</sup> Another important opportunity is that brought by technology, but I shall leave that to the chapter dedicated to that topic.

<sup>41</sup> One of the key voices on this side is Joseph Stiglitz (see [Globalisation and Its Discontents](#)).

<sup>42</sup> P. Heslam, [Globalisation: Unravelling the New Capitalism](#), 25.

<sup>43</sup> I am aware of the dangers of putting future scenarios in print. By the time this gets published the world scene may have changed again.

things are paramount here: one is the reform of the WTO so that this becomes its overriding principle<sup>44</sup> and the second, interrelatedly, is the establishment of a system of accountability for corporations whereby they would adopt best practice in their work and be accountable for any environmental and social damage.<sup>45</sup>

The implications that the link between economic globalisation and poverty carries for mission seem obvious. Those Christians and churches reaping the benefits of globalisation are increasingly recognising the responsibility that is held for the sisters and brothers who have been left behind. Globalisation's effects on the poor mean that social concerns must be at the heart of mission and the church as, "Christian compassion will be the only hope of survival for victims of the global economic process".<sup>46</sup> Araujo highlights the fact that "most of the still unreached peoples of the earth belong to countries that bring up the rear of globalisation" and makes the point that missionary preparation and training in this context may not differ much from the way pioneering missionaries were trained and so sophisticated use of technology and mission models may hinder more than help.<sup>47</sup>

How might mission engage with this? Perreau talks about moving from 'job faking' (using a job as a disguise to enter a country) to 'job taking' (i.e. 'tent making') to 'job making'. One of the greatest needs that people have to be able to survive this world is business skills and the finance to support it. Hence micro-business and enterprise are a key factor in development. Mission agencies should be, and are, looking at how they can equip their personnel with these enterprise-making skills.<sup>48</sup> English comes into play again here. Many missionary activities are focussed on the developing nations and these nations have three requirements: health, education and economics. As English is a key factor in all three, teaching it can help a country access those areas.<sup>49</sup>

**[box insert: Paul Read and his family are involved in micro-enterprise development in south India and east Thailand. Their work aims at those living at or below the poverty line who then become their 'clients': people with skills and ideas for self-employment who cannot get bank start-up funding because of lack of assets to offer as security. They have seen many businesses start up: tailoring, watchmaking, shoe-repairing, food cultivating, car paint spraying... The idea is to give a 'hand up', rather than a 'handout', to those in poverty, irrespective of their religion. This inclusiveness is deliberate and gives the project a community feel that is both more acceptable locally and useful for building relationships. After three years in India they have helped about 1200 people in total, 1% of the local population, from an investment of £16,000. The Reads see what they do as mission, even if it is not primarily evangelism. They see that being good news to those who are not Christians is just as valid as preaching about the good news. Their aim is to help the poor out of poverty whatever their religion and if someone accepts Christ through this at some point, then praise God. In fact, two Muslim men have indeed become Christians through the work.<sup>50</sup>**

---

<sup>44</sup> This reform would include eliminating unequal voting rights, allowing flexibility in policies and preventing the development of trade rules that stop national governments pursuing the right policies for development.

<sup>45</sup> Underlying both of these is the need to deal with corruption and bring in internationally-recognised anti-corruption laws.

<sup>46</sup> S. Escobar, "The Global Scenario at the Turn of the Century", in *Global Missiology*, page number unknown.

There is, of course, nothing new about Christians in development and many reading this will have been involved in social concerns for years.

<sup>47</sup> Araujo, "World Evangelism", 66-67.

<sup>48</sup> But remembering always to ensure that missionaries do not therefore go in as the 'expert', placing themselves on a level above the local people. Another consideration is to work with local values and customs. For example, in one North African country, an expatriot group started a woodwork factory for women, but ran into problems when all the young women they trained married and then could not leave their home. When they discovered that these women knitted whilst at home, they developed a knitting group to help improve the quality of the goods they produced and allow them to gain a small income. Gradually things started to change.

<sup>49</sup> As missionaries increasingly become involved in development work, great wisdom will need to be exercised by of mission agencies as to how the resources of the wealthy are shared with the poor. The corrupting power of money must always be remembered – both for those who give and for those who receive. Even in my wealthy country a speaker was heard to remark that he looked to Korean invitations because of the money he got from them.

<sup>50</sup> For more information, contact [reads@sify.com](mailto:reads@sify.com).

***Cred Trading Company Ltd* was established out of the charity, Cred, in 1996. It retails sterling silver jewellery at the high street in the UK. Our core value is consistent with our Foundation: 'to see justice for the poor'. We all realise that charity alone is never going to be the answer. The answer is lifestyle change and we seek to offer the option of ethics in business in the jewellery sector, stocking our shop primarily from wholesalers, but also selling items from communities around the world. We are unashamedly profit-making and plough a proportion of that profit back into the Foundation. We require commercially successful companies to take up the mantle of social change with a 'for-profit social enterprise' agenda. This is what CTC Ltd seeks to do: impact the high street with excellence of product, excellence of service and excellence of ethics.<sup>51]</sup>**

### **Implications for the church and for Christian lifestyle.**

Let us return to the story of the banana sitting in my fruit bowl for, whilst the picture I painted was somewhat negative, there are also positive things taking place: fair trade being the most obvious.<sup>52</sup> Alongside Fair Trade, many NGOs are campaigning to see a change in how bananas are produced. On a broader level, in the UK, there is currently running a Trade Justice Campaign, signed up to by virtually all the main NGOs involved in these issues, which is campaigning to see the global trading rules changed.<sup>53</sup>

A well-respected opinion poll (the Mori poll), in October 2001, gave some surprise new findings as to people's opinions on globalisation. The results showed that the people were suspicious of globalisation and sympathetic towards the anti-globalisation protestors. Bob Worcester, Mori Chairman, said that the survey was, "a timely indicator of people's underlying distrust of big companies when it comes to acting in people's interest. The fact that 41% of the British public believe the anti-globalisation protestors have a point should prompt a serious rethinking of the globalisation debate".

There are alternative ways of doing things and people who are prepared to use their voices and purses in the push for change. The WTO meeting in Seattle not only brought the WTO into public focus, but also brought attention to the 'anti-globalisation movement', mentioned above<sup>54</sup>. It needs to be said that the 'anti-globalisation movement' is a name coined by the media. Those who belong to it are clear that, if they are anti anything, then it is *economic* globalisation not globalisation as a whole. The 'anti-globalisation movement' refers to a huge array of pressure groups, individuals, charities and NGOs, from all around the world, that are working to see a change in the way the global rules, and especially the TNCs, operate in order to see more justice for the poor.<sup>55</sup> What is interesting about this movement is that there is no organisational centre, just lots of individual groups and campaigns, all linked with each other like hotlinks on a website: "a chaotic network of hubs and spokes".<sup>56</sup>

In the UK at least, single-issue campaigning has become one of the hallmarks of our day, with people increasingly perceiving the real power to lie with the TNCs, rather than with the political leaders. With our world so vast and complex, it seems easier to take one issue to campaign on than get involved in the quagmire of the political corridors that can seem somewhat irrelevant. Nearly all of the major UK NGOs, therefore, are turning campaigning into a main focus.

Alongside campaigning is the growth of the concept of 'ethical consumerism', as seen with Fair Trade bananas. There is a growing awareness of how the way that I consume here directly affects the lives of others in other countries and affects the rest of creation. So, if I buy a banana with a label on it that says Dole, Chiquita, Fyffes or Del Monte, then I am giving my consent to the way they treat their workers

---

<sup>51</sup> For more information see [www.cred.org.uk](http://www.cred.org.uk)

<sup>52</sup> For more information on fair trade, see [www.fairtradefoundation.org](http://www.fairtradefoundation.org) .

<sup>53</sup> See [www.tradejusticecampaign.org.uk](http://www.tradejusticecampaign.org.uk)

<sup>54</sup> It is also good to note that the World Bank changed its ways of working after Seattle and has been taking strides to become more open and accessible.

<sup>55</sup> This is a phenomenon that is peculiar to our time. Never before have there been so many organisations working outside established political structures. Today, there are 26,000 international NGOs: four times as many as a decade ago. Some of these are specifically involved in the anti-globalisation movement: see, for example, [www.adbusters.org](http://www.adbusters.org); [www.reclaimthestreets.net](http://www.reclaimthestreets.net); [www.directactionnetwork.org](http://www.directactionnetwork.org); [www.ruckus.org](http://www.ruckus.org).

<sup>56</sup> Klein in A. Roddick, *Take It Personally*, 38.

and the environment. However, if I buy a Fair Trade banana then I am taking away that consent and giving my money to a system that will benefit the lives of that banana's producers. People are recognising that this applies to all sorts of areas: clothes, pensions, toys, food, mortgages, electrical equipment, holidays, investments... . It also applies to the way I consume energy in the form of petrol, gas and electricity and whether I throw things away rather than reusing or recycling them.<sup>57</sup>

**[Box insert: "If mission is about the growth of God's kingdom (rather than just about saving souls) then authentic Christian mission today must involve a radical critique of globalisation, and teaching on discipleship that covers lifestyle and economic-political attitudes" (Dave Bookless, A Rocha UK)]**

There is much here for the Church and for individual Christians to get hold of. We clearly have a responsibility to speak out on behalf of the poor. Coming from his American church context, Sine lays down the gauntlet and challenges churches "to embrace a more politically radical faith that identifies with the powerless instead of sanctioning the politics of the powerful"<sup>58</sup>

**[Box insert: "When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist." Dom Helder Camara, a former Brazilian Bishop]**

We also have a responsibility to live our lives in such ways that demonstrate that we follow and worship a God of justice and mercy. Many of us as Christians around the world do not have a choice as to how we live our lives. However, for those of us who do, there is a need to rediscover the joy that comes from living more simply. Nearly thirty years ago the Lausanne Covenant called Christians to develop a simple lifestyle.<sup>59</sup> It may well be said that this has not been heeded. Both in affluent and poor contexts, we all too easily succumb to the temptations of greed and covetousness, seeing money and possessions as the basis for happiness and security. Simplicity, instead, is about discovering what it really means to be rich: a wealth that is found in our relationships with God, with one another and with the rest of the created world.<sup>60</sup>

### **Relational riches**

Jim Wallis says, "economics is too important to be left to economists alone. It is high time to apply biblical theology to the crises of our global economy"<sup>61</sup> To put it another way, "the realm of economics, culture, morality and religion are not as separate as we sometimes think".<sup>62</sup> If the Church's mission is to be effective in a world dominated by economic globalisation then we must be able to reflect theologically on the situations in which we find ourselves.

I want to start with our understanding of personhood as 'beings-in-relation': defined by being made 'in the image of God'. The most foundational aspect of God is that of the Trinity. The Godhead is composed of continually flowing relationships between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit so that each finds its identity through the other: God's personhood as 'Father' only comes into being in relation to God as 'Son'. Whilst they each have separate identities, yet there is absolute unity and harmony between them. The Father is the supreme author of all, yet there is equality between them and order in their separate roles as, through them, they each exist to serve and glorify the other.<sup>63</sup>

It is this Trinitarian understanding that provides the foundation for what it means for humanity to be made "in the image of God"<sup>64</sup> Being made in God's image finds its meaning in the personhood that is in God. In this understanding, personhood does not consist in being distinct and separate before relating together. Rather, personhood arises precisely through being together in relationship. It is this

---

<sup>57</sup> Two excellent resources are the World Development Movement's, "The Good Life" and The Ecologist, [Go M.A.D! 365 Daily Ways to Change the Planet](#).

<sup>58</sup> In a personal email.

<sup>59</sup> For more on this see, J. Stott (ed.), [Making Christ Known](#), 142 - 149.

<sup>60</sup> See further, R. Valerio, [Simplicity: living life to the full](#).

<sup>61</sup> Cited in P. Heslam, [Globalisation: Unravelling the New Capitalism](#), 14.

<sup>62</sup> H. Cox in, [the Globalisation of Pentecostalism](#), 387.

<sup>63</sup> M. Goldsmith, [Jesus and His Relationships](#), 8 - 23.

<sup>64</sup> Genesis 1:28.

understanding of personhood that we image in our humanity. Instead of the static individuality of the Western worldview, the Genesis account leads to a view of humanity as social beings who only become genuinely human through relationships. These relationships are twofold: vertically, with God and, horizontally, with the created order, both human and non-human.

Let us look at these two aspects. *Firstly, as human beings we relate to God, our Creator.* We have been created in order to be “for the praise of his glory”,<sup>65</sup> an expression of the unceasing love that exists between the persons of the Godhead. The picture of the Lord God walking in the garden of Eden in the cool of the day<sup>66</sup> shows the perfect harmony that should have existed between God and humanity, but which was broken by the Fall.

It is no accident that the primary command in Exodus 20 is against idolatry: the worship of false gods in the place of the one true God. Having first reared its ugly head in the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 idolatry became Israel’s perennial sin. For Israel this was an issue of trust and security: who would make their crops grow? Who will make the rains come? Who will protect them from outside attack? The command against idolatry is given its starkest expression in Jesus’ bald statement: “you cannot serve both God and Mammon”<sup>67</sup> There is no way round Jesus’ words and they speak straight to the heart of today’s society. As with the Israelites, so with us, it is an issue of trust and security.<sup>68</sup> Do we dare trust the God we cannot see in the face of the images and values we are bombarded with every day?<sup>69</sup>

“The question of the poor ... is fundamentally the question of God, and of what kind of God we worship”.<sup>70</sup> The basic question facing us is, ‘who are we worshipping?’. There is no doubt that globalisation is an idolatrous culture, worshipping the God of Money, chasing futilely after the gods of happiness and success. Whereas Jesus comes to bring life (John 10:10), these gods can only bring death (similarly in the Old Testament where idolatry led to death and imprisonment). For Sobrino, the idols of his country of El Salvador are those of wealth, militarisation and private property: “divinities of death”, as he calls them. He describes how they manifest themselves today through the economic structuring of society and the forces of international capitalism that “produce millions of innocent victims, whom they despatch to the slow death of hunger and the violent death of repression”.<sup>71</sup>

The good news we carry is that, through the sacrifice of Jesus (the second Adam and true image of God<sup>72</sup>), this harmony between God and humanity is restored again, as seen in the final chapters of Revelation. Here we are told that “the dwelling of God is with people, and he will live with them. They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God”.<sup>73</sup>

One aspect of the missionary’s work, therefore, is to proclaim to the world this good news about Jesus. It is by new birth and faith in Jesus that people enter the Kingdom with its values and are given the Holy Spirit’s power to live out these ideals. Evangelism, church planting and teaching are hence central in all mission alongside the church presenting the models of these values in her own life.

*The second area of our relationships is with one another.*<sup>74</sup> Whilst in the Genesis creation narrative the marital relationship may be primary, it is not exclusively so. Cain’s question to God – “am I my brother’s

---

<sup>65</sup> Ephesians 1:12.

<sup>66</sup> Genesis 3:28.

<sup>67</sup> Matt. 6:24.

<sup>68</sup> This is expressed wonderfully ironically in the American avowal of “in God we trust”, printed on the dollar bill.

<sup>69</sup> This leads appropriately to a consideration of consumerism and a biblical theology of money and possessions. Space does not permit this to happen here so I refer you to the discussion of it in R. Valerio, [Simplicity: living life to the full](#).

<sup>70</sup> Northcott, [Life After Debt](#), 66, citing Sobrino.

<sup>71</sup> J. Sobrino, [Jesus the Liberator](#), cited in Northcott, [Life After Death](#), 65.

<sup>72</sup> Colossians 1:15.

<sup>73</sup> Revelation 21:3.

<sup>74</sup> Our relationship with the rest of creation is looked at in my second chapter, on globalisation and the environment.

keeper?”<sup>75</sup> carries a clear affirmative with it and the Noachic covenant of Genesis 9 extends this still further. Because we have all been made in the image of God, we are each accountable for the life of our fellow humans. Basic to that accountability is the recognition that we find our true selves not as autonomous individuals but through our relationships with one another. As Gunton says, “who we are is made known to us through the relationships in which we stand”.<sup>76</sup>

This view of our identity stands in direct contrast with that given to us by modern society. All around us we are told that we find our true selves in what we consume: the car we drive, the house we live in, the clothes we wear etc.<sup>77</sup> Instead, we look again to the Trinity to see the model for our relationships. Whilst we each maintain our uniqueness yet we should live in unity together, preferring the other and living lives of service.

Our relationships with one another are based on our understanding of each one being made in the image of God. Through faith in Jesus, the Son - in his incarnation, death and resurrection - we have our image of God restored and we also become sons (children) of God ourselves. Hence this description of prayer:

a ceaseless interchange of mutual love unites the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Our prayer is not merely communion with God, it is coming to know God by participation in this divine life. In prayer we experience what it is to be made ‘participants of the divine nature’; we are caught up in the communion of the divine persons as they flow to one another in self-giving love and reciprocal joy.<sup>78</sup>

## Conclusion

This understanding of humanity provides a sharp critique of globalisation. As globalisation reduces humanity merely to consumers and robs them of their ability to relate fully, whether to God, to one another or to the world. A person who is viewed as just a human, devoid of all divine orientation, is, in essence, de-humanised. When we lose our true humanity, we must search for it elsewhere and hence the rampant rise of materialism. When we lose our true humanity, we lose our basis for compassion and concern and hence the terrible injustices that happen in our world. Northcott puts it succinctly: “The enslavement of whole societies to the dehumanising, but humanly generated, forces of globalisation is an extreme example of the cruelty and misery which issue from the denial of the spiritual origin and orientation of our humanness”.<sup>79</sup>

As we think through what mission means in our world of economic globalisation, we see that it is to image God in this world: to be living parables of the relational reconciliation that Jesus’ life and death has brought. A powerful dynamic within this is that a biblical understanding of relationships rests on the firm basis of a giving away of oneself. Our role model for this is, of course, Jesus. Phil. 2: 6-8 describes how Jesus “did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant” and, in doing this, “he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross”. Whilst Jesus’ sacrifice is a once-for-all event, yet it still carries within it the principles for mission; for how we live our lives and conduct our relationships.

Jesus’ death and resurrection are the means by which broken relationships are restored, reconciling God to humanity and humanity to one another.<sup>80</sup> Our role is so to image God in this world that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we might be the agents of that reconciliation.

---

<sup>75</sup> Genesis 4:9.

<sup>76</sup> Gunton, *Christ and Creation*, 72.

<sup>77</sup> This is often described as *tesco ergo sum* (‘I shop therefore I am’, using Tesco, the UK’s largest supermarket) as opposed to Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum*.

<sup>78</sup> The Society of St. John the Evangelist, *Living in Hope* 42.

<sup>79</sup> Northcott, *Life After Debt*, 115.

<sup>80</sup> Cor. 5: 18 - 21; Eph. 2: 11 - 18

## **Bibliography**

- T. Chester, "Christ's Little Flock: Towards and Ecclesiology of the Cross" (Tearfund Paper) 2000
- M. Dempster, B. Klaus, D. Petersen (eds.), The Globalisation of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made To Travel (Oxford: Regnum) 1999
- Department for International Development (DFID) UK: literature on trade and development.
- The Ecologist, Go M.A.D! 365 Daily Ways to Save the Planet (Think Publishing) 2001
- T. Foust, G. Hunsberger, J. Kirk, W. Ustorf (eds.), A Scandalous Prophet: The Way of Mission after Newbigin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 2002
- M. Goldsmith, Jesus and His Relationships (Carlisle: Paternoster Press) 2000
- T. Gorringer, Fair Shares: Ethics and the Global Economy (London: Thames and Hudson) 1999
- C. Gunton, Christ and Creation (Carlisle: Paternoster Press) 1992
- P. Heslam, Globalisation: Unravelling the New Capitalism (Cambridge: Grove Books Ltd) 2002
- M. Hutchinson, "What's Wrong with Globalisation, Anyway?" (Cambridge: Currents in World Christianity Project) 1999
- Institute of Directors, "Globalisation: the real nature and impact", 2002.
- N. Klein, No Logo (London: Flamingo) 2000.
- Micklethwaite, J. and Wooldridge, A. A Future Perfect (London: Heinemann) 2000.
- K. Mofid, Globalisation for the Common Good (London: Shephard Walwyn Ltd) 2002
- M. Northcott, Life After Debt: Christianity and Global Justice (London: SPCK) 1999
- A. Roddick (ed.), Take it Personally: how globalisation affects you and powerful ways to challenge it (London: Thorsons) 2001
- T. Sine, Mustard Seed Vs. McWorld: Reinventing Christian Life and Mission for a New Millennium (Crowborough: Monarch Books) 1999
- D. Smith, "The Emerging Paradigm – Mission Thinking for the Third Millennium" (Paper given at Global Connections Conference, Doncaster) 2000.
- The Society of St John the Evangelist, Living in Hope: A rule of life for today (Canterbury: Canterbury Press) 1997
- J. Stiglitz, Globalisation and Its Discontents (: Allen Lane) 2002
- J. Stott (ed.), Making Christ Known: Historic Mission Documents from the Lausanne Movement 1974 – 1989 (Carlisle: Paternoster Press) 1996
- B. Taylor, Global Missiology for the Twenty-First Century: the Iguassu Dialogue (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic) 2000
- R. Valerio, Globalisation and Poverty (Cred Papers) 2002 (provides further bibliography on globalisation)

R. Valerio, Simplicity: living life to the full (Cred Papers) 2002 (to obtain the Cred Papers email [ruth@cred.org.uk](mailto:ruth@cred.org.uk))

World Development Movement, "The Good Life: your guide to everyday actions which ensure a fairer deal for the world's poor", 1998