

# The Globalization of Greed

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There is no exaggeration in saying that the greatest problem that humankind has to face today is the growing gap between rich and poor produced by the globalization of greed. When dealing with poverty in today's globalized world, one must admit right from the start that material poverty is not the only kind of poverty. Poverty is a very complex problem, and time does not allow a detailed discussion of this subject on which there is already a very extensive bibliography.<sup>1</sup> My thesis here is that in today's world the main (though by no means the only) reason for the material poverty that prevents millions and millions of people from covering their basic needs is the spiritual poverty of a small minority of Mammon worshippers in the transnational class generated by corporate capitalism.<sup>2</sup> Under the rule of Mammon, the world is deeply affected by ecological, economic, and human vulnerabilities. It has become

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1. For a good synthesis of several views on poverty, see chapter 3, "Poverty and the Poor," in Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), 57–90.

2. There is no intention here to claim that poverty is restricted to countries dominated by contemporary corporate capitalism and the market fundamentalism that characterizes so-called neoliberal economics. Poverty has been part and parcel of human history and has been and continues to be present under a wide variety of political and economic systems, from feudalism to communism. The fact remains that at present the capitalist system centered in the wealthy countries—especially the G8—has been globalized and is to a large extent the main cause of poverty all over the world.

what Toffler has described as “a global casino”<sup>3</sup>—a casino that transcends national regulatory mechanisms.

## A Biblical View of Greed and Oppression

Scripture seems to take for granted that the human heart is naturally inclined to find security in the possession of material things.

Only in light of that pervasive materialistic inclination can Moses’ warnings to the people of Israel before they entered the promised land be properly understood:

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Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness.... You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.” But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today. If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed. (Dt 8:12–15a, 17–19)

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3. Alvin Toffler, *The Eco-Spasm Report* (New York: Bantam, 1975), 1.