

# Globalization and Christian Mission<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

At the risk of oversimplification, it may be said that the greatest challenge that the Christian mission faces today is the phenomenon of “globalization.” Even though this term is now being widely used, one must not assume that there is a common understanding of its meaning. Right at the beginning we must admit that there are several types of globalization. The term may be used, for instance, to simply refer to the process through which multiple aspects of the natural, cultural, social, economic, and political reality that make up the milieu of human life have become interconnected in such

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1. This article and the following two were originally presented at the “Global Shift” conference that took place in Budapest, Hungary, in October of 2012 under the auspices of the Evangelical Free Church of America, mainly with the participation of missionaries and pastors working in Europe. They have been updated for the purposes of this journal.

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a way that what happens or is done in one place is soon known by people in other places around the globe. Viewed from this perspective, globalization is experienced more than anything else as a sort of planetary consciousness, the sense that a growing number of people all over the world seem to have of belonging to one world, as portrayed by the media. Perhaps a more appropriate term for this concept would be *internationalization*. That topic would deserve serious study, but it is not the subject of this essay. Nor are we here concerned with the anti-globalization movement portrayed by the massive protests that have taken place against sessions of the World Trade Organization (WTO), beginning with the memorable demonstration held in Seattle in December of 1999. Hundreds of thousands of protesters from all over the world compelled the WTO to interrupt the meeting, despite the efforts of heavily armored police to suppress the demonstration. We do not intend to deal here with today's global battle against the globalization of trade as such. Rather, our focus is on globalization in a wider sense: the *globalization of corporate capitalism* promoted by business corporations and increasingly affecting millions of people, especially the poor, oftentimes in a negative way.

My first talk in this series of lectures will be an attempt to describe corporate capitalism and its ecological, economic, and human effects not only in the Majority World but also in the wealthy countries. In the second lecture I will deal with the problem of greed as the root of the present global situation. Finally, I will discuss the question of Christian mission in the context of globalization.

## I. The Globalization of Corporate Capitalism and Its Effects

According to Leslie Sklair, capitalist globalization, which emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, is "a particular way of organizing social life across existing state borders" and includes