Ethnicity and Globalisation
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Presented at the Global Connections Conference "One World…or Else?" Swanwick.
3-5 July, 2002

Introduction: what is Globalisation?
The opening paragraph of Anthony Giddens' Reith lectures on the subject of
globalisation is a good place to begin an examination of this topic:
*'A friend of mine studies village life in central Africa. A few years ago, she paid her first
visit to a remote area where she was to carry out her fieldwork. The evening she got
there, she was invited to a local home for an evening's entertainment. She expected to
find out about the traditional pastimes of this isolated community. Instead, the evening
turned out to be a viewing of Basic Instinct on video. The film at that point hadn't even
reached the cinemas in London.'*

This quote goes some way to filling in a meaning that is not immediately apparent in
the word 'globalisation' itself. The word itself simply means 'making global' but is
understood as making 'something' global. What that 'something' is is suggested by this
quote.

The fact that someone in a remote African village had been able to purchase a
sophisticated machine and a video to put in it point to the **economic** aspect of
globalisation. That African villagers are watching Western films points to its **cultural** and
that they are free to do so to its **political** aspects. Finally, the electronic sophistication of
the machinery being used points to its **technological** aspect.[1]

A global economy
Globalisation at root is an economic idea. It is the attempt at the global dissemination of
the free market economy that is driven by the belief that the best interests of humanity
are served when goods, services and finances are allowed to cross national boundaries
untrammelled. Since the collapse of communism this ideology has totally dominated
world economics. Evidence of this is the fact that China, the one remaining significant
economic player that still claims to be communist, has succeeded in joining the World
Trade Organisation, which is the international guardian of the free market.

Because the necessity for growth is a free-market dogma there is an intense pressure for
companies to become bigger and bigger so that they can corner a greater and greater
proportion of the particular market in which they operate. This drive for growth has led
to the formation of Trans-National Companies [TNCs] that are global players in the
international market. Some of the facts about them are striking:
- The ten largest TNCs have a total income greater than that of 100 of the world's
  poorest countries.
- Two-thirds of international trade is accounted for by just 500 corporations.
- Of the world's 100 largest economies, fifty are TNCs.[2]

Political power constricted
Traditionally economic management has been seen as one of the key functions of the
nation-state. Even in our most recent election in the UK the Labour Party were arguing
that they should be voted in for another term because of their ability to manage the
economy well. However, it is now clear that neither Labour nor any other party have any
control over many decisions that have a direct bearing on the conduct of the economy.
That producing steel in Ebbw Vale and Llanwern has come to an end, with its

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[1] I have received a lot of help from Ruth Valerio's work for Tearfund on this topic, particularly her paper
entitled 'Globalisation and the Poor'.
[2] *New Internationalist* (NI) (November 1997), 18.

devastating impact on local communities, was the result of decisions taken in the board of a TNC over which government had no power whatsoever.

Some political theorist are now claiming that so many crucial decisions have been taken out of the hands of politicians that they no longer have any significant power and that it is possible to talk about the demise of the nation-state. Whether this claim is legitimate is debatable but the way a sense of ethnic identity has re-emerged strongly in European states with traditionally strong centralised governments, such as Spain or the United Kingdom, suggests a weakening of the nation-state. We shall return to this point later.

Theoretically at least the constriction of political power as a result of economic globalisation happens at government level. At the level of the people the opposite is the case because democracy and a free market are seen as inseparable allies because a free market needs a population that is free to choose. Globalisation is a strong advocate of Western style democratic government.

Technology – the engine of contemporary globalisation

The desire for economic and political globalisation is not new. Historically there have been a number of empires that have aspired to world domination. However, the marriage of technological advance, industrialisation and democracy in Europe in the late eighteenth century made growth in the geographical spread of commercial influence possible. In the last 50 years that growth has been raised to unprecedented levels because of the amazing advance in Information Technology. Globalisation is not new but IT has given it a tremendous boost. When the reserve of French beans reaches a certain point in an UK superstore a computer instantly relays the information to a commercial grower in Africa so that stocks can be replenished in less than 72 hours. A security company can have its cameras in a building in Chicago and its employees watching monitors in India....

My experience in Tearfund over the last 14 years graphically illustrates the change. When I joined Tearfund in 1987 the fax was making a significant difference to our communication with partners all over the world. A lot of correspondence was still coming and going by 'snail mail' and the process of vetting projects and giving grants could take many months. By now most correspondence with partners is by e-mail. The need for personal contact and building relational trust is seen as crucial but once that is done processing grants can happen much faster. I am not denying that Tearfund's partners belong, in many cases, to the elite few that have access to the world wide web in their countries, but it is still a reality that in every country on earth there are people who are plugged into the world-wide internet community. As we shall see later this can be very empowering for 'little' people.

A globalised culture

Hand in hand with the technological advance of the computer has been the massive growth of the television, film and music industries that are closely linked to the advertising industry. They represent the vanguard of the cultural impact of globalisation. This is why people in a remote village in Africa came to be viewing a film described by Jami Bernard in the *New York Post* as 'saddled with extremely unattractive characters, vile dialogue and sex that appeals only to your baser instincts.'[3] What is most significant about the impact of these industries is the way they create an image of the Western, primarily North American, way of life that seems so attractive to people living in material poverty. I have seen the success of the advertising industry in particular in the homes of the poor where any artefact from the West is treasured and displayed - as if an empty perfume bottle or a page of a magazine somehow gives the homeowner a stake in the much-coveted Western life-style.

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[3] *Halliwell's Film and Video Guide*, ed. J. Walker, 1998 Edition, London: Harper Collins, 1997, p. 57.

The greatest impact of the media industry is not surprisingly among the young because it is the young that the industry is targeting most intensively. This struck me very forcibly on a visit to South Africa in September 2000. I arrived early on a Sunday morning and was taken to the home of a delightful black middle class family to freshen up before going with them to church. While I waited for the time to go to church I watched a couple of programmes on a Christian TV channel, which seemed to be dominated by North American prosperity teaching. The church I attended with the family was black Pentecostal. The congregation was large and multi-ethnic and the service was long, vibrant and multi-lingual. The fellowship in Christ expressed in the service seemed very real to me and the singing in deep harmony was wonderful.

After the service I was taken to another home for the afternoon where the teenagers watched MTV continually in the room where I was obliged to sit. These delightful teenagers also wore Western clothes and read Western magazines. They were as much a part of the Western teenagers' scene as any teenager in the UK. What I found so disconcerting in Johannesburg was the stark contrast between the African Christian culture of the church and what was being served up on the Christian channel and MTV. I felt that the good in African culture is likely to be overwhelmed with the bad in Western culture rather than that the good in both Western and African culture would be combined to produce something even better.

Ethnicity

I have not said everything that will be said about globalisation in this paper in this introduction. Hopefully I have said enough to convey something of its meaning, and especially about those aspects that have a bearing on ethnicity. We must now turn our attention to 'ethnicity'. So, what is 'ethnicity'?

> "When I first wrote this paper 'ethnic' Albanians, as the media described them, were creating mayhem in Macedonia and confirming the conviction that anything to do with ethnicity is bad news. 'Ethnic' and 'conflict' have become closely linked in the minds of most people as a result of what has happened in Yugoslavia and Rwanda. If one did a word association exercise with the word 'ethnic' one would inevitably get a list including 'cleansing', 'genocide', 'hatred', 'cruelty', 'rape' and so on. The common conviction is that it is an unmitigated evil.
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> Mompati and Prinsen in an article in *Development in Practice* even claim that 'ethnicity can be defined as a social phenomenon concerned with negative interactions between cultural-linguistic groups (ethnic groups). "It arises when relations between ethnic groups are competitive rather than co-operative"[4]...ethnicity often manifests itself in phenomena such as cultural stereotyping and socio-economic and political discrimination...These labels result in prejudice, which encompasses negative assumptions and pre-judgements about other groups that are believed to be inferior... Ultimately, the feeling of exclusiveness as a group, and the negative images held about other groups, lead to discrimination, which Clements and Spinks ... see as "prejudice in action".[5,6]

Despite the bad press given to so-called ethnic conflict I would argue that definitions such as the one just quoted are themselves examples of 'prejudice in action' - the sort of prejudice that causes ethnic conflict. 'Ethnicity' is not, by definition, about negative relationships but the characteristic of a certain type of human community that has been known since the beginning of history. John Hutchinson and Anthony D.Smith in their introduction to a volume of readings on ethnicity list six main features of this type of

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[4] Okwundiba Nnoli, *Ethnicity and Development in Nigeria*, (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995), p.1.
[5] P. Clements and T. Spinks, *The Equal Opportunities Guide: How to deal with Everyday Issues of Unfairness*, (London: Kogan Page, 1994), p. 14.
[6] Tlamelo Mompati and Gerard Prinsen, 'Ethnicity and participatory development methods in Botswana: some participants are to be seen and not heard', *Development in Practice*, vol. 10, no. 5, (Nov. 2000), p626

community. They say that an ethnic identity is the name given to a specific type of human community that shares:

- a common proper name;
- a myth of common ancestry;
- memories of a common past;
- elements of a common culture which normally includes religion, custom or language;
- a link with a homeland;
- a sense of solidarity.[7]

I believe that this is a helpful working definition and it is what I have in my mind when I refer to 'ethnicity' or 'ethnic identity' in this paper. It is also a pity that English has not adopted a noun like the French *ethnie* as the name for the type of community that has 'ethnic identity' or 'ethnicity'. I occasionally use it in the hope that it will be adopted as an English term.

There is obviously a close relationship between the meaning of 'ethnic identity' as defined by Hutchinson and Smith and the meaning of 'nation'. Hechter claims that nations 'are territorially concentrated ethnic groups (like the Quebecois and the Kurds), rather than ethnic groups – like American Jews, Algerians in France, and others often termed *minorities* – who are spatially dispersed in a given state.'[8] I believe that Hechter is correct not to identify 'nation' with the 'state' in this definition, although Will Kymlicka's description of groups such as the Quebecois and Kurds as *national minorities* may be more helpful. National minorities are also often a people that were indigenous to the territory where they live before they became subject to a more dominant nation. When this is the case they can be called 'indigenous peoples'.

When these definitions are applied to the state in which we live, the United Kingdom or Great Britain, it is made up of four nations – the English, Irish, Scottish, and Welsh. In this state the English nation is dominant and the other three can be classified as national minorities or even indigenous peoples. Added to this there are substantial numbers of Asians and African-Caribbeans that are recent immigrants, mainly into England. I would describe these as ethnic groups or ethnic minorities.

My aim in this paper is to suggest where evangelical Christians should position themselves in relation to the impact of globalisation on national minorities in particular. However, before doing that I think it would help to say something about the way in which ethnies/nations have been viewed in modern and postmodern times and also to offer a Biblical understanding of this type of human community.

Ethnicity and Modernity

The dominant political philosophies in the rationalist stream of modernity – by which I mean the period since the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century – have been generally antipathetic to national and ethnic minorities.

The Enlightenment declared that reason operates along the same lines everywhere and if human beings were granted the freedom to follow reason they would come to the same beneficial conclusions about how they should order their lives in this world. Reason declared the freedom of the human mind and spirit from traditional authority, especially the authority of the church and the monarchical state. Locke had argued in the seventeenth century that the root of government is a social contract. Building on this theory the political philosophers of the Enlightenment concluded that there is no reason why the shape of government cannot be a social construct. With the American Declaration of Independence and Constitution and the Constitution of the Republic after the French Revolution this theory became a historic reality.

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[7] John Hutchinson & Anthony D.Smith, *Ethnicity*, (OxfordUniversity Press, 1996), pp.6-7
[8] Michael Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*, (Oxford University Pres, 2000), p. 14.

According to 'modernist' historians the combination of the great social changes brought about by migration and the industrial revolution with the political philosophy driving the American struggle for independence and the French Revolution gave birth to the modern idea of a nation-state. It marked the beginning of modern history when nation-states could become creations of the popular will rather than playthings of kings and aristocracies. When the founders of the United States of America came to define their new state everyone within the boundaries of the state became citizens irrespective of social status or ethnic origin - except for slaves and Native Americans! The same was true in France. At the Revolution everyone within the boundaries of France became French citizens possessing equal rights before the law. However, the equal rights enjoyed by citizens of the United States or France did not include the legal right to ethnic diversity. On the contrary, even if the total exclusion of blacks and Native Americans is taken out of the equation, in the United States the law spoke English only and the large community of people of German or any other origin would have to become anglicised in order to enjoy equality. Likewise in France the Bretons and other ethnic minorities had to become French.

The fact that English was the dominant culture of the United States or French of France is not seen as significant by modernists. A common culture is an administrative convenience that facilitates the pursuit of material prosperity, which is the fundamental 'freedom' of modernism. Language, custom or religion, as markers of ethnic identity, are not relevant. So, according to modernists emphasising ethnic identity is a hindrance in the construction of the modern nation state. What is important is the freedom of individuals to associate, produce and influence the nation-state's material development through the democratic process - something that can be done much more effectively when there is cultural uniformity.

Modernism eventually divided into two major camps – the liberal and socialist – but both camps expected ethnic diversity to wither away in modern nation states. They believe that intellectual freedom gives birth to technology that is the modern engine of industrialism. Industrialism, in turn, destroys ethnic diversity for the good of humanity. Neither liberalism nor socialism, which modernists see as the key political products of the industrial revolution, believe that ethnic identity has any permanent significance. They share the conviction that industrialism will inevitably lead to the demise of ethnic and even 'national' identity. *Ethnies* that survive are seen as merely the creations of those who are looking for a power base within a state that will inevitably melt away in the warmth of practical efficiency.

Modernism in either its liberal or socialist form was the dominant force that drove the independence struggle that brought about the demise of the great European empires in the twentieth century. The leaders of liberation movements adopted the modernist concept of the nation-state. They believed that the state exists to uphold democratic, and judicial rights and to foster the development of industrialism. Success would mean dignity, prosperity and the disappearance of ethnic diversity. Any attempt to highlight ethnic diversity or to use the political process to gain advantage for a particular ethnic group was condemned as 'tribalism'. Given the political philosophy on which they were founded it is not surprising that 'tribalism' came to be viewed as one of the key hindrances to the success of the new independent nation-states in the post-colonial era. This was especially the case in Africa. But despite the condemnation power has often been used in African countries for tribal ends. This is not surprising because the very common colonial policy of divide-and-rule fostered tribal rivalries.

By today the socialist alternative of modernism has withered away in dramatic fashion and liberalism with its free market ideology has prevailed. It even seems possible that the globalisation of the free market will lead to the demise of the nation state and the creation of one universal super-state focused on consumption – which is a terrifying

thought in a world where human beings have never been very good at handling power. One has visions of the era of the beast described in Revelation becoming a reality?

However, there is mounting evidence that the liberal thesis concerning the demise of ethnic identity is false. Rather than wilting away ethnic consciousness seems to be blossoming in more and more countries. Particularly damaging to the liberal case is its resurgence in European countries like the United Kingdom and Spain where it has even led to political devolution.

Ethnicity and Postmodernity

The postmodernist approach emphasises the constructed or instrumental nature of ethnicity. Ethnic identity is seen as an instrument that is the result of human construction. The idea is that ethnic identity is constructed by a certain group in a community as an instrument to build a power base within a state. It has no existence outside this power game.

This type of thinking belongs in a much wider and very pervasive sociological approach to all types of collective identity. It cannot be denied that we all have a variety of collective identities. Family, gender, class and religious affiliation are examples as well as our ethnicity. Instrumentalist/constructivist sociologists believe that human beings are able to move in and out of these collective identities at will. They argue that we choose, and construct, our identities, including our ethnic identity, according to the situations in which we find ourselves. Social identity depends on specific human choices in specific situations. It is not something that we experience as an external reality but a matter of individual choice and construction. So, ethnic identity is not something that is inherited but created by individuals in a particular situation. It is not a collective reality but a property of individuals.

There is, however, a significant body of more modernist sociologists, anthropologists and political theorists who argue that ethnic identity is a primordial, collective reality. At the strong end of the spectrum of primordialism we have ethnic identity in the same way as we have speech or smell. We belong by nature to a fixed ethnic community in the same way as we belong to our family. The weak end of the spectrum is quite close to constructivism. Here the power of ethnic identity is not believed to exist in the ethnic bond itself but in the experience of those who participate in it. Ethnic identity has a primordial hold because those who participate in it feel that it does. The power and significance of ethnic identity is the same as in the strong primordialist view but there is more room for human initiative to shape ethnic identity and to recognize that ethnic identities can flourish and decay. According to this view, also, everyone belongs to an ethnic community.

The debate between these two positions has been long and often heated. In my opinion a resolution is impossible because the two sides represent the fundamental and irreconcilable tension between 'freedom' and 'nature' that is at the root of modernist and postmodernist thinking. I will resist the temptation to pursue this thesis and move on to look at what we can garner about ethnicity from the Bible.

Ethnicity in the Bible

Interestingly the biblical book of origins ends with an account of the origins of ethnicity in Genesis 10-11:9. In this passage the existence of ethnic identities is presented as a direct result of the outworking of God's command to the original human beings to multiply and fill the earth.[9] The fulfilling of this command is twice interrupted but God's purpose eventually prevails. The first interruption was the Flood that destroyed most of humanity. After the flood in his covenant with Noah God reasserts his command to 'be fruitful and increase in number' and 'to multiply on the earth and increase upon it'.[10]

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[9] Gen 1:28
[10] Gen 9:7

The evidence that this command was effective is found in the table of nations in Genesis 10. As the families of Noah's son's became more numerous a process began which has persisted ever since. Greater numbers created economic pressure that drove some clans to go in search of a new place where they would be better off. Very early in the history of humanity some even crossed the sea in this search.[11] Distance and geography led to the development of an identity different from that of the place of origin so that in time distinct peoples come into existence 'spread out into their territories by their clans within their nations, each with its own language.'[12]

It is interesting that the description of what happened as human beings spread over the earth in Genesis 10 corresponds very closely with what Hutchinson and Smith claim as the main features of ethnic identity in contemporary academic discussion of the subject.[13]

Many of the names in Genesis 10 are somewhere on the road between a proper name for an ethnic group and the name of an ancestor. For example, Japheth's son Gomer is a proper name of the ancestor of what is known historically as the Cimmerians, an Indo-European people who lived in southern Russia and who were a severe challenge to the Assyrians in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. On the other hand Madai or Medes is the proper name of another Indo-Iranian people who may have established themselves on the Iranian plateau as early as 1300 B.C.[14] In vss 8-12 there is a break in the genealogy to tell the story of Nimrod, one of the descendants of Cush the son of Ham, who was the founder of Babylon and Nineveh among other great cities in Mesopotamia. This is a good example of the type of historical memory that forms an ethnic identity. The diversity of languages that followed the scattering is mentioned after the genealogy of each son of Noah while a number of the names in the lists are also names of territories. Mizraim/Egypt, Seba, Havilah and Dedan are all examples of known territories. The only feature in the list that is not explicitly witnessed in Genesis 10 is a sense of solidarity although if three or four of the first five characteristics of ethnicity are present the presence of the sixth will follow as a matter of course.

The impression that we get from Genesis 10 is that the development of ethnic identities as a result of the spread of human beings over the earth was simply the fulfilment of the divine mandate to Noah and his family after the flood. There is no hint of evil in this development. Then, as soon as the genealogies are finished we have the story of the Tower of Babel that seems to imply that the scattering of the people over the earth and the formation of ethnic identities was a judgement of God. Personally I believe that Moses had a hand in compiling Genesis but whoever the final redactor was he must have placed the chapter of genealogies and the story of the Tower of Babel side by side for a purpose.

It is possible to get the impression from Genesis 10 that the spread of human beings over the earth was a perfectly natural process as was the development of ethnic identities. Genesis 11, the story of the Tower of Babel, reminds us that history is severely impacted by human sin and divine judgement. As is the case throughout the biblical book of origins the pattern is one of divine goodness requited by human rebellion and followed by judgement. The story of the Tower of Babel is primarily not about the origin of languages, which is one of the features of ethnic identity, but about human wickedness and pride and God's judgement upon it. Like everything else the formation of ethnic identities has been severely affected by sin.

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[11] Gen 10:5 'From these the **maritime** peoples spread out.....'
[12] Gen 10:4, cf. vss 20,31,32.
[13] (1) a common proper name; (2) a myth of common ancestry; (3) shared memories of a common past; (4) elements of a common culture which normally includes religion, custom or language; (5) a link with a homeland; (6) a sense of solidarity.
[14] Gordon J.Wenham, *Genesis 1-15 Word Biblical Commentary* vol. 1, Waco: Word Publishers, 1987, pp.216-7.

The building of the Tower of Babel is the second interruption to the story of the scattering of humanity. We find humanity early in its history after the flood, with one common language, moving east from Ararat until they come to the broad and fertile plain of Mesopotamia. There they settle down and multiply in numbers and skills as they establish the world's first civilization. Soon they feel that they can usurp the prerogative of God so they set about building a tower reaching to heaven in order to make a name for themselves. This is probably the first proclamation of empire in human history with, in this case, one city seeking to dominate the rest of humanity and in the process trying to usurp a position that belongs only to God. The city and its tower was also meant to be a magnetic centre of power that would keep people from moving apart from each other and filling the earth as God had intended they should. Seeing that a united humanity with one language would have an endless capacity for rebellion God confuses their language so that they could not understand each other. Without understanding collaboration is impossible so the tower is abandoned as the people scatter in every direction 'over the face of the whole earth.' The final outcome is precisely what God had intended for humanity in the first place and the process which we saw at work in Genesis 10 occurs.

The only conclusion we can come to from reading Genesis 10 and 11 together is that the formation of different ethnic identities is a part of God's providence but that, like everything else since the fall, that process is marred by sin.

The rest of the Bible witnesses to God's sovereignty over the destiny of the communities of peoples with common names, history, culture, homeland and sense of solidarity which, in English translations, are called 'nations'. These biblical 'nations' are usually what modern English would call 'ethnic groups' rather than political communities as is implied in the modern understanding of 'nation'.

Deuteronomy 2:9-12, 19-23 contain what, on first sight, seem like obscure notes, which the NIV puts in parentheses, about the movements of nations in the area East of the Jordan which the Israelites passed through on their way to the Promised Land. Chris Wright comments that 'these notes unambiguously assert Yahweh's multinational sovereignty. The same God who had declared to Pharaoh that the whole earth belonged to God (Exod. 9:14,16,29) had been moving other nations around on the chessboard of history long before Israel's historic exodus and settlement. This universal sovereignty over the nations mattered a great deal to Israel in subsequent centuries as they themselves joined the ranks of the dispossessed. Later prophetic understanding of Yahweh's "use" of the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians as agents of Yahweh's purposes in history is in fact consistent with this deeper theme of God's ultimate, universal direction of the destiny of nations (cf. Deut 32:8; Jer. 18:1-10; 27:1-7).'[15]

Two further points need to be made on the basis of passages like Deut 2. First, it is clear that in the long view nations are not permanent entities. They begin, grow, flourish, decline and die like human beings. There is no room for the idolatrous absolutising of the nation or ethnic group as happens in ideological nationalism. Second, God has a moral purpose in his dealing with nations/ethnies. For example, repentance can save a nation from oblivion [Jer. 18:7-10; Jonah 3] and one nation can be used by God to punish another nation for its sin. As Deuteronomy 9:4-5 states the wickedness of the Canaanite nations was a key reason for their expulsion and destruction by the Israelites. Later on the Persians drove the Israelites themselves out of Israel as punishment for their sin. But as Wright states 'the "rod of God's anger" (Is. 10:5) did not have to be straight.'[16]

There are deep issues to be pondered here as we think of the historical demise of many nations but we can safely reject any attempt by any nation to adopt a position of judge

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[15] Christopher Wright, *New International Biblical Commentary, Deuteronomy*, Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996, p. 36. Some other passages that make the same point are Deut 26:19; Job 12:23; Ps 22:27-8; 47:8; 86:9; Dan 12:1; Acts 17:26-28.
[16] op. cit. p. 133.

over other nations on the grounds of inherent moral superiority. All nations are 'bent rods'. There is no biblical justification whatsoever for ideas such as 'manifest destiny', which justified the terrible treatment of native Americans in the United States, or apartheid, which justified the horrible abuse of blacks in South Africa.

In the New Testament teaching on ethnic identity two major themes emerge. On the one hand there is the theme of the nations being offered and welcoming the good news of the kingdom of God. In fact this New Testament theme is but a continuation of the Old Testament prophetic theme that in the last days the nations would flock to Zion to present their gifts to God.[17] The climax of this process is seen in John's vision of heavenly glory in Revelation 21:24-26: 'The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it.' On the other hand is the counterpoint theme of the nations finally conspiring together to destroy the kingdom of God. Jesus promises that throughout the rest of history after his coming there will be 'wars and rumours of wars'.[18] Nations will clash until the time when they come together to attack God's people. In Revelation, again echoing Old Testament prophecy, this is pictured as the battle of Armageddon that ushers in the end of the world. Reconciling these two themes seems impossible. All we can say is that while wars and rumours of wars abound we are yet free to invite the nations to bring their treasures to Zion. The day of 'national' redemption is not passed. Repentance is still a live option.

Something needs to be said at this point about the collectivist view of humanity in the Bible that is so alien to our individualistic Western culture. This is not to say that the Bible devalues the worth of an individual human being. That is impossible for a creature made in the image of God. What the Bible teaches is that the meaning and purpose of human life is worked out in the relational context of collectivities - of family, tribe, people, nation, and humanity. 'All flesh' is a phrase used in the Old Testament to express the idea of 'all humanity' although it sometimes includes animals as well.[19] But 'all nations' is probably the commonest phrase for expressing the whole human race beginning with the promise to Abraham that all the nations would be blessed through his seed in Genesis 18:18[20] and ending with the prophecy of the coming of the 'desired of all nations' in Haggai 2:7. In the New Testament humanity is divided between the people of God - meaning Israel first and then the church - and *ethnoi*, which is translated by 'Gentiles' more often than not but really means 'nations other than the nation of God'. It follows that Christians have dual citizenship. On one hand, they belong to the heavenly kingdom which is already manifested in Jesus but which is yet to be revealed in all its glory. On the other hand, they also belong to earthly nations and have a responsibility to ensure that when the kingdom is revealed that those nations will be able to make a worthy contribution to the praise of the Lamb.

In his sermon to the Athenian intellectuals of the Areopagus Paul states that all nations are ultimately descended from Adam and that God oversees their formation, geographical extent and demise.[21] It is God's intention that the one human race subsists in a multiplicity of nations/ethnies but, so that the nations do not arrogate divine prerogatives to themselves, Paul reminds us that they are finite – they are born, they flourish and they die like other 'creatures'. Like other idols they are very uncertain objects of worship.

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[17] Is. 60:1-11.
[18] Mt 24:6ff
[19] As in Gen 7:21; Ps 136:25
[20] Interestingly when this promise was first made to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 it was all the 'families' of the earth that would be blessed through him. The term used here could be translated 'clan' - a collective unit that was bigger than a 'father's household' but smaller than a 'tribe'.
[21] Acts 17:26-27.

Ethnicity, the Bible and Globalisation

What has been said about the nature of ethnic identity, especially from the biblical perspective, ought to make us somewhat suspicious of forces that destroy ethnic identity. Ethnic identity is a valuable part of the range of 'identities', which God has provided for us, through which we can express the glory of what we are as human beings before God. It makes no difference that the shape of this identity is constructed by us. The key point is that it belongs to our nature to construct this type of identity and without it we are less than we can or ought to be. Ethnic diversity is one way in which God intended us to express our humanity.

Globalisation is a movement that fosters uniformity. It claims to unite people all over the world. Many even talk of the creation of a global village, which implies that globalisation is creating a global community. If so, it may be worthwhile asking what sort of community is being created? Is it not a consumerist community whose icons are Coke, MacDonald's and Nike and whose values are shaped by MTV and Hollywood? The globalisation of Western commercial interest looks suspiciously like the latest and most powerful expression of the spirit of empire that has blighted human existence since Babel. The frightening thing about this empire is that it can impact people everywhere through its immense commercial, technological and cultural power. Unlike the great empires of the past it imposes its will without the force of arms, although backed by the military might of the USA. At its heart is the need of massive Western transnational companies to expand their markets. In order to do this they need to persuade more and more people that the goods they produce are desirable. The way this is now done is not by marketing the goods themselves but the lifestyle that is implied by possessing them. This means that globalisation is an attempt to lure more and more people into the pursuit of an Anglo-American cultural ideal that is profoundly materialistic. A good example of the success of this strategy is the fact that well off young people all over the world are increasingly wearing the same clothes, listening to the same Anglo-American music, watching the same Anglo-American TV programmes and reading the same Anglo-American magazines. As an expression of an aggressively materialistic Anglo-American identity this commercially driven 'empire' has the potential to destroy diversity more effectively than any previous empire.

Globfrag

One wonders whether there is anything capable of halting the progress of this juggernaut? Interestingly I believe that there are aspects of the very culture that is being globalized that encourages diversity. This tendency has been called 'globfrag'.[22] There seems to be forces pushing in the direction of 'fragmentation' inherent within the culture that is being globalized.

1. One source of this fragmentation is the extreme individualism and relativism of post-modernist culture, which says that there is no religious, political or any other creed that can make universal claims. The individual's freedom to choose any 'creed' they like is the creed of post-modernity. I wonder what freedom of choice can mean in the light of genetic and historical endowment or if an individual chooses to identify with a strong collective identity that limits the freedom of others, but this approach undoubtedly opens the door to affirming ethnic diversity. If someone chooses their Yoruba or Karen identity then their choice must be respected. People can be what they want to be.

2. In its 'spiritual' manifestation post-modernist culture, which has strong links with New Age religion, is very affirming of difference. Having rejected the materialistic meta-narrative of scientism it has gone on a quest for spiritual reality primarily to the exotic East. As a result, for example, the defence of Tibetan identity from the assimilasionist policy of China, has become a popular cause in Hollywood, which is a key location for the dissemination of cultural globalisation. Well known actors like Richard Gere, who

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[22] E.g. Gerard Kelly, *Get a Grip on the Future without Losing your Hold on the Past*, (London: Monarch Books), 1999, p. 160ff.

contribute to the globalisation of Anglo-American culture through their films, lobby for the rights of national minorities like the Tibetans. This manifestation of post-modernity sees the preservation of the identity of at least some threatened ethnies as essential to the future spiritual well being of humanity.

3. The ecological or environmental movement, that also overlaps with New Age religion to a certain extent, also affirms the identity of certain ethnies. Ecologists have noticed that biological diversity has survived in areas inhabited by non-industrialised traditional indigenous peoples. It is now commonly argued that the preservation of these ethnies in their environment is crucial for the preservation of bio-diversity. The protection of tribal peoples in the Amazon or Indonesia from logging companies, or even Christian missionaries, has become a popular cause among environmentalists.

4. Globalisation's communications revolution is not just about the dissemination of the Anglo-American culture of Coke, McDonald's, MTV and Hollywood. When coupled with the growth in education worldwide it makes possible the empowerment of ethnic groups through dissemination of information about their struggles to survive. Knowing that others are facing the same problems is a great encouragement but the communications revolution also makes possible the formation of networks of ethnic groups to defend the threats against them. An example of this is the way a network of indigenous peoples successfully lobbied the United Nations to begin a process of formulating international law to defend their rights. The drive behind this effort came from Latin American indigenous peoples and Native Americans but the movement could impact the future prospects of the so-called tribal peoples of countries like India, Myanmar and Thailand. This network that is driving the process to formulate a UN declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples is the most active and impressive in the history of the UN.

5. The internationalisation of commerce as epitomised by Trans-National Corporations is leading to the formation of large trading blocks. In Europe the formation of the European Union witnesses to the political implications of this process. Interestingly while this movement is opposed by many in historically dominant ethnies/nations such as England many among national minorities/indigenous people such as the Welsh, Scots and Catalans welcome this development. The latter see it as an opportunity to acquire more autonomy and greater recognition within a larger political-economic unit. Autonomy in the context of the European Union is now official policy in many 'nationalist' parties of European national minorities.

So, while globalisation is unquestionably a powerful force for uniformity the post-modernist view of freedom, the New Age and ecological movement, the communications revolution and the formation of trading blocks creates a current that is flowing in the opposite direction and makes the climate much more amenable than it was, even ten years ago, to a reassertion of ethnic identity. Since ethnic diversity seems to have been God's intention for humanity from the beginning, I believe that, as Christians, we should welcome such developments.

There are also a number of factors in the Christian context itself that are working against uniformitarian globalisation and making possible an appreciation of ethnic diversity - even though in some quarters modernist thinking is still influential. I will look at three:

1. The Protestant/Evangelical tradition of Bible translation.
Translating the Bible into the heart language of those that are being evangelised has been a central plank of Protestant/Evangelical missionary policy since the beginning – and 'the beginning' here means the Reformation. It is difficult to over-estimate the impact that giving the Bible to an ethnic group in their own language can have, especially if they take the Bible to their heart. Some testimonies of those that have

received the Bible, or even just parts of it, witness to this impact. Here are two recent examples:

a). An elder of a Falam church in Myanmar/Burma: "We never imagined it possible to have a Bible in our own language. We'd accepted that reading it in other [languages] was good enough for us. But when the Falam Bible was made available we discovered the wonderful richness of reading God's word in our own language.... We now realise that the Bible freed us from the 'slavery' and domination of other ethnic groups. We have come to realise that we are special, one of the races our God created....'[23]

b). The second testimony concerns the publication of the New Testament into Chorote – one of the languages of the indigenous people of the Argentinean Chaco. "At last," a Chorote pastor exclaimed, "God speaks to us in Chorote." Other reactions were: "It is like waking up from a long sleep." "Now we no longer need to be like parrots, we can actually understand the words." However, there were misgivings among the Chorote about the whole project. Some felt that to emphasise their ethnic difference through bolstering their language would disadvantage them in a political and economic community dominated by Spanish. They had to be encouraged by Western outsiders to value their own distinct identity. To quote Bill Mitchell, a Bible Society consultant involved with the project: "When you're a little people, when you live on the margins, and you're forgotten, receiving the Word of God in your language is tremendously affirmative: it says you matter. You might not matter in world politics, but you matter to God and your language matters. This gives a new sense of identity to people, it helps them to lift up their heads and stand tall."[24]

Through its translation work in particular evangelical missionary activity empowers and affirms ethnic identity. The question we now need to face is whether we are content as evangelicals to provide the means for ethnic groups to develop their identity while being disinterested in what that might mean in terms of the relationship of the group to the state and the wider church? I suspect that very little thought has been given to this important question.

I suspect that many translators did not look beyond the horizon of individualistic evangelisation. Bible translation was seen as simply an evangelistic tool, a means to get people saved. The preservation of a people's identity as bound up with their language was not part of the agenda. Respecting ethnic identity was simply a means to an end. Once they had become Christian it would not be that much of a loss for them to be assimilated with another identity. The general approach to evangelisation was modernist in its individualism and took no account of the fact that each individual belongs to a variety of social groups that give meaning to their life and are the context in which salvation becomes a reality.

A more realistic and Christian approach to Bible translation would be to assume that by ennobling a people with God's word we are helping them to value what they are and are giving them a much better chance of survival. Since the Bible can become a living reality within any ethnie and can sanctify its life it would make more sense to continue to defend a people's right to exist than to abandon them to the forces of modernisation and globalisation with its worship of mammon. To do so would be simply to help an ethnic group to walk after helping them to their feet. Therefore, the aim of evangelical mission to translate the Bible into every language should include a commitment to defend the right of those ethnic groups that receive God's Word to exist and flourish.

2. Contextualisation.

Contextualization, which is now a key term in missiology, has a wide variety of meanings. It has come into prominence as a result of re-thinking about the relationship between the Christian faith and culture in the light of the growth of the non-Western church and the collapse of empire. It was very generally assumed by Western

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[23] Quote from a Bible Society publication.
[24] "At Last, God Speaks to Us in Chorote", Share, *The Magazine of the South American Mission Society*, Issue 3, 1997, pp. 4-5.

missionaries until well into the twentieth century that Western culture/civilization and Christianity were one package that needed to be transported to the mission field. It was not until mid-century that this identification began to be questioned by scholars in the West, who pointed out that even Western Christianity had extra-biblical cultural traits, and Christians from the mission fields, who began to insist that they need not jettison everything in their cultures and become thoroughly westernised in order to become Christian. As a result of such questioning it is now generally accepted that the form that the faith takes is dependent on the context in which it takes root.

The type of contextualisation in view here is inculturation, which is the process by which the Christian faith is adopted into a specific ethnic culture and adopts a whole spectrum of cultural traits, as well as transforming other traits, so that it becomes thoroughly indigenised. To countenance inculturation is obviously affirming of ethnic identity. It affirms the uniqueness of ethnic culture with its conviction that any culture or ethnie can be inhabited by the gospel without losing its identity. I would argue that this approach was already included in the Protestant policy of Bible translation, but sadly obscured for many years by 'imperialist' thinking. To believe that the Word of God is translatable into the language of any people, however small or obscure, is to believe that the gospel can be incarnated in any ethnie because language is one of the most fundamental expressions of any ethnic culture. Combining contextualization, in the sense of inculturation, with Bible translation in contemporary mission policy means taking a stance against the destructive forces of globalisation.

The other type of contextualization according to David Bosch[25] is contextualised theology and I would argue that this is really an example of Western, modernist theology that offers no support for ethnic identity unless combined with inculturation. Certain types of Liberation Theology is an example of this type of contextualisation. It argues that the content of theology is determined by its context among the poor because God has declared that he is on the side of the oppressed. It is only from the perspective of the poor and their longing for liberation that the truth of God can be experienced. I am not denying that cultural oppression can be included in what is meant by poverty but I suspect that powerlessness leading to economic deprivation is the fundamental category of much Liberation Theology. If this is the case then its strategy is a means to modernisation that can be applied universally to the poor as poor and not to the poor as Aymaran, or Mayan, or Maori, or Aboriginal etc.

3. Christian development theory.
Here I am going to be discussing something that I think is beginning to happen. Evangelical Christian development theory is in its infancy even though evangelicals have been involved in development for over 30 years. During that time evangelicals, like other Christians involved in development, have tended to be wedded to the secular agenda. For most of those 30 years and more the secular agenda has been modernisation in some form or other. The assumption has been that if poor countries adopted Western techniques and know-how they would be able to climb out of poverty. However, things have changed recently and even secular development 'orthodoxy', especially at the micro level, is turning its back on modernisation. A good example of this sea change is the Participatory Rural Appraisal [PRA] method of development that is now very commonly employed by development workers. Robert Chambers is one of the key advocates of this method and the almost biblical title of his most recent book, *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the Last First*,[26] strongly evokes this change in development theory. This book contains a strong attack on the arrogance of Western expertise and professionalism as it advocates a method that calls for humility towards and respect for the knowledge and abilities of the poor.

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[25] David Bosch, **Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission**, New York: Orbis, 1991, p. 421.
[26] London: Intermediate Technology Publications, 1997

Chambers argues, rightly in my opinion, that the world is being increasingly divided into the two camps of those who are able to join the globalised world of Anglo-American culture and those who are left outside or behind. He calls these two camps the 'uppers' and 'lowers'. Traditionally in the context of development those who do development have been 'uppers' while those having development done to them have been the 'lowers'. Chambers argues that there is a need for uppers to change their attitude so that development can become something that 'uppers' and 'lowers' do together. Since he defines development as 'good change', and advocates radical change in the attitude and behaviour of development uppers, development becomes something which both uppers and lowers need. The 'Behaviour Attitudes', which is one of the 3 pillars of PRA, include 'Hand over the stick', 'They can do it', 'Sit down - listen - learn – respect', 'Ask them', 'Have fun', 'Be nice to people'. 'Most important of all', says Chambers, 'has been learning that to facilitate PRA our behaviour and attitudes matter more than the methods.'[27] Imposition from above is out and ideas like 'capacity building' and 'empowerment' have moved to centre stage.

In his overall philosophy Chambers himself is torn between a Christian ethic without its divine dimension and post-modern relativism but it is not surprising that Christians involved in development have welcomed his approach and see it as being much more consistent with biblical teaching than previous secular development theory. The implications of PRA, and other new methods such as 'Appreciative Inquiry', for ethnic identity have not yet been developed. I believe that as these methods are welcomed into Christian development and combined in the evangelical camp with a renewed commitment to contextualisation and Bible translation that Christian development could become a bulwark against the corrosive effects of globalisation on ethnic identity.

Conclusion

As the latest example of the sinful human drive for dominance, for creating a human name that is above all other names, the globalisation of Western culture is demonic. The terribly amoral and materialistic values that it disseminates clearly witnesses to this. I have argued that the way in which it destroys ethnic identity is also a manifestation of its demonic nature.

Happily, in God's sovereignty, movements that are set up in rebellion against God often carry within them the seeds of their own destruction. So globalised culture carries within it the seeds of fragmentation. I believe that as Christians we should welcome and encourage these elements that are working for the preservation of diversity.

Finally there are trends in evangelical Christian mission, missiology and development theory that are clearly working against destructive globalisation. We should welcome and encourage these trends.

I want to close with a statement by Artidoro Tuanama, a leader of the Association of Quechua Evangelical Churches of the Jungle [AIEKSEL] based in Tarapoto, Peru. Tearfund supported AIEKSEL in its work of training leaders, encouraging native liturgy and helping the community to rediscover its culture. What he says about the objective of the work makes me feel very privileged to be involved with an organisation that has had the honour to support such people. It is a brilliant example of what I mean by standing against the destructive forces of globalisation. This is what Artidoro said:
'We simply want to take our place as indigenous and native Quechua people and understand and live the gospel as Quechua people. We assume our identity without shame, retaliation or indignation against those who have caused harm to our past and castrated our culture.'[28]

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[27] op. cit. p.129.
[28] *Peru Update File*, No. 24, June 1996, p.1.