

## GLOBALIZATION: GOOD OR BAD?

*By David Horst*

Globalization is the trend toward a single world society, which includes communications, ease of travel, advertising, the Internet, popular culture and the increase of English as an International Language. This definition is pretty broad and speaks mostly for the North American society. Globalization involves assimilating our North American society into other cultures around the world.

I recently traveled to Cairo, Egypt, and it was a wonderful experience. I was able to see a different culture and not be influenced by the American culture for once in my life. One of the major things that stuck out to me was how much the Egyptian society wanted to be like Western society, whether it was Europe or the United States. The music was very up beat and the female artists wore skimpy clothes similar to our female artists. This surprised me, since Egypt is primarily a Muslim nation and Muslims believe that women are to be covered.

As a Christian in Egypt to serve and spread the news of Christ, I was interested to hear Muslims talk about life and what their view of the world is like. Many didn't like the United States and George W. Bush. As Americans, we were automatically singled out and marked as agreeing with our government and our society; and we Americans are guilty of doing the same and assuming all Egyptians agree with their government.

As Christians we need to try to understand other cultures and not automatically think that other cultures should be like ours. For example, many other cultures view our women as what they see coming from Hollywood. In Egypt, they thought that the girls in our group were like the girls in Hollywood, and they let them know this quite frequently. Since our mission was to spread the love of Jesus, we tried to find ways to talk to some of the men about the fact that our girls were different. I am glad that our group was able to work on breaking down some of the walls that existed between our two cultures.

Advertising is another contributor to the rapid growth of globalization. When you can go from the United States to the most remote area in Africa and find an advertisement for Coca Cola, it shows how much advertising and globalization work together to bring the world in touch with each other. The problem with advertising is that America continues to tell us we always need more and better things, and one of the main targets is children.

Advertising industries spend over twelve billion dollars alone on advertisements for children, with the goal of making kids think they need the products in order to be accepted. The average child in a Western society sees about 40,000 ads per year, whether on TV, the Internet, or at school. Children and youth want more and more things because the ads say they need them, their peers are getting them, and parents are buying things in place of spending time with their children.

But not everyone can go to the store and buy a shirt, a pair of shoes, or the latest CD or DVD. This is a luxury many of us take for granted. And while we have that luxury, much of what we buy is made in another country such as China, Malaysia, Mexico or Thailand, and in some cases, under harsh conditions and horrible pay.

What is our responsibility as Christians? Should we buy name brand clothing if it has been produced under bad conditions? Is wearing a status symbol more important than the conditions the people are working in?

The other side of this aspect of globalization is that many people are without jobs in these countries, and when large industries come along and offer them jobs, it is a good

opportunity to make much-needed money for their livelihood. However, if, in the long run, the industry strips the countryside of natural resources and greatly increases pollution, then this third world community is more hurt than helped.

There are no easy answers. I think that as Christians we need to try to look at these issues like Jesus would. Workers need to be treated fairly and equally. We need to make our buying decisions based on social justice issues, not status and popularity.

Another aspect of globalization is the change in transportation over the last hundred years. A hundred years ago we were just beginning to understand and discover the combustion engine and how it worked. Today the average American home has two cars, and many teens have a car. Air travel makes visiting another part of the world as common as traveling to another part of the country was a hundred years ago. I believe that God wants us to take advantage of this new age of transportation and be disciples and fulfill the Great Commission to take the Gospel to "the ends of the earth."

Air travel enables us not only to take the Good News to people around the world, but it also helps us to have cross cultural experiences. This aspect of transportation is very positive. I believe that everyone should have the opportunity to go to another country to gain a new and broader perspective on the world. Many times we will discover that the Christians in other parts of the world have much to teach us about trusting God.

The other side of the transportation issue is pollution. In my opinion, there are entirely too many cars on the road with just one person in them. Whatever happened to car-pooling? And why do so many people think they need an SUV? Again, materialism, advertising, and "keeping up with the Jones'" are dictating what we buy.

Globalization affects about 95% of the population on this earth in one way or another. As Christians in North America, we need to look at how globalization affects us, the rest of the world, and ultimately look to Jesus as an example of how to live our lives in an ever-changing world.

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