

The New World of Globalization

by Bassam M. Madany

In a previous essay, I dealt with **Pluralism** in theology and in the life of the church. When examined in the light of the Scriptures and the historic Christian faith, I came to the conclusion that **Pluralism**, as advocated by the pluralist theologians in the West, is a heresy. It is a heresy because it denies the uniqueness, finality, and superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ as taught in such passages of Scripture as John 1, Colossians 1, Hebrews 1, and as confessed in the early **Ecumenical Creeds** as well as the **Confessions of Faith and Catechisms of the Reformation**.

When we deal with "**Globalization**," this technological phenomenon is not intrinsically dangerous. In a certain sense, the rise of globalization at the end of the 20th Century is similar to the invention of the printing press near the end of the Middle Ages, that facilitated the rapid spread of new ideas. The Reformation took root in many parts of Europe thanks to the relative ease in the circulation of the translated Scriptures and the writings of Luther and Calvin. Today, the Internet is playing a similar role in the spread of the Christian faith over our globalized planet, transcending all man-made barriers.

Since I am not an expert in the technical aspects of Globalization, I would like to refer to a recently published book "**THE LEXUS AND THE OLIVE TREE: Understanding Globalization**." The author is Thomas L. Friedman of the New York Times. His thesis is summed up in his Introduction: **Opening Scene: The World Is Ten Years Old**.

This book is an effort to explain how this new era of globalization became the dominant international system at the end of the twentieth century --- replacing the Cold War system --- and to examine how it now shapes virtually everyone's domestic politics and international relations. (1)

We Christians, like others, use computers as word processors. For fast communications, we e-mail our messages. We have our web sites on the Internet and do some of our purchasing through the World Wide Web. While we are thankful that many Christian organizations utilize the Internet to make their services known, yet the implications of the **Globalization phenomenon** have not been fully investigated. As far as I know, it is mostly scholars who are not committed to the historic Christian faith, that have endeavored to examine the various ramifications of this new state of affairs.

Referring to his goal in publishing the book, Friedman writes:

*It is meant as a contribution to the body of literature that has been attempting to define the post-Cold War world. Among the most widely read of this genre are ...Francis Fukuyama's **The End of History and the Last Man**, and Samuel P. Huntington's **The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order**. (2)*

The following are some points to consider as we reflect on the globalization phenomenon:

1. We must take full advantage of globalization and the tools given to us by the Internet, in the propagation of the Christian faith. It is no accident that the Reformation of the sixteenth century, as noted above, benefited tremendously from the invention of the movable type by Gutenberg. When we look at the works of Luther and Calvin, we cannot but marvel at the speed with which their teachings spread all over Europe. The success of the Reformation, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, cannot be isolated from the fact that the printing press and the relative ease of travel in Europe, contributed a great deal to its spread in many parts of the Continent.
2. Unlike the days of Luther and Calvin, whose work was done almost exclusively within Europe, we live nowadays in a radically different world. The following is a list of organizations that affect the lives of people everywhere: The United Nations Organization, The World Bank, The World Trade Organization, The European Union, The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), The Organization of American States (OAS), and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA.)
3. Since our world has become more inter-dependent and inter-connected than ever, non-Christian faiths and traditions, many of whose representatives live in the West, are utilizing these new means of communication to spread their beliefs in traditionally Christian lands. Just take time to surf the Internet. You will come across several web sites advertising Islam, defending it against so-called faulty Western stereotypes, and painting it in glowing words as a religion of international peace and brotherhood, better suited to cope with the corrosive effects of secular worldviews.

Up to the middle of the 20th Century, Christian missions required the physical presence of the messengers of the gospel in distant lands. The emergence and spread of international Christian radio stations and broadcasting organizations, added a new dimension to world missions. Personally, I was actively involved in radio missions for 36 years, preparing, recording, and broadcasting the Word of God in Arabic to the Middle East and North Africa. Muslims, who had never heard the authentic gospel before, learned of the claims of the Biblical Messiah, and some, by the grace of God, responded in faith.

As we stand at the threshold of a new Millennium, we face a new challenge. While not denying the relevance and usefulness of traditional missionary methods, we must be in the forefront in our use of the Internet on a global level and in all languages.

I would like to illustrate the special role of the Internet by sharing with the readers a recent experience. In my retirement ministry, I have concentrated on the use of a web site where we place several materials such as my book, THE BIBLE AND ISLAM, articles and book reviews on missions, as well as my wife Shirley's contributions to the MISSIONARY MONTHLY magazine over a long period of time.

While busy working on this article, we received an e-mail message from a missionary working among Muslims in a former part of the USSR. He had come across the Russian translation of THE BIBLE AND ISLAM. He wanted to obtain the English

original. Responding the same day, we gave him our web site www.safeplace.net/Members/mer and suggested that he may down load the entire book. Instead of taking months for our communication with each other, the whole "transaction" happened within hours! Now he is reading the book in English and comparing it with the Russian version.

Is it too much to claim that globalization, the Internet, air travel, and the presence of representatives of world religions among us, are accelerating the march of history and thus bringing us every day, closer to the Eschatalogical (Last) day?

(1) THE LEXUS AND THE OLIVE TREE: *Understanding Globalization*, by Thomas L. Friedman. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1999. P. Xvi

(2) Ibid. P. Xvi, xvii

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