

Globalization: The Human Consequences by Zygmunt Bauman
New York: Columbia University Press, 1998

Reviewed by Dumerzier Charles, PhD, Director of Multicultural Affairs
and Adjunct Professor of religion, Mount Vernon Nazarene College

Zygmunt Bauman makes an important contribution to social analysis of globalization. The media has often pictured the positive aspects of globalization by ignoring the devastating human consequences. The struggles between what Bauman calls "inside vs. outside, here vs. there, near vs. far away", margin vs. center continue to hunt us everyday. Promoters of political and economic globalization seem to ignore the demonic result of such a process on individual lives. The absentee landlords who are benefiting from globalization seem to overlook its dehumanizing effect in different countries and communities. While stockholders celebrate globalization, the consequences for many citizens are " progressive spatial segregation, separation, and exclusion."

Bauman challenges his readers to look at globalization whether political, economic, and cultural with critical lenses. He brings to light through critical analysis the false sound of optimism produced by the powerful stockholders of globalization. Bauman underlines our social blindness to the harsh reality that the common person is facing in his or her daily struggle to differentiate want and needs, to overcome the constant temptation of being indiscriminate consumer, and live life in its fullness in an unpredictable disorderly jobless environment. This certain uncertainty keeps the post-modern person restless.

The book raises more questions than it provides answers about the nature of globalization and the means to confront it constructively. Throughout the book, Bauman pinpoints the smell of greed and self-promotion covered by the perfume of modernization of cities and communities,

but he does not offer a prescription of social antibiotics to prevent this decay. The book does not provide ideas or possible means to evaporate the perfume and expose the smell of greed of the corporate world to the common person who imprison himself or herself in the false hope of a better tomorrow based on globalization.

In reading the book, one has a glimpse of the inner structure of globalization and its destructive consequences on individuals, families, clans, tribes and societies in general. The book does not deal with religious and educational issues in the framework of globalization. Nevertheless, it challenges globalization in every aspect of human existence. Religious readers are invited to look at their attempt to globalize their religious faith. Can they use the perfume of religion and spirituality to hide the smell of landlord absenteeism in religious globalization? Can ministerial deodorant keep the smell of religious tourism, banditism, or neo-paternalism away from globalization of religion? Do we have religious stockholders who are more interested in having quick self-satisfying result without considering the psychological, cultural, and religious impact of gaining space without nurturing?

Bauman inspires the readers to ask new questions, rephrase old ones, and confront neo-economic tribalism, social segregation, religious dehumanization at every level. The book makes us look at globalization through different lenses and forces us to reconsider simplistic applaud of globalization as the hope for a healthy human family.