



Spiritual Perspectives on Globalization



Discussion Guide

DIFFERING VIEWS

- What about globalization impresses or distresses you most?
- Many people find globalization an attractive prospect for the world. Given this support, could globalization's critics simply be wrong?
- Globalization appears to be irreversible. If so, how can its positive aspects be enhanced and its negative side diminished? Is glocalization (blending local values with globalization) a viable option?
- Critics often say that globalization is in fact economic and cultural neo-colonialism. Do you agree? Can globalization's secular bias be considered a form of "spiritual colonialism"?
- Are anti-American and even anti-modern agendas too prominent among globalization's critics? How can Americans be convinced to work for a more equitable process of globalization if they are continually being blamed and put on the defensive?

VALUES

- To what degree do you believe attitudes toward globalization are determined by religious, cultural, and economic conditions? What connection exists between religious values and economic issues?
- Globalization's values reflect those of the free market economy. Do you feel these values work equally well in all areas of the world?
- How do globalization's values compare with those of the religious traditions included in this book? How do they compare with those of your tradition?
- Values influence actions. How do globalization's values influence individual and societal actions? How do they influence your actions?
- How can you influence your children's values in the age of global media?
- The values of popular culture are often associated with Western values. Is this a fair depiction of Western values?

TRADITION'S GUIDANCE

- What does your faith tradition say about globalization? Has your tradition's leadership acted in accord with your understanding of the tradition's teaching?

- What responsibility do you have to chart your own response to globalization? What if your response differs from that of the leaders of your tradition?
- The Roman Catholic Church, among many faith traditions, has profited greatly from globalization. Does this negate the church's moral authority to now criticize globalization?
- Does any tradition have greater or lesser moral authority to criticize globalization? What about tribal traditions?
- What spiritual resources do you rely on to determine your own attitude toward globalization and its presence in the modern world? Are there scriptural teachings or contemporary authors whose viewpoints influence your own?
- Could globalization—the coming together of the world's societies—be an earthly reflection of the spiritual vision of interconnectedness taught by all major religions?

COMMUNITY

- Does globalization strengthen or weaken community? How does globalization's influence on community differ between Westernized and non-Westernized cultures?
- How has globalization shaped your family history? How has it shaped your individual spiritual path and that of your extended family? Has globalization brought you closer to or distanced you from family and community?
- The nature of family and community has evolved to become more inclusive, at least in part because of globalization's influence. Is this good or bad?
- Some groups attempt to counter globalization's influences by creating insular communities. Is this a viable strategy for dealing with globalization?
- How do values that promote individual freedom of choice conflict with communal responsibilities? Is freedom of choice or communal continuity more important?

ECONOMICS

- Is free-market capitalism compatible with a spiritual life? What does your tradition say about the creation of material wealth?
- Is it feasible, or even moral, to claim that spiritual goals are of paramount importance when communicating with people who are materially deprived?
- Socialism and similar communitarian-oriented economic systems seem to have failed or been supplanted by free-market capitalism. Does this mean free-market capitalism is inherently better—perhaps even “God's plan”?
- “Odious debt” refers to debts of developing nations that critics say should be entirely forgiven because they result from corrupt political leadership squandering or stealing international loans. Do you agree it should be entirely forgiven?
- Think about the economic course that coffee or electronic products follow from producer to retailer. Is the farmer or factory worker in the developing world paid a fair share of the final price? What can you as a consumer do about this?

- Do you know a family that has suffered or prospered economically because of globalization? Is this family aware of the connection between their economic situation and globalization?

RELIGION AS A COUNTERWEIGHT

- Faith traditions have a bitter history of exhibiting institutional self-interest and engaging in conflict. Can we realistically expect them to challenge globalization's negative aspects with more than pronouncements? Why or why not?
- Give examples of faith-based organizations or people that actively work to mitigate globalization's negative influence. What have they done? Have they been effective?
- Are faith institutions more a part of the problem than a part of the solution? Share your perspective on your own faith tradition's role at the present time.
- Religions have always influenced and been influenced by outside events and forces. Is the current situation any different, and if so, how?
- Can reliance on personal spirituality be more effective than organized religion in confronting globalization?

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OTHER RELATED SKYLIGHT PATHS BOOKS

For more in-depth reading on the topics explored in *Spiritual Perspectives on Globalization*, here are some suggestions of related books from SkyLight Paths:

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