Globalizing “Jesus”:
Critical Review of Processes of Media Globalization in the Production and Global Promotion of the Film “Jesus”
Presented by: Wilson McFarland,
Major: Communication Studies, Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Sudeshna Roy

Purpose:
To answer the question of how the Jesus film exemplifies media globalization, the author uses a critical review of globalization literature to look at the history of the Jesus film, how the film is an agent of cultural deposition, the technological and cultural influence of the film, the translations of the film, common critiques of the film, and the display of globalization in its production, promotion and use.

What is Globalization:
Globalization is “the breakdown of social and technological barriers across the planet toward the creation of a one-world grid of increasing connection, interdependency and homogeneity” (Southerland, 2005). An excellent case where globalization is exemplified is through the creation and propagation of art. For this paper, one particular artistic rendition in the form of a film created by Ben Bright and Paul Eshleman and propagated through mass media is taken as a case in point to discuss the influence and implications of media representation of religion in a globalized world. The film in question is titled “Jesus”, aka “The Jesus Film”.

Facts of the Film:
The Jesus film exists today in 1,148 languages and has been presented in 234 (JesusFilm.org) out of the about 257 countries.

Theories in Use in the Analysis:
- Cultural deposition is defined as “where people will adopt a foreign value, but it comes at the expense of another value” (Balnaves, et al., 2009). “The Jesus Film” is truly aimed at achieving a form of cultural deposition. Its intent is to cause another culture to experience Christian salvation and promote a faithful relationship with Christ.
- Technology, in this case, is providing the four important terms of globalization — production, knowledge, possession and change (Atabek, 2002). Technology improves the ability to produce, even in long-distance situation such as is the case here. Technology itself is an intellectual activity that produces knowledge about Christianity in this context.

Findings and Conclusion:
- The argument made by critics is that this film is an agent of cultural deposition to the next level. Critics particularly point out that this film and its cultural-religious influence on the people, destroys the religious culture of different countries and forces them to be dependent on the predominant religious culture practiced mainly in the Western Countries. People promoting the film are ideologically opposed to this interpretation and contend that they are providing truth, healing, and life to the people in these distant countries.
- The film’s cast and the way it was produced and directed also carries obvious Western ideas such as the white, long haired, bearded Jesus. The film’s depiction is contentious because it represents Jesus as the “white man,” the savior of the world, implicitly putting him on an ethnocentric pedestal.
- The film product, causes cultural transfer and crosses national boundaries spreading different ideologies, technologies, and of course, Western culture. However, despite the success of such a film, cultures continue to demonstrate their diversity in countless ways, pushing back globalizing forces and rebuilding local cultures.