

A Vision For the 21st Century

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My vision for our world in this 21st Century is a biblically sourced vision having to do with economics. Douglas Meeks, in *God the Economist*, points out that the Greek word from which we derive economy, "oikonomia," is a compound of "oikos," meaning "household," and "nomos," meaning "law" or "management of the household." "Economy" means literally "the management of the household." The Bible, throughout, is about a God whose purpose is to *create a household in which all of God's creatures can find home and abundant life*. This suggests lines from the WCIAS statement of faith: I believe in the dignity of all humanity, that each person is a being of supreme worth...I believe in the stewardship of life and resources to the end that all may mutually benefit from the earth's bounty and that no person may have to go without food or shelter...I believe in the global community, interdependent and mutually responsible for our physical and social environments...a world where justice and compassion rule and where greed and hatred are diminished..." The chief goal of this 21st century must be to develop the potential implied in these words.

This requires an understanding of today system of Global Economics--why it has failed to lived up to its heralded promise that, in time, all of earth's citizens would enjoy a decent standard of living. The basic problem is that global economics is under the control of the developed nations and giant corporations, which exist for profits and not for people. Even so, as Joseph Stiglitz says in *Globalization and Its Discontents*, "I believe that globalization--the removal of barriers to free trade and the closer integration of national economies--can be a force for good and that it has the potential to enrich everyone in the world, particularly the poor."

This raises some vital questions:

- (1) How did it come about that globalization became a "domination system," to use Walter Wink's term?
- (2) What changes are necessary if globalization is to be transformed into a just, humane system that benefits all of the earth's peoples and nature?
- (3) How does "outsourcing" fit into the picture?
- (4) How can the greed in human character that drives the profit motive be transformed for the sake of both the victims and the oppressors?
- (5) How can peoples of the developed nations begin to recognize how we support the system?

It seems that the needed reforms require that people around the world work together with collective action in shaping international agreements and regulating international corporations. Global public institutions must be created to help set the rules. Concerned world citizens need to join and support organizations which are working toward economic and environmental justice.

This kind of vision calls for a global communications system. It seems that such a system is available to us today through the World Wide Webb. With global access to the Web:

- (1) There could develop a common understanding about how the global economic system works and what is needed to change it.
- (2) Workers in a given nation could share information with those in other nations how the corporation controlled system is affecting their lives.
- (3) Peoples involved in the struggle for justice in their homeland could enjoy encouragement and support from around the world.
- (4) Global action could be brought to bear on a local situation of injustice (refusal to pay a living wage, refusal to provide health care, damage to the environment, etc.). Peoples in other nations could write the

corporation CEO with appeals for justice. When a corporation knows that the eyes of the world are on it, it may feel inclined to change its ways..

How important to the 21st century is the vision discussed here? William Sloan Coffin, in his Credo, says it well: "the war against terrorism will finally be won by economic justice. There is nothing meta-physical about terrorism. It springs from specific historical causes--political oppression and economic deprivation. Until these injustices and our complicity and their furtherance are faced, our escalating counter violence will predictably result in more and more terrorists attacking more and more American institutions at home and abroad.."

What's at stake in the 21st Century is world peace! This world must become a household in which all of God's creatures find home and abundant life.