



Subverting Greed: Religious Perspectives on the Global Economy (Faith Meets Faith Series)

Paul F. Knitter

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The Boston Research Center for the 21st Century is pleased to announce the publication of *Subverting Greed: Religious Perspectives on the Global Economy* (Orbis Books, November 2002, in association with the BRC). This multi-author volume grew out of the BRC's consideration of the impact of globalization and other economic justice issues (1999-2001). This focus culminated in a conference and lecture series in 2001 entitled *Economics for Human Well-Being: Advancing a People's Agenda*. With this foundation in mind, *Subverting Greed* offers an "interfaith dialogue on paper" focused on one of the most urgent issues of our time: corporate-driven globalization.

Insightful essays by distinguished religious scholars--who are also practitioners of the religious traditions they represent--consider the impact of globalization as they seek to shed light on their own tradition's concerns, define common problems, and propose common solutions. It is clear from the range of essays that all religious traditions have structures and teachings designed to distribute resources and mitigate greed, though several contributors acknowledge the difficulty of applying ancient teachings to modern life. For some, there is a fine line between prosperity and greed. As Ameer Ali says in his chapter entitled *Globalization and Greed: A Muslim Perspective*, "Islam is not against profit motive, the cardinal principle of free-market ideology; but it is not willing to allow profit motive to determine human progress." Others, like David Loy in *Pave the Planet, or Wear Shoes? A Buddhist Perspective on Greed and Globalization*, critique neoclassical economics as they connect the issue of greed to deeper issues of kindness, generosity, and wisdom. Still others raise concerns of sustainability and the shared resource of Planet Earth. In this regard, Sallie McFague's essay, *God's Household: Christianity, Economics, and Planetary Living*, identifies two world views: neoclassical economics and ecological economics, each of which has different "house rules." As McFague so aptly demonstrates, "The reason economics is so important, why it is a religious and ecological issue, is that it is not just a matter of money; rather, it is a matter of survival and flourishing."

Co-editor Paul Knitter's Introduction ends with a series of questions: "In their different diagnoses of the global market, in their varying remedies that they draw from their own traditions, can they [the voices of *Subverting Greed*] sing together? Of course, singing together would not mean singing the same tune. Whatever harmony might be possible, it would be polyphonic. Do the religions offer a polyphonic, contrasting, yet harmonizing message for those who are in charge of the global economic system, and/or for those who are struggling to understand or reform it? Can the religious communities of the world form any kind of a common front from which to engage the global market?"

Thus, while no definitive conclusions are reached, the deep experience and thoughtful prose of the contributors to this important volume go a long way toward framing the questions that must be answered if religious communities and economic systems are to function with integrity. In the end, as co-editor Chandra Muzaffar's Conclusion suggests, the injustice of the global economy is a spiritual and moral issue that each individual must deal with in order for a collective solution to be found.

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