

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PRELIMINARY REMARKS

This introductory chapter seeks to show the general structure of the study “A Theological-Ethical Framework for Economic Development: The case of Zambia”. It is divided into the following sections namely: preliminary remarks, background and rationale, problem statement, main argument and point of departure, research objectives, methodology, structure of chapters, literature review, and study relevance.

Essentially, this study is a study of economics from the standpoint of theology. Differently stated, it is a theological and ethical reading of economics. By theological and ethical reading of economics is meant that, this study will attempt to bring Biblical and theological values to come to creatively bear on economic development in Zambia. This is in order to contribute to the positive influence on the social order which grows towards human, moral, and environmental wholeness. It is a social project which attempts to understand the meaning of human existence amidst gigantic difficulties in relation to the christological offer of abundant life as the ultimate concrete expression of God’s love.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The background and rationale for this study is the economic evolution in Zambia and how this has impacted on the most ordinary of Zambian citizens and on the Zambian physical environment in the period 1964 to 1999. The economic impact on Zambia, in general, and on ordinary Zambians, in particular, has, more often than not, significantly compromised the social imperatives. Environmentally, it has contributed to a gradual harm of environmental wholeness. The economic impact includes both internal and external forces which totalled

up to produce the current state of under-development¹ with potential for environmental destruction if corrective measures are not taken.

At the time of Zambia's independence from Britain in 1964, Zambia had the highest living standard in black Africa (see the magazine *Zambia: A Model for Africa* 1995:1). The situation did not change much in the early 1970s (Jones in Van der Geest, editor, 1994:25). The million-dollar question is: "How has Zambia fallen from "grace" to become by 1990, one of the poorest?" (*Zambia: A Model for Africa* 1995:1).

To put things in perspective, here is a brief survey of Zambia's economic history. Firstly, from the time of its independence, Zambia was very much dependent on a single commodity "copper" for its foreign exchange earnings (Jones in Van der Geest, editor, 1994:25). The situation did not change significantly up until 1999. This was partly due to the legacy of the British colonial masters who did not develop nor invest in other areas apart from copper mines (Cleary 1990:13). Part of the profits from the mines in Zambia were used to prop up large-scale infrastructural development in neighbouring Zimbabwe, seen by British colonial masters as an eternal settlement area. In this regard, Zimbabwe became a historical beneficiary of Zambia's mineral exploits by foreign political and industrial powers. Secondly, the economic crisis situation was due to government's negligence of a strong economic diversification programme of industry and agriculture (Kalyalya *et al.* 1988:50-53), but especially of agriculture. French agronomist, Rene Dumont, heavily criticised the government's agricultural programme (Cleary 1990:13). By 1999, intensive and extensive industrial and agricultural diversification had not yet taken root. Thirdly, the economic programmes pursued by government which were guided by the Zambian philosophy of humanism, a socialist collectivist project, especially between

¹ Under-development is defined as "a state of societal well-being which, in relation to other conditions, is far from satisfactory". See Mabogunje (1989). *The Development Process: A Spatial Perspective* (London: Unwin Hyman, p.50).

1968 to 1991, though designed for good social purposes, did not yield desired results over a long period of time (see Zambian Government document *Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in Zambia: Policy Framework, Basic facts and Realities* 1994). Even though they were mitigatory, designed to cushion the adverse impact of the economy on the common man and woman and to assist them in acquiring basic necessities of life, they did not yield economic fruits in real terms (Jones in Van der Geest, editor, 1994:25). Seshamani observes: “Zambia entered the 1980s in economic crisis” (in Cornia *et al.* editors, 1992:116-131). Fourthly, the subsequent economic programmes underpinned by a capitalist individualist philosophy, which were carried out by government between 1992 and 1999, though aimed at correcting perceived failures of the command economy, did not contribute to massive social upliftment. In other words, even though some of them tried to achieve positive results, *inter alia*, the revival of industrial activity, their total impact on the most ordinary of Zambians was significant human and social dislocation never known in the history of Zambia since independence. Fifthly, the falling price of copper, especially in the 1970s contributed to the economic crisis (Jones in Van der Geest, editor, 1994:26; Seshamani in Cornia *et al.* editors, 1992:116-117). Sixthly, “the oil crisis of 1973 made things worse” (*Structural Adjustment Programme in Zambia (SAP) in Zambia: Policy Framework, Basic Facts and Realities* 1994: 5-6). Zambia had to spend huge sums of foreign exchange reserves to import oil – thus depleting gradually its coffers for immediate use and for posterity. Seventhly, it is a well-known fact that from 1964 to 1991, Zambia as a frontline state, courageously and sacrificially supported the liberation struggle for independence in Southern Africa which saw the independence of Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia and later, South Africa. Even though the objective was good, it drained the country of its financial resources. Finally, Zambia had accumulated a huge debt between 1970 and 1999. This meant that foreign exchange earned was shared between debt-servicing and economic development.

The foregoing had a compound-effect on the lives of many Zambians, creating a situation of under-development with all its concomitants such as poverty, unemployment and inequality. As if this was not enough, the Zambian physical environment has been undergoing a slow,

but gradual disruption mainly due to environmental neglect in the execution of economic development programmes.

In the light of the above, Zambian churches have executed their pastoral and social responsibilities in the context of either a socialist collectivist system or a capitalist individualist system. They worked within the existing economic structures and sought to contribute to communal and social upliftment of the Zambian people.

Zambian churches should never underestimate the unfavourable economic reality and the deteriorating physical environment Zambians are faced with. Regarding this, speaking generally for the Christian community all over the world, Stott observes: “We should not underestimate the complexity of issues which confront humankind today” (1990:29). One such issue is the need for economic development. This is a clarion call to all Zambian churches to begin to get involved in the day to day lives of Zambians, especially when human suffering is experienced. It is in such a situation that the Zambian churches should spell out in very clear terms the meaning of the presence of God among people. They should not just sit and watch the situation of the people, especially the weakest and most vulnerable, deteriorate. To do nothing about the situation is a portrayal of utter ecclesial irresponsibility. Here one is reminded of that parable in Matthew’s gospel chapter 25 verses 42-43: “... for I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes, and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison, and you did not look after me” (NIV). In as much as the church seeks the enhancement of the spiritual lives of believers and other humans unto salvation, so should it seek the enhancement of the material lives of all believers and other humans. As it does this, it should also seek the preservation, enhancement, and the fulfilment of all life. The prime objective is the realisation of human, moral, and environmental wholeness. In the nature of things, God, humankind, and the environment should be at peace. This is the cosmic vision which should motivate ecclesial reflection, concern and participation in social transformation.

This study seeks to contribute to the search for new values for church and society. What is at stake is the whole of life. Unless humans begin to re-examine their beliefs and practices, social and environmental harm will continue unabated. Economic development, therefore, is an issue which needs to be analysed and interpreted in the light of social and environmental imperatives such as the ones informed by theology and ethics. This study endeavours to contribute to this systematic analysis and interpretation of economic reality so that economics of inclusivity and responsibility may begin to take shape in society and may bring significant and substantial benefit to all humans and non-humans.

1.3 **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Scarcity of resources is a reality of modern society. This is identified as the fundamental economic problem which economics seeks to solve. According to economics, scarcity is solved when choices are made from the standpoint of scarcity as a "point of departure". Subjected to a theological-ethical critique, making scarcity a "starting point" for economics brings about moral questions. Traditional economics does not usually see this. In fact, scarcity is simply viewed as a technical problem which needs to be solved. And that solution involves the technical allocation of scarce resources for productive, distributive, and consumptive use among competing wants and needs. In the long run, the notion helps to create a culture of materialism based on the production, distribution, and consumption of more and more calculated in price. Everything is done to produce economic goods which conform to the business idea of technical efficiency and which maximise profits. This process grows and creates a material superstructure which is responsible for today's material prosperity. As this process grows, that which does not have purchasing power, that which is technically inefficient, that which does not maximise profits, that which is incalculable, that which is immaterial, is relegated and expunged from economic life. This is extremely problematic because moral concerns in relation to social life and the environment are excluded from this process. That these are excluded becomes a theological and ethical concern.

This issue is illustrated within the specific context of Zambia. From independence, up until 1999, Zambia's political economy was in all its phases underpinned by the notion of scarcity. Apart from the failure to implement long-term self-sustaining economic development programmes, the lack of critical examination of scarcity played a major role in not achieving adequate economic development in Zambia. The result was a significant compromise of social objectives and a gradual destruction of the environment. Even though Zambian churches have, since independence, been participating in economic development through their small-scale social programmes, they neither undertook any significant critical examination of the notion of scarcity. They were content to carry out their pastoral duties and social tasks within an economic context which was defined by the ethos of scarcity.

The research problem addressed in this thesis is how the notion of scarcity as a "point of departure" for economic development and its impact on the Zambian economy should be evaluated from a theological-ethical perspective. The thesis will also address the question whether theological ethics cannot provide a socially-sensitive and environment-friendly "point of departure" and "model" for economic development as an alternative framework for the notion of scarcity.

1.4 MAIN ARGUMENT AND POINT OF DEPARTURE

This thesis argues that Christian theology (including ethics) does indeed have something to offer to the current debate and thinking about economic development, as a voice among many. Its contributions are in the form of Christian insights and perspectives which can positively influence the development process. This involves a clear presentation of moral criteria which is founded on the Biblical witness. And then, a broad framework needs to be constructed as an intellectual and practical matrix within which to explicate such moral criteria. In other words, there is an urgent and timeous need to present a normative basis which would capture Christian theological and ethical reflection on economic development.

In place of scarcity, this thesis proposes a new “point of departure” for economic development. The proposed new “point of departure” is stewardship. Apart from being seen as a new “point of departure”, it ought to be seen as a “model” as well. It is not simply another moral criterion, but it is that adequate “starting point” for economic development and that general model within which to explicate relevant moral criteria. As a Biblical metaphor, it immediately calls to mind human responsibility over God-given resources of the earth for the sake of mutual benefit of all humans and non-humans. Its focus is the promotion of economics of inclusivism, sustenance, contentment, responsibility, and accountability, which could arrest the fatal and significant compromisation of social and environmental imperatives.

If Zambian churches are to enhance their participation in the economic development of Zambia on a more fundamental level, the foregoing is what they should offer. They ought to be willing to move beyond mere intra-church stewardship of financial resources to extra-church stewardship with a focus to significantly effect positive changes within the country’s political economy and societal household. They can demonstrate their specific role in the political economy of Zambia by reclaiming and appropriating an adequate theological-ethical framework for economic development within their structures. And then, see how they can influence society with new values for economic life.

This thesis is a humble attempt to contribute to the search for a life-affirming, life-enhancing, and life-preserving framework for economic development and to the strengthening of the participative role of churches in the economic development of Zambia. The emphasis of this study will be principle-based, that is, relevant principles will be used to analyse, interpret, and evaluate the development phenomenon. Unless humans are challenged at the level of their beliefs, there will be no desired change in physical societal structures. There can be no better time to make a humble challenge and to act optimistically than now.

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.5.1 To formulate a comprehensive Christian concept of salvation

Rather than exclusively the spiritual emphasize salvation of human souls, this study will endeavour to situate the theme of salvation in concrete day to day circumstances. The salvation of God through Christ is a matter for the *now* and the *future* because even though the Kingdom of God has not yet fully come, it is a present reality. Relating the eschatological present to the eschatological future is an objective which this study would like to achieve.

1.5.2 To develop an adequate theology of economic development

This study will seek to provide “benchmarks” which can be used by the church as it seeks to contribute to adequate economic development. Rather than start from the notion of scarcity, this study will start from stewardship as the best general framework within which to argue moral criteria which have relevance for economic life.

1.5.3 To evaluate economic development programmes in Zambia: 1964-1999, from the standpoint of a theological-ethical framework

The philosophy of stewardship as a viable theological-ethical framework will be tested in the case of Zambia by means of an evaluation. This study will attempt to show that stewardship principles ensure that social and environmental imperatives are protected.

1.5.4 To develop guidelines for churches’ participation in the economic development of Zambia

This study will attempt to suggest how a theological-ethical framework for economic development in Zambia can be appropriated within ecclesial structures. Zambian churches should be a model to society in Zambia by embodying the ethos of stewardship within the

life of communities of faith. On that basis, they have every right to extend the appropriation process to their local communities, local businesses and the national household at large. They cannot call others to new values without setting a good example.

1.5.5 To find the right balance between modes of moral discourse as Zambian churches participate in economic development

This study will further endeavour to strengthen the participative role of Zambian churches in the economic development of Zambia through adequate moral approaches. This will be achieved by pointing to the need for balancing between the four major modes of moral discourse, namely: the prophetic, the narrative, the ethical, and the policy (see Gustafson 1988). Zambian churches cannot afford simply to be prophetic, to apply relevant Biblical stories, and to point out what is ethically wrong and right. They have to balance this with their critical engagement with policy issues. That is to say, it is not their task to prescribe policy, but that it is their task to understand policy and influence it through Christian insights and perspectives with a view to enable policy makers make decisions with a moral perspective. These insights and perspectives should be regarded as a voice among many which seeks to contribute to the positive and healthy change of the social order.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study will consist mainly of two main parts namely: literature study and qualitative empirical analysis.

Literature study of both primary and secondary sources will mainly focus on the following areas: ecclesiology, Christian social ethics, philosophy of economics, a historical survey of

the participation of the institutional church in the economic development of Zambia, and the economic history of Zambia.

Qualitative empirical analysis will mainly be done through structured interviews of church organisations, NGO's, international bodies, government institutions and prominent Zambians. This is in order to gather data on the development process in Zambia. Other persons with knowledge about the development process in Zambia will be consulted through unstructured interviews. The idea is to get first-hand information from as many people as possible which is so vital to a comprehensive articulation of economic reality.

It is hoped that, in the final analysis, this research methodology will “bear fruit”, thereby contributing to academic flourishing, ecclesial relevance and societal change.

1.7 STRUCTURE OF CHAPTERS

This study is divided into 7 chapters.

Chapter 1, Introduction, discusses the perimeters of the study. It mainly spells out the problem statement and the main argument. Chapter 2, Economics: a review of definitions and perspectives, is an attempt to show clearly the philosophy which lies behind the science of economics. An understanding of this philosophy is very vital to the analysis of the case of Zambia. Chapter 3, Historical overview of economic development in Zambia: 1964-1999, is a comprehensive illustration of relevant aspects of the economic philosophy in the context of Zambia. Chapter 4, The church as an institution: a historical survey of its response to economic development in Zambia, is also an illustration of how the church has responded to economic development in Zambia in the light of relevant aspects of the economic philosophy. Chapter 5, The normative basis of a theological-ethical framework, is a presentation of what ought to be the Christian theological and ethical contribution to the current debate and thinking on the economy. Chapter 6, An evaluation of economic development programmes and guidelines for churches participation in the economic

development in Zambia, attempts to test the framework constructed in chapter 5 in the context of Zambia and to suggest how Zambian churches can appropriate such a framework. Chapter 7, Summary, Conclusion, Recommendations and the Way Forward, summarises, concludes, and shows the way forward.

It is hoped that ideas in this study will be arranged critically, systematically, and scientifically for the mutual benefit of the academia, the church, and society at large.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to do a solid and successful study, a literature review of relevant works is conducted. The main objective is to establish whether anything has been written on the topic. The following are the main works which are reviewed. The intention is to give a general gist of each work in order to ascertain its importance to the study.

Küng (1995), in his book *The Church*, argues that the modern church does indeed have a task to do in the modern society. In order to do this successfully, it must “return to the place from which it proceeded; must return to its origins, to Jesus, to the gospel” (*Ibid*: xii). And this can “only mean forward to a new future, the future God has in mind for mankind” (*Ibid*:xii). This is a general work for the church at large. Nonetheless, it contributes to the strengthening of the role of Zambian churches in social transformation.

Stott (1990), in his work *Issues Facing Christians Today: New Perspectives on Social and Moral Dilemmas*, attempts to develop a Christian perspective on a wide range of social and moral issues, including economics. It is an essential general guide for the Zambian situation for Christian debate and action in a modern society.

Birch and Rasmussen (1989), in their work *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life*, attempt to give critical guidelines as to how the Bible can be used in ethical decision-making. However, they argue that in all Christian ethical decision making and action, other non-

Biblical materials which contain ethical truth ought to be used as well. This approach is an impetus to the study to be as inclusive as possible in the quest for a viable framework for economic development.

Moltmann (1978), in his book *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, like Küng, argues that the church does have a specific mission in the modern world. Unlike Küng who tends to be historical in his exposition of ecclesiology, Moltmann feels that if the church should make any missiological in-roads in modern society, it must situate itself between “the already” and “the-yet-to-come”. That is to say the church should do its mission in the context of the Kingdom of God as a present reality and as a futurist event. This approach gives balance to the study in that not only should one emphasize life in the *now*, but life in the *future* when all things will be restored in full by means of the divine cosmic activity.

National Conference of Catholic Bishops (1986), in their classic work *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U S Economy*, examine moral dimensions and human consequences of American economic life. Even though their audience is the American public, their ideas, especially those about moral principles such as economic justice and human dignity, have a universal appeal. And such as, they touch on the very fundamental theological and ethical issues which this study would like to address and apply to the Zambian situation.

Gustafson (1988), in his book *Varieties of Moral Discourse: Prophetic, Narrative, Ethical, and Policy*, argues that there needs to be a right balance between the four major forms of moral discourse. This quest for balance is very relevant for this study which seeks to engage in solid issues of economic development.

Stackhouse *et al.* (1995b), in their book *Christian Social Ethics in a Global Era*, brainstorm on the question of how Christian ought to live in a market society. This is a collection of various approaches to the market era and gives some general opinions on how economic

problems of society can be solved. This study will be open to those ideas which speak specifically and relevantly to the Zambian situation.

Coetzee, editor (1987), in his work *Development is for people*, seeks to provide “a theoretical and empirical framework within which the holistic human purpose of the total development effort can be situated” (*Ibid:i*). That it contributes to the construction of social projects which aim at people and their needs makes it very relevant to this study.

Goudzwaard and De Lange (1995), in their work *Beyond poverty and affluence: toward an economy of care*, make an urgent appeal for a bold new economic practice in the world which cares for the earth and its people. They argue for the search for new values which are based on human and environmental sustainability for *now* and the *future*. In this regard, their ideas are very relevant to this study.

Atherton (1992), in his study *Christianity and the Market*, gives a critical survey of the three major Christian approaches to the market economy, namely: the conservative, represented by Brian Griffiths in the UK; the radical, represented by Ulrich Duchrow in Germany; and the liberal, represented by J Philip Wogaman in the USA.

He observes that each approach has its own demerits and merits to contribute to the development of Christian social thought. Even though he affirms the market economy as the least harmful way, he calls for continuous struggle between market reality and its challenges through what he calls the “interactive way” until societal problems are solved. This study intends to be open-minded to those approaches so that a feasible approach to economic reality can be worked out.

Nürnberg (1994), in his study *An Economic Vision for South Africa: The Task of the Church in the Post Apartheid Economy*, addresses the specific South African audience with the view to challenge it to redress economic and ecological imbalances. It calls on South African Christians to cultivate analytical, prophetic, and constructive competence if they are

to contribute to the redress of these imbalances. It is a simple and straightforward statement of ideas which can be related to the Zambian situation.

Nürnbergger (1988), in his work *Power and Beliefs in South Africa*, attempts to answer the question: How does economic power relate to beliefs of the people? He does this from the standpoint of Christian ethics for the South African audience. His major concern is how “asymmetrical interaction”, that is, marked differences in living standards between the rich and the poor, affluent neighbourhoods and poor neighbourhoods, and so on, can be solved. His theological-ethical critique is extremely solid and can be appropriated by this study, especially in understanding how systems of meaning and value affect human convictions and power structures.

Preston (1991), in his book *Religion and the Ambiguities of Capitalism, inter alia*, attempts to criticise and examine various Christian statements on current economic issues with a view to propose the basis for a more adequate social theology. For Preston, in all Biblical and doctrinal theologies, the analysis and interpretation of the concrete social context is extremely important. This study would like to take seriously the historical social context of the Zambian situation in order to understand it with a view to propose new ideas which can contribute to societal progress.

Daly and Cobb Jr. (1989), in their work *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy Towards Community, the Environment and a Sustainable Future*, attempt to give a searching critique of “mainline” economics in order to show how the growth-oriented industrial economy has led to environmental disaster. Most importantly, they argue for the need to put the earth and its inhabitants at the center of the economic universe. Their trilogy of community, the environment and a sustainable future is one of the guiding pillars of this study.

Polanyi’s (1944) book *The Great transformation* is one of the greatest academic statements on human and social dislocation due to the adverse effects of the self-regulating market economy. It has every relevance for developing economies such as Zambia. To understand

firmly the economic well-being of a country or continent, one has to analyse critically the historical praxis of that country or continent. This is precisely what Polanyi has done. He has employed a philosophical-historical-critical approach to the rise of social and economic times on the continent of Europe in the 20th century. His approach provides that helpful intellectual framework for thinking about social, moral, and environmental problems of new nations.

Wogaman (1986), in his study *Economics and Ethics: A Christian Inquiry, inter alia*, seeks to show the interrelationships between economics and ethics. His chief concern is to propose how a “responsible state” can attend to five specific priorities, namely: productivity, equity and security, employment and educational opportunity, conservation, and a new world order. His approach which is backed by theological firmness and Biblical concreteness aims at the recovery of “a sense of priority about the things that really matter” (*Ibid*:130). And the things which really matter are for the benefit of members of the human community, locally and globally. Such an approach is very helpful to this study.

Meeks’ (1989) book *God the Economist: the Doctrine of God and Political Economy* is a clarion call to inclusive economics. Even though Meeks does not dwell much on the intricacies of the modern social context, his work is an excellent articulation of the constructive vision of God’s law of the household. As he says himself, in God’s household, every person finds sustenance, support and contributes his or her potential for the well-being of the household. This way of thinking is very cardinal to this study.

The foregoing are some of the important works which are reviewed to form a firm academic background for this study. As noted already, these are general works written mainly for other contexts. For this reason, there is a great necessity to research on a specific topic which tries to significantly address the relationship between Christian theology (including ethics) and economics in the specific context of Zambia. Up until 1999, there was no major work either on the proposed topic of this study or a related topic which was done about Zambia. This study attempts to fill up this academic gap. It is hoped that more researchers will, in future, be motivated to analyse further the issues which will be raised in this study.

When all is said and done, academic research should always be updated, refined, and enhanced for the service of humankind and to the glory of God.

1.9 **STUDY RELEVANCE**

Zambia is a country that is in dire need of economic development. Christian theology has a moral responsibility to address the specific context of the ailing Zambian economy and see if it can contribute its insights and perspectives to the solution of this crisis. A theological and moral contribution has the potential to supplement and complement the technical. Therefore, the study attempts to spell out a relevant theological-ethical framework for economic development for the specific context of Zambia. Hopefully, it can thus contribute to an adequate vision of economic life in Zambia and elsewhere.