

## CHAPTER 5

### THE NORMATIVE BASIS OF A THEOLOGICAL-ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the normative basis of a theological-ethical framework – that is, the moral standard or foundation upon which a theological-ethical evaluation of economic development rests.

It is a firm contention of this thesis that there is no such thing as a value-free science (c.f. Todaro 1997 and Burawoy 1972). Humans engage issues from specific value systems<sup>1</sup>. Its overall objective is to show the kind of conceptual and practical shift which ought to occur through a commitment to a new “point of departure” and “model” for economic development. There are three main parts to this chapter, namely: Christian theology and economic development: does theology have anything to offer to economic development?; other moral criteria as part of a new point of departure and model for economic development; and the concept of stewardship: towards the quest for a new point of departure and model for economic development. These three parts are linked by one cardinal conviction: Christian theology (including Christian ethics) does have something to

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<sup>1</sup> From the perspective of professional Christian ethics or theological ethics, one would rather say “specific normative systems” in order to include the de-ontological (principles), the ethnological (values) and the teleological (goals) (Stackhouse *et al.* editors 1995a and Boulton *et al.* editors, 1994). However, throughout the text of this thesis, the phrase “value systems” or the word “values” will be used in a general sense to include all moral values, moral principles and moral goals. This is to avoid the unnecessary problem of showing clear lines of distinction for each concept. Besides, principles and goals do contain values.

offer in terms of presenting a new “point of departure” and “model” for economic development which is based on moral values and which are in tune with the Biblical witness. In addition to these three parts, an evaluation of stewardship in the light of the complexities of running a modern economy and a checklist of a set of principles to be used in the evaluation of economic development programmes will be presented.

The previous chapters have established that “scarcity” is the main problem under investigation in the field of economics. It is used as a “point of departure” for economic theory and practice. Consequently, it defines the “rules of the economic game”. Nonetheless, economists such as Goudzwaard and De Lange of the Netherlands (1997) have argued convincingly that scarcity is an insufficient “point of departure” for economic development. *Inter alia*, they argue that it tends to exclude social and environmental imperatives from economic development (*Ibid*). In the same vein, this chapter takes up this argument and proposes a new “point of departure”.

In the place of scarcity, this chapter proposes that *stewardship* ought to be the new “point of departure” for economic development. It will not just be seen as a “point of departure” for economic development, but as a “model” which can ensure that there is adequate development for every person, if only this concept and appropriate moral criteria such as justice, fairness, accountability, and care are allowed to incarnate in society. Stewardship is a Biblical concept and general framework within which moral values which are in tune with the Biblical witness will be concretised. But before this, the pertinent question is: Does Christian theology have anything to offer to economic development?

## 5.2 CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: DOES THEOLOGY HAVE ANYTHING TO OFFER TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT?

Does theology have anything to offer to economic development, which according to Christian social ethics belongs to public policy moral discourse? (Forrester 1997; Gustafson 1988). This is one of the major questions the Edinburgh University scholar, Forrester (1997), grapples with. He observes that one of the problems of distinguishing between the public and the private is that it has led to the “privatisation and domestication of religion (including theology)” (brackets included *Ibid*: 9ff). In this way, the public realm has been deprived of the benefits of religion and theology. Technical approaches to human problems rather than moral concerns take pre-eminence in the public sphere, that is, the arena in which decisions are made on behalf of the public by those in positions of authority. About this he observes:

*The public sphere has, however, been impoverished and trivialised in recent times by certain aspects of modernity. For one thing there has been an increasing tendency to treat all issues in the public realm as technical rather than moral concerns, so that it is assumed that political problems are amenable to a quick fix on the part of a technician, an expert, rather than requiring wrestling with the complexities and ramifications of the problem on the part of the wide range of people who are involved and bringing into the common discussion their varied insights and perspectives (Ibid:23).*

Inevitably, this raises a pertinent question of who has monopoly over the public realm. In response to this, Forrester alludes to some of dominant theories in the West, especially those which relate justice and public policy discourse. These have an unavoidable influence on

Third World nations as recipients of Western aid and culture. They are conveniently expounded and analysed by Forrester and their implications for Christian theology and religion are presented and drawn out by him (*Ibid*:113-246). They are those of John Rawls, Friedrich A. Hayek, and Jürgen Habermas. All of them take a pluralist and secularist approach to public policy discourse, to the exclusion of all religious or theological or metaphysical considerations as authoritative sources for public policy discourse. In other words, they articulate the view that humankind can discover by themselves what should constitute public policy discourse (political, social, economic and so on) without referring to their experience of a supreme being, to a systematic reflection on the revelatory activities of divinity, or philosophical questions about life, truth, and existence.

John Rawls, in his theory of justice, feels that with regard to public policy discourse, the state is the dispenser of justice<sup>2</sup> (*Ibid*:113-138). For Friedrich A Hayek, the market is the dispenser of justice<sup>3</sup> in the public sphere (*Ibid*:140-164). As for Jürgen Habermas, in his “critical theory” whose central function is to “expose structures of domination and exploitation, often elaborately concealed, for what they are” (*Ibid*: 167), justice in public policy discourse will only be established through processes of communicative action and solidarity<sup>4</sup> (*Ibid*: 165-191).

Against this irreligious, atheological and ametaphysical background, Forrester feels that in

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<sup>2</sup> *Inter alia*, Rawlsian justice is admired by Christians for its inclusion of the principle of concern for the least advantaged (*Ibid* 129). See also Rawls, J (1972)

<sup>3</sup> Hayekian justice is a major influence on public policy in the USA and Britain (*Ibid* 157). In fact, the Chicago school, represented by the “neoclassist par excellence”, Milton Friedman, with its emphasis on the power of freedom in a free market and its emphasis that everything within and outside a human person is marketable, shares the Hayekian notion of justice on public policy. See Hinkelammert (1986). See also Hayek, F (1982) and Friedman, M (1962 & 1967)

<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, the Habermasian socialist “critical theory” is not made use of on a large scale (Forrester 1997:181). However, some Christians, especially liberation theologians, do find inspiration from his works, for example, his emphasis on solidarity and justice (*Ibid*: 191). See Habermas, J (1984-1987)

a pluralist and secular society, there exists the possibility for theology (including Christian ethics) to make “a modest, but constructive questioning contribution” both to “the theoretical discussions which undergird policy and to policy-making itself” (*Ibid*:36). As we shall see below, Gustafson (1988) clarifies the point that even though policy-making is the responsibility of government policy-makers, Christians can actively participate in policy-making through the influence they bring to bear on policy issues which comes from Christian insights and values. The basis for this, as we shall re-emphasize later, is the salvific and redemptive life of Jesus (*Ibid*:58).

Theology does indeed have a legitimate, specific, and valid role to play in the public sphere where, *inter alia*, economic development plays a significant role in people’s lives. Theology should come from a position of optimism, but non-triumphalist, and contribute its valid insights and perspectives (“theological insights and perspectives”), as a voice among many voices.

As already noted in the previous chapters, Gustafson (1988) takes up this debate and observes that there are four varieties of moral discourse in relation to Christian engagement of a public nature, namely: the prophetic, the narrative, the ethical, and the policy. Policy discourse touches at the very heart of the public sphere in which public policy is formulated and implemented. However, this does not mean that the other varieties (the prophetic, the narrative, and the ethical) are excluded from influencing policy discourse. The point is that policy discourse, as a moral variant, has a specific role to play, but it can also be enriched by other moral variants.

What, then, is policy moral discourse? According to Gustafson, policy moral discourse is utilised in “the writings which seek to recommend or prescribe quite particular courses of action about quite specific issues” (1988:45). Following the reasoning of Gustafson, for example, in political economy, appropriate government bodies may recommend or prescribe

“quite particular courses of action” about “quite specific issues”. This may include fiscal and monetary policy at macroeconomic level and consumer policy at microeconomic level<sup>5</sup>, whereby these policies will address and deal with the question on how best to go about “quite specific issues”. It is here where one finds the limitations of prophetic discourse, narrative discourse, and ethical discourse whose main foci are the condemnation of unjust practices from the perspective of Christian and Biblical justice, the highlighting of Biblical stories which have relevance for today, and the sharing and critical argumentation of Christian values, respectively. All three, in their own right, cannot articulate the complexities of economic policy such as fiscal and monetary policies which are reflected in economic programmes. This is done by means of policy moral discourse (cf *Ibid*: 50-51).

Gustafson points out two features which are characteristic of policy discourse, namely: that policy discourse is not conducted “by external observers, but by the persons who have responsibility to make choices and to carry out the actions that are required by choices” and that there is the question of “the particularity of conditions within which policy is developed” (1988:46). With regard to economic policy and programmes, especially in a liberal democracy, these persons include the President or Prime Minister and Cabinet, and those who work in various ministries and institutions such as Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Commerce, various government bodies, and the central or reserve bank. It includes experts in policy formulation and implementation of various levels who “have responsibility to make choices” on behalf of a country and “carry out the actions that are required by choices” of a particular economy. These persons are not angels, but human beings who react to “the particularity of conditions” which may include, *inter alia*, pressure from the donor-community and a volatile international environment. They have accountability to the nation

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<sup>5</sup> Microeconomic level refers to individual units within an economy rather than the economy as a whole (macroeconomic level). See Pearce, D W ed (1992). *The Mit Dictionary of Modern economics*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

as they shift through competing choices and possible courses of action (*Ibid*: 46-47).

As policymakers (and implementers), they are morally involved simply because they deal with moral questions such as “What ought we to do?” (*Ibid*:47). Gustafson observes again: “The policymaker has to know what is possible as well as what is the right thing to do, or what are the most desirable outcomes” (1988:47). Policy discourse has “distinctive demands in terms of knowledge, concepts and understanding” (*Ibid*:51) to help policymakers “shape the course of events” (*Ibid*:51). This is their specific “social role” as policy makers (*Ibid*:51).

Even though Gustafson argues that policy moral discourse belongs to policymakers, he does not rule out the participation of other social groups and individuals whom he calls “external observers”. With regard to the Christian religion, he says: “Churches and Christian persons who aspire to affect the course of events with moral aims and principles need to be able to participate in policy discourse” (*Ibid*:52). This can either be done through direct and active participation in commissions and the like, and through various societal event-changing ways like critical examinations. This will help them understand biases, theories, and convictions underlying policy and thus, appropriately influence the outcome of economic programmes. Their role, in this regard, is not to prescribe policy, but to understand it in order to positively contribute to the change of the social order.

In addition, Gustafson argues that policy discourse cannot stand in isolation. It needs the rich contributions of other moral variants and *vice versa*, and the same is true for each moral variant:

*Policymakers need to have their institutions challenged by the prophetic; they need to have their arguments and choices clarified, evaluated, and informed by the ethician. The prophet and narrator need to have their discourse subjected to ethical analysis ... They also have to understand sympathetically the legitimate role of the*

*accountable policymaker in the determination of the course of events. The ethicist needs to understand that the policymaker cannot simply apply the conclusion of a sound moral argument to his (or her) circumstances, but that ethical arguments deepen, broaden and sharpen his (or her) capacities to make morally responsible choices (brackets included Ibid:52-53).*

In other words, the participative role of prophetic discourse, narrative discourse, and ethical discourse in policy discourse is challenging, clarifying, evaluative, and analytical so that choices “with a moral perspective” are made for the betterment of people and society at large. Economic choices, for example, should not just be technical, but made “with a moral perspective” (c.f. Niebuhr in Boulton *et al.*, editors, 1994:466) and not the kind which hinges on “distorted moralism” (Tillich in Boulton, *et al.*, editors, 1994:250 ff) of inflexible don’ts and dos.

From the foregoing, it is clear that Christian theology does indeed have something to offer to public policy discourse affecting issues of justice, equity, empowerment, food security, safety of humans and the environment (Dorr 1991). It needs not be privatised nor domesticated, but be de-privatised and de-domesticated so that it can appropriately contribute its rich and specific insights and perspectives, not only to economic development, but to all manners of public issues.

To take the argument further, there is no need for animosity between economics and theology or religion as sometimes is exhibited when some theologians and economic theorists confer with one another (cf. Brennan and Waterman 1994:4). There is some “common ground” between the two disciplines which needs to be explored.



This means that economics should allow itself to be challenged by other disciplines such as theology and *vice versa*. Differently stated, economists ought not to consider economics as their own domain. Instead, they should allow other people to make valuable contributions in finding solutions to human problems. Economics is too fundamental a matter to be left in the hands of economists alone (Wogaman 1986).

Historically, speaking for the Christian community, there has been Christian reflection on economics from time immemorial which has been consolidated in the last hundred and fifty years in both Protestant and Catholic circles (see, for example, the 1910 WCC Edinburgh Conference quoted by De Santa Ana in the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC, 1991:313-314J); also the papal encyclical *rerum novarum* (on the condition of workers) issued by Pope Leo XIII on May 15, 1891 quoted in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* Vol. XIII (New York: McGraw-Hill 1967:387) – regarded as “the first of the great social encyclicals”). This Christian reflection on economics is usually influenced by fundamental religious beliefs on God and God’s purpose for humanity. It is related to the whole business of theology or theological discourse. Etymologically, theology is based on the Greek *theologia* – a compound word based on two Greek words – *theos*, meaning God and *logos*, meaning word or reason, rendered as study of God or word of God or reason of God or science of God (see *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* 1985:299; *A Concise Dictionary of Theological and Related Terms* 1984:258; *A Dictionary of Theological Terms* 1990:135; *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* 1997:1604; and *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology* 1983:566). About this De Gruchy, theological professor at Cape Town University observes:

*It was an urgent and intense attempt to discern meaning amidst suffering, to understand both themselves and the ways of God in the affairs of humankind, to penetrate the mystery which lies at the heart of reality, and to determine their responsibility in the struggle for social justice, liberation and human dignity.*

*Genuine God-talk - the literal Anglo-Saxon equivalent of the Greek word "theology" – has always been about such things (1986:1).*

Again, he observes: "God-talk is inseparable from our concern for human fulfilment and the flourishing of human community" (*Ibid*:1). Economics which according to economic wisdom, *inter alia*, tries to solve scarcity problems such as poverty, unemployment and income inequality, is very much related to theology in that even though theology has its own "point of departure", they both deal with the questions of life and living. Theology by its very nature "... is not to be confused with faith and revelation: It is a human project in which we attempt, in Langdon Gilkey's words, to 'present an understanding of contemporary human existence as that existence is interpreted through the symbols of the Christian tradition'" (Gilkey quoted in De Gruchy 1986:2). Differently stated, "... we might say that Christian theology is critical reflection on the liberating faith and transforming praxis of the Christian community in relation to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ" (De Gruchy 1986:2). Even though De Gruchy does not acknowledge this, in many respects, his definition reflects the influence of liberation theologians, but especially Gustavo Gutierrez (1973:3-32) who defines theology as a critical reflection on praxis (or historical praxis). There is an inseparable connection between faith and human existence.

It follows that theology, like economics, seeks to deal with issues pertaining to contemporary human existence from a specific standpoint. It seeks to reflect critically on "the liberating faith and transforming praxis of the Christian community" (to use De Gruchy's words) within the context of "contemporary human existence" (to use Gilkey's words) which is bedeviled by so many socio-economic-politico problems. In this regard, theology seeks to take seriously the "situational reality" of human existence. About this Dickson observes: "...theology is done meaningfully only in context, or with reference to a situation or set of circumstances" (1984:15). For this reason, theology ought to be a partner of economics which, *inter alia*, also seeks to deal with contextual issues of human existence such as unemployment and poverty through economic development. This partnership will, however,

be constructively critical. Economics and theology should “join forces” in order to achieve human wholeness which is geared towards true community and a sustainable present and future of both humanity and the entire created order – each contributing its specific insights and perspectives which are supplementary and complementary. From the perspective of theology, this means that it should take seriously the specific nature of economics. This should be done in order to understand its distinctive characteristics, focus, and laws, and to find an entry point into it so that the construction of a coherent and systematised theological discourse can be facilitated.

Therefore, theology, as a partner of economics will contribute its viewpoint (a theological-ethical framework for economic development) to the debate on economic development.

Now that it has been established that theology does, indeed, have something to offer to economic development as a public issue, the obvious question is: What are these Christian insights and perspectives which can be contributed to economic development? These are moral criteria which are in tune with the Biblical witness and form part of the new “point of departure” and “model” for economic development which will be developed in the rest of this chapter.

### **5.3 MORAL CRITERIA AS PART OF A NEW POINT OF DEPARTURE AND MODEL FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The first part of this section “the normative basis of a theological-ethical framework” ended by hinting that Christian theology can indeed offer its rich and specific insights and perspectives to economic development – a matter of public policy moral discourse. This point raises a number of theoretical questions with practical implications for economic development, for example: What are these insights and perspectives? How should they be

allowed to have a bearing on economic programmes? And what ought to be moral values, which these should pursue? These questions and others will be addressed critically under this section.

These insights and perspectives are those Christian teachings which are rooted in the Biblical witness and Christian experience. Nonetheless, a Christian does not live on an island. From time to time, they come into contact with shared insights of human experience in modernity which, *inter alia*, include positive influences from human and social sciences (c.f. Gustafson in Boulton *et al.*, editors, 1994:164). These form part of a rich and valued human heritage which cuts across boundaries of gender, colour, creed, and status.

The result is that a theological-ethical normative basis ought to be based not only on Christian theological and ethical norms, but equally on positive influences within human experience which have shaped society and contributed to human progress and advancement (c.f. Atherton 1994 and Birch and Rasmussen 1987). In some respects, these positive influences do reflect the basic meaning of Biblical values.

In this thesis, only those moral criteria that can significantly contribute to the debate on the evaluation of specific economic programmes in Zambia will be discussed. Other moral criteria from Christian theology and ethics, from human experience in modernity and from other sources, will only be mentioned, but not discussed.

The purpose of this section is to present and discuss the essential moral guidelines or criteria from Christian theological-ethical discourse which is rooted in the Biblical narrative. They are then related briefly to moral criteria from shared human experience. .

### 5.3.1 Moral criteria from Christian theology and ethics

Moral criteria, for an adequate Christian interpretation of the social order, should be anchored in the essence of the church. The essence of the church is "God's salvific act in Jesus Christ"<sup>6</sup>.

The all-embracing theme of salvation in human history is present throughout the pages of the Bible (cf Küng 1968:16-17). Salvation is not only confined to the spiritual salvation of the soul as in the case of Lazarus<sup>7</sup>, but has implications on how we ought to live with others<sup>8</sup> and effects the entire life of humanity - drawing them to cosmic salvation<sup>9</sup>.

It is the reference to the historical Jesus who revealed the purposes of God, the resurrected one, who now reigns with God, intercedes for us, and abides with us through the Holy Spirit, which forms the basis for Christian theological and ethical reflection (c.f. Boulton *et al.*, editors 1994:1-4). He is "the one in terms of whom Christians undertake both the task of living lives of discipleship and the task of thinking about the sort of lives that are worthy of followers of Christ" (*Ibid*: 3). It is this task of living and thinking which goes beyond the confines of the church to extend to society which is replete with many socio-economic-political problems. It is in such a society that Christians seek to incarnate Christian moral values, not just as a matter of Christian discipleship, but as a matter of how they ought to live and think in relation to other human beings (cf Pemberton and Finn 1985:1ff).

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<sup>6</sup> Küng (1968:15). See also Moltmann (1977:1-65). Klaus Nürnberger calls this the essential core of the Word of God.

<sup>7</sup> See Luke chapter 16 verse 19ff

<sup>8</sup> For example, Luke chapter 19 verse 1 f.f. witnesses to the conversion of Zacheus, who after a spiritual encounter with the Lord, is motivated to give reparations to the community (for extortion) as a mark of moral re-armament through justice as a moral norm.

<sup>9</sup> Apostle Paul, in Romans chapter 8 verse 18ff, witnesses to a vision of cosmic redemption for humanity and the entire created order. In interpreting salvation, one should always keep this cosmic vision.

The failure to refer to Jesus or simply “the failure to somehow ‘think from’ the perspective of the story of Jesus” is indeed “a failure of the greatest significance” (Boulton *et al.*, editors, 1994:4). Christian theology and ethics will be failing in its duty if it does not draw its strength from the ecclesial essence. This is the moral basis which Christians should share (c.f. Bwalya 2000:5). They ought to be true to this legacy of christendom (*Ibid*: 5). They should not teach nor preach nor live out any other “moral basis” except that age-old “moral basis” which has been handed down to them. And they read it for themselves from the scriptures that God was in Christ reconciling men (women and children) to God’s being<sup>10</sup>. They ought to demonstrate the ecclesial essence throughout their life, work and mission (Bwalya 1998 and 2000). And “what God has done in Jesus Christ” is founded on what has come to be a well-known attribute of God – the unconditional self-giving love (Greek *agapé*) (*New Dictionary of Theology* 1988:398-399; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 1984:656). This unconditional self-giving love goes beyond natural affection or family love (Greek *storgé*), the attraction of desire or physical love (Greek *erós*), and friendship love (Greek *philia*) (*Ibid*). It is the fundamental characteristic of the being of God according to the Biblical witness. Similarly, it is expected that it ought to be “the motivating power and pattern of Christian living” (*New Dictionary of Theology* (88:398). Differently stated, “*agapé*, that love in men and women which images divine grace, needs to permeate, inform, direct and control all the other ‘loves’ and all the Christian’s relationships with others” (*Ibid*:399). It is hoped that this love ought to define the character of not only Christians, but of all people at various levels of human endeavour. It ought to be seen as the overarching message of “what God has done in Jesus Christ”. From this message, moral criteria are drawn out.

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See II Corinthians chapter 5 verse 19.

The following are some of the moral guidelines or criteria which can be drawn from the life of Jesus. They include: the holistic mission of Jesus, the primacy of human dignity, the necessity of justice, and an ethic of care and sociality.

### 5.3.1.1 The holistic mission of Jesus

Matthew chapter 4 verse 4 states that: “Man (and woman) shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (RSV, brackets included). Exegetically, the life of humanity depends on bread – a symbol of life-sustaining material things which are meant for the well-being of the human body – and on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (God’s way of communicating to humanity by the power of the Spirit which transcends human spirituality and cuts through to human materiality<sup>11</sup>). To give life to the materiality and spirituality of all human persons in all places and at all times was the moral *telos* of the mission of Jesus. In fact, he once said: “I have come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly”<sup>12</sup> (RSV). Jesus gives abundant life – a fuller life – to both spiritual and material dimensions of all human life. His mission was holistic. He ministered to: the spiritual needs of humanity which included demonic deliverance<sup>13</sup> and forgiveness of human sin<sup>14</sup>; and the material needs of humanity which include healing of the human body<sup>15</sup> and provision of food and drink<sup>16</sup>.

The holistic mission of Jesus ought to be a challenge for Christian theology and ethics. It should be appropriated as a moral value in theological-ethical discussions of economic programmes.

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<sup>11</sup> See Hebrews chapter 4 verse 12 which witnesses to the power of God’s word which is able to penetrate both our spirit and our flesh in order to give us life.

<sup>12</sup> See John chapter 10 verse 10.

<sup>13</sup> See Mark chapter 5 verse 1ff

<sup>14</sup> See Mark chapter 2 verse 1ff

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>16</sup> See John chapter 6 verse 1ff and chapter 2 verse 1-11

Paul Hertig explores this moral value in his article: “The jubilee mission of Jesus in the gospel of Luke: reversals of fortunes” (in Whiteman, editor, April 1998:167-179). He argues that “Jesus’ jubilee mission was holistic in four aspects: it was proclaimed and enacted, spiritual and physical, for Jew and Gentile, present and eschatological” (*Ibid*: 167). Hertig enlarges and enriches the moral goal of the holistic mission of Jesus by contributing three other important categories namely: “proclaimed and enacted”, “for Jew and Gentile”, and “present and eschatological” to the category “spiritual and physical”. In short, Jesus was not only holistic on matters pertaining to spirituality and physicality (or materiality), but he was equally holistic on matters pertaining to what he said and what he did (theory and praxis), his inclusive and non-separatist view of all human persons, and to his balanced understanding of time. His mission, therefore, matched theoretical matters and practical issues, was for all human persons, and was for all times, as he went about to be a minister to spiritual and material problems of humanity.

He further argues that what is of interest is that Jesus introduced a new jubilee (*Ibid*: 168-170). According to the Old Testament jubilee, which occurred every 50 years:

*... those forced into slavery due to poverty were released (Leviticus 25 v39-41); leased land due to poverty was returned to its original owners (Leviticus 25 v10, 13); debts were erased since it was the fiftieth year following seven times seven sabbatical years (Deuteronomy 15 v1-6); and the land was given a rest from planting and harvesting (Leviticus 25 v2-7, 11-12) (Ibid: 171).*

The old jubilee was oriented more to matters of social well-being like slave-master relations, the land issue, debt issues, and sustainable agriculture, in order to have a more just society. The new jubilee, as demonstrated by Christ, introduces a new element – the holistic mission. Hertig argues that the new jubilee could be summarised by what he calls “a reversal of rich and poor, a redistribution of resources” (*Ibid*:171) on the one hand and the integration of



“spiritual and social dimensions (including physical matters)” on the other hand (Kraybill quoted by Hertig *Ibid*: 171).

That is to say that not only does Jesus deal with social issues, especially those relating to the rich and the poor, he also deals with spiritual issues. Thus, in the context of the current debate on the holistic mission of Jesus: “the jubilee integrates spiritual and social dimensions” and “it weaves religion and economics into one fabric” (*Ibid*: 171). That is to say that religion (our basis for theological and ethical thinking) is linked to and related to the business of economics, which falls under the social dimension of life. The salvific and redemptive act of Jesus should not be regarded as religious only, but as an act that includes the social dimension. Stated differently, there is a need to balance between pastoral matters and social issues. As Hertig observed, quoting Kraybill, “pulling the two apart prostitutes the biblical truth” (*Ibid*: 171). In fact, the passage of Isaiah quoted in Luke chapter 4, clearly “illustrates that Yahweh’s one is not only the bearer of good news to the poor<sup>17</sup>, but equally the deliverer of the poor from their sufferings” (*Ibid*: 172). By this passage, Jesus initiated “the reversal motif when he announced a new jubilar age in the Nazareth Synagogue” (*Ibid*: 173). This motif calls for “inclusivity” of all categories of the poor ((*Ibid*: 173). For example, for those who hated their enemies, they are called upon to love their enemies. By offering deliverance to all categories of the poor, Jesus expects all to live by kingdom ideals such as love, peace, compassion, and forgiveness, and renounce anti-kingdom ideals such as hatred and murder. Jesus “literally fulfilled the jubilee that he proclaimed” (*Ibid*: 176). He demonstrated it in both word and deed holistically throughout his ministry. Finally, Hertig throws a challenge to the church: “the present jubilee era we live in calls for Christians everywhere to embrace the holistic mission of Jesus by engaging in the real world through

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<sup>17</sup> In Old Testament teaching, the poor were in one sense the victims of the unjust structures of society - powerless, vulnerable, insignificant, exploited, economically deprived, and oppressed (*Ibid*: 173) – the *ptochoi*. In another sense “they were the spiritually poor who were humbly and utterly dependent upon God” and who “hoped for both social and spiritual deliverance” (*Ibid*: 172-173 – the *anawin*. Both senses are found in the ministry of Jesus in the New Testament. See also De Santa Ana (1977).

Jesus' spiritually and socially inclusive mission of mercy and love" (*Ibid*: 177).

Embracing the holistic mission of Jesus ought to be a moral norm of the Christian church. It should move the church to come into contact with a multiplicity of human needs which are manifested both at the spiritual and material or social levels. In relation to this, Nürnberger argues that ecclesial mission patterned after the holistic mission of Jesus ought to be understood in terms of human needs which he identifies as immanent and transcendent needs (1994:5-10). According to Nürnberger, these immanent needs "belong to the sphere of reality which is at least partially under human control, or accessible to human manipulation" (*Ibid*: 7). These include "ecological, physical, psychological, communal, social, economic and political needs" (*Ibid*: 7). Transcendent needs, however, "go beyond human accessibility and control" (*Ibid*:7). These include "an authoritative system of meaning, an authoritative assurance of one's right of existence and an authority to use the powers at one's disposal to achieve one's goals" (*Ibid*: 7). According to his argument, the "immanent" refers more to the material or physical and the "transcendent" refers more to the spiritual or moral.

Ecclesial mission, therefore, should target "the entire spectrum of human needs" and for ecclesial mission to be relevant, contextual, and meaningful, the church has to "ask where the greatest needs of the people, among whom it works are located" (*Ibid*: 9).

The quest for economic development in the Third World is one of the areas of greatest need. Churches should seek to incarnate the holistic mission in the context of economic development in the light of the new "point of departure". They ought to emphasize that economic development ought to be holistic, to keep an adequate balance between what is spiritual and what is material, in word and deed, for all people, and for all times, as a moral goal. An economy which only aims at the material satisfaction of human needs is deadly

and leads humanity away from their spiritual and moral foundations. In other words, in an economy, human wholeness ought to be intact. About this Pope John Paul II observes:

*In singling out new needs and new means to meet them, one must be guided by a comprehensive picture of man (and woman) which respects all the dimensions of his (or her) being and which subordinates his (or her) material and instinctive dimensions to his (or her) interior and spiritual ones<sup>18</sup>. If, on the contrary a direct appeal is made to his (or her) instincts – while ignoring in various ways the reality of the person as intelligent and free – then consumer attitudes and lifestyles can be treated which are objectively and often damaging to his (or her) physical and spiritual health<sup>19</sup> (in Boulton *et al.*, editors, 1994:471).*

Falling into an “orgy of materialism” is disastrous to the human race (Weber 1930). The point is that an economy which grows partly due to a respected, supported, valued and motivated workforce ought not to compromise the different dimensions of humanity. Humanity does not just enjoy to eat, to work, and to do other material things, but also enjoys to excel to higher levels of spirituality and religiosity (c.f. Todaro 1977). To be holistic, to keep an equilibrium between what is spiritual and what is material, ought to be the moral *telos* which churches should uphold in the light of the “new point of departure”. It is a moral criterion which needs to be shared with others, especially those who seek after genuine economic development for their people.

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<sup>18</sup> While it is appreciated that evil material cravings ought to be tamed by higher spiritual desires and that the Roman Pontiff takes a subordinationist view, whereby materiality is subordinate to spirituality, it is the view of this thesis that there ought to be an equilibrium between materiality and spirituality. *Inter alia*, the Biblical narrative witnesses to the fact that human life is both spiritual and material and is dependant on both spiritual and material interventions. There is indeed that inherent communication between the spiritual and the material as humanity moves to mature manhood and womanhood as God intended. Both the spiritual and material need to grow together in this journey. Theologically, the Spirit of God to whom all Christians ought to submit, makes this possible. See Luke chapter 4 verses 1 ff and Romans chapter 8 verses 1 ff.

<sup>19</sup> Brackets included by author for purposes of inclusive language.

### 5.3.1.2 The primacy of human dignity

The primacy of human dignity hinges on the fact that God decided to create a human being - male and female – in their image<sup>20</sup>. A human being is a bearer of God's image. This is what gives a human being the dignity which cannot be compared with anything created on the earth. A human being becomes a dignified creature of God, exalted far above anything else<sup>21</sup>. Nothing or no one in creation has the right to take away this dignity. A human being cannot be lowered to any status – be it animal, be it plant, or otherwise. They bear the likeness of God Almighty. It is not that they are gods nor equal to God in power and glory, but that, in them, one can see the characteristics of God – including the power of reason and the ability to work. This dignity is accompanied by responsibility towards themselves, fellow humans, other creatures and the created order<sup>22</sup>. A human being – a dignified creature – is a responsible steward over all what God has created. They draw their happiness and fulfillment from God and as they live in harmony with the created order. They enjoy full humanity and full dignity and, in this regard, they tender God's creation and support the continuation of all life. The purpose of God is for them to be dignified through and through as they relate responsibly to themselves and other members of the created order.

The essence of their dignity is that God the creator had consciously decided to give them a special place in the economy of the created order. They tender and tame everything in the

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<sup>20</sup> See Genesis chapter 1.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*; De Villiers expresses the same view when he argues that “Christians believe that all people are created in the image of God. This means that God bestowed on humans a special dignity that should be recognised by fellow human beings” (in De Villiers *et al.* 1996:4).

<sup>22</sup> Again, De Villiers highlights the extent of the nature of human to human responsibility when he observes: “Part of being created in the image of God is to take responsibility for your own life and for the lives of your next of kin. And part of recognising the dignity of fellow human beings is to allow them fulfill this responsibility and to empower them when they are unable to fulfill it” (*Ibid*: 4).

created order. God provides them with the necessary “tools” to use in order for them to execute their responsibility and to show that they are dignified creatures. These “tools” include wisdom, foresight, and the ability to recreate their own world. In God’s plan, the dignity of humanity cannot be compromised either by selfish human schemes or by any other creature. Humanity – the bearer of God’s image and the dignified one – stands out as the officer-in-charge of the goods of the earth and over everything God created.

In today’s world, modern capitalism, especially, tends to make a large portion of humanity act as if they are not in charge of the goods of the earth and over everything God created. In fact, in most cases, it promotes an ethic of human indignity whereby the majority of humanity is ideologically seen as a commodity through contractual labour (Hinkelammert 1986:1ff). In most cases, capital is more important than human beings and the labour they provide (*Ibid*:1ff). Against this ideologically defined ethic of dehumanisation, churches should rise to the occasion and promote an ethic of human dignity according to the Biblical witness. It is a moral norm which needs to be shared with the world which tend to see human beings as things or commodities.

Writing to the American audience, the Catholic bishops in America agree that human dignity should be seen as a moral value (1986:12-15). They argue that it should form the basis of the Christian vision of economic life (*Ibid*:15). It is in the Third World, especially in Africa, where special emphasis should be laid on the application of this norm. A number of citizens of Africa live in dehumanising conditions and suffer many indignities (International Bank of Reconstruction and Development/World Bank 1999). Africa’s story is a story of exploitation by the rich and powerful countries. The same story is repeated in the national economies (c.f. Nürnberger 1988:1ff). In relation to this, the American Catholic bishops argue that the economy ought to serve human beings as ends and “not means to be exploited for more narrowly defined goals” (1986:15). This is one of the main arguments of Heilbroner that “behind the veil of economics” lies human domination and social control (as

offshoots of exploitation) (1988:1ff). The economy has assumed absolute power and has become a mechanism by which society is organised (*Ibid*:1ff). Consequently, society – through most of humanity – is serving the economy. In rendering this service, humanity is simply an “economic means” without that God-given dignity.

This ought not to be like this. Christian churches cannot encourage other human beings to continue to assault the image of God in fellow human beings who are the majority. If they do, they will encourage the sacralisation of human dignity and consequently, go against the purposes of God in human history. The ecclesial task, therefore, is to prop up human dignity in an economy. In relation to this, the American Catholic bishops observe again that: “all economic institutions must support the bonds of community and solidarity that are essential to the dignity of persons” (1986:15). These bonds of community and solidarity in the context of Africa include mutual respect between employee and employer, citizens and government, recipient country and donor country. This has to be premised first and foremost on Africa’s re-conceptualisation of who its people are; that they are creatures of God, created in God’s image and, therefore, they are dignified – they are neither “things” nor “commodities”. Secondly, it has to be premised on the fact that Africa’s economies should unreservedly serve the interest of Africans and not use them as means to the narrowly defined selfish dictates of orthodox capitalists.

The life of Jesus, especially in the gospels, is a clear demonstration of the faith which he attached to the dignity of the human person. Throughout his life and ministry, he did not do anything which worked against the dignity of human beings. He went about to heal the sick, preach the good news and do good works<sup>23</sup>. His view of humanity was that humanity needed to have a fuller life free from sin, disease, and mortal destruction. He was even willing to die for and on behalf of dignified humanity<sup>24</sup>. It was a clear demonstration of

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<sup>23</sup> Mark chapter 1 verse 14-15 and Matthew chapter 4 verse 23-25.

<sup>24</sup> John chapter 19. See also Nürnberger (in Cochrane and West, eds 1991:31).

his intentions to correct human failure which threatens the dignity of humanity. He was indeed fulfilling the purposes of the Creator God. Jesus appears in human history as a restorer, enhancer, fortifier, and energiser of the image of God in humanity. In his redemptive and salvific story, humanity holds a special place in the scheme of things. The christological salvation is primarily for humanity who bears the image of God. Nonetheless, other creatures and things in the created order become beneficiaries and party to the redemption and salvation plan due to God's cosmological restoration of all things<sup>25</sup>. Jesus truly demonstrated an ethic of human dignity.

The primacy of human dignity founded on God's image is, indeed, a moral value which churches should share with those who are entrusted with the power to shape the economies of the world. Denial of human dignity is a "blot on this image" (Conference of American Catholic Bishops 1986:16-22). The ecclesial task, therefore, is to ensure that programmes are implemented which give due recognition to the dignity of the human person by insisting that government economic programmes ought to be oriented to the service of the human person. Nothing in an economy - including capital, land, and labour - should exalt itself or be exalted above the dignity of human persons. This is the Biblical witness, the biblical value, which ought to guide Christian thinking on the economy, as Christians seek to positively influence the social order.

### 5.3.1.3 The necessity of justice

The theme of justice is one of the themes most often discussed in the modern world today. According to its current use, it refers to "just behavior or treatment", "the administration of the law or authority in maintaining this" and "a judge or magistrate" (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition, 1999b:768). It follows, therefore, from this current understanding, that it has to do with the behaviour or treatment of human beings by fellow human beings,

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C.f. Romans chapter 8.

with the dispensation of justice according to the provisions of law, and with legal officers. It appears that all uses of the word “justice” hinge more on the popular understanding that justice means giving someone his or her due<sup>26</sup>. For example, the law provides for the person who commits murder and this can be called as his or her due rewards. Also, judges or magistrates give what is due to an individual through their legal judgements.

The complex question is: What constitutes justice? Or put differently: What constitutes just behavior or treatment? Forrester (1997) alludes to the intricacies of defining what justice constitutes partly as a result of the prevailing popular view that nobody knows what justice ought to be in our modern world. Nonetheless, even though he does not give a precise Christian definition of justice, he is content to argue that Christian theology can, indeed, add its voice to the debate on what justice ought to be in relation to public policy<sup>27</sup> discourse.

Forrester argues that churches need to share their understanding of justice with the world. They need not be intimidated by popularist and secularist theories of justice like those of Rawls, Hayek, and Habermas<sup>28</sup>. The Christian understanding of justice is ultimately anchored on the biblical witness, especially the Old testament evidence. The Bible does not give a specific definition of justice, but only gives examples of what justice in God’s dealings with humanity is. It is these Biblical examples which inform the Christian interpretation of justice and its definition.

According to the Authorised version of the Old testament, for example, the Hebrew word which stand for the word “justice” is *mispat*<sup>29</sup> meaning “judgment” (*The New Bible Dictio-*

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<sup>26</sup> See *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, revised and enlarged: page 281.

<sup>27</sup> See the first part of this chapter: “Christian theology and the public sphere: does theology have anything to offer to economic development?”

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*: 1 ff.

<sup>29</sup> See also *Economic Justice for all: Pastoral letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the US Economy* (1986).



nary 1962:680). In some cases, it is translated from the Hebrew word *sedeq* or *sedaqa* meaning “righteousness” (*Ibid*). In situations where *mispat* and *sedaqa* appear together, the Authorised version of the Bible “translates the whole phrase as ‘judgement and justice’” (*Ibid*). The Revised version of the Bible translates the same phrase as “justice and righteousness” (*Ibid*). It follows, therefore, that when one speaks of justice, the reference is to both judgment and righteousness.

In understanding the notion of justice (*sedaqa*), it is important to see how it has been used through time (*Ibid*: 681 ff). Firstly, its root signifies “straightness” – for example cf. Deuteronomy chapter 9 verse 5 which talks about *yoser*, a kindred noun of *sedaqa* meaning “uprightness”. Secondly, it means “conformity, by a given object or action, to an accepted standard of values” –for example, Jacob’s honesty in contractual dealings with Laban in Genesis chapter 30 verse 33 and Moses’ reference to just balances, weights, and measures in Leviticus chapter 19 verse 36 and Deuteronomy chapter 25 verse 15. Thirdly, as mark of God’s character which should be pursued in life and which should help the people of God to distinguish God’s will in life – for example, Job chapter 9 verse 2. Fourthly, as a “moral standard by which God measures human conduct” – for example Isaiah chapter 26 verse 7. Fifthly, as a descriptive mechanism<sup>30</sup> which shows how God punishes people for moral infraction which is done under God’s government – for example the punishment of Pharaoh in Exodus chapter 9 verse 27. Sixthly, as a description of God’s “deeds of vindication for the deserving” – for example, the promise of Absalom to “do justice on behalf of petitioners” in 2 Samuel chapter 25 verse 4. Seventhly, as a connotation of divine pity, love, and grace – for example, David’s prayer for forgiveness in Psalm 51. Eighthly, as a gracious impartation of God’s moral attribute to humankind – for example, the divine righteousness imputed to Abraham in Genesis chapter 25 verse 6. And ninthly, as a call to duty “as God in his grace bestows righteousness upon the unworthy, so the people of God are called upon

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<sup>30</sup> That is to say that justice can describe what is good and wicked. Thus bring wicked deeds or wicked actions under God’s punishment.

to ‘seek justice’” – for example, in “pleading for the widow and ‘judging the cause of the poor and the needy’” in Jeremiah chapter 22 verse 16.

These are some of the senses in which justice occurs. It follows, therefore, that according to the Biblical narrative, justice has to do with: straightness or uprightness especially of a person’s character; conformity to a given value system; the human search for God’s character; measuring human behavioral patterns; punishment in accordance with juridical description; vindication to whom it is due; human participation in the undeserved graces of God; human reception of God’s righteous character based not on human effort, but the unconditional love of God; and the incarnation of God’s righteousness through righteous activities of children of God in society. Each sense complements and supplements the other sense. This rich meaning of justice is seen throughout the pages of scripture. Not only is it emphatically presented in the Old testament, it equally resonates in the New testament. In fact, the New Testament Greek renderings for justice (*dikaïosyn* righteousness, *dike* - right penalty, and *crisis* – judgment) are not very different from the basic Old Testament Hebrew meaning of justice (see, for example *An Analytical Concordance to the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament* 1979:329). The activity of God in human history is truly associated with justice.

About this, the American Catholic Bishops observe:

*God is described as a “God of justice” (Isaiah 30:18) who loves justice (Isaiah 61:8, cf Psalms 11:7; 53:5; 37:28; 99:4) and delights in it (Jeremiah 9:23). God demands justice from the whole people (Deuteronomy 16:20) and executes justice for the needy (Psalm 140:13) (1986:21).*

Similarly, the Christian church ought to be an organisation of justice, a lover of justice, one which delights in justice, one which demands justice in society on behalf of God, and one which is able to execute justice for the needy (including victims of economic brutalisation)

on behalf of the God of justice. The ecclesial task is enormous: to share in word and deed the meaning of Biblical justice.

The life of Jesus as God's anointed is a clear demonstration of the reign of God of justice (*Ibid:23*). The American Catholic Bishops observe again:

*What Jesus proclaims by word, he enacts in his ministry. He resists temptations of power and prestige, follows his Father's will, and teaches us to pray that it be accomplished on earth. He warns against attempts to "lay up treasures on earth" (Matthew 6:1a) and exhorts his followers not to be anxious about material goods but rather so seek first God's reign and God's justice (Matthew 6:25-33). His mighty works symbolize that the reign of God is more powerful than evil, sickness, and the hardness of the human heart. He offers God's loving mercy to sinners (Mark 2:17), takes up the cause of those who suffered religious and social discrimination (Luke 7:36-50; 15:1-2), and attacks the use of religion to avoid the demands of charity and justice (mark 7:9-13; Matthew 23:23) (*Ibid: 23*)<sup>31</sup>.*

The christological life of justice should encourage Christians to be involved in societal events in order for them to contribute to the positive influence of the social order. In the context of the current debate on churches participation in economic development, the necessity of justice, as a moral criterion, cannot be over-emphasized.

The incarnation of Biblical justice in concrete day to day human affairs does not promise to be an easy assignment. This is because partly the modern world is ruled by secularist theories of justice as already alluded to. The situation is made extremely complex when Biblical justice is related to economics which generally claims that it has its own laws which ought to be respected. In spite of this complex situation, what connects Biblical justice to

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<sup>31</sup> See also Paul Hertig in Whiteman, editor (April 1998: 167-179).

economics is human beings and how they are treated in the economic development process. This is the thread which should connect Christian reflection on Biblical justice with the economy.

Therefore, the contribution of churches to the debate on justice and the economy will be on two fronts: firstly, at the level of people, especially those who least benefit from the economic process; secondly, at the level of how an economy operates – to see if people are ends of an economy and to see if there is business morality among all stakeholders including creditors and debtors, employers and employees, the public sector and the private sector, the state and its citizens. In other words, Christian theological and ethical engagement in relation to economic justice should not just end with people as subjects of history. It must be incarnated within the real world of business where human-initiated productive, distributive, and consumptive forces meet.

About the first front, the American Catholic bishops observe:

*Central to the biblical presentation of justice is that the justice of a community is measured by the treatment of the powerless in society, most often described as the widow, the orphan, the poor and the stranger (non-Israelite) in the land. The Law, the Prophets, and the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament all show deep concern for the proper treatment of such people. What these groups of people have in common is their vulnerability and lack of power. They are often alone and have no protector or advocate. Therefore, it is God who hears their cries (Psalms 109:21; 113:7), and the king who is God's anointed is commanded to have special concern for them (1986:21).*

What the American Catholic bishops refer to is what has come to be known as *the preferential option for the poor*. This is a special contribution of Latin American liberation

theologians<sup>32</sup>. Ultimately, it ought to guide economic programme formulation and implementation (cf Pobee 1994). De Villiers calls it “the trade mark of biblical justice” (in De Villiers *et al.* 1996:4).

At the level of the operation of an economy, Protestant and Evangelical Christian churches should probably take a leaf from Catholic social teaching which distinguishes three variants of fundamental justice namely: commutative justice, distributive justice, and social justice (*Economic Justice for all* 1986:35ff).

According to this teaching, commutative justice “calls for fundamental fairness in all agreements and exchanges between individuals or private social groups” (*Ibid*: 35). These agreements and exchanges include those between buyers and sellers, employers and employees, creditors and debtors. Commutative justice reflects the view of Biblical justice that there needs to be fairness in promissory and contractual dealings between persons in civil society (cf Stackhouse in Krueger *et al.* 1997:11-16). Further, distributive justice “requires that the allocation of income, wealth, and power in society be evaluated in light of its effects on persons whose basic material needs are unmet” (*Economic Justice for All* 1986:36). This includes groups of uprooted women and children, street kids, the unemployed youth and adults, and the under-employed workers. It reflects the Biblical view of justice that God cares for the vulnerable and the down-trodden<sup>33</sup>. Further still, social justice “implies that persons have an obligation to be active and productive participants in the life of society and that society has a duty to enable them to participate in this way” (*Ibid*: 36). This can also be called “contributive justice” (*Ibid*: 36). In God’s design, all human beings find their fulfillment in applying their energy, talent and life for the well-being of society<sup>34</sup>. It is a reflection of biblical justice that in God’s economy every human being is

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<sup>32</sup> See for example Gustavo Gutierrez (1983): *The Power for the Poor in History* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis); cf Albert Nolan’s essay “A Worker’s Theology” in Cochrane and West, eds (1991).

<sup>33</sup> Catholic Social teaching on distributive justice hinges on the notion of the preferential option for the poor. To care for the vulnerable and the down-trodden is the primary task of state (cf Stackhouse in Krueger *et al.* 1997:11-16).

<sup>34</sup> See for example the active and productive capabilities of Jacob and Esau in Genesis chapter 24-38.

included and makes their contribution therein for the well-being of society (c.f. Meeks 1988).

The necessity of Biblical justice is a moral value that is rooted in God's dealings with humanity for humanity's sake and humanity's well-being. Thus, the Christian church ought to share this Biblical norm with all stakeholders who believe in the creation of just economic trends as well as those who are adamantly opposed to the establishment of ethics of justice in economics.

#### 5.3.1.4 An ethic of care and sociality

In modern use, the word "care" signifies the following: "the provision of what is necessary for health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone or something"; "serious attention or consideration applied to an action or plan" (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition, 1999a:212). The first rendering conveys the idea of ways and means which are employed to support and sustain human, plant, and animal life, and the physical environment, as well as strategies and methods which are used to preserve the well-being of these entities. The second rendering gives the idea of the pre-psychological and pre-attitudinal disposition which is necessary before the execution of an action or plan. It refers to an outcome-based approach whereby possible results or consequences of an action or plan are critically analysed first before implementation. The word "sociality" is a derivative of the adjective "social" which means: "of or relating to society or its organization"<sup>35</sup>; "need companionship; suited to living in communities"; "relating to or designed for activities in which people meet each other for pleasure"; and in relation to Zoology, "breeding or living in colonies or organized communities" (*Ibid*: 1361). The Latin etymologies of "social" are *socialis* meaning "allied" and *socius* meaning "friend" (*Ibid*: 1361). It follows, therefore,

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<sup>35</sup> See also chapter 3 of this thesis.

that by definition, the word “sociality” signifies the state of being social. It is a state of social organization, of companionship – a prerequisite for community-building, of simply meeting together in informal gatherings, and of simply co-existing together as *homo sapiens* and in relationship to other members of the larger created order. But most importantly, it is a state of being “allied” to and being a “friend” not only to fellow humans, but to other non-human entities in creation.

The Biblical renderings of care are not very different from what ought to be the modern understanding of care. Firstly, they carry the idea of anxious care (inner urging expressed by paying attention to an action) – from the Hebrew *deagah* – as in Ezekiel 4:16 (*Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible* 1970:144). Secondly, as a state of fear or trembling (in relation to performance of duty) – from the Hebrew *charadah* – for example, 2 Kings 4:13 (*Ibid*: 144). Thirdly, as division or distraction (in the sense of possible spiritual stumbling blocks) – from the Greek *merimna*<sup>36</sup> - for example, Luke 8:14 and 2 Corinthians 11:28 (*Ibid*: 144). Fourthly, as haste or speed (a spontaneous and quick response for others) – from the Greek *spoude* – for example, 2 Corinthians 7:12 (*Ibid*:144). Fifthly, simply to be mindful (of others) – from the Greek *phroneo* – for example, Philippians 4:10 (*Ibid*: 144). Sixthly, to look upon or visit (an indication of special feeling for someone) – from the Greek *episkeptomani* – for example, Hebrews 2:6 (*An Analytical Concordance to the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament* 1979:87). Seventhly, as simply care (which is expected to be shown by God to human beings and to other creatures and which is expected to be shown by human beings to fellow human beings and other creatures) – from the Greek *melei* – for example Mark 4:38, John 10:13, and John 12:6 (*Ibid*:87). Eighthly, as simply to take care of (to show concern for the well-being of others) – from the Greek *epimeleomai* – for example, 1 Timothy 3:5 and Luke 10:34 (*Ibid*:87). Ninthly, to tend or herd or govern (in terms of leadership) – from the Greek *poimaino* – for example Acts 20:28 (*Ibid*:87). Tenthly, to bring nourishment or sustain – from the Greek *trophophoreo* – for example, Acts

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See also *An Analytical Concordance to the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament* (1979:88)

13:18 (*Ibid*:87). Eleventhly, to warm or cherish – from the Greek *thalpo* – for example, 1 Thessalonians 2:7 (*Ibid*: 87). Twelvethly, to see or look (a form of critical examination of one’s ways and actions) – from the Greek *blepo* – for example, 1 Corinthians 3:10 and Hebrews 3:12 (*Ibid*: 88). Thirteenthly, to take heed to oneself (to avoid being careless) – from the Greek *prosecho* – for example, Acts 5:35 (*Ibid* : 88).

The above are some of the biblical renderings of care. In short, Biblical care is described by words like attention, performance with fear, distraction, speed, mindfulness, visitation, simple care, concern, leadership, warmth, critical examination, nourishment, and a state of carefulness. Except for *merimna* (cares or care), the rest are very similar to the modern understanding of care.

As for the word “sociality”, it is not included in the major analytical concordances consulted. However, its basic meaning is expressed by similar terms such as fellowship (Greek *koinōnia*) and friendship (Greek *philia*) (see for example, *An Analytical Concordance to the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament* 1979:195 and 437). The history of salvation – from the Old Testament to the New Testament – is a story of sociality of God and humanity, of humanity and humanity, of God, humanity and the created order<sup>37</sup>.

It follows, therefore, that the modern understanding of care and sociality is complemented and supplemented by Biblical care and sociality. Care and sociality are inextricably linked: care emphasizes actions which are needed for human and non-human well-beingness; sociality defines the basis of those actions. Humans cannot execute meaningfully an ethic of care if they are not social. In God’s design, they are created by God, bear God’s image, share the same destiny, and are meant to be “allied” to or be “friends” to each other and other members of the created order. Similarly, humans cannot execute meaning-fully an

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cf Clifford Green’s *Bonhoeffer: a theology of sociality*, Revised edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1999) which discussed Bonhoeffer’s theology and life in the context of sociality.



ethic of sociality if this is not demonstrated by practical care in word and deed. Stated differently, how can one say that one is “allied” to or a “friend” to someone or something if one cares not for this someone or something? The measurement of true human and ecological sociality is the demonstration of deeds and words of care for humanity and other members of the created order, and to some extent, for divinity.

The moral goal of an ethic of care and sociality is the creation of healthier, happier, materially and spiritually fulfilled communities of human persons. These communities are in turn inter-linked to the larger ecological community whose well-being the human family needs to unflinchingly support. It is in such communities of human persons in which characteristics of care and sociality ought to be incarnated. These characteristics include mutual respect, friendship, sharing, and sacrifice.

Once again, the life of Jesus was a clear demonstration of an ethic of care and sociality. From the beginning, he called ordinary persons as disciples to live in the community<sup>38</sup>. His life, work and mission were done in the context of the human community. He desired the very best for human communities<sup>39</sup>. He shared his life and his abundant spiritual and material resources for the sake of communities of human persons. Most importantly, he laid down his life for the sake of human communities in order to fashion out of these frail and weak communities a godly and holy community of the redeemed who will continue to effect God’s kingdom on earth and who will inherit God’s kingdom when it is finally revealed<sup>40</sup>. The christological ethic of care and sociality was a stupendous act of divine disclosure of love (c.f. Moltmann 1977:1 ff).

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<sup>38</sup> See Mark chapter 1 verse 16ff

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, the story of the wedding at Cana at which Jesus gave the best wine to the community of persons in John chapter 2.

<sup>40</sup> cf *Economic Justice for all* (1986:25 f.f.).

It is this ethic of care and sociality as a moral value which Christian churches need to incarnate in the economy. This task does not promise to be easy especially in the light of the fact that modern economics is predominantly ruled by the doctrine of individualism, whereby individual wants and needs are more important than those of the community (cf Daly and Cobb, Jr. 1989:85ff). However, Christian churches ought to share their understanding of care and sociality in spite of this difficulty.

One of the ways is to insist on *maintaining a trilogy of community, the environment, and a sustainable future* whereby an economy ought to orient itself to these dimensions<sup>41</sup> (*Ibid*: 1ff). This trilogy touches at the very heart of the Christian message which includes communal and environmental nourishment, recreation, responsibility and vision. The other way is to insist on *pre-care economics* whereby care should be taken first to consider the effects of the economic process on people and the environment before implementation of a development plan (Goudzwaard and De Lange 1995:1ff). Still another way is to insist on the *inclusivity of an economy* whereby all human persons should find their fulfillment and sustenance in this economy as God's economy signifies<sup>42</sup> (Meeks 1988: 1f.f.). In such a paradigm, talk of "casualties" who are usually excluded from enjoying the benefits of an economy is unacceptable<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> J J Kritzinga calls it "a people centred, religiously sensitive and environmentally friendly development paradigm" – see his article "The role of religion in development" in Etienne de Villiers *et al.*: *Church and Development* (Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research, University of Pretoria 1996).

<sup>42</sup> Meek's terminology – inclusive economy – is very rich and reflects a view similar to the view on "social" or "contributive" justice in Roman Catholic social teaching (*Economic Justice for All* 19986:35ff). Nonetheless, he is criticized by English theologian, Ronald H. Preston (1991:95-107), for drawing out detailed conclusions from his discussion of the concept of *perichoresis* (Mutual-in-dwelling: the Greek Cappadocian contribution to the doctrine of God) and applying them to economics (especially to the concept of inclusive economy) without taking into consideration the analysis of nuances and complexities of the social context.

<sup>43</sup> See Bwalya (1996). In many parts of Africa, it is not uncommon to see the elite grow potbellies, beam with shining faces, drive the latest cars, and trot around the globe with USD travelers cheques, while the majority of their people, who are usually excluded from the economy, suffer from emaciation, malnutrition, skin diseases, lung diseases, and a general lack of self-esteem.

Christian churches should not hesitate to share an ethic of care and sociality as a moral criterion. The life of humanity, inclined to the building of vibrant, resilient, and healthy communities of human persons, and that of the environment, is dependant on how humanity, consciously and resolutely, realize this ethic in creation. Christian churches have a role to play in this regard.

#### 5.3.1.5 A synthesis of moral criteria from Christian theology and ethics

Moral criteria from Christian theology and ethics naturally bring out various implications for economic development. Therefore, a synthesis of these moral criteria is of vital importance.

Firstly, the holistic mission of Jesus implies that economic development ought to support the idea that human needs are not just spiritual and material, but that: theory ought to match practice; every human being – poor or rich – ought to be helped to excel to something spiritually and materially better; and that economic programmes ought to consider the needs of the *now* and the *future*. This means that these spiritual and material needs ought to be met. Even though it is generally accepted that “evil cravings” of humanity ought to be tamed by higher spiritual goals, there is a need to balance between both the material and spiritual dimensions of humanity. Even though one cannot expect economic development *per se* to help humanity excel to the highest levels of spirituality, it, nevertheless, ought to depend on other aspects of life such as the spiritual. It is here where the role of religious institutions such as churches ought to be pronounced. It also means that quantitative economic growth should match with qualitative economic development.

People should not just be satisfied with the good performance of the economy when ordinary people have not experienced any changes in their lives. Both significant material and attitudinal changes in the lives of people are needed, for example: the poor should strive for

material well-being; the rich who exploit the vulnerable and powerless should strive for a co-operative existence; and so on. Significant life-affirming, life-changing changes ought to occur materially and spiritually (or morally) Further, it means economic programmes should not just “use up” resources only for *now*. People should remember that there is “a today” and “a tomorrow”. Hence, the need to plan for the present and the future. Overall, what this means is that economic development ought to move towards a comprehensive balance in every aspect of life such as outlined above.

Secondly, the primacy of human dignity imply that human beings occupy a special place in both the economy of God and the human economy. This is because they bear the very image of God (Latin *imago dei*). This means that they do exhibit some of the characteristics of God such as the ability to manage their affairs, the ability to reason, and the ability to work. This places on them a very heavy responsibility for their lives and things around them. To execute this responsibility, God gives them abundant and sufficient “tools” such as wisdom, foresight, and natural resources. For God, scarcity is not part of God’s economy. It is God’s expectation that humanity sees these “tools” not as scarce, but as abundant and sufficient. Such is the honour which God bestows on humanity. Therefore, economic development should not assault God’s image in humanity, but prop it up through responsible utilisation of all the abundant and sufficient “tools” for the sake of humanity’s progress and well-being.

Thirdly, the necessity of justice imply that justice ought to be seen in every facet of life – including the economic one. It means both the integration of justice at the level of society in general and at the level of how the processes of economic development are carried out from government economic machinery to business technocrats to an ordinary worker. At the very centre of these two levels are human persons. Ultimately, society in general should be the main beneficiary of the fruits of the economic development processes. This includes human persons such as women and children, disillusioned youth, and hopeless adults. Society can

only benefit if business technocrats in positive collaboration with government stimulate ordinary workers through good work relations and incentives. A motivated worker contributes to an increase in productivity which will in turn bring about increased wealth, capital creation, and investment, all things being equal. Social benefits of this process include an increase in the standard of living for people and an expansion of job opportunities. This is why commutative justice, distributive justice, and social justice are so important to be part and parcel of societal ethos from the high echelons of power to business executives to the last person in society. No one should “rip off” the other. Society ought to be protected against economic brutalisation through an entrenchment of economic justice which can be expressed in various ways.

Lastly, but not the least, an ethic of care and sociality imply that care and sociality ought to affect not only human relations, but the entire created order. It means that when it comes to economic development, humans should care for one another because they are “allied” and are “friends” – that is, they share one common origin and are socially involved with each other. This alliance and friendship extends to other living things, non living things and the entire created order, and also to God the originator of humanity’s origin. This is connected to the holistic approach to economic development and to the notion of the primacy of human dignity and the responsibility which it places on humans in relation to themselves and their “neighbours”. In this regard, there is no justification for economic processes to destroy human community, the environment, and a sustainable future. One of the prime objectives of humanity in the implementation of economic development is to maintain a sacred trilogy of the community, the environment, and a sustainable future.

These are the implications of moral criteria from Christian theology and ethics. Therefore, economic development ought to be holistic in every way, dignify humanity, to be premised on the notion of justice, and executed with a high degree of care and sociality in relation to

the community, the environment, and a sustainable future. These moral criteria will be used as “building blocks and material” for the new “point of departure” to be discussed below.

### 5.3.2 Moral criteria from shared human experience: a brief discussion

Moral criteria from Christian theology and ethics ought to be in tandem with moral criteria gained from shared human experience which supplement the Biblical witness. Together they form “building blocks and material” so crucial to the formulation of a new “point of departure”.

In the realm of economics, Christians have increasingly come to understand that a theological-ethical engagement of economic issues requires basic knowledge of economics. About this, Gustafson observes:

*It is no longer possible to discuss economic ethics, for example, at the level of generalization used in the great social encyclicals. Now one should have technical knowledge of the gross national product, the economics of development, the function of monetary and fiscal policies, etc (in Boulton et al. editors 1994:164).*

It is this technical knowledge, at least in a basic form, which should give legitimacy to Christian theology as it tries to engage hard issues of economics. It is this knowledge, therefore, which has helped Christians to “draw out” important moral criteria from shared human experience which have a bearing on economic programme evaluation. These criteria include: a regulated market, individual rights to property, promotion of appropriate and healthy business, and human co-operative action.

Historically, the market (including financial, commodity, labour markets) has been seen as the most efficient mechanism through which scarce resources<sup>44</sup> can be allocated (Daly and Cobb, Jr. 1989; Todaro 1997). At the moment, humanity has not yet developed a viable and vigorous alternative to the market – usually conceived in terms of the Western industrial capitalism (Atherton 1992 and Polanyi 1944). The market has assumed centre-stage in modern human history partly because of the lesson which has been learnt from the folly of command economies which were characterised by total government control of the market and wholesale fixations of prices without a self-sustaining productive base (cf Atherton 1992).

Nonetheless, the market should not be left to itself as if it were an automatic machine or a living idol (Pobee 1994). The point is that it does not have a mind, a soul, and a life except that which is given to it by humans (cf Hinkelammert 1986). It owes its very existence to humanity. It cannot regulate itself, except when human persons do that. It follows, therefore, that the principle of self-regulation of the market should not be misinterpreted to mean a system that can regulate itself without any due regard for ordinary citizens. That is to say that while the principle of “supply and demand” should be allowed to flourish, it should not be allowed to incapacitate society to the extent that ordinary people find it hard to get goods and services from the market. What is the use of the market if there are sufficient goods and services in an economy, but they are not accessible to ordinary citizens? Window-shopping citizenry, that is, citizens who are merely on-lookers and not buyers, is an assault on humanity. Third World countries need to regulate the market to make it accessible to ordinary people. It is precisely at this stage where the role of government as a responsible state comes in (cf Wogaman 1986). How government goes about regulating is

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It is not that productive resources which provide economic goods and services are scarce, but that, through sheer human choice, these have been restricted to the hands of very few institutions and

probably one of the most difficult tasks. One of the well-known ways is to boost the agricultural potential and food production of a country (c.f. Barclays Bank of Zambia 1999 *Budget Digest and 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 1998 Quarterly Economic Review*). This usually result in cheaper food prices for home consumption. The point is that a responsible state should not relinquish its classical role of protecting its people from market negativities as it seeks to promote market-oriented neoclassical programmes. There needs to be a deliberate effort to see the market as “merely an accessory feature of an institutional setting controlled and regulated more than ever by social authority” (Polanyi 1944:67). It ought not to be allowed to operate on its own terms, but controlled and regulated by a responsible state so that citizens might have access to affordable goods and services. Christian churches, therefore, ought to persuade government to uphold the regulation of the market as a moral norm in economic programmes.

The other normative criterion is that individuals have the right to own property. Ownership of property is their just entitlement which fortifies a sense of belonging, dignity and positive pride (in one sense, feeling proud of what they own for its intrinsic and use value). An individual has the right to own property such as a car, a house, a farm, and a business. Even though some of these items may only be considered as possessions and may not necessarily contribute to capital formation in an economy, the bottom line is that they ought to be owned by human persons in their private capacities. About this, Pope John Paul II argues that the genesis or *the origin of individual* property is when man and woman “makes part of the earth his (or her) own, precisely the part which he or she has acquired through work” (in Boulton *et al.*, editors, 1994:468). In some respects, the Roman pontifical understanding of property rights is Lockean, because it stresses the Lockean idea that if a person, through his or her labour, gets something from the earth, this something becomes his or her own, and nobody has the right to take this property away (quoted in Wogaman 1986:14-18). While the Roman

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persons who control society and upon whom the livelihoods of millions depend. See chapter 2 on the problem of “scarcity”.



Pontiff promotes individual rights to property, he cautions: “Obviously, he (or she) also has the responsibility not to hinder others from having their own part of God’s gift; indeed, he (or she) must co-operate with others so that together all can dominate<sup>45</sup> the earth” (in Boulton *et al.*, editors, 1994:468, brackets added). Unfortunately, most trickle-down economic programmes perpetuate a “culture of the propertied and the property-less”. The elite of Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, especially politicians and senior civil servants, are extremely propertied: they have more than two houses, two cars and so on. The majority of citizens who are usually property-less are left in the cold. They are far too much excluded by structural inadequacies and impediments to have an individual claim over the kind of property which matters in a modern world. The Roman Pontiff observes again that the formulation of *the universal destination of the earth’s goods* is that “God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favouring anyone”<sup>46</sup> (*Ibid*: 468). Biblical figures such as Abraham were firm believers in individual ownership of material goods<sup>47</sup>. Therefore, it is not too much to claim that individual rights to property are not only for the President, a Cabinet minister, an industrial magnet, a business executive and the like, but for all citizens, including ordinary civil servants, mine workers, and other workers. This does not mean that they will have the same amount of property, but that at least, basic property necessary to stable human survival and livelihood such as a house and a piece of land, will be accorded to all citizens in an economy. People should enjoy their natural and God-given rights to property as a matter of their fundamental

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<sup>45</sup> Even though the idea of domination is Biblical, it is repressive. The verb “dominate” is to exercise power over somebody or something, usually to one’s advantage. It promotes a “culture of violence” not just against other human persons, but against the environment as well. This thesis argues that the verb “dominate” should be traded in for more amiable phrases like “look after”, “care for”, and “be steward of”.

<sup>46</sup> C.f. Meeks (1988) with his emphasis on the “inclusive economy”.

<sup>47</sup> See the Abrahamic story of great material success and prosperity founded on the belief that God is the creator, provider, and sustainer of the world and all that is in it, including humanity, in Genesis chapter 12ff.

human rights. It is the contention of this thesis that Christian churches ought to support individual rights to property for all as a moral norm.

Another moral criterion is that there ought to be the promotion of appropriate and healthy business. About this, Pope John Paul II observes that business is not only for profit, but that it ought “to be found in its existence as a *community of persons* who in various ways are endeavouring to satisfy their needs and who form a particular group at the service of the whole of society” (in Boulton *et al.*, editors 1994:471). One of the tragedies of modern business is the impersonalisation and asocialisation of the business environment. Human persons, especially employees, are simply seen by owners of capital and their collaborative business executives as commodities (through their labour) and not as humans created in God’s image. That is why Franz J Hinkelammert (1986) does not mince his words when he calls this kind of attitude as one bent on the capitalist ideology of death.

Through the commoditisation principle, “human commodities” are at the mercy of the capitalist who decides who “lives” and who “dies”, that is, who gets life sustenance and who does not get it. Against this asocial and mechanical background, a business environment should indeed reclaim the concept of *community of persons* from the highest person (a chief executive officer) to the lowest person (probably a cleaner or a tea maker). Each one of them is very vital in the line of business command, and should be respected, supported, and valued. Even though profit is a regulator of business life, it should be borne in mind that “it is not the only one, other *human and moral factors* must be considered which, in the long term, are at least equally important for the life of a business” (Pope John Paul II in Boulton *et al.*, editors 1994: 471). A respected, supported, valued, and motivated workforce does wonders for business and society. It can fulfill its historic mandate: *to produce quality and safe products for local consumers and for export, on the one hand; and to excel to the highest levels of its potential in the service of God and humanity on the other hand.* Therefore, Christian churches should rise to the occasion and promote appropriate and

healthy business as a moral norm whose goal is the creation of a *community of persons* which contributes to the larger human family in society.

Further, the other moral criterion is human co-operative action. Inevitably, there needs to be a deliberate conceptual and practical movement from a triumphalist Christian tradition to the joining of all human forces aimed at co-operative action in an economy. Christians ought to be willing to depart, in some cases, from a radical church-centric approach to a flexible human-centred approach which seeks the solution of economic problems which have continued to bedevil humanity. If this paradigm shift is not realised, Christian triumphalism will go on unabated. Christians must be aware of sources of their triumphalism. One of the sources is through radical and misguided propaganda against non-Christian religions like Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, and against secular humanisms, philosophies, spiritualities and religiosities<sup>48</sup>. The other is by dismissing the basic tenets of socialism, and denying that they can be used in economic analysis and progress<sup>49</sup>. Further by simply asserting that the Judeo-Christian heritage, especially of the West, should be the “ultimate plumbline” for economic theory and practice.

While it is appreciated that Christians claim to be bearers of the *evangel* and are heaven-bound, they ought to realise that they, like other human beings of different philosophical and religious persuasions, belong to this earth. What binds them together is their common origin, existence, and destiny. Each one of them has a sacred legitimacy and mandate to

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<sup>48</sup> For example, see and compare Stackhouse and McCann (in Boulton *et al.*, editors 1994:486) who argue that these “should not be allowed to shape the future by default”.

<sup>49</sup> This is the stand taken by Max L Stackhouse and Dennis P. McCann in their essay “A post-communist manifesto” (*Ibid*: 485ff) when they argue that capitalism (in a reformed state) in stead of socialism, ought to be the reigning social system. On the contrary, Pope John Paul II does not necessarily feel that the failure of communism or socialism signifies victory for capitalism, but that humanity ought to evolve a system which promotes “the fundamental and positive role of business, the market, private property and the resulting responsibility for the means of production, as well as free, human creativity in the economic sector” and one in which freedom in the economic sector is “circumscribed within a strong juridical framework which places it at the service of human freedom in its totality ...” (*Ibid*: 472).

make a positive and life-affirming contribution to their common human heritage whose source is in God. All of them should find a way to contribute to the alleviation of human problems. They ought to put their resources – intellectual, moral, religious, scientific, artistic, cultural, political, and economic – in a common basket for the sake of human progress and advancement. A movement towards human co-operative action, in particular on matters of economic development, is urgently needed. It is a moral goal which churches should fully support and seek to share with others. It will be a mark of utter religious and theological irresponsibility, if Christian churches continue to adhere to triumphalist ideas and claim that as “the redeemed of the Lord”, they alone have a claim over how the social order should evolve.

The foregoing, therefore, are some of the moral norms from shared human experience in modernity which will be used in the evaluation of economic programmes. They do, indeed, enrich the Christian theological-ethical engagement of economic issues and thus, make it more relevant to the economic context. As already noted, they form part of moral “building blocks and material” which will be used in the critical discussion of the new “point of departure”.

### **5.3.3 A summary of moral criteria and their implications**

Moral criteria from Christian theology and ethics and from shared human experience are both anchored on the Biblical witness. There is some degree of congruency with Biblical views and values.

The holistic mission of Jesus emphasize comprehensivity in economic programmes. The primacy of human dignity stress that humanity should not be dehumanised by any economic system. The necessity of justice calls for fair and just relations at every level of human experience. An ethic of care and sociality teaches that this should not only be confined to

human relations, but extended to the entire created order. A regulated market highlights the centrality of the human community that everything ought to be geared towards its well-being – an idea which brings out the Biblical teaching about the importance of humanity. Individual rights to property stress that God has benevolently given the goods of the earth to each human being to possess and enjoy, albeit, they should not hinder others from possessing and enjoying them. The promotion of appropriate and healthy business teaches that the business environment is not only for profit, but for the enhancement of the human community - again, an idea which highlights the Biblical teaching on humanity's importance. Part of this enhancement is the recognition of the image of God in humanity and the condemnation of the commoditisation of human persons. The human co-operative action is a clarion call to all humanity to come together and share ideas in the solution of economic problems, irrespective of gender, creed or status – due to the common origin in God.

These are the moral criteria which will be integrated in the new “point of departure” and “model”. Other moral criteria will be discussed briefly as they arise in the course of discussing the new “point of departure” and “model” for economic development.

#### **5.4 THE CONCEPT OF STEWARDSHIP: TOWARDS THE QUEST FOR A NEW POINT OF DEPARTURE AND MODEL FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The previous two sections of this chapter have argued that Christian theology does indeed have something to offer to economic development. Its “offerings” are in the form of Christian insights and perspectives which are expressed in moral criteria which are in tune with the biblical witness. Even though these moral criteria are Christian in character, they are, nevertheless, inclusive. This is to say, they are discussed in relation to other valid moral

criteria from shared human experience which in some ways reflect the basic meaning of Biblical values. Thus, the Christian contribution to economic development is enriched, made relevant, and meaningful. The Christian insights and perspectives seek to influence the thinking on and attitude towards economic development. The main goal is to contribute to the achievement of a more just, caring, friendly, balanced, dignified social order. This section argues that there is every need to move towards a new “point of departure” for economic development and that this ought to be seen as a new “model” for economic development as well. By “point of departure” is meant an intellectual starting point for thinking about the economy. And by “model” is meant a representation of how the economy ought to be.

This section is divided into three main sections. The first section “from scarcity to stewardship” establishes the need to make the transition to a new “point of departure” and “model” for economic development. The second section “the broad outlines of stewardship” discusses broadly the meaning of stewardship. And the last section “main implications of stewardship for society and economic development” is an attempt to concretize moral criteria in the context of the discussion on the proposed new “point of departure” and “model” for economic development.

#### 5.4.1 From scarcity to stewardship

The previous three chapters have established beyond any reasonable doubt that the scarcity concept is the central theme of economic theory and practice. With scarcity solved, economics will cease to have a purpose. So everything in economics ought to be organised around the solving of the scarcity problem as the fundamental economic problem. As already noted in chapter two, not only is it seen by traditional economists as a fundamental economic problem, it is also taken as a “point of departure”, that is, a mechanism by which it can solve itself. That is to say, it is perceived that the reality of scarcity can be solved by intellectually

and practically employing the notion of scarcity as a means. As shall be seen below, scarcity may not be an adequate “point of departure”.

From the standpoint of traditional economics, approaches to the solution of scarcity as a fundamental economic problem vary. The Western world has predominantly felt that scarcity could and can be solved through the employment of the individualist capitalist philosophy founded on private property and the free market economy (c.f. Goudzwaard and De Lange 1995:41-46). The Eastern world, led by Russia, felt that scarcity could be solved by the collectivist socialist philosophy based on common ownership of wealth and property and the command economy. With the fall of socialism and communism, the individualist model has become the reigning economic system, with very few exceptions. And as such, scarcity – from an individualist capitalist standpoint – continues to reign supreme as a “point of departure” in socio-economic-political life on both the local and the global scenes.

In the powerful individualist model, problems of scarcity for individuals, communities, businesses and governments are registered and solved by the market. Unfortunately, the moral issue is that the registration and solution process does not distinguish between real needs in form of basic necessities of life such as food and shelter from wants in form of luxuries such as the want for a television set (Pemberton and Finn 1985:123-124; Goudzwaard and De Lange 1995:101-104). In addition to this, to participate in this market successfully and favourably, for example, as seller, one ought to allocate efficiently one’s scarce productive resources in order to competitively supply quality goods and services according to consumer demand. On this basis, individuals and groups of sellers out-compete each other. Those who employ efficient means which meet customers’ expectations gain more from the market. Thus, there are gainers and losers in the market. Moreover, competition becomes morally problematic if it is bent on deliberate and well-calculated means to “strangle” other sellers. Meanwhile, it is hoped that gainers – through the pursuit

of self-interest and personal wealth – will in the long run contribute to the common good (Adam Smith in Leatt *et al.* 1986). Further, the buyer, in order to participate in such a mechanism, ought to have the purchasing power in form of money or capital or labour. Those with more purchasing power participate more successfully than those with less. This is morally problematic because those with less are systematically excluded from the market and thus, they cannot get all the basic necessities of life. The neoclassical argument that their lot will improve in the future when successful people are allowed to prosper *now* does not hold water. The point is that they need to be included in the market *now* and in the future. To crown it all, only those things which are mathematically quantifiable in terms of value and price can be allowed to enter the system (Goudzwaard and De Lange 1995:51-59). The negative effects of doing this is that moral and social values such as community and friendship which are important to human survival are significantly reduced. This development becomes morally problematic. In addition to this, anything that tends to increase the cost of production such as the harmful effects of production on the environment is simply excluded from the system (*Ibid*; c.f. Wilkinson 1980:168). This way of thinking cares only for profit-maximisation and does not care for environmental and social dimensions upon which all life depends. Again, this becomes a moral concern.

Scarcity and its concomitant and inseparable scarcity-solving mechanism, the market, brings about a social ethos which is anti-social in many ways. This includes selfish self-interest<sup>50</sup> at the expense of societal service, destructive competition at the expense of appropriate competition oriented to cooperation<sup>51</sup>, egoistic individualism at the expense of communalism, unsatiability of human wants at the expense of contentment, exploitation at

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<sup>50</sup> Self-interest does not necessarily mean selfishness. It becomes morally bad if self-interest is used for selfish goals. Self-interest can and should be balanced with others - interest. Having said this, one must be aware that in many cases, self-interest has been portrayed as a mark of sheer selfishness and greed. See Boersema (1999:162-163).

<sup>51</sup> Similarly, as noted already, competition becomes morally bad if it is used to destroy other people. But if it is used fairly, adequately, and in a healthy way, it can lead to, *inter alia*, efficiency, lower consumer prices, quality consumer goods, and business stability. See Boersema (1999:222-234).



the expense of tender care, and exclusivism at the expense of inclusivism (c.f. Meeks 1988:12). The result is that moral and social well-being is radically disrupted (Polanyi 1944); everything in the economy is commoditised including human labour (Hinkelammert 1988); and the economy rather than the human community becomes the most powerful phenomenon to set the socio-economic-political agenda (c.f. Heilbroner 1988).

This approach to economic development has far-reaching social and environmental ramifications. In the quest for economic development, the social and environmental vitality are being destroyed. In terms of the human community, what matters in this approach is how much an individual has and not unquantifiable human values such as friendship and care. In terms of the “silent” environment and ecosystems, what is important is their exploitation for human production, distribution and consumption and not a caring, loving, just and responsible utilisation of resources (Du Plessis in *Koers* Vol.53, Issue 2 1988, pp253-265). As for posterity, it faces an uncertain future due to significant alterations of the environment and ecosystems (Daly and Cobb, Jr. 1989; Goudzwaard and De Lange 1995). The pertinent question is: Should this be the way forward for humanity in their pursuit of wealth and prosperity?

In setting the context for their proposal of a new “point of departure” for economics, Goudzwaard and De Lange, argue that scarcity is a modern phenomenon which bedevils industrialised economies (1995:101). Quoting a social philosopher, Hans Achterhuis, they observe that the notion of scarcity in general did not exist in previous centuries (*Ibid*: 101). In modern times, however, enormous scarcity exists, in spite of unprecedented wealth. They raise a critical question and comment thus:

*How is it that a society of enormous wealth also experiences enormous scarcity? Economically we would expect that as material prosperity increased, we would have reduced scarcity rather than raised it. However, even as economic growth continues*

*and the standard of living rises, a new, generalized feeling of scarcity has permeated our society (Ibid: 38).*

Now the scarcity issue is clear. You cannot solve scarcity by using scarcity as a point of departure for economic development as the industrialised world has done. In other words, for example, cancer cannot be solved by cancer; you need something else to solve it. It is probably in exceptional cases that a problem can be solved by the very problem – for example, one can use fire to divert the course of fire and prevent its spread by setting fire from the opposite direction so that the two courses of fire can meet and thus, prevent its spread. In the case of the scarcity problem, it tends to be perpetuated when scarcity, especially in an ideological sense, is used as a means to the solution of this problem. Besides, the effects of scarcity-guided economic systems on society and environment are well known. One needs a “new point of departure” and “model” to solve what is traditionally known in economics as scarcity. In fact, in the new paradigm, the problem to be solved is no longer scarcity as defined and ideologised by main economic thinkers. The issue is the solution of very specific, plain, and concrete social and environmental problems which have come about especially in the last two hundred years of human economic history. Unprecedented wealth has lamentably failed to reduce these problems mainly due to insufficient means which are characterised by the notion of scarcity. That is why humanity needs fresh means to address these problems.

Even though Goudzwaard and De Lange largely speak for the First World, the same is true for Third World countries whose economic growth rates increase year by year (except in some cases) without a corresponding reduction in general scarcity. Something has gone wrong in humanity’s conception of scarcity and the means employed in the solution of scarcity. For this reason, they call for the defining of a new economic agenda in the light of “the unyielding and deteriorating nature of the human and environmental tragedy” (*Ibid: 38*).

They say that economic problems of modern times are “crises of *culture*” (*Ibid*: 39). They are partly socio-political and partly religious (*Ibid*: 39). On the basis of social, political and religious ideas, a society has been constructed which is inimical to societal well-being. This is exactly what Nürnberger means when he says that the kind of beliefs we hold (social, political, religious, or otherwise) influence the kind of institutions we build (1988: 1ff). Even though we have these crises of *culture*, the solution to this will not just be cultural, but technical as well (Goudzwaard and De Lange 1995:38). That is to say, humanity needs not only a change of attitudes and lifestyles, but a new way of producing and consuming. This includes, for example, consumer products which are unharmed to both society and the environment. Thus they emphasize:

*Indeed, the appeal for economic renewal must include an appeal to embrace values, values that can serve as a foundation for an analysis whose ultimate aim is to encourage the development of a more humane and sustainable society (Ibid: 39).*

It is hoped that an embracement of new values will ultimately and practically be translated into a new way of doing business. The kind of values people cherish, affects the way of producing and consuming, and thus, the way society is constructed (c.f. Nürnberger 1988).

Even though they appreciate positive aspects of the present day economic order, they call for its replacement. Thus:

*Our economic order has had, and still has many good sides. Some, such as the respect for human freedom, ought to be maintained. But we must state that our economic order sets out society on the wrong foot. It draws us away from our human condition (the three aspects of the human conditions namely: social life, earthliness, and life itself (time) alluded to by Hannah Arendt in Goudzwaard and De Lange) and from what we genuinely need to sustain culture and aims us at what is not real instead. It breaks apart culture and the world into the fragments of its own*

*ambitions. Consequently, our economic order is thoroughly out of date and must, with utmost urgency, be replaced (Ibid: 104, brackets included).*

Their language on how to go about changing the current economic order shifts from a somewhat liberal stance to radicality by their use of the word “replacement” instead of “renewal” (c.f. *Ibid*: 38). That is, at this stage, they suggest that one has to go to the roots of the problem and uproot it completely. Goudzwaard and De Lange seem to argue for a radical replacement of the economic order, including scarcity as a “point of departure” which, *inter alia*, ideologically leads humanity not to distinguish between real needs and unreal wants and thus is one of the signs that the current economic order is out of date (*Ibid*: 101-104).

What Goudzwaard and De Lange raise is the problem of methodology, that is, how to go about reconstructing the current economic order. It seems that they prefer a radical approach to the problem. Atherton (1992) alludes to three ways of approaching the market economy by Christians, namely: the conservative (whereby some support the current economic order except that this has to be governed by Christian values), the radical (whereby the current economic order must be uprooted completely and be replaced by a new one), and the liberal which stands in between the two approaches. The argument of Goudzwaard and De Lange seems to fall under the radical mode, that is, a total replacement of the current economic order. One would rather say that a radical approach is not asked for, especially when one considers the benefits of the market economy. It is suggested that a liberal approach is the desired option. This is because this approach seeks the best from both extremes in order to gradually and evolutionary come up with a realistic and humane solution to the problem. It is flexible and seeks an adequate re-alignment of the economic order so that those parts which need to be replaced are replaced, those which need to be adapted are adapted and so on.

Christian theology has provided the philosophy of stewardship. It is now up to Christian economists and other like-minded people to demonstrate in more detail how the present economic system can be changed gradually and evolutionary on the basis of stewardship as a new “point of departure” and “model”. Their work will greatly enhance the transfer of moral discourse from the narrative, the ethical and the prophetic modes to the policy mode (c.f. Gustafson 1988).

From the current economic system, making scarcity a “point of departure” is one of the things which need to be done away with. As already noted, it ought to be replaced by a new “point of departure” as a means of solving the reality of general scarcity – preferably called specific social and environmental problems. The main reasons are clear and some are re-emphasized again: scarcity does not distinguish between real needs and wants; the notion projects human needs and wants as unsatiable; through the market, it excludes those things which do not have value and price; and that it encourages the production and consumption of more and more through its portrayal of a human person as an unsatiable being. Take, for example, the unsatiability of human wants and needs. There has been a creation of an increasing number and variety of wants and needs in our time. This has been achieved through the rapid development of new products through state of the art technology. The mass media has also contributed to this process through advertisement. Consequently, basic necessities of life for all are relegated and huge sums of money, which can be used on what people really need for survival, are spent on luxuries and prestigious items. About this, mainly due to the superficiality of scarcity which is hinged on the notion of the unsatiability of *homo oeconomicus* (economic human), Meeks observes: “Scarcity may not be made the starting point of a system of economic justice. As a *starting point*, scarcity is an illusion. In almost all situations of human life scarcity has been caused by human injustice” (1988: 174, c.f. Pemberton and Finn 1935). It is not that Meeks denies the reality of scarce resources, but that he finds it hard to accept that the notion of scarcity can be used as a “point of departure” for establishing justice among all people in an economy. As already noted, *inter alia*, it gives a false perception of life by not distinguishing real needs from mere wants.

Because of this, one tends to agree with Meeks' idea that scarcity is an illusion. And as such, there is every need to come up with an adequate "point of departure" which can address specific problems of social life and the environment. For Goudzwaard and De Lange, the "point of departure" is the "caring administration" (1955:41-59) – or simply *stewardship*. They observe again:

*With "caring administration" as our starting point, an entirely different economic scenario emerges than the one provided by an economy whose trademark is the pursuit of more and more material prosperity measured in money (Ibid: 41-46).*

With care, justice is entrenched, comprehensivity is upheld, sociality is respected, human dignity is cherished, and a moral economy emerges. With this new way of thinking, all views about "there is never enough to go around because the human being always wants more" (c.f. Meeks 1988:12) become bankrupt. Human beings begin to appreciate economics of enough or contentment (Goudzwaard and De Lange 1995:41-47) and not of unbridled and careless production and consumption. Human beings begin to realise that "if the righteousness of God is present, there is always enough to go around" (Meeks: 1988:12) and there is no need for people to go hungry, naked, and shelterless.

One can agree with Goudzwaard and De Lange, and others, that in spite of its benefits, a scarcity-guided economic order has brought about a superfluous, wasteful and destructive society (c.f. *Ibid*: 38ff). Human communities are assaulted left, right, and centre. The environment is destructively altered. Posterity and their future environment are not a priority simply because the scarcity-solving mechanism, the market, does not account for their needs (*Ibid*: 77).

There is a need to develop “a new public ethos and regauge today’s values” (*Ibid*: 77). As Goudzwaard and De Lange have observed, humanity needs to reclaim the original focus of economics which is *people and their needs* (*Ibid*: 77; c.f. Coetzee, editor, 1987). These needs include: the moral and the spiritual such as justice, dignity, care, friendship, and service; and the social or material such as food, shelter, education and clothing (c.f. Nürnberger 1994).

In the light of the new “point of departure” and “model”, the sense of scarcity which makes people “less accepting and compassionate” (Meeks 1988:17) simply because people feel resources are not enough is out of place. The fullness of God’s being who gives all good gifts to humanity made in God’s image makes this possible (*Ibid*: 17-153).

The acceptance of this new way of thinking and living alters human attitudes towards what is identified by traditional economics as general scarcity. This is because they can now employ “new means” to its solution which enhance social life and the environment. Their adherence to the “new point of departure” spurs them to be more caring, more friendly, more balanced, more responsible and accountable, as they produce, distribute, and consume God-given natural resources. In this regard, it becomes necessary to replace scarcity as an illusion and as a social construct with a more realistic “point of departure”. And that “point of departure”, as already alluded to in passing, is *stewardship*. As noted already, it is a notion which will be argued in relationship to the Christian moral criteria discussed in the previous section.

Stewardship is a metaphor which introduces a new way of looking at economics in that it shifts emphasis from the pessimistic notion of scarce resources or scarcity to the optimistic

role of humanity in not only resource management, but in the management of the whole of life. The notion of stewardship highlights the point that it is not the question of how to solve the problem of scarcity, but the question of how humanity goes about using, producing and consuming God-given sufficient resources for the benefit of fellow humanity and the entire created order. This should be a pre-occupation of economic development.

The ethic of stewardship is a Biblical and theological metaphor which recognises the overall abundance, benevolence and grace of the creator God, who has created all things. Within that overall perspective, it recognises there is enough for all living things – including humanity – to sustain their being, although it takes into account that natural resources are limited. On this basis, humanity's role is to responsibly and accountably utilise these resources in relation to fellow humanity and the entire created order. In other words, nothing is excluded and relegated: the material and the spiritual, the social and the moral, the marketable and the non-marketable, the priced and the non-priced, are part and parcel of the circle of humanity's comprehensive task. It is a perspective that ought to permeate all sectors of human society. But most importantly, it is a perspective that should permeate our economy. All production, distribution, and consumption ought to be done from the perspective of stewardship. This perspective recognises, first and foremost, *the people and their needs* (Goudzwaard and De Lange 1995) as the original task of economics, but in relation to *the needs of non-humans* and *the needs of posterity* (c.f. Wilkinson 1980:233).

The next section discusses the broad outlines of the notion of stewardship. The main purpose is to show that to take our "point of departure" in stewardship is the best option if we want to redirect the economy towards "community, the environment, and a sustainable future" – to use the words of American economist, Daly and American theologian, Cobb, Jr. (1990: *passim*).



#### 5.4.2 The broad outlines of stewardship

What, then, is stewardship? In ordinary use, the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, defines stewardship as “rank and duties of a steward” or a “period of office” (1986:847). It further states that a steward is a “man who arranges for the supply of food, etc in a club, college, etc.” or “man who attends to the needs of passengers in a ship or airliner” or a “man responsible for organising details of a dance, race-meeting, public-meeting, show, etc” or a “man who manages another’s property (especially a large house or estate)” (*Ibid*). Whereas a stewardess is a “woman steward (especially in the sense of one “who attends to the needs of passengers in a ship or airliner”) (*Ibid*). What comes out clearly is that, in ordinary use, the word “stewardship” defines and describes both the specific position and tasks of a steward who executes them within a particular timeframe. His or her position is a relational one – that is, doing tasks on behalf of higher authority and, in some cases, in his or her own behalf for the benefit of higher authority as well as other people according to their specific needs. To ensure that tasks assigned or taken are accomplished in good time and in the right way, it is incumbent upon a steward to work to the best of one’s ability.

Definition number four (see above) is very close to the Biblical view of a steward. Nonetheless, the Biblical narrative expands the meaning of stewardship. It is a Biblical theme which begins with the genesis of the creation of humanity, continues throughout humanity’s fall, and the history of salvation until all things are restored in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit (c.f. Wilkinson, editor, 1980). This does not mean that it is the ultimate Biblical theme, but that it is one of the most important Biblical themes which needs to be appropriated in daily living – including economic life!

The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* defines the word “stewardship” as “management of a household” (1984:1054; see also *New Dictionary of Theology* 1988, *An Analytical Concordance to the Revised Version of the New Testament* 1979 and *Analytical Concordance to the Bible* 1879) – from the Greek *oikonomia* (c.f. definition of economics in chapter two of this thesis). It is a word which is connected to the word “steward”, meaning: “the man who is over” – from the Hebrew *haish asher al*, for example, Genesis chapter 43 v 19; “who is over a house” – from the Hebrew *asher al bayith*, for example, Genesis chapter 44 v 4; “son of acquisition” or “acquired son” – from the Hebrew *ben mesh*, for example, Genesis 15 v 2; “prince” or “head” or “chief” or “captain” – from the Hebrew *sar*; “one to whom a thing is committed” – from the Greek *epitropos*<sup>52</sup>, for example Matthew chapter 20 v 8 and Luke chapter 8 v 3; and “a house manager” – from the Greek *oikonomos*<sup>53</sup>, for example, Luke chapters 12 v 42, 16 v 1, 16 v 3, 16 v 8, 1 Corinthians chapter 4 v 1 and 2, Titus chapter 1 v 7 and 1 Peter chapter 4 v 10 (*Analytical Concordance to the Bible* 1979:934).

Historically, the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* observes that “stewardship” has “its roots in the institution of slavery” (1984:1054). In such an arrangement, “the master appointed a slave to administer his household, which might be teaching and disciplining the members of the household, especially other slaves and the children” (*Ibid* :1054). The position of Joseph in Potiphar’s house (Genesis chapter 39 v 4-6) is identified as a classic example (*Ibid*: 1054). Nonetheless, even though the *Evangelical Dictionary* might be right to historically link slavery with “stewardship”, the fact of the matter is that “stewardship”

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<sup>52</sup> An *analytical concordance to the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament* simply calls this person a “manager” and similarly bases its interpretation on Matthew chapter 20 v 8 and Luke chapter 8 v 3 (1979:553).

<sup>53</sup> Similarly *oikonomos* refers to an “administrator” (*Ibid*). In short, according to this concordance, a steward can either be a “manager” – from the Greek *epitropos* - or an “administrator” from the Greek *oikonomos* (*Ibid*). The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* clarifies this point when it observes that: “The person who administers the household is called a steward (*oikonomos*, meaning literally “law of the house”) or an overseer (*epitropos*)” (1984:1054). In short, the word “steward” refers both to *oikonomos* and *epitropos* – meaning either a manager or an administrator, especially of a household.

occurs before the fall of humanity. This point is clarified by the same dictionary when it observes that the concept that “man (or woman) is a steward of God in his (or her) relation to the world and his (or her) own life is inherent in the creation story (Gen. 1-3) in which he (or she) is appointed lord of all things except himself (or herself)” (brackets included, *Ibid*: 1054-1055). For example, Genesis chapter 1 v 28 (NIV):

*God blessed them and said to them: “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground”.*

Also, Genesis chapter 2 v 15: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it”. Humanity’s responsibility, therefore, is to fill the earth, to subdue (or dominate) it, to rule over all that is in it, to work it and to take care of it. Humanity’s awesome responsibility is well explained by Wilkinson, *et al.*, when they allude to important words in the creation process (in Wilkinson, editor, 1980:207 ff). They argue that “‘Be fruitful’ and ‘multiply’ are commands given to no other creatures.

But in this divine command to humanity (Gen 1 v 28) are two commands, which are given to no other creatures: ‘subdue’ and ‘rule’” (*Ibid*: 109, brackets included). They note that, in Hebrew, they mean *kabash* and *radah*, respectively (*Ibid*: 209). Then they explain:

***Kabash** is drawn from a Hebrew word meaning to tread down or bring into bondage, and conveys the image of a conqueror placing his foot on the neck of the conquered; in one passage the word even means “rape”. The other verb, **radah**, comes from a word meaning to trample or to prevail against and conveys the image of one treading grapes in a winepress. Thus there is no doubt at all that man (or women) is placed **over** the rest of creation. These verses express that superiority in the strongest possible terms (*Ibid*: 209, brackets included).*

Nonetheless, they observe that “the image of forceful dominion which this verse conveys (Gen chapter 1 v 28) is balanced (and, in some sense, reversed) by the rest of Scripture” (*Ibid*: 209, the first pair of brackets included). As already noted, that “balance first appears in the next chapter, where Adam is given tasks which seem quite different from the kind of dominion decreed earlier: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to fill it and keep it” (*Ibid*: 209). Then they proceed to do exegesis of the passage:

*... human responsibility is described by two words, **abad** and **shamar** (Hebrew), here translated “till” and “keep”. The first of these verbs, **abad**, is often translated “till”, but it is sometimes translated “work” or “serve”. And in fact, **abad** is the basic Hebrew word for “serve” or even “be a slave to”. The other word, **shamar**, is translated variously “keep”, “watch”, or “preserve” ... The kind of tilling which is to be done is a **service** of the earth. The keeping of the garden is not just for human comfort, but is a kind of **preservation**. Both verbs severely restrict the way the other two verbs – subdue and rule – are to be applied. Human ruling, then, should be exercised in such a way as to **serve** and **preserve** the beasts, the trees, the earth itself – all of which is being ruled (*Ibid*: 209).*

It follows, therefore, that the dominion or rulership of humanity is not to destroy the earth and everything that is in it, but so *serve* and *preserve* the earth and all that is in it for the sake of humans and non-humans. In this way, human dominion ceases to be a kind of destructive victory over the powerless in nature and among human communities, and becomes a loving, caring, just, friendly utilisation of human privilege over nature for the benefit of humans and non-humans. In fact, human dominion, ideally speaking, is swallowed up by service and preservation so that what emerges is servant-leadership and preserver-leadership. Thus:

“The lesson about dominion is clear: unless such dominion is used for the benefit of the dominated, it is misused” (*Ibid*: 214). In this regard, stewardship is not just the question of management of resources, but that it is also the question of character of those who are called to manage. Generally speaking, what humanity is lacking in the management of resources is character. By “character” is meant the kind that is patterned after “what God has done in Jesus Christ”. It is a mark of love for neighbour as oneself. It does not seek to destroy the society of human persons nor the environment. It aims to give service to and preserve society and the environment. The stewardship concept is, indeed, a very powerful life-affirming way to image both society and the environment.

As a Biblical metaphor, it is “closely linked to the concept of grace: everything comes from God as a gift and is to be administered faithfully on his (and her) behalf” (*New Dictionary of Theology* 1988: 661, brackets included). For example, Psalm 24 v 1: “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (NIV). About this and in relation to human dominion, Wilkinson *et al.* argue: “If God is owner of all and the human dominion is clearly delegated, then it is also clear that the steward is both a servant and manager” (1980:233). Overall, humanity’s task does not end with “stewardship of the earth”, but extends to the “stewardship of the gospel”<sup>54</sup>, “stewardship of personal resources of time, money and talents” and “stewardship of the resources of church and society” (*New Dictionary of Theology* 1988:661; see also *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 1984:1055). What comes out clearly is that stewardship has to be exercised over all what God has given. And “Thus God’s steward over nature is to be a manager of the earth’s household: rock, water, air, tree, bird, and beast, in the infinite complexity of their interrelationships” (Wilkinson, editor, 1980:233). This God-delegated “human management or stewardship must be directed to benefit the household of the earth and the creatures, who depend on it for life, health, and fulfilment” (*Ibid*:233). In this way, “the manager of the earth, even in most

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<sup>54</sup> “Stewardship of the gospel” is a matter which needs separate treatment. The focus of this project is the stewardship of the earth by humans in relation to the human community and other non-human realities.

ideal conditions, is often called upon to balance conflicting needs. For the richness of nature is given, in part to provide for the human necessities of food, clothing, shelter, health, delight, work, and joy” (*Ibid*: 233). The same “richness is there also to provide similar needs for non-human creatures: food, shelter, procreation, delight – and perhaps other needs we have not yet learned” (*Ibid*: 233). The manager will not be guided by the illusion of scarcity whose cost-benefit rationale only encourages, *inter alia*, the production and consumption of more and more, and ignores non-marketable things and externalities. Thus, making humanity to concentrate exclusively on the so-called efficient profit maximisation and *chrematistics* which, in many cases, have no consideration for human and non-human necessities which are crucial to the life, health, and fulfilment of the earthly household. Instead, the manager – in the true sense of the word – will be guided by life-giving, life-affirming, and life-enhancing moral values whose *telos* is to bring about and maintain the well being of the earthly household. Humanity, therefore, is confronted with a stupendous task: “The stewards of nature must balance those needs, establish priorities, smooth out conflict. In short, they must *manage* for the welfare of the creation and the glory of God” (*Ibid*: 233). And this task, as already noted, has a futurist stance: “The earth’s managers must also balance present needs with future ones: the needs of present humans and non-humans with the needs of future humans and non-humans” (*Ibid* 233).

The prime requirement of the task is “faithfulness, i.e. administration of trust according to directions” (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 1984:1055). If humans - present and future – can faithfully administer this trust over local and global wealth and resources, over individual and corporate talents and endowments, and over all what God has given them, local and global economies would overflow with abundant blessings for each and every person. Alas! due to human greed, the notion of “administration of trust according to directions” has suffered a miscarriage of morality at every level of human endeavour. The problem is that “... both biblical history and our own observation of the past show that we

departed very early from the ability to use superiority as a basis for service” (Wilkinson editor 1980:211). Humans as stewards, according to the Biblical narrative, have not been faithfully accountable to God who gave them this task (c.f. *Ibid*: 226). In stead they have chosen to be accountable to themselves through the market (cf. Goudzwaard and De Lange 1995:70). Consequently, people are more willing to amass wealth than worry themselves about the imperatives of stewardship. People are willing to enrich themselves at the expense of community, the environment, and a sustainable future.

In short, in Biblical-theological imagery, the fall of man and woman was complete. It led to the changing of an adequate understanding of management based on Biblical *oikonomia* to a corrupt understanding of management based on selfish self-interested *chrematistics* supported by the scarcity concept. The result was and is a paradigmic and structural shift from life-giving others-interest to life-destroying self-interest. Today, the human family and the “silent” environmental community, are suffering the pains of misdirected human politico-economic actions hinged on greedy personal aggrandisement.

Biblical stewardship says “no” to both irresponsible amassing of wealth and the indiscriminate use of the earth and its resources. Instead, the notion says “yes” to both a responsible creation of wealth and a responsible utilisation of the earth’s resources in relation to humans and non-human realities. Further, the notion casts a wide net of responsibility over personal and corporate resources of time, money, talents, and so on, and over each and every resource of society. It is, indeed, an awesome responsibility which seeks faithful accountability to God because all things belong to God and all are given to humanity as steward. Humans are challenged to reclaim their stewardship responsibility so that humans and non-humans might have life, health, and fulfilment.

### 5.4.3 Main implications of stewardship for society and economic development

The broad outlines of stewardship have been drawn; its meaning defined and described; and its depth explored. The obvious question is: What are some of the main implications of stewardship for society in general and for economic development in particular? The notion of stewardship becomes empty unless it is related to the real world of people and their institutions. Thus the main objective of this section is to relate stewardship to concrete issues of society and economic development. The first part deals with the general implications of stewardship for society. The second part looks at stewardship implications for economic development. And the third part attempts to draw out stewardship implications for humans and human institutions in the light of economic development. But before this, there arises a structural issue: How are moral criteria identified in the second section of this chapter linked to stewardship?

#### 5.4.3.1 The relationship between moral criteria and stewardship implications: a brief note

The second section of this chapter has categorically stated that moral criteria which have been identified ought to be integrated in the concept of stewardship. *Inter alia*, one cannot explicate the notion of stewardship without reference to these moral criteria. It is a generally accepted idea that the management of resources requires moral criteria such as justice and human dignity. Hence the need to integrate moral criteria in the discussion of stewardship.

The previous discussion on moral criteria has clearly identified moral values which ought to be incarnated in an economy. These values need a general model, a representation, within which they are to be discussed. And that model, as already noted, is the notion of stewardship. Stewardship can also, to some extent, be seen as a moral criterion. Nonetheless, it is not simply a moral criterion, but a broad framework in which to explicate moral



values. The notion immediately calls to mind human persons who are tasked to manage well the resources of the earth for the benefit of the human family – present and future – as well as non-humans. As noted already, the issue is no longer scarcity of resources, but the management of resources by humans and how they go about doing this.

The “how”, therefore, becomes a matter of moral concern. Moral criteria which have been identified, provide the basis for ethical engagement and analysis of the economy. In the context of the discussion on implications of stewardship, these moral criteria will be re-emphasised in brief. The idea is not simply to repeat oneself, but to situate important moral criteria in the broad framework of discussing stewardship. By so doing, a clear picture begins to emerge as to how stewardship ought to be in the real world of people and the economy.

Thus, the relationship is feasible: stewardship is that broad framework within which to explicate moral criteria. And that explication is not for mere repetition, but for contextualising and clarifying the meaning of stewardship.

#### **5.4.3.2 General implications for society**

The notion of stewardship, inevitably, has some general implications for how society ought to be organised. The following are some of them:

##### **5.4.3.2.1 All resources and all property belong to God**

The earth and all that is in it belong to God. This includes human life and all its capabilities and potentialities. God is the originator of all things according to the Biblical narrative. God created the rivers and seas with all their benefits such as fish, the land with all its benefits such as minerals, good soils and trees and animals such as cattle and zebras, the sky

with all its benefits such as sun and moon. In God's economy, everything has a purpose and works in accordance with the divine master plan. All these things are owned by the creator God. Modern humanity has tried to alter the face of creation through the wisdom given to them by God. This alteration includes human superstructures such as industrial sites, building sites, and habitation sites. The resources used to put up such structures are from God's creation and gift – even the wisdom, in the form of technology and skill, is God's gift. Property which humanity claims to extract from nature through a mixture with labour – according to the Lockean view – comes from God's creation and gift (see property rights in 5.3.2). Ultimately, humanity owns no resources and no property. This is why the words of that great poet of God – Job – that we brought nothing into the world and we shall take nothing out of this world are true also for this generation. Humanity, though they brag about how much they have, are absolutely poor – that is, they have completely nothing. All resources and all property belong to God, the creator, the originator and the generous giver of all things.

#### **5.4.3.2.2 Humans are stewards of God's resources and property**

Even though humans own completely nothing, they are, nevertheless, called by God to participate in God's economy by being managers or administrators of God's resources and property. They are tasked to exercise responsible and accountable stewardship. This task has to do: firstly, with how they treat fellow humans and non-humans while managing God's resources and property; and secondly, with how they go about doing the task of managing these resources and property. In terms of their treatment of fellow humans and non-humans, they are expected to maintain the necessary balance between the spiritual and the material, the moral and the technical, to be sensitive to human dignity, to be just to both humans and non-humans alike, to execute an ethic of care and sociality in relation to both humans and non-humans alike (see moral criteria from Christian theology and ethics in

5.3.1) and to do everything in their power – as superior beings – to be moral in their treatment of humans and non-humans. It is only in this way that their management of God's resources and property can pass the test of responsible and accountable stewardship. In terms of the actual task of the management of God's resources and property, it is expected that they will respect interrelationships which exist between living and non-living things, and seek to live within the earth's capacity to support life. Similarly, it is only in this way that humanity can pass the test of responsible and accountable stewardship. In addition to the foregoing points, the notion of stewardship does recognise the ownership of resources and property by private individuals and by communities. Nonetheless, their ownership – privately or corporately – is with the *proviso* that they do this on behalf of God the originator, the creator, and the generous giver of all things. This means that their ownership is not for their exclusive use, but also for the use of others such as street children, the unemployed, and the disabled or simply to share with others (cf. Maynard-Reid in *South African Outlook* – Nov/Dec 1989:155-156). For the Biblical narrative teaches humanity that ownership of resources and property – privately and corporately – ought to be for the benefit of the human community (cf. Wilkinson editor 1980:239-244). In fact, property ownership which is basic to human survival ought to be encouraged. In this way people can be given an opportunity to exercise their stewardship. Humans bring glory to God if they manage God's resources and property responsibly and accountably.

#### 5.4.3.2.3 **Human stewardship is for the life, health, and fulfilment of the human community and other non-human creatures**

In God's economy, it is the intention of God that all humans and non-human creatures might have life, health, and fulfilment. In fact, in God's sight, all creation is good. God did not create a self-destructive economy, but one which was inclined towards the preservation and sustenance of all human life, the enhancement of environmental sanity, and the realisation of eternal fulfilment for both humanity and non-human creatures. God did not expect humanity to destroy life, health and fulfilment. God expected humanity to promote these unquantifiable qualities for the sake of the entire creation. That humans are earthly and as

such, creatures of God, should spur them to act responsibly and accountably. The quality of their life, their health, and their fulfilment, and that of other non-human creature depend, first and foremost, on the sanity of the earth, of the biosphere, and of the entire created order. Irresponsible disruptions of these have a telling effect on human and non-human life, health, and fulfilment. In addition to human earthliness, as a motivation to act responsibly and accountably, humanity ought to be spurred on by the fact that human life is social. This is to say the life, health, and fulfilment of an individual is dependant on the life, health and fulfilment of others. The individual and the community are inextricably linked: they share the same destiny. Hence it is expected that humans --privately and corporately – will do everything in their power to avoid those things that would harm their life, their health and their fulfilment. Similarly, the same sociality ought to be extended to non-human creatures – treating them with care and as friends. Dignified humanity has a sacred duty to ensure that their life, their health, and their fulfilment, and that of non-humans, are not compromised.

#### **5.4.3.3 Stewardship implications for economic development**

##### **5.4.3.3.1 Stewardship as a point of departure and model for production, distribution and consumption**

From the perspective of a theological-ethical framework for economic development, the notion of stewardship should replace the notion of scarcity. In this way, it becomes a new “point of departure” for economic development. Nonetheless, in spite of the short-comings of the notion of scarcity and the capitalist model, some concepts and ideas related to them are reclaimed and adapted to suit the notion of stewardship. This is not intended however, to

do away with useful socialist concepts and ideas (see human co-operative action in 5.3.2). These will be integrated in the broad framework of stewardship which is being developed. But for now, the focus is on scarcity situated in a free market economy as the reigning model. These reclaimed and adapted concepts and ideas are very basic to the economic organisation of society. This includes the productive machinery, the distributive mechanism, and the consumption patterns. In this regard, the notion of stewardship becomes a model for production, distribution, and consumption. According to the theological-ethical framework for economic development, everything begins with stewardship and is modeled according to this notion. The notion of stewardship ought to be realistic and not idealistic, and speaks a language which is familiar to modern humanity, albeit, with comprehensivity, with dignity for humanity, with justice, with care and a sense of sociality (see moral criteria from Christian theology and ethics in 5.3.1).

The productive machinery ought to emanate from a very strong stewardship base. This is because it is the first phase at which humanity interacts with God's resources and property in nature in order to produce goods and services for the consumers. The centre of the productive machinery is industry. Firstly, there needs to be an awareness in industry that natural resources are limited and should be used responsibly (c.f. Wilkinson editor 1980:169 ff). Some of them are renewable such as soils and trees. Others are non-renewable such as minerals and crude oil. Secondly, the extraction and transformation of these resources ought not to compromise environmental sanity. That is to say the earth ought to continue to renew itself and its resources ought not to be depleted irresponsibly (*Ibid*). Thirdly, production ought to aim, first and foremost, at the meeting of basic needs for the greatest number and the avoidance of wastage. This includes: production of basic food for human consumption guided by environmental-friendly agricultural practices (Pemberton and Finn 1985; Wilkinson, editor, 1980); production of basic shelter for all; production of cheaper, accessible and unarmful drugs for human health; production of quality and affordable clothing for all; and the production of basic and affordable educational programmes for all.

As for other wants which are not threatening to human survival such as the want for automobiles, society has to decide as to what should be the priority. Unbridled production should not be encouraged. Fourthly, there must be an awareness that there are some things which cannot just be produced, and, are therefore, unquantifiable. These include friendship, care, sacrifice and solidarity. This means that attention should not just be paid to quantifiable goods and services, but also to unquantifiable “goods and services”. Both of these categories are important to the life, health, and fulfilment of human communities.

According to the notion of scarcity, in the capitalist individualist model, distribution of goods and services is done through the market mechanism. In this new “point of departure” and “model” for economic development, distribution of goods and services will be done also through the market mechanism. Nonetheless, it is not the “invisible hand” of Adam Smith, but one which is regulated by social authority to meet the basic needs of human beings. Also, society-enhancing virtues such as co-operation to transform destructive competition into responsible paths, communal interest to transform self-interest into service, and contentment to transform unsatiability into economics of enough (Goudzwaard and De Lange 1995), will be encouraged. Still, fair and just incomes in accordance with commutative justice (*Economic Justice for All* 1986), and the creation of more jobs, so that the majority of people participate constructively in the distributive mechanism, will be promoted. Further those who are unemployed and have no income will be catered for not only through hand-outs, but through projects which will make them self-reliant. In fact, distribution of resources, goods and services, according to the Biblical narrative, ought to be done from the perspective of the weak, the vulnerable, and the powerless (Wilkinson editor 1980; Goudzwaard and De Lange 1985; *The American Bishops Pastoral Letter* 1986). This is what distributive justice means. Those assigned to distribute resources, goods and services, should, therefore, ensure that more and more people participate in a just, caring and friendly market. And those who may not have the means to participate for the time being are

catered for both by charity and projects aimed at self-sufficiency. This is possible if humanity begins to realise that we are not just a market society, but a humane and social entity. In fact, according to the demands of social or contributive justice, humans contribute their best to society when they are empowered through fair and just distribution of resources, goods and services (c.f. *Economic Justice for All* 1986). This can be achieved through both market and non-market means which balance between the moral and the technical, the spiritual and the material, the present and the future, which recognise human dignity, which are just, and which exercise care and sociality for all.

It is a well-known fact that all economies depend on the consumption of resources – in raw form or transformed form. Their uses vary: some are for food and bodily health, others are for pleasure and so on. Nonetheless, how humanity consumes God-given resources is a matter of stewardship. Firstly, consumer goods and services ought not to compromise the vitality of human life and the environment. This means the consumption of human-friendly and environment-friendly products. Secondly, humanity's consumption patterns should distinguish between what is basic to human life and survival from what is luxurious and superfluous. Society can alleviate problems of poverty and ill-health if more and more products which are fundamental to human life are easily accessible and available. Thirdly, humanity's consumption patterns ought not to encourage wastage and extravagance. The point is, for every product and produce we throw away, for example, food, there are millions of people who need it for their survival. Fourthly, we ought to learn to say we have consumed enough (Goudzwaard and De Lange 1995) and that we ought to give others the chance to consume with contentment. This will hinder humanity to go on a rat-race of scarcity which makes them to consume more and more, usually at the expense of those who do not have the means. Fifthly, humanity ought to realise that in God's economy, there is enough to go around for each and every person, if only the righteousness of God is allowed to incarnate (Meeks 1988). Stories of hunger, unemployment, homelessness and the like are not signs of Biblical stewardship, but are signs of the illusion of scarcity which, *inter alia*, is

caused by self-interested material possession for more and more calculated in price. The imperative of stewardship is that the entire household of humanity gets its sustenance from within this household and thus, enable each member to contribute their talents, to society for the sake of its well-being. Therefore, humanity's consumption patterns ought to be stewardly conceived and stewardly exercised.

Finally, the productive machinery, the distributive mechanism, and the consumption patterns ought to be fashioned in such a way that they enhance the life, the health, and the fulfilment of humans – and to a certain degree, that of non-humans. Humanity cannot just produce, distribute, and consume irresponsibly and unaccountably. The creator God, the originator of all things and the giver of all things has given humanity an awesome task: to execute stewardship – justly, lovingly, caringly, humanely and friendly – over all what God has given them. It is expected that humanity ought to be faithful, that is, be accountable to God who gave them such a stupendous and sacred responsibility. Therefore, production, distribution, and consumption ought to start with the notion of stewardship and be modeled on the basis of the imperatives of this notion. These three important economic categories should not be submitted to the figments of the human imagination based on illusionary scarcity which has contributed to the destruction of human communities and environmental degradation. For the present and the future, they have to embrace stewardship as an optimistic option which aims at a more just, caring, friendly, balanced, dignified social order.

#### **5.4.3.3.2 Stewardship and the preservation of community, the environment, and a sustainable future**

From the foregoing, it is clear that the development process will be judged successful or unsuccessful on the basis of how much it preserves (and serves) the human community, and to some degree, non-human communities, the environment of humans and non-humans, and



the life and environment of posterity and their non-human neighbours. This idea has become a well-known issue among scholars (for example, see and c.f.: Daly and Cobb, Jr., 1989; Goudzwaard and De Lange 1995; and Wilkinson, editor, 1980) and can be alluded to in brief. This trilogy has already been mentioned (see moral criteria from Christian theology and ethics in 5.3.1). Its implications are now discussed a little more comprehensively in the context of the discussion on stewardship.

A successful economy ensures that human communities thrive, prosper, and excel to greater heights. Thus, it values both the moral and the technical, the spiritual and the material, and ensures that humanity remains dignified, that justice for all is entrenched, that there is care and sociality for all. Similarly, it ensures that non-human communities enjoy the benefits of these human moral norms. A successful economy protects its citizens or beneficiaries from the harmful effects (physical and moral) of producing, distributing and consuming. It works for the best so that humanity and other non-humans realities might have life, health, and fulfilment.

A successful economy respects the environment as the basis not only of human life, but of all life. This economy is aware that God has graciously benevolently and abundantly given all resources to humanity, but that these resources are limited. It takes into account that humanity, can destroy renewable resources as well as deplete non-renewable resources through unsteadwardly actions. Therefore, a successful economy encourages interaction among all environmental realities so that the earth can renew itself and resources can be depleted in a responsible way. Destruction of the environment by any means is not part of the ethos of a successful economy which starts from stewardship and is modeled on the basis of this notion.

A successful economy is accountable to posterity, their future “neighbours” and their future environment. So the actions of the present will define the future. In this regard, it is not

party to irresponsible and accountable production, distribution, and consuming. It ensures that the productive machinery, distributive mechanism, and consumption patterns do take into consideration the needs of future humans and non-humans, and their environment. Its goal is to deliver an environment which is full of vitality and resilience – ready to meet their needs and the needs of future non-humans.

This, indeed, ought to be the test for a successful or unsuccessful development process. The notion of stewardship, if rightly implemented, ensures that the development process preserves and serves community, the environment, and a sustainable future.

#### 5.4.3.3 **Stewardship implications for humans and human institutions in the light of economic development**

The responsibility of stewardship was not delegated to nature nor to other non-human creatures. It was delegated to humans and human institutions. The ball is in the hands of humans and their institutions to begin to reclaim their God-given responsibility of stewardship, and, ideologically and structurally, move away from the false culture of scarcity. In God's economy, scarcity does not exist. What exists is the abundance and grace of the creator God. Humanity's role, therefore, is to work with God and exercise their God-given authority in the service and preservation of community, the environment and a sustainable future. This task affects all humans from the grassroots to the highest echelons of power. Stewardship ought to be regarded as a general task for humanity (Wilkinson, editor, 1980:231), but with a particular focus on economic development. Humans can do no other than their God-given responsibility of stewardship. They and their institutions should join forces – body, soul and spirit – to think and to do stewardly (*Ibid*: 231). The following are the main groups of humans and human institutions upon which stewardship responsibilities placed.

#### 5.4.3.3.1 Stewardship and government

Government officials and workers – from the President to the last person in the line of command – ought to consider themselves as stewards as well as custodians of a country's resources and property. These include: natural resources such as minerals and rivers; infrastructural property like roads; and monetary wealth, especially in foreign reserves. In addition to this, they ought to manage well the many and various talents, skills and potentialities of the citizenry. Their role is to see to it that their country prospers and progresses in every facet of human endeavour. In order to achieve this, as stewards and custodians of a country's resources and property, they ought to observe very specific norms of public etiquette. For example, they ought not to steal from the country's coffers. Stealing from your country household is like stealing from your own household. This is inimical to the notion of stewardship whose aim is to promote the well-being of the household as a whole. Also, they ought not to earn dis-proportionately when compared to the levels of progress in a country. It is not uncommon to see this trend especially in many Third World countries. Politicians of such countries like to lavish themselves with expensive consumer goods and services which are out of the reach of the suffering majority. Moderation in taste and conduct is one of the main lessons of the notion of stewardship. Further, they ought to use resources wisely and plan for the future of their country. Their vision ought to be the realisation of a prosperous, healthy, and fulfilled citizenry. This involves: firstly, the meeting of basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, health and education; secondly, the diversification of the economy from a mono-economy to a multilateral economy to help the country expand its financial resource base and cushion itself against global trade uncertainties; and thirdly, the storage of sufficient resources and the good management of the country's renewable and non-renewable resources for their future use and the future use of posterity. Further, they ought to ensure that the development process - production-wise, distribution-wise, and consumption-wise – does not harm community, the environment, and a sustainable future. One of the ways is to protect them through sufficient legislation on industrial development and the environment which includes both punitive and motivational

measures (see and c.f. Goudzwaard and De Lange 1995:134ff). Above all, as stewards and custodians of the country's resources and property, they have to ensure that as they attempt to boost the development process, they simultaneously protect the weakest members of society (see necessity of justice in 5.3.1). This can be done through the facilitation of job-creation, the facilitation of responsible and accountable investment, and through socio-economic empowering social programmes.

The life of the nation is in the hands of government. Its sacred mandate is to stewardly preside over the nation's resources and property which they hold on behalf of God for the sake of God's people. It is their moral responsibility to practically execute stewardship in all their projects, programmes and actions, so that human life, health and fulfilment, and that of other non-human creatures can be sustained.

#### 5.4.3.3.2 **Stewardship, industry and business**

Even though it is generally accepted that industry and business are there for profit-making, decision-makers in this sector have to be aware that they are called to stewardship of resources and property. In short, they are tasked with *chrematistics* as well as *oikonomia*. According to the imperatives of stewardship, the two concepts – *chrematistics* and *oikonomia* – have to be held in creative tension. Both of them are important in running a successful industry and business. That is, as they seek to make a profit in order to stay in business, they should be mindful of the other aspects of the societal household such as humans, the environment, and a sustainable future (see moral criteria from shared human experience in 5.3.2).

Firstly, as already noted, it involves starting and modeling the productive machinery, the distributive mechanism, and the consumption patterns from the perspective of stewardship. All decision-makers, as well as workers in all sectors of the economy, including trade and industry, manufacturing, agricultural, and service, should regard themselves as stewards. Their starting point is not the illusionary scarcity, but a firm acknowledgement that they are tasked to manage well whatever resources are before them. Secondly, it involves seeing industry and business as a community of persons (Pope Johan Paul II in Boulton *et al.*, editors, 1994). Top management, middle management, and skilled and unskilled labour ought to see each other as dignified human beings who need each other for industrial harmony and business survival. The habit of seeing workers as good for nothing except for their labour value, does not exist in stewardship. Thirdly, it means creating a conducive atmosphere for all categories of workers which would in turn contribute to the efficient productive, distributive, and consumption base. This includes the setting up of just conditions of service and the honouring of contracts so that commutative justice can take effect (*Economic Justice for All* 1986). Fourthly, it means considering that private or corporate wealth is not for the exclusive use by owners of capital, but for inclusive use of the public household. This can be done through charity and social empowerment programmes such as educational projects. Fifthly, it means re-orienting the ethic of self-interest to service so that all persons are able to exercise their democratic right of expression for the good of the company (Block 1993). This can cut down on unduly control of those in the lower echelons of power by authorities. Sixthly, it includes the tapping and enhancing of the human talent and skill of all workers so that this can work for efficient and effective service (Teke in *People Dynamics* Nov/Dec 1988:85-89). Human resources<sup>55</sup> ought to be well prepared and well placed in order to contribute to company and societal well-being (*Ibid*). Above all, they are mandated to make money on *proviso* that they preserve community, the environment, and a sustainable future.

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<sup>55</sup> Nonetheless, the use of the phrase “human resources” borders on the ethic of commodisation of human labour which reduces human beings to things (c.f. Hinkelammert 1988). The notion of stewardship simply sees human beings as human beings, the dignified creatures of God.

It is expected of them to demonstrate service-leadership and preserver-leadership as they seek to contribute to the creation of national wealth. Responsible and accountable *chrematistics* ought to be a watch-phrase for their contribution to economic growth and development.

#### 5.4.3.3.3 **Stewardship, social groups and civil society**

The notion of stewardship is a matter for all human beings. Nobody, except may be the mentally disabled and people with extreme physical disabilities, is excused.

All social groups from NGOs to church organisations, from professional bodies to social clubs, and so on, should consider themselves as stewards of God's resources and property. Similarly, civil society, from individuals to families, from communities to workers in various and institutions, are called upon to be stewards.

This calls for a change in mindsets and life styles. The way humanity produces, distributes, and consumes ought to be stewardly. Humanity can no longer make allowance to care less for the harmful effects of environment-unfriendly and society-unfriendly actions. This change includes the little things humans do in their ordinary life, as well as complex actions in the entire economy. No action should destroy moral and social well-beingness and environmental vitality.

Stewardship, is indeed, a clarion call to duty. It challenges humanity not to be confused by the illusion of scarcity which makes them to unstewardly produce, distribute, and consume more and more without due regard for social and environmental imperatives. They should rise to the occasion and model the productive, distributive and consumption base from the vantage point of the notion of stewardship. If that notion is allowed to incarnate, it will

ensure that: all persons have their basic needs met and human beings learn the ways of contentment.

Therefore, all social groups and civil society ought to share this responsibility that the life, health, and fulfilment of humans and non-humans might be preserved and enhanced. Time to act stewardly is *now* – for in this lies the realisation of the new economic vision: *the preservation and enhancement of community, the environment, and a sustainable future.*

#### 5.5 AN EVALUATION OF STEWARDSHIP IN THE LIGHT OF THE COMPLEXITIES OF RUNNING A MODERN ECONOMY

There is indeed a high value in incarnating stewardship in a modern economy. As already noted, the benefits are for all humans and non-humans – past and present. However, the path towards this is both painful and gradual. In proposing stewardship as a new “point of departure” and “model” for economic development, one is aware of the complexities of running a modern economy. No doubt, today’s society is a market society and lives by market values, principles, and goals. Nonetheless, this does not mean that society cannot change from self-destruction to self-preservation and self-enhancement.

As already noted, this involves a gradual process of life-style change (cf. Goudzwaard and De Lange 1995:120ff). People of all sorts who are touched by the new ethos ought to join forces in order to create both local and global awareness (*Ibid*; Pemberton and Finn 1985:204-239; Wilkinson editor 1980:239ff). Through insistence on stewardship and practical demonstrations, this gradual process can yield results. The view that society cannot change its adherence to scarcity, to the ideology which surrounds it, and to an exclusivist market ethos, should be conquered and ought not to be entertained. Society ought to change its ways and move optimistically towards self-preservation and self-enhancement.

This process also involves the swift , flexible, and resilient management of local and global affairs by national governments and international bodies. This is because humanity ought to acknowledge the existence of power structures which are bent on the manipulation of society through their selfish means (c.f Goudzwaard and De Lange 1995:120 ff). In this regard, for example, at national level, sufficient and water-tight regulation as noted already ought to be put in place for all sorts of investors. This is in order to ensure that before, during and after, the development process, community, the environment, and a sustainable future are preserved and enhanced.

Humanity, through greed, has replaced stewardship with the illusion of scarcity. Time to reclaim this Biblical metaphor of stewardship and apply it to economic development has come. It ought to be a new “point of departure” and “model” for economic development. Through stewardship, the development process can certainly be redirected to community, the environment and a sustainable future.

#### **5.6 A CHECKLIST OF A SET OF PRINCIPLES TO BE USED IN THE EVALUATION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

The basic philosophy of a theological-ethical framework for economic development has been developed. What follows now is, the presentation of a checklist of a set of principles, that is, standards, which can be used in evaluating an economy or economic development



programmes. These principles<sup>56</sup> are grouped under three sub-headings namely: social life principles; environmental life principles; and economic life principles which are divided further into two parts, namely: business principles and government principles. By “social principles” is meant standards which apply to human persons in their total dimensions, referring to their materiality which is inextricably linked to other aspects of human life such as their spirituality and their culture (Nürnbergger 1994). It is expected that human beings ought to see themselves as they really are. “Environmental principles” are standards which apply to the environment in its own right. Even though the environment cannot speak for itself, there needs to a deliberate human movement towards spelling out clearly an approximation of what standards rightly belong to the environment. “Economic principles” are simply social and environmental principles adapted to economic life. As already noted, they are divided into two, namely: business (including industrial) principles and government principles. This division is necessary because there are two essential groups in running a modern economy (Todaro 1997), namely: business leaders and government leaders. In this regard, their respective roles in ensuring that social and environmental imperatives are protected within an economy ought to be clearly seen.

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<sup>56</sup> See and c.f. Boersema (1999), Hay (1989), Goudzwaard and De Lange (1995), and Wilkinson, editor (1980), on how they formulate principles for economic life derived from Christian theology and biblical teaching. In spite of their different approaches, they all take the notion of stewardship as their point of departure. Boersema prefers to add to stewardship what he calls the “cultural mandate”, that is, the first job description given to Adam and Eve of working and ruling, as a co-starting point for principles. As already noted, this thesis takes the so-called “cultural mandate” as a part of stewardship. Hay, Goudzwaard and De Lange, and Wilkinson are somewhat general in their application of these principles to economic life. It is Boersema who begins to develop some specific initial thinking on how these stewardship principles can be translated into specific economic policy issues. This process should be encouraged to facilitate a balanced transition from the narrative mode, the ethical mode, and the prophetic mode of moral discourse, to the policy mode of moral discourse (see Gustafson in part one of chapter five). And this task belongs to both academic and practical economists, who, in collaboration with interested and appropriate parties, should concretise the philosophy of stewardship into feasible economic policy frameworks.





Key:

A = exceptional

B+ = very good

B = good

C = average

D = poor

E = very poor

(Source: Musonda Bwalya, June 2001)

NB (1) All the principles can be used in the evaluation of either economic development programmes as a whole or specific economic programmes. However, in order to avoid unnecessary repetition, social and environmental principles apply more to the evaluation of economic development programmes as a whole. Economic principles apply more to the evaluation of specific economic development programmes. After all, economic principles are simply social and environmental principles adapted to economic life.

(2) Where a principle does not apply, the grade will be “non-applicable” (n/a).

## 5.7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The main objective of this chapter was to critically discuss and present the normative basis of a theological-ethical framework for economic development. This was achieved by critically formulating the moral foundation upon which a theological-ethical engagement of economic issues rests.

Firstly, this chapter has established that Christian theology (including Christian ethics) does have something to offer to economic development. It ought to be willing to offer its various insights and perspectives as one voice among many.

Secondly, this chapter has hinted that the Christian insights and perspectives are in the form of Christian moral criteria such as the holistic mission of Jesus, the primacy of human dignity, the necessity of justice, and an ethic of care and sociality. These criteria are in tune with the Biblical witness. In addition, these criteria ought to be combined with moral criteria from shared human experience which are generally in tune with the Biblical witness such as a regulated market, individual rights to property, promotion of appropriate and healthy business, and human co-operative action. Moral criteria from Christian theology and from shared human experience form part of a new “point of departure” and “model” for economic development.

Thirdly, it has pointed out that the concept of stewardship ought to be a new “point of departure” and a “model” for economic development. Stewardship, a Biblical metaphor and principle, is that broad framework within which to discuss and present other moral criteria which are in tune with the Biblical witness. These are taken from Christian theology and ethics on the one hand, and from shared human experience on the other hand. It is not simply another moral criterion, but a general model within which moral criteria is explicated. There is every need to move away from scarcity as the current “point of departure” for economic development to stewardship as the new “point of departure” for economic development. This is because, *inter alia*, the notion of scarcity spurs humanity to produce and consume more and more without any regard for the human society and the environment nor for anything without a price. By definition, stewardship is a God-given responsibility which has to do with the management of the household. Stewardship ensures that the God-given human mandate is used for the service and preservation of society and the environment. As a concept, it has implications for society, in general, and for economic development, in particular. In general, that: all resources and all property belong to God; humans are stewards of God’s resources and property; and human stewardship is for the life,

health, and fulfilment of the human community and other non-human realities. In relation to economic development, that: stewardship ought to be a “point of departure” and “model” for the productive machinery, the distributive mechanism, and consumption patterns; and the preservation and enhancement of community, the environment, and a sustainable future ought to be the test for a successful economy. In relation to humans and human institutions, that: government, as steward and custodian of a country’s resources and property, ought to think and act stewardly for the sake of the nation; decision-makers in industry and business ought not to see themselves as people responsible for wealth-creation (*chrematistics*) only, but as also tasked with *oikonomia*, that is, stewardship in the true sense of the word; and that all social groups and civil society ought to see stewardship as their general human task which has a particular relevance for economic development.

Fourthly, this chapter has shown that to realise the vision of a new economic way of life rooted in stewardship will not be an easy task especially in light of the complexity of the modern economy. Nonetheless, there needs to be a gradual process of life-style change for all people and the legislative intervention of responsible governments and international bodies so that selfish power structures do not hinder this change. Humanity ought to be optimistic that, locally and globally, they can gradually change the *status quo* which is guided by scarcity to one which is guided, directed, and modeled by the notion of stewardship.

Finally, a checklist of a set of principles is provided in this chapter. These are deduced from the philosophy of stewardship which has been developed. The purpose of doing this is to help one to easily evaluate the economy or economic development programmes by using relevant principles as evaluative criteria.

The ball is in the hands of all humans to exercise responsible and accountable stewardship over all what God has given them. They ought to use their superiority and their authority in

the service and preservation of society and the environment. They have to act *now* so that their life, health, and fulfilment and that of other members of non-human communities, and that of posterity, and their future “neighbours” can be assured. Humanity, therefore, has to arrest the destructive effects on society and the environment which were and are being unleashed by unsteady actions. Their sacred duty is to incarnate stewardship in the economic realm so that it might serve the interests of society and the environment.