

***BOTHO/UBUNTU AND JUSTICE AS RESOURCES FOR ACTIVISM TOWARDS
A JUST AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY IN SOUTH AFRICA AND AFRICA***

(Picture – please find a picture showing ‘redistribution’ and / or justice. It can even serve as the background for the whole page)

**AN OCCASIONAL PAPER
COMMISSIONED BY THE
ECUMENICAL SERVICE FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC JUSTICE (ESSET)**



Dr Puleng LenkaBula

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Ecumenical Service for Socio-Economic Transformation (ESSET)

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Published:

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Acknowledgement:

Much appreciation goes to ESSET's donors who made the writing and publication of this paper possible:

Christian Aid (UK), Diakonia Sweden, Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED), HEKS, Norwegian Church Aid, and the Karibu Foundation

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ABSTRACT

This paper suggests that an economy which is largely based on the values of the neoliberal economic policy framework, in the contemporary context of economic globalisation, such as the South African economy, has the potential to yield deeper levels of poverty and greater inequalities. It also has the prospects of widening the gap between the poor and the rich; between those with access and those with limited or no access, to the basic requirements of life such as health, education, water and housing. In so far as the neoliberal economic framework uses market mechanisms to apportion value to the resources and goods which enable life, it unwittingly perpetuates the hegemony of the market over and above other life-giving principles and values such as botho/ubuntu justice and sustainability, which are essential for the flourishing of societies and for a just and sustainable economy.

The paper suggests that the insistence by policy makers on adopting economic models premised on economic growth, a key distinguishing feature of the neoliberal economic policy framework, even when these approaches fail, ought to be challenged since they undercut the wellbeing of humanity and the web of life. In order that transformation and alternative ways of being and conducting life are ascertained, constructive African and Christian values, such as botho/ ubuntu and justice, ought to be embedded and entrenched in the economy. In addition, the paper asserts that the transformation of life-denying policies and their negative impacts, ought to be, and is one of, the central mandates of the church, ecumenical movements and society. The prophetic responsibility to advocate a just and sustainable economy is not only a requirement for the church and the ecumenical organisations, such as the Ecumenical Service for Social Transformation (ESSET); it is the identity and core responsibility of the church and the ecumenical movement. This mandate was evident in the identity and work of Jesus Christ by his active solidarity with the poor and those on the underside of society and history, and who also affirmed the fullness of life for God's people and the earth.

PREFACE

South Africa's economic development since 1994 is a 'tale of two cities'. One part of the country celebrates unparalleled success as evidenced by an economy that grew consistently over the years reaching a high of 4.9% in 1996 resulting in the country's revenue rising from R161, 97 billion in 1997 when Honourable Trevor Manuel became Minister of Finance to a projected R544, 6 billion in the 2007/8 budget.

However these figures stand side by side with another stark reality. A reality of a South Africa which has become more unequal; has an unemployment rate that increased from 15.2% in 1996 to 26.5% in 2005 when defined narrowly or 38% using the expanded definition; and has millions more living in conditions of acute poverty.

To date the discourse to overcome this challenge has been dominated by a quasi-religious adherence to a strategy of 'redistribution through growth'. This strategy is premised on the belief that if the 'first' economy is supported and put on a sustainable growth trajectory the spin-offs would make a dent on the 'second' economy. The fundamentals, as the proponents of the status-quo argue, should not be tampered with. There have however been a number of government interventions such as employment equity, black economic empowerment policies and increased social security initiatives aimed at increasing the number of beneficiaries of the economic growth.

This dual reality, of economy that generates growth for some and destitution for others, prompted ESSET to commission this paper. The paper is presented as part of ESSET's **promoting dialogue** process. It seeks to expose the limitations of the 'redistribution through growth' model as a poverty eradication strategy. Secondly the paper seeks to introduce aspects of our indigenous knowledge and faith imperatives as possible resources for use in the quest for a just and ethical economic system that will embrace and be geared towards addressing the needs of those who still remain outside the realm of mainstream economic activity.

It is said in Setswana "**bana ba motho ba kgaogana tlhogwana ya tsie**". Literally it means that members of the family share the head of a locust. It means that when some are in need, we do not wait until we have in abundance before we can start to share with them, however little we may be having. The imperative this value raises is that we should share even the little we have with others in need. The challenge is to begin inculcate in our economic and political systems values that will drive the nation to embrace sharing, redistribution as an ethical imperative, as a right African thing to do.

May we study the paper with minds that constantly strives to produce the best possible strategies towards making our world, our nation, a poverty free society that thrives on justice and the equality for all. May we find it within ourselves to read the paper and offer our critique with hearts that are also pained by the cries and pains of the millions of our brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, children and neighbours whose lives are nothing but abundant – a reality that negates Jesus affirmation as recorded in the gospel of John.

Rev Desmond Lesejane
Executive Director
ESSET

ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
ASGISA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa
CGE	Commission on Gender Equality
ESSET	Ecumenical Service for Socio-Economic Transformation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEAR	Growth Employment and Redistribution Policy
HS	Hebrew Scriptures
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SACBC	South African Catholic Bishops Conference
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
WARC	World Alliance of Reformed Churches
WB	World Bank
WCC	World Council of Churches
WSF	World Social Forum
WTO	World Trade Organization

INTRODUCTION

One of the leading African feminist theologians, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, has made an important call to African theologians to encourage and advance theological reflections which are relevant to, and take seriously, the plight of the African people and the earth. She proposes that African theological or ethical reflections ought to draw “on the latent powers of our faith convictions both Christian and African”.¹ This challenging invitation and perspective is also in synergy with numerous calls, particularly by feminist, black, liberation and contextual, African theologians, that for theology to become meaningful to the African peoples, it ought to be grounded and enhanced by the resources derived from Christian scriptures, tradition, wisdom, rationale, experiences and African culture. These theologies also have to proclaim the affirmation of life for all God’s people and God’s creatures.

The affirmation of life is a central motif for theological and ethical reflection by Africans, primarily because Africa, unlike many other continents or peoples, has suffered a variety of human-made and natural disasters or crises, such as slavery, colonialism, apartheid, neo-colonialism, and in recent years, subtle exploitation and plunder of the resources and peoples of Africa for the purposes of trade and profit.² Mafeje rightly notes that the historical antecedents, which shaped political governance and economies of Africa, cannot be ignored if one wants to fully understand the contemporary issues related to democracy and the economy in Africa, and I would add, South Africa. Mafeje further suggests that one of the greatest challenges that still confront Africa today is the fact that post-independent African states and post-apartheid South Africa were fully plunged into economic systems which were meant to be related to those of the metropolitan and/or former colonial rulers. This he expresses in the following words,

Africa more than any other Third World region got fully integrated into metropolitan economies. This can be treated as a proof of its low defence capacity or permeability of its social formations. Compared with Asia, Africa was balkanized too easily because it did not have any prototypical state formation that might have afforded it a maximum political resistance on a wide scale. Consequently to the destruction of the West African mercantile economies during the trans-Atlantic slavery, by the advent of colonialism Africa was in no position to withstand the capitalist onslaught to its economies. It became easy prey to colonial capitalism. This signifies two things, namely that African economies literally became appendages of European economies and, accordingly, lost their internal dynamic, i.e. they were totally subordinated and could not reproduce themselves. Therefore, the

¹ Oduyoye, M.A. 1996. “Feminist Theology-Africa”, in Russell, L.M. and Clarkson, J. S. *Dictionary of Feminist Theology*, 14.

² Bond, Patrick 2006. *Looting Africa*, London: Zed Books.

colonial political and economic heritage in African social formation runs deeper than most would realize.³

The numerous experiences of crises and calamity, whether in the political, environmental, socio-political or economic spheres, have permeated so many generations and African lives, that, if unchecked or unattended to, they will promote the cycle of death. Thus, they require theologians, ethicists, social scientists, institutions, people of good will and those in solidarity with Africans, to seek socio-economic and ecological justice as imperative and alternative ways of being and living life so that exploitation, marginalisation, colonialism, domination, neo-colonialism, and hyper- and death-dealing capitalism are overcome, and life for all humanity is affirmed and recognised. It has become imperative for all Africans (and those in solidarity with their plight) to seek alternative ways of being and living life so that their legacies are not perpetuated.

Kobia rightly expresses the need to embrace hope and to transform the negative impacts of the legacies of colonialism, slavery, apartheid and neo-colonialism when he says, “the suffering and the misery experienced in Africa today is an invitation to awaken, in the hearts and minds of her people, the possibility of a new life that is rich and fulfilling.”⁴ He further suggests that in order to cultivate hope to transform the contemporary situation for the better, Africans ought not to endure the miseries of poverty and isolation and should not allow its people or leaders to be eternally marginalised. Instead, Africa should cultivate its resources and proclaim the message of hope so that life can be lived in abundance by all. It is therefore very important for any theological endeavour by African theologians, churches and/or ecumenical organisations, to continue to pursue the restoration of the dignity of Africans and the earth, in all facets of life, including the economy.

The author of the present paper sets out to identify and discuss the values that should undergird a just and sustainable economy. Sustainable and just economies are understood, in the present study, to refer, *inter alia*, to the interlinking and integration of the economic, social, religious, cultural and such systems to ensure that the well-being of humanity and the web of life is attained, which implies that all institutions, attitudes/values, or conduct by any member of society, whether individual, group or institutions, that inhibit the well-being of humanity and the web of life, are transformed so that the ideals of just and sustainable economies and ecologies are established. This would entail all people and institutions, public or private, embracing values and principles that would enable the wellness of humanity and the said web to flourish. It means that the macro-economic, socio-political and environmental policies and their implementation must be subject to these values.

³ Mafeje, Archie. 2002. “Democratic Governance and New Democracy in Africa: Agenda for the Future” in Anyang’ Nyongo et al, eds [2002]. *New Partnership for Africa’s Development NEPAD A New Path?*, 2002:74

⁴ Kobia, Samuel. 2003. *The Courage to Hope: The Roots for a New Vision and the Calling of the Church in Africa* Geneva: WCC, 94.

The context of this study is post-apartheid South Africa, that is, the twelve years following the political transition from apartheid to democracy. South Africa's 'inclusion' in the global economy, by means of its participation in international trade and economic institutions and processes, also informs this context.

The author of this paper further seeks to identify resources and values in African culture, Christian Theology, Ethics, the Bible, ecclesial (Church) and Ecumenical tradition, which are useful in the search for a just and sustainable economy, especially in South Africa and Africa. In particular, the present author will examine the values of *botho/ubuntu* and justice, as well as explore how these can be utilised in the pursuit of a sustainable and just economy.

'*Botho*' is a Sesotho⁵ word which expresses the concept of being human. It encompasses qualities such as humane interactions with other people, relationality and respect for the dignity of human beings and other creatures, cognisance of the connectedness of humanity, the earth and the web of life, in all their diversity.

Justice, on the other hand, is both a normative value, encouraged by both Christianity and African traditional religion, and spirituality. In African cultural thought and life, it finds meaning in relationality, connectedness and the desire to ensure fairness in all aspects of life. In Christianity, justice has also found different expressions. It has generally been used to describe the notions of fairness, integrity, impartiality, righteousness, honesty and fair-dealing. Because of the variety of meanings attached to justice, it is sometimes viewed by ethicists or theologians as an elusive concept. In the present paper, however, the author will not endeavour to outline the diverse or competing claims or definitions of justice. The notions of justice which encompass being and doing (ontologies and praxis), will be promoted. These conceptions of justice primarily concern themselves with the constant quest for "right relationships with self, others, creation and God."⁶ *Botho/ubuntu* and justice will undergird the framework which assesses the current economic situation in South Africa. They will also be employed to underlie the envisioning of a 'better life for all South Africans' and Africans in general.

It would seem that the evaluation of the economy and ecology and the search for just and sustainable economies require multidisciplinary approaches that demonstrate understanding, assess, and interrogate. To engage economics and economic policies, is fundamental and urgent for Africa and African theologians/ethicists, because the economy has been a realm in which biodiversity and many lives have been compromised during and after colonisation. African theology and ethics, like the 'disciplines' of other human, social and natural sciences, also have the responsibility (and right) to engage in economic discourses in order to dispel the long held myth that the realm of economy or economics is the domain of economists only. The inaccurate idea that the best people to

⁵ Sesotho signifies both the language and culture of the Basotho, found in South Africa and Lesotho. The language belongs to the same language groups as the Setswana (Botswana), Lozi (Zambia) and Sepedi (Polokwane –SA).

⁶ Lebacqz, Karen. 1987. *Foundations for a Christian Approach to Justice: Justice in an Unjust World*, 158

engage in, and thus determine, economic discourses and policies, are economists, to the exclusion of the insights and inputs of other disciplines was, for instance, advanced by the famous 20th century American economist, Jacob Viner (1892-1970) who said that “economics is what economists do.”⁷

Our understanding is that economics requires the insights of different disciplines and different peoples. All sectors of society have to engage in economics and economic policies because they have a stake in it. Our belief is that if and when society and its constituent institutions disengage from economics and economic policies, the threats to life and the web of life will increase.

The present paper is divided into nine parts. The first, will locate the context of the discussion with a brief background to the South African economy, highlighting its policies and features. The second part will indicate links between the South African and the global economy. This part seeks, in particular, to indicate the influences of international economies, multilateral trade, and finance institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (the WB) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), on the development of the economic policy of this country.

The third and fourth parts of the paper will employ *botho/ubuntu* and justice as constructive principles and norms that can be helpful in the quest for just and sustainable economies. In this section, the variety of meanings connected to *botho/ubuntu* will be delineated. Its contribution and significance for Christian theological and ethical reflections on a just and sustainable economy will be stated. The next part explains the meaning of justice in the Bible and theological ethics, while the sixth explores the implications of *botho/ubuntu* and justice for a sustainable and just economy in South African and Africa in general. The seventh part will seek to understand the implications of *botho* and justice for a just and sustainable economy. The final part will outline some alternatives that can be employed to promote a sustainable and just economy.

The alternatives affirmed in this study do not claim to exhaust the entire range of options which are available or possible for the total transformation of unjust elements of the economies centred on economic growth and globalisation. They are understood as complementary and supportive strategies to a variety of alternatives which are being proposed or offered as strategies for undoing or overcoming these unjust elements. Therefore, in the present study, they are understood to be African-inspired alternatives because they seek to draw from and engender constructive African Christian theological, ethical and cultural resources to envision and influence the construction and development of a just and sustainable economy. These alternatives, it is suggested, have the potential to lead to a just and sustainable economy that would benefit the wellbeing of humanity and the web of life, including the earth.

The task of seeking justice, that is to advocate transformation for a better life for all people and the earth, is not only constitutive of the mandate, life and work of the Ecumenical Service for Socio-Economic Transformation (ESSET), but in addition, it is

⁷ Viner, Jacob, quoted in Mohr *et al.* 1995. *Economics for South African Students*, 7.

and ought to be its identity as well as that of the church, which by implication, means, that the mandate and responsibility of ESSET, the churches and the ecumenical organisations, is to affirm the fullness of life (John 10:10) and to seek and announce the reign and kin-dom⁸ of God on earth, including the economy. Thus, this requires advocacy for the economy, ecology and relations between peoples.

⁸ Kin-dom is used in this sense to express the idea of relationality and the search for justice. It is a term that was coined or first used and developed in theological discourse by a member of the Latin American Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) and feminist social ethicist, Ada Maria Isasi Diaz, to replace the use of the patriarchal and hierarchical notion of 'kingdom' when referring to God's reign, because it is more egalitarian and relational. Refer to her book *Mujerista Theology*, Orbis, 1996.

POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA AND THE ECONOMY

1.1 Post Apartheid South Africa and the Need for a Transformed Economy

One of the main challenges facing the democratic South Africa is the continuing marginalisation of the majority of black people from economic activity, which has resulted in a gap between socio-political expectations and economic reality. It has, to a large extent, demonstrated that political liberation does not in and of itself translate into economic liberation. Rudolf Gouws, in an article, 'South Africa and the Challenge of Globalisation', suggests that despite the successes of the political transition in 1994, South Africa has been marred by numerous problems in the economic sphere. He argues that

Unemployment remains extremely high, though declining in recent years. High unemployment is linked partly to structural issues, such as the fact that in common with most African countries, South Africa has not yet developed substantially beyond commodity and processed exports. The country also has a shortage of skills (particularly among the black population) that are appropriate in the globalizing world. Among other problems facing the economy and society are HIV/ and Aids, large income and wealth disparities, widespread poverty and high levels of crime.⁹

The observation that the post-apartheid South Africa would be beset with numerous socio-economic problems, led the government (of national unity) in 1994 to aim at constructing economic policies which address poverty, inequalities, and related ills. These problems have demonstrated that political transformation needed to be complemented by economic transformation urgently.

1.2 The Reconstruction and Development Programme

In the quest for socio-economic redress and economic transformation, the government of National Unity, led by the African National Congress (ANC), adopted a policy framework, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), when it took governance in May 1994. The RDP sought to find a way of fostering economic growth and investment whilst at the same time addressing poverty, inequalities and social problems which resulted from years of colonisation and apartheid. It was a medium-term vision for the new South Africa with its defining features being, *inter alia*,

⁹ Gouws, Rudolf. South Africa and the Challenge of Globalisation. Paper presented at the Conference on Globalisation and Economic Success: Policy Options for Africa in Cairo, on the 13th -14th November 2006:3.

- Economic transformation,
- Eradication of poverty,
- Reduction of inequalities,
- Redistribution of goods and resources,
- Distribution of wealth and access to wealth, and
- Delivery of resources and services to all (health, education, housing etc).

The above were to be achieved by, among other means, the provision of training and education; access to social support, including social security support to the aged and children living below the poverty line; and access to health for children younger than the age of five.

Gouws, however, states that although the RDP had sought to balance the need to improve economic growth and to address the social inequities derived from the legacy of apartheid, such as poverty, unemployment, inequalities and access to wealth, it had been negatively received by the corporate world and even the global players in international trade and economy. He states that

Business and foreign investors did not view the RDP favourably and the currency remained under pressure. At the same time the fiscal situation proved a great deal more intractable than it had appeared at the time of the transition.¹⁰

Not only business was critical of the RDP. The South African Comrades for the Encounter, for instance, makes the claim that the RDP's "greatest ambiguity remained in its inability to provide foundations for the kinds of productivity deals and social citizenship arrangements (e.g. full employment policies, comprehensive land redistribution, nationalizations) which could support the fiscal structures already necessary to the historic social democratic welfare states."¹¹ Moreover, when the RDP was drafted, similar democratic experiments were falling apart all over the world due to new developments which emphasised fiscal restraint and neoliberal market economic discipline. Hence a new strategy was developed:

As a result, in 1996, the government published its Growth Employment and Redistribution strategy. The package of policy measures envisaged by GEAR was interpreted by critics to imply that macro-economic balance (in particular, cutting the fiscal deficit) and economic growth had been raised in priority to a level well above poverty alleviation and redistribution. This interpretation added to concerns

¹⁰ Gouws, Rudolf. 2006:7.

¹¹ South African Comrades for the Encounter. 1997. "Resistance to Neoliberalism: A View from South Africa." 4 http://www.geocities.com/capitolhill/3849/safrica_paper.html/20066, Accessed on October 2006, 18th

from the left that GEAR was unduly influenced by the 'Washington Consensus'.¹²

1.3 Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR)

GEAR located the future of the South African economy within the global economic system.

The objectives of GEAR were to:

- Achieve macroeconomic balance in the South African economy;
- Stimulate South Africa's economy to achieve a 6% growth path by the year 2000;
- Enhance redistribution of resources; and
- Address high levels of unemployment.

Some of GEAR's defining elements were:

- A speedy fiscal deficit reduction programme to contain public debt and debt-service obligations;
- To target inflation;
- To focus on budget reform;
- Trade liberalisation by means of import tariff reductions;
- Commitment to wage demands, and the moderation, facilitation and structuring of a flexible labour system within the collective bargaining system;
- Relaxation of exchange controls;
- Restructuring of state-controlled and owned assets by means of privatisation, deregulation and liberalisation;
- Development of a tax system that stimulates incentives for investment in competitive labour-absorbing projects and which finances training programmes commensurate with South African developmental needs;
- Development and support of an infrastructural programme aimed at accelerating delivery of the backlog of the social infrastructure.¹³

As Jeffrey D. Lewis notes that one of the shifts from RDP to GEAR was prompted by the high inflation, declining GDP growth, and large scale fiscal deficit".¹⁴ This point is also apparent in the following remark:

¹² Gouws, Rudolf. 2006:7.

¹³ These have been adapted from Lewis, J.D. *Policies to Promote Growth and Employment in South Africa – Informal Discussion Papers on Aspects of the Economy of South Africa*. Washington: The World Bank Southern Africa Department 2001: 4, which are taken from the Department of Finance, 1996, South African Government.

[T]he policy changes in 1996 were deemed necessary for higher economic growth and job creation: significant reduction of the fiscal deficit and containment of debt service obligations; maintenance of consistent monetary policies so as to contain inflation; further liberalization of the capital account of the Balance of payments; further reduction of import tariffs; introduction of tax incentives to stimulate new investment in labour absorbing projects so as to enhance job creation; and increase the pace of restructuring of state assets.¹⁵

Lewis notes that, not only was the change from RDP to GEAR inspired by the need to evaluate the progress and performance of the economy, but, also, it was catalysed and instituted because of external pressure. For instance, he states;

In 1996, faced with external pressure and instability in the Rand, and concerns over the commitment to sound macro policies, the Government introduced the GEAR macro-economic framework. To restore confidence and enhance credibility, the GEAR built upon (rather than revised) the strategic vision set out in the RDP by committing government to specific macro-targets, and including a phased fiscal deficit reduction plan that was deliberately more ambitious than its predecessor[RDP].¹⁶

Numerous critical concerns have been raised against GEAR. Most significantly, it limited economic growth to a level that was likely to have an inconsequential impact on prevailing levels of unemployment, inequality and poverty in South Africa.

The strategy was seen as stifling growth rather than promoting it. The performance of GEAR was also dwarfed by the global economic crises which spread to South Africa in 1998. The decline in world demand for South African exports between 1995 and 2000, in general, brought about the shedding of labour by South African firms, which was, for instance, evident in the decline of the value of gold exports. In addition the rate of growth of the manufacturing export sector had fallen “from about 10% per year to about 0% in 1999.”¹⁷

The Archbishop of the Anglican Church, Njongonkulu Ndungane, has, in detail, identified some of the limitations and weaknesses of GEAR based on its consequences or

¹⁴ Lewis, J.D. 2001. *Policies to Promote Growth and Employment in South Africa – Informal Discussion Papers on Aspects of the Economy of South Africa*. Washington: The World Bank Southern Africa Department, 3.

¹⁵ Khamfula, Yohane 2004. *Macroeconomic Policies, Shocks and Economic Growth in South Africa*, 8

¹⁶ Lewis, J.D. *Policies to Promote Growth and Employment in South Africa – Informal Discussion Papers on Aspects of the Economy of South Africa*. Washington: The World Bank Southern Africa Department, 4.

¹⁷ Khamfula, Yohane 2004. *Macroeconomic Policies, Shocks and Economic Growth in South Africa*, 8.

impact on South African society. He points out that one of the failures of GEAR was its inability to reach the targets it set for the South African economy, adding that GEAR had planned to create jobs and grow the economy in order to bring about economic justice and eradicate poverty. However, it brought the opposite:

GEAR planned to create 126 000 new jobs in 1996, for example. In fact they lost 70 000. This represents a net loss of 196 000 jobs in 1996. Likewise in 1997 they planned to create 252 000 new jobs. In fact they lost 142 000 jobs, a net loss therefore of 394 000 jobs. If we add these losses together, then in just two years we lost 590 000 jobs. This is not economic justice!¹⁸

An important observation regarding the contradictions which were inherent in the GEAR policy and its application, is also well documented by the South African Comrades for Encounter. GEAR recommended greater market labour flexibility via a two-tiered system which involved the deregulation of certain categories of semi- and unskilled workers. It also envisaged the exemption of small businesses from the provisions of labour legislation which, among other things, would encourage affirmative action and good conditions of employment for the workers. It also envisioned a situation in which wage restraint by organised workers would be rewarded with a commitment to price restraints by organised business. This, the South African Comrades for Encounter suggests, was particularly dramatic and disadvantageous for many unemployed and semi-skilled workers, particularly women.

From one side, neoliberalism and globalisation encourage their [women] to the labour market on the basis of their cheapness - given their continuing links with the household - and their adaptability, due to the desire of emancipation from the oppressive structures of patriarchy. From the other hand their position remains of second class citizenship, confined to the jobs with worst wages and working conditions, which are proliferating as a result of market led processes of casualization, decentralization and homework. Moreover, neoliberal policies which cut public spending and basic services shift most of the burden of reproduction on women, thus reinforcing their subordinated position and hampering in a contradictory way their entrance in the labour market.¹⁹

It is clear from an evaluation of GEAR that a growth-centred or led economy does not necessarily eradicate poverty or even stimulate growth itself. Instead, it perpetuates life-denying practices for the poor and those on the periphery of the economy. This observation has also been observed and accepted by the South African government,

¹⁸ Ndungane, Njongonkulu. 2003. *A World A Human Face-A Voice* Geneva: WCC Publications, 34.

¹⁹ South African Comrades for Encounter 1997: 6.

hence its announcement, in February 2006, of the institution of the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA).

1.4 Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA)

ASGISA was introduced by President Thabo Mbeki in his State of the Nation Address on February 2nd, 2006. Its fundamentals were later delineated by the Deputy President, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.

Some of the stated objectives of ASGISA are to:

- Sustain or increase the average economic growth rate to 5-6 percent of the GDP;
- Eradicate poverty by 2014;
- Reduce unemployment levels;
- Meet the Millennium Development Goals (agreed to by some members of the United Nations, and which include a gender-just provision of access to education and the reduction of poverty);
- Improve and increase the skills capacity of South African citizens;
- Improve the capability and capacity of the South African government/state, for service delivery; and
- Improve competitiveness and productivity of the business, tourism and bio-fuels sectors.

ASGISA attempts to achieve the targeted objectives by 2014. It also aims at attaining the average economic growth rate in two phases. The initial phase is expected to accomplish a minimum of, if not more than, 4.5 % of the GDP between 2005 and 2009. The aim of the second phase, which runs between 2010 and 2014, is expected to yield an economic growth rate of at least 6 percent of the GDP.

ASGISA is based on the understanding that there are structural restrictions which limit the South African state in [?] spending effectively and achieving economic growth. Due to this understanding, ASGISA has focused on several constraints identified by the government, which also form the bases for the strategies it seeks to employ in order to promote clear objectives regarding access to investment and service delivery.

Some of the “binding constraints” to be overcome are the:

- Volatility and the fluctuating level of the rand (cost of the rand in buying capital equipment);
- Cost, efficiency and capacity building of the national logistics system;
- Shortage of suitably skilled labour, amplified by the cost effects on labour of apartheid spatial patterns;
- Barriers to entry, limits to competition and limited new investment opportunities;
- Regulatory environment and the burden on small and medium businesses; and

- Deficiencies in state organisation, capacity and leadership.²⁰

To counter the above constraints, the SA government has identified interventions in the following six areas:

- Macroeconomic management;
- Accelerated infrastructural development;
- Sector investment strategies by targeting sectors with potential success;
- Improving skills and education;
- Interventions in the second economy such as poverty reduction; and
- Public administration.

Advocates of ASGISA suggest that the principal driver of rapid economic growth is the increase in investment in the economy. For instance, the South African's Investment Survey suggests that further private sector investment is constrained by the costs of "crime, macroeconomic instability, inflexible labour regulation and the cost of labour, and critical shortage of skilled labour and managers."²¹ However, there have been those who challenge the above view.

Pretorius, for example, states:

ASGISA policy intervention is informed by the orthodox trickle-down approach to development which is criticised for increasing economic disparities rather than reducing poverty. Government expectations that growth in the first economy will draw people in the second economy out of poverty ignore the vested interest and role played by the first economy in sustaining the second. Investment in infrastructure is mainly driven by the needs of industrial development and economic growth rather than the needs of the people. So far the measures to address the imbalance of the past may be perpetuated or exacerbated rather than reduce [reducing?] past inequalities by giving rise to a growing but still very small consumerist black middle class. The constraints of the global economy and the imperatives of international competitiveness currently undermine the development potential of export-led growth strategies in developing countries.²²

Pretorius further identifies the number of limitations embedded in ASGISA. The fundamental problem is that ASGISA rests on a fragile and weak economic policy

²⁰ Adapted from Pretorius, L.G. 2006. Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) Unpublished, 5.

²¹ Pretorius, 2006: 6.

²² Pretorius, 2006: 11.

framework because of its over-emphasis on economic growth as the key element of economic success. ASGISA is also limited by its lack of acknowledgment that “South Africa’s development challenge is not only about faster growth, but also about broadening participation and accelerating the pace of social advancement.”²³

²³ Pretorius, 2006: 3.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN ECONOMY AND GLOBALISATION

2.1 The South African Economy and Globalisation - Introductory Remarks

It is important, from the outset, to state that the transition to democracy did not result in the need to transform the political sphere only. It also necessitated the transformation of the economy, due to the fact that, in the past, the economy had generally been planned with the main aim of benefiting the white minority. The transition and transformation of South Africa in 1994, it should be noted, occurred at a time when global economies were being radically restructured to adopt a more intense and hyper-capitalist approach, in particular, economic globalisation.

Economic globalisation is understood, in the present study, to entail, among other measures, macro-economic policy frameworks that focus on the supremacy of the market to allocate resources, private property, the privatisation of state-resources, the self-regulation of business by the corporate sector (deregulation) as opposed to high levels of regulation by government, as well as the liberalisation of trade and the economy. The features summed up above, to a large extent, are informed and shaped by the macro-economic policies adopted by the South African government post-1994, such as RDP, GEAR and ASGISA, which have already been discussed in the previous chapter.

2.2 Defining Economic Globalisation

Different scholars, depending on their disciplines, social location, and sometimes, socio-economic or political commitments, attach different meanings to economic globalisation. However, the meanings attached to globalisation “in these different sites vary quite substantially.”²⁴ The diverse meanings associated with globalisation thus require a nuanced and delimited articulation of exactly what one understands the meaning, content and shape of globalisation, to be, which is in line with the observation made by the feminist ethicist Moe-Loebeda when she suggests that if people do not readily define or clarify what they mean by globalisation, their use of the concept will generally mean “almost nothing because it [globalisation] can mean almost everything.”²⁵ When concepts are understood and interpreted in radically diverse ways, there is a possible risk of creating hermeneutical controversies and disconnectedness, which accordingly, requires us to be clear as regards to what we understand these concepts to mean, so that we can be clear and coherent. The author of this paper will thus attempt to clarify her understanding of the nature and content of economic globalisation.

In this essay, economic globalisation is understood to refer to “a set of economic processes in which production, marketing and investment are increasingly integrated across borders and between firms, which leads to the consolidation of a monopoly and a

²⁴ Brah Avter. 2002. “Global Mobilities, Local Predicaments: Globalisation and the Critical Imagination.” In Brah, A, Crowley, H, Thomas, L and Storr, M (eds) *Globalisation*. Vol. 70 (2002: 31); can also be accessed on <http://www.feminist-review.com>.

²⁵ Moe-Loebeda, Cynthia. “Globalisation in the Light of Luther’s Eucharistic Economic Ethics: Dialog: A *Journal of Theology* (2003: 250).

“single market for goods, capital, technology, services, and information and to a limited extent, for labour”.²⁶ This process, Saranel Benjamin observes, leads to a situation whereby “the economic, political, social and cultural links between different countries, industries and individuals of the world are increasing”.²⁷ As an economic process, economic globalisation describes the set of policies and regulatory framework, plans, strategies, *et cetera* which “control the wealth and resources of a country, about how resources are distributed between people, and about how the means of production such as land, factories, and technologies are owned and controlled”.²⁸

Economic globalisation rests on the choices of economies that countries make. It covers the processes by which humans and or institutions consolidate wealth as well as “the rapid integration and structuring of national economies, into one global economic order through trade liberalisation,²⁹ privatisation³⁰ and deregulation”.³¹ It is understood by the economist to be a mechanism that is utilised to remove the so-called ‘obstacles’ to the global movement of capital and the production of goods that have accumulated in advanced, industrial, capitalist countries.

The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom classifies the primary institutional agents for economic globalisation as “the transnational corporation[s]”.³² It is important to note that while these corporations are the most active agents in economic globalisation, they are not in any way the only active players. There are other actors such as, intergovernmental agencies and multilateral institutions, including, among others, the IMF, the WB, the WTO, as well as influential and affluent individuals, such as Bill Gates and Richard Branson, and others, who benefit extremely from the processes of economic globalisation.

2.3 Support for Economic Globalisation

²⁶ de Wet, Heather. 2002. “Globalisation Briefing Paper” (2002: 1); can also be accessed on, <<http://www.baobab-ct.org>> and <http://www.cdra.org.za> Accessed on October 18th 2006.

²⁷ Saranel Benjamin. 2001. Masculinisation of the State and the Feminisation of Poverty. *Agenda*. Issue no. 48: 68.

²⁸ SACBC quoted in LenkaBula, Puleng. 2002. “Justice and the Fullness of Life in the Context of Economic Globalisation: An African Woman’s Perspective.” In, *World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Reformed World: That All May Have Life in Fullness*. Vol 52, Number 4. December, 164.

²⁹ LenkaBula, Puleng. “Justice and Fullness of Life in the Context of Economic Globalisation: An African Woman’s Perspective” in *World Alliance of Reformed Churches* “That All May Have Life in Fullness: That Africa May have life in Fullness” Vol. 52 number 4 December 2002 (163-174).

³⁰ Privatisation refers to the sale of state-owned enterprises and services to the private sector. This implies that the state should not be the producer, owner, or deliverer of services. It also implies that services which have been performed by the state, such as health care, telecommunication, electricity, water and other services are no longer performed by state employees but are contracted to a private company. It also encourages the entrenchment of the transfer of public goods and commons into the hands of a few.”

³¹ Deregulation refers to a variety of measures, which reduce the state’s role as the producer, provider of services and promoter of social welfare. Some of the key elements of deregulation include removal of subsidies for local businesses by government, removal of price controls, meaning sellers set their own prices; reduction of direct taxes or direct charges on income or profit and self- regulation by corporate and business enterprise.

³² Womens’ International League for Peace and Freedom. Globalisation In <[http:// www.wilpf.int.ch/econ justice](http://www.wilpf.int.ch/econjustice)>. Accessed on October 2nd 2006

Supporters of neoliberal capitalism or economic globalisation often celebrate it as an advance of human freedom in which individuals are ever freer to lead and determine lives and lifestyles of their own choosing, in which, among other activities they use their capital power to make lifestyle choices. Within this understanding, the market, and thus money/capital, is believed to be a means to distribute and make choices regarding the distribution of resources, life and wellness. Numerous institutions and individuals support economic globalisation and its promotion of economic growth as the best indicator for economic success and wellbeing. These include institutions such as the IMF, the WB, and the WTO which assert that increasing economic growth and economic globalisation facilitates the expansion of opportunities for national economies. They argue that economic globalisation and economic growth “on average help workers in rich and poor countries alike.”³³

Michael Camdessus, the former Managing Director of the IMF is an example of those individuals who view economic globalisation as a positive development for the world economy. He states that economic globalisation “has brought the world a half century of unparalleled prosperity”.³⁴ He suggests that there is no alternative framework for a successful economy and thus concludes that it (economic globalisation) is a process and system that is a natural and inevitable part of historical change. He accordingly promotes the view that it cannot be reversed.

The international financial institutions and international regulatory institutions such as the IMF, the WB and WTO, also promote economic globalisation as a key strategy for global development in general, and for Africa, in particular. They claim that in order to address the developmental needs of Africa, and for poverty to be alleviated, African countries ought to adopt an economic policy framework which would enhance economic growth and economic globalisation.

Antony Giddens, for example, has suggested that deliberate government policies, which entail elements of economic globalisation, such as deregulation, privatisation and liberalisation, should be used as market mechanisms and conditions essential to entrenchment of economic growth and globalisation. He has also suggested that the impacts of these should not be reversed by government policy but, rather, by market mechanisms. He argues against the view that economic growth and globalisation “marginalizes the masses, spreading inequalities while trampling on humanity...”³⁵ Furthermore, he argues that economic globalisation is not the problem but that the problems of poor economic performance, poverty and marginalisation of African countries, for instance, arise because of the poor choices and the terms for which the poor countries, or so-called) developing countries, negotiate, or their limited participation

³³ United Nations (UN). *1995 World Development Report* quoted in *An Alternative View of Globalisation*. 1998: 5.

³⁴ Michael Camdessus quoted in *An Alternative View of Globalisation*. 1998: 5

³⁵ Giddens, A. *The Great Globalisation Debate*. <<http://www.lceip.org>> Accessed on December 18th 2002

in globalisation. He thus maintains that poor countries should not disengage from the global economy; instead, they must engage it by liberalising even their economies.

For a long time, the IMF and the WB have promoted the economic models of development which rest on “the idea that prosperity can only be achieved through economic growth. To this day the World Bank and the IMF continue to promote a paradigm of growth without limit.”³⁶ These international financial institutions, as the World Council of Churches (WCC) decries, have continued promoting the economic growth path as the main model of development and have paid too little attention to the issues of equity, redistribution and the ecological impact of unlimited growth. This insistence upon a model that is not life-giving undermines many lives, as evidenced by the extremely high mortality rates in Africa, sickness and death through chronic illnesses such as HIV/Aids and poverty. The WCC suggests that the emphasis on economic growth, even when it shows no signs of economic wellbeing for many citizens, is predicated upon the assumption that the free market will resolve the issues of distribution of resources, equity, ethics and environmental sustainability, even when there is clear evidence to the contrary.

The perspectives which view economic growth and economic globalisation as constituting elements of justice and a sustainable economy, as well as constructive approaches to the economy, it would seem, are mainly held by institutions, individuals and privileged persons based in the industrialised countries of the north. There are also a few, and in many instances, privileged elite Africans and South Africans who believe that such economic growth and economic globalisation, which favour the market distribution of resources, are the best means for distributing economic resources. This category, though, constitutes a diminutive perspective in Africa and South Africa in general.

2.4 Critics of Economic Globalisation

There are scholars in South Africa, Africa and those in the Diaspora who contest the optimistic portrayal of economic growth, economic globalisation and their effects on the South African and African economies, peoples and biodiversity. An African feminist sociologist, Omega Bula, has for example, outlined a number of questions which could be construed as key criteria/critical questions that churches, ecumenical and social justice groups, should ask in order to evaluate the implications and impacts of economies based on the motive to drive economic growth or economic globalisation. These questions are:

[I]f globalization is so good, why are communities and especially women much poorer than before? Why is the gap between the rich and the poor nations and persons within those nations getting wider and wider? ...Why do we have an urgent ecological crisis on our hands... why do

³⁶ World Council of Churches. 2001. *Lead Us Not Into Temptation – Churches’ Response to the Policies of International Financial Institutions - A Background Document*. Geneva: WCC-Justice, Peace and Creation, 7.

we have so much armed conflict? ... Why is there an over-consumption by a few who have the financial resources and economic power and freedoms, which have led to greed, exploitative systems of overproduction, marginalisation and exclusion of the majority who are forced to live on less and less? [And] why is it that for the majority of the poor despite the rhetoric of democratization and popular participation, the experiences are that of exclusion from meaningful participation in the economic and political lives of their nations and communities?³⁷

Another prominent critic of neoliberal economic globalisation, particularly its promotion and application by the international financial institutions, has been the former chief economist of the World Bank, Joseph Stiglitz. His concerns about and criticism of the neoliberal economic path emerged whilst he was still a member of staff at the WB. During his term of office, he initiated a debate which challenged the feasibility of the tenets of structural adjustment programmes, and thus ultimately, the neoliberal economic paradigm. The points below summarise his analysis:

- Trade liberalisation and privatisation are not ends in themselves;
- Moderate inflation (below 40%) is not harmful. Single-minded preoccupation with inflation results in macro-economic policies that stifle growth;
- Private financial markets do not do a good job of selecting the most productive recipients of funds;
- Budget deficits can be acceptable, given the high returns of government investment in such areas as primary education and physical infrastructure;
- Macro-economic stability is the wrong target when it down-plays stabilising output and employment;
- Large-scale unemployment is clearly inefficient – representing idle resources; and
- Markets are not automatically better than government involvement.³⁸

The WCC asserts that Stiglitz's exposure of the limitations of the neoliberal economic policy paradigm "annoyed the US Treasury so much that it engineered his removal from the World Bank".³⁹ Moreover, after his departure from the WB Stiglitz has continued to offer his analyses and continues to point out the ways in which this model undermines democracy.

³⁷ Bula, Omega. 1999. "A Jubilee Call for African women" in *Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative* In Mihevc, John. (ed) *Jubilee Wealth and the Market*, 70-71.

³⁸ The list has been adapted from the World Council of Churches. 2001. *Lead Us Not Into Temptation – Churches' Response to the Policies of International Financial Institutions - A Background Document*. Geneva: WCC-Justice, Peace and Creation 2001: 17.

³⁹ World Council of Churches 2001 *Lead Us Not Into Temptation – Churches' Response to the Policies of International Financial Institutions- A Background Document*. Geneva: WCC-Justice, Peace and Creation 2001: 17.

The WCC has also pointed out that neoliberal economic globalisation has not promoted economic success in poor countries. Contesting the life-denying aspects of globalisation, the WCC has stated that neoliberal market prescriptions have been imposed and have become so pervasive that they have begun to become normative, not just in the world of economics, but also in politics. This, the WCC suggests, has led to a situation where macro-economic policies, which adhere to the economic prescriptions of economic growth and globalisation, have been effected, even when they run counter to the values of diversity, differences in cultural understanding of the different roles and structure of economies, as well as the different conditions of local economies. Furthermore, the WCC points out that this position (of economic globalisation) is also derived from the observation that the rules and norms of the neoliberal ideology perfectly serve the needs and interests of a few capital-powerful individuals, and corporate business and finance, whilst undermining the web of life and the humanity of the poor: in particular, women who generally tend to constitute the majority of those on the underside of the economies and powers in many countries, including Africa.

The South African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC) has also been sceptical of the so-called benefits and successes of economic growth and globalisation that are touted by proponents of economic globalisation. The Bishops perceive economic globalisation and its negative manifestations as extensions of violence, domination and brute force. This, the Bishops suggest, results in inhuman modes of development which do not account for ecological costs, the destruction of ecosystems, exhaustion of the biosphere, plunder of non-renewable resources and negative relations amongst people. The consequences of economic growth and globalisation, the Bishops aver, are often detrimental to the poor, working class, and the vulnerable, especially women in Africa. With its emphasis on growth and competition, economic globalisation results in the exclusion of “millions of people from any meaningful participation in the economy.”⁴⁰ Economic growth and economic globalisation thus create, maintain and promote polarisation and inequalities between men and women, and between poorer and affluent nations (north and south); and because (it is) based on profit maximisation, privatisation of the resources and the means to life and competition, “those who are unable to compete with the giants are swallowed up and/or made redundant”.⁴¹

The life-negative aspects of economic growth and economic globalisation must be rejected because they fail to acknowledge the life-denying aspects and ecological destruction which come about as a result of their pronouncement and imposition all over Africa and the world in general. The idea that is important to encourage is that

At the heart of every economic system lie human needs,
human abilities and human decisions, and it is the choices
which we make in addressing those needs, sharing those

⁴⁰ Bula, Omega. 1999. “A Jubilee Call for African Women” in *Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative. Jubilee Wealth and the Market* 1999:68.

⁴¹ LenkaBula, Puleng. 1999. “Jubilee at the turn of the 21st Century and the African woman.” In, Mihevc, John.(ed) *Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative. Jubilee Wealth and the Market* 1999:68 1999:121.

abilities and making those decisions, that determine the justice or injustice of the economic system; the more powerful our economic position the greater our freedom of choice, with the poor being marginalised and having very little effective choice in their economic decision making.⁴²

The author of this paper thus suggests that the ideological apparatus of the logic of economic growth and economic globalisation must be interrogated and viable alternatives for all humanity, the web of life and the earth, must be asserted to promote a life-affirming, just and sustainable economy for all. These alternatives are explored in the next section by means of an appraisal of African and Christian values that could undergird and promote life-affirming and life-supportive economies that are just and sustainable for all humanity, the earth and the web of life.

⁴² Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference. 1995. *Economic Justice in South Africa: A Pastoral Statement*, 5.

BOTHO: AN AFRICAN RESOURCE FOR A JUST AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

3.1 *Botho*: an African Resource for a Just and Sustainable Economy

There is a moral quality about any economy, “a quality which has its roots in the morally correct or incorrect choices made by people; and it is the moral quality of the economy that enables us to make judgments about whether or not it is a just economy”.⁴³ As stated in the introduction, it is important to emphasise that the economy cannot just be left to the economist alone. It is a central concern for theology and ethics. It is also an issue, in which the church and ecumenical movement must engage, relate to and offer constructive counsel. The church cannot ignore the effects of economic growth and globalisation on humanity and the earth, especially when economic models adopted by civic leaders compromise the lives of many and, also, the state of the earth.

Some of the questions that are important to be asked, particularly by the church and ecumenical movement, and which may be helpful for the churches to discern their approach to and participation in economic issues, may include:

- How do churches and the ecumenical movement in Africa, in the context of economic globalisation, deep levels of poverty and Africa’s marginal position on global economy/ commerce, tackle these issues?
- Which resources from the scriptures, church/ecclesiastical traditions, experiences, personal stories and reason, can be utilised to advocate a life-affirming, sustainable and just economy?
- What African cultural resources and values can be used alongside Christian values and those of other faiths, to advocate a just, sustainable economy?
- How can these resources be used creatively to influence the economy at the micro, meso and macro levels?
- Would these resources and values help advance the pursuit of alternative ways of being and acting in the face of the struggles of economic and ecological destruction, economic violence and destruction, the neglect of the dignity of those affected and those on the underside of economic wellbeing, such as the poor and women?
- How do ESSET and other social justice organisations and movements constructively discern the meaning of economic growth and economic justice in this context, and continue or enhance their mandate of socio-economic transformation in post-colonial, post-apartheid South Africa, 12 years after democratisation?

To attend to some of these questions, ESSET has found it imperative to identify and utilise, in order to envision a life-affirming, just and sustainable economy, a few but

⁴³ Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference. 1999. *Economic Justice in South Africa: A Pastoral Statement*, 5.

comprehensive resources that emerge from both Christianity and African culture. These entail the African concept of *botho/ubuntu* and justice. These values, it would seem, are paramount and essential to the transformation of economies that are unjust and undermine the life and livelihood of humanity, undercut the integrity and well-being of the web of life and the earth. This therefore implies that *botho/ubuntu* and justice will be utilised in order to contribute to the vision of an economy of life.

3.2 *Botho* and the Economy

3.2.1 A Brief Description of *Botho/Ubuntu*

Botho is a Sesotho word which explains personhood and humaneness. It describes the ontology of people and their identity. It is synonymous with other African concepts, such as *ubuntu* in isiZulu and isiXhosa. It is a cultural and an ethical world-view found in diverse forms in many societies throughout Africa and “more specifically among the Bantu languages of the East, Central and South Africa”.⁴⁴ It is expressed in the saying “*motho ke motho ka batho*” which literally translates into the idea that a person is a person through other persons. A similar turn of phrase which clarifies the concept of *botho/ubuntu* is creatively articulated by Mbiti when he poetically states “I am because we are and since we are therefore I am”.⁴⁵

The concept of, and the essence of *botho/ubuntu* has, however, in African literature and/or theological/ethical discourses, tended to be limited to purely an anthropocentric description. It has often expressed an intrinsically bound connectedness of human beings to the exclusion of the ecological dimension. Elements which attend to its cosmological inflections have tended to be omitted in most literature that addresses this concept, yet they are also core to its understanding. The cosmological inflections of *botho/ubuntu* are generally evidenced in the descriptions of identities of people when they associate themselves with other creatures when describing their clan names or totems. It is, therefore, important to demonstrate, not only its potential to advocate human economic wellbeing, but also economic and ecological justice, since it is a concept and ethic that includes relationships between human beings and creation. Its power for inclusivity also finds resonance and significance in the biblical and theological story of creation in which “God created humanity in relationship”,⁴⁶ which implies that:

Being human is relational and cooperative... the concrete person is a web of interactions, a network of operative relationships. A person is fashioned by historical, cultural, genetic, biological, social and economic infrastructure. These relationships are not mechanical ones; they do not allow for a competitive individualization which would

⁴⁴ Murithi T. “Practical Peacemaking Wisdom From Africa: Reflections On Ubuntu” <<http://www.bath.ac.uk>> Accessed on October 10th 2006

⁴⁵ Mbiti, J.S. 1988. *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann.

⁴⁶ Botman, Russell, H. date. “The *Oikos* in A Global Economic Era: A South African Comment” <<http://www.crvp.org>>. Accessed on October 18th 2006

damage the dignity of the human being. The dignity of human beings emanates from the network of relationships, from being in community... cannot be reduced to a unique competitive and free personal ego.⁴⁷

In this sense, every person's humanity is ideally articulated through his or her relationship with other human beings, the earth and the web of life on the earth and beyond.

Botho/Ubuntu entails, in summary, "respect, empathy, respect and compassion for others". As Ramose suggests, it is an essential "ontological and epistemological category in the African thought of Bantu-speaking people".⁴⁸ Being human or '*motho*', or having *botho*, is the "marker of knowledge and truth in the concrete areas, for example, of politics, religion and law".⁴⁹ It "articulates a world view or vision of humanity... as an integral part of eco-systems that lead to a communal responsibility to sustain life. Human value is based on social, cultural and spiritual criteria. Natural resources are shared on principle of equity among and between generations".⁵⁰

In order to promote *botho/ubuntu* as the ideal norm in the quest for justice and fairness in the economy and ecology, as well as in relations between individuals, societies and countries, including within individual and corporate conduct and practices related and embedded in economic policies and economic globalisation, we need to provide a comprehensive understanding of its meaning and some features or essential elements associated with *botho/ubuntu*. These include solidarity and the collective consciousness of the peoples' of Africa, the essence of being, communalism and the care and nurture of the earth and African ethics of life.

3.3 Essential Elements of *Botho/Ubuntu*

We provide examples of the qualities of *botho/ubuntu* and relate them to economic and ecological concerns.

3.3.1 *Botho as Ontology - The Essence of Being*

Archbishop Desmond Tutu describes *botho/ubuntu* as "the essence of being human... [which] embraces hospitality, caring about others, being willing to go an extra mile for

⁴⁷ Botman. <<http://www.crvp.org>>. Accessed on October 18th 2006

⁴⁸ Ramose, M.B. 2001. "An African Perspective on Justice and Race" in *Forum on Intercultural Philosophy* (2001:2); can also be accessed on <http://www.them.polylog.org/3/frm-en.htm>. Accessed October 18th 2006

⁴⁹ Ramose 2001:2.

⁵⁰ Whitehead, Jack. "Ubuntu, The Loving Eye of an Ecological Feminism, Post-Colonial Practice and Influencing the Education of Social Formations" <<http://www.bath.ac.uk>>. Accessed on October 18th 2006

the sake of another”.⁵¹ It includes self-expressive works of love and efforts to create harmonious relationships in the community and the world beyond.

3.3.2 *Botho/ubuntu as African Life Ethics*

Botho/ubuntu refers to “a set of institutionalized ideals which can guide and direct the patterns of life of Africans”[?]. It is “not an individualistic, abstract, cold and irrelevant spiritual way of life. It is being neighbourly; has a strong social consciousness”.⁵² It is “a deliberate act of God to make us a community of brothers and sisters jointly involved in the quest for composite answers to varied problems of life”.⁵³ This implies that “the natural relationality of the person thus immediately plunges him/her into a moral universe, making morality an essentially social and trans-individual phenomenon focused in the well-being of others [and earth]”.⁵⁴ It is, according to Mnyaka, a philosophy that holds society together, which is, essentially, imperative when envisioning alternatives since economic globalisation only takes care of those with self-interest.

In ethical terms, *botho/ubuntu* stipulates the requirements or responsibilities expected of human beings in their relationships with each other, and in relation to the earth and other creatures. It is “the basis for a morality of cooperation, compassion and communalism and concern for the interests of the collective respect for the dignity personhood, all the time emphasizing the virtues of that dignity in social [and ecological] relationships and practices”.⁵⁵ According to Louw, *botho/ubuntu* can be described as a “social ethic... which prescribes what ‘being with others’ should be about”.⁵⁶

Botho/ubuntu is also a “multidimensional concept which represents the core values of African ontologies, respect for any human being, for human dignity and for human life, collective shared obedience, humility, solidarity, caring, hospitality, interdependence, communalism, to list but a few”.⁵⁷ It explains the importance of solidarity, interdependence and social and economic justice in African culture.

3.3.3 *Botho/ubuntu as African Solidarity and Collective Consciousness*

One of the key features or values associated with *botho/ubuntu* is that of the solidarity and collective consciousness of the Africans and their communities. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz describes solidarity in the following words:

⁵¹ Tutu, D. Ubuntu in <<http://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Afr/Afri/Lower.htm>>. Accessed on October 18th 2006

⁵² Mnyaka, M.N.M. 2003. Xenophobia as a Response to Foreigners in Post-Apartheid South Africa and Post-Exilic Israel: A Comparative Critique in the Light of the Gospel and Ubuntu Ethical Principles. Unpublished DTh Thesis - University of South Africa, 154.

⁵³ Biko quoted by Mnyaka. 2003:154.

⁵⁴ Mnyaka. 2003:154.

⁵⁵ Mokgoro, J. Y. 1998. *Ubuntu and the Law in South Africa*, 2.

⁵⁶ Louw 1997:2.

⁵⁷ Kamwangamalu, N.M. 1999. “Ubuntu in South Africa: A Sociolinguistic Perspective to a Pan-African Concept.” *Critical Arts Journal*. 13/2 pages 24-41 (1999:1).

Solidarity has to do with the actions of those not directly suffering from a situation of oppression in concert with those who are. It is both an attitude and practice. Solidarity is an ethical principle; a direction for human life should follow, operating both as a virtue (character trait) and as a norm (guide to human behaviour). Solidarity refers to the community of feelings, interests, and purposes that arise from a shared sense of responsibilities; it leads to action and social cohesion. [It] moves away from the false notions of disinterest and altruism and demands love of self [and others]. It is praxis of mutuality, an intentional, reflective action aimed at building of community of those who struggle against oppression and for justice.⁵⁸

By *botho/ubuntu*, solidarity and collective consciousness, “the self is perceived primarily in relation to the perception of the others”⁵⁹, this, according to Russell Botman, is also due to the view that an individual (or the self) is a social and relational being and thus is perceived in cooperative terms. “The human being is not only a personality, but also a sociality.”⁶⁰ This view, which asserts that all humans are social beings, it would seem, is also strongly embedded and affirmed in the Christian story of creation, wherein it is stated that “God created humanity in relationship”.⁶¹

3.3.4 *Botho and Good Economic and Political Governance*

Botho/ubuntu is considered to be one of the fundamental rudiments of good political and economic governance. Most African societies believe that a leader must always be in touch with the struggles and challenges that the people or territory he/she leads faces, or may face. These may be struggles relating to economic wellbeing, social justice, family problems and even relations among peoples. It is expected that the leaders have to address, these issues together with the counsel of the community. It is also expected that the policies followed by the leaders ought to enhance the quality of life for the people, protect creation and ensure that protection from that which undercuts life, is established. *Botho/ubuntu* thus is an imperative form of good leadership and governance, which not only thrives on soliciting input from people, but also on the concept of consensus, not competition. In many instances, “each person gets an equal chance to speak up until some kind of an agreement, consensus or group cohesion is reached”.⁶²

However, certain scholars view the notions of consultation, solidarity and consensus, the core of socio-political, economic and ecological governance in African culture, as an impediment to progress. For example, Louw suggests that “the desire to reach consensus”

⁵⁸ Isasi-Diaz, Ada Maria. 1996. in Russell, L.M and Clarkson, J.S (eds) 1996 *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies* Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, p.

⁵⁹ Laden quoted by Kamwangamalu. 1999:2.

⁶⁰ Botman. <<http://www.crvp.org>>.

⁶¹ Botman. <<http://www.crvp.org>>.

⁶² Louw, Dirk. 1997. “Ubuntu: An African Assessment of the Religious Other”, 3; refer also to <<http://www.safrika.info/news/ubuntu.html>>. (1997:2).

is a possible weakness of *botho/ubuntu*, and further, states that although *botho/ubuntu* articulates such important values as respect, human dignity and compassion, its “desire of consensus also has a potential dark⁶³ [sic] side in terms of which it demands an oppressive conformity and loyalty to the group”.⁶⁴ He avers that it is often believed that the building of a[?] community occurs when consensus is reached, and that *botho/ubuntu* safeguards the rights and opinions of individuals and minorities, when it could possibly lead to coerced group solidarity. He further points out that because of *botho/ubuntu*'s extreme emphasis on community, it has the potential that “democracy might be abused to legitimize...totalitarian communalism which frowns upon elevating one beyond the community”.⁶⁵

While the present study recognises that, if left unchecked, *botho/ubuntu* can place oppressive demands on individuals, such as conformity, the author of this paper asserts that underutilisation of good resources, simply because they are seen to have the potential to obstruct rather than nurture, is itself reductionist. This occurs because *botho/ubuntu*, like any socio-political/economic and socio-economic resource, is not a stagnant or fixed concept which does not allow debate and or deliberation by and amongst people. It is imperative for people (individuals) and communities to become cautious and not to sensationalise the potential good inherent in the conception of *botho/ubuntu*, particularly because history has shown that good concepts are also liable to abuse. However, one must not confuse the idea of *botho/ubuntu* with simple conformity to values, institutions, systems and structures that do not allow active and constructive participation in one's life and the life of one's community. *Botho/ubuntu*, as understood in this paper, therefore, embraces a diversity of opinions and choices. It should be underscored that *botho/ubuntu* encourages individuals to be sensitive to their choices as well as the possible effects of such choices on themselves, their communities and the earth.

Botho/ubuntu and communalism do not promote simplistic homogeneity and conformity. Essentially, they encourage people to nurture their individuality without negating their association with the earth and their communities. They encourage people to understand their connectedness to other beings. It could then be argued that *botho/ubuntu* and communalism do not subsume people's individuality. They only require individuals to be responsible and conscious of other beings, broader ecological networks, and life beyond themselves.

3.3.5 *Botho/Ubuntu And The Care And Nurture Of Humanity And The Earth*

Botho/ubuntu is motivated and undergirded by the spirit of communalism. The wellbeing of the individual is supposed to be in synergy with that of the community and the earth.

⁶³ The association of darkness with “bad” is strongly discouraged in this paper. This is because darkness has been used in the history of South Africa to undermine the dignity and life of black peoples. It has the potential to perpetuate the legacies of Apartheid and reinforce harmful attitudes and beliefs which characterised the values or the legacies of Apartheid stratification which was colour-based and if unchecked could run the risk of posing serious threats to social justice and anti-racism or anti-racist discourses.

⁶⁴ Louw. 1997:3.

⁶⁵ Louw. 1997:3.

This implies, though not exclusively, that no one member of the society should live in poverty, or struggle with the basics of life, when the wellbeing of a few affluent or wealthy people supersede or undermine their wellbeing of the others. *Botho/ubuntu* thus encourages the sharing of resources, and the care of the least among societies, including people living with disabilities, the aged and those who fall through the cracks of life. For instance, so as to address and attend to those in the economic margins, the ethics of *botho/ubuntu* has developed socio-economic and cultural strategies of *Letsema* (which translates into collective or communal effort to assist one another, or those who cannot help themselves. It is aimed at promoting and maintaining life, the common good and social justice. It has also developed strategies such as the development of earmarked agricultural spaces, called *Ts'imo-ea-Lira/mathata*, which is the reservation of land used for food production and food security/sovereignty in order to assist the sick, poor and elderly, and to which all members of a community contribute so that poverty and other life-threatening disasters are curtailed, or their possible effects alleviated. These practical applications of *botho/ubuntu* through 'letsema' and 'Ts'imo-ea-lira' are constitutive of the merger between theory and praxis and their support of each other to enhance life for all.

3.3.6 *The Implications of Botho/Ubuntu for Economic and Ecological Wellbeing*

The significance of *botho/ubuntu* for the economy and ecology is also demonstrated by people's association with and care of plants and/or animals through their clan names and the totems they use to define their identity or to define themselves to others. In order to acknowledge their interconnectedness with creation and the web of life in general, many clans and African ethnic group, define their identity, their being and their self-conception with reference to the ecology and communities in which they live. For example, some people would refer to themselves as *Bakoena* (literally translated as those of the crocodile), *Bafokeng* (those of the hare), *Bataung* (those of the lion), *Batloung* (those of the elephant), *et cetera*. From conception until adulthood, people are taught to nurture and honour their relationships with other human beings and creatures of the earth. They are encouraged to grow and enhance their knowledge of themselves, other creatures, the earth, and the values of *botho*, which become embedded in their moral conduct, especially by means of the values of respect for life.

As an ethic of relationality and the co-existence of human beings with each other and with other creatures on earth, it therefore follows that such an ethic is opposed to hoarding and the monopolistic control of life-sustaining resources being made available to only a few. It is an ethic aimed at promoting democratic dialogue and participation, in this sense; it encourages the use and sharing of resources for the improvement of the lives of all people and the earth. One of the most important elements of *botho/ubuntu* is its emphasis on, or rationale for, harmonious relationships between humanity and the earth. Its distinct message in an African context, is that relationships must be under-girded by justice. In this sense, *botho/ubuntu* articulates an ethic of self-respect and the prevention of abuse and exploitation of others. It encourages the conception that humanity ought to take responsibility for the nurture of other human beings, the earth and the web of life; and to understand and treat them not only as a means to an end, but also as an end in

themselves. *Botho/Ubuntu* thus promotes the idea that relationships ought not to be based on exploitation and abuse. To clarify this point, Louw comments:

The concept of [*botho*] *ubuntu* gives a distinctly African meaning to, and reason or motivation for, a decolonizing attitude toward the other, including and especially the religious other. As such, it adds a crucial African appeal to the call for the decolonization of the religious other - an appeal without which this call might well go unheeded by many Africans.⁶⁶

Botho/ubuntu encourages a holistic understanding of human beings as part of God's creation. It is helpful to ecological justice and as an alternative against the current ways of economic globalisation, which is due to its affirmation that what we do to others has a bearing on our own identities, and in many instances, manifests in the interwoven fabric of social, economic and political relationships, that eventually impacts upon us all.

Botho/ubuntu has the potential to facilitate and influence members or leaders of the corporate sector who are active economic agents, as well as their institutions or organisations, which, in most instances, benefit from unjust economies, to become aware that profit is not the only motive for sustenance and life. It also has the potential to encourage collective consciousness and responsibility, particularly in relation to other considerations that are essential for the sustenance of the dignity of life other than the profit motif. These include values such as sharing of resources, compassion and ethical behaviour in the conduct of social, economic and business relations amongst and between peoples in the economy and ecology. *Botho/ubuntu* therefore sheds light on reciprocity and justice in the conduct of peoples and institutions as well as in the laws that govern societies. It could act as a corrective to the logic of self-interest and exploitation entailed in the conduct of the multinational companies that engage in exploitative economic globalisation. *Botho/ubuntu* "can also serve to re-emphasize the essential unity of humanity and gradually promote attitudes and values based on the sharing of resources and on cooperation and collaboration in the resolution of our common problems".⁶⁷

Botho/ubuntu has sustained Africans in the multiplicity of structural injustices that they have experienced. In spite of the many difficulties that Africans have endured, such as slavery, colonialism and apartheid, *botho/ubuntu* has remained as a life, ethical and social resource which African peoples continue to utilise for their sustenance. It is an ethic which provides a commendable schema of values for life. It is a value system that has enabled Africans to survive, despite the many life-denying, humiliating structural injustices, such as slavery, colonialism, apartheid, wars and conflicts; thus it exhibits great potential to promote a just and sustainable economy.

⁶⁶ Louw. 1997:6.

⁶⁷ Murithi. <<http://www.bath.ac.uk>>.

JUSTICE -- A CHRISTIAN RESOURCE FOR A JUST AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

Introduction

The concept of justice, in Sesotho culture and Christianity, possesses a variety of philosophical and theological expressions. It refers to a multiplicity and plurality of values which include, among others, ideas or notions such as, fairness, freedom, liberty, equality, community, wisdom, impartiality and egalitarian relationships, freedom of opportunity, equality of benefits and equality of participation in societal and economic life. It could refer to a variety of forms of sharing and distribution of the material and ecological resources within and between societies, and may also include the ideas, procedures, mechanisms and strategies used by societies to allocate economic, ecological and material resources to all members of society.

Owing to the multiple notions associated with justice in theological and ethical discourses, it is essential to clarify the concept of justice with which we are dealing in this chapter. The focus will fall on justice as equality, fairness, procedure, respect and consent regarding the sharing of the resources of the earth and knowledge. It also involves the restoration and correction of unhealthy relationships between people and companies, promoted by economies and economic globalisation based on economic growth.

Justice is important in promoting non-exploitative, just, fair and equitable sharing of resources and knowledge. It encourages the creation and promotion of respect for the other. It is also central, and essential, to the sustenance of the ecology of African communities. The just distribution and sharing of knowledge and commons enable communities to flourish and to survive. It enables societies to guard against greed, hoarding and maximum profit, exploitation of others and the earth as supreme values and norms of relationality.

The quest for justice in the economy is, to some extent, shaped by the politics of the environment, the distribution of resources and access to those aspects that enable human and ecological life to flourish. It is also shaped by the relationships that human beings have amongst themselves, the institutions that they set up to enable their lives, as well as their relationships to the other creatures and the earth. Access to resources and the sharing of economic and ecological resources amongst people is also an important element in shaping the notion of justice.

4.1. Justice as Relationality

Christians define justice broadly as “right relationships with the self, others, creation and God. Right relationships, according to Lebacqz, “preclude[s] oppression or exploitation and requires that both individuals and groups are empowered as moral agents...it is not

just ‘giving what is due’ or ‘treating equal cases equally’”.⁶⁸ This implies that justice requires structural attention to those who are socially excluded and economically marginalised.

4.2 Justice as Equality and Fairness

Justice as equality, or at least as opposition to arbitrary, unnecessary, or extreme inequalities, is a concern for economic justice in the context of globalisation. According to Bakken, et al., people concerned about the massive disparities and wealth between nations and within nations, as well as the health of the biosphere, assert that the wealthy nations and individuals “must reform the global economy or provide money and technology to poorer nations so that they can increase incomes while protecting their natural resources”.⁶⁹ Justice therefore, when viewed in this way, can include “not only the right to distribution of political power, wealth, or social services, but also of environmental goods”.⁷⁰ It encompasses equal rights to ecological resources and necessities.

When understood to entail and imply fairness in the economic and ecological sharing of resources, justice would oppose the idea that the ecological burdens, resulting from unjust and exploitative economic policies and business practices derived from certain elements of economic growth and economic globalisation, should be borne by the poor, while access to these resources is inhibited and/or taken away from them. Justice is thus oppositional to the distribution of the burdens of economic and ecological injustices to the poor. It also rejects the degradation of the earth and the idea that the burdens derived from consumption should be borne equally by those who exploit and abuse the web of life and those who are on the underside of the economies, abused and exploited, such as the poor.

4.3. Justice as Restoration and Correction

A corrective justice concerns the fairness of demands for social and ecological damages imposed on others. For instance, in relation to the plunder of economic and ecological resources, corrective justice requires that unbecoming conduct, for example, business or economic benefits derived from plunder, exploitation and abuse, either through colonialism, apartheid, onerous debt or other unethical means, are corrected by including corrective mechanisms that address this conduct and the privileges derived from them. This would require the institution of corrective measures such as reparations, or benefit-sharing agreements to share the wealth that has flourished under apartheid or exploitative means, with the poor and those disadvantaged by these exploitative systems.

4.4 Justice as Freedom and Emancipation

⁶⁸ Lebacqz, Karen. 1996. In Russell, Letty, M. and Shannon Clarkson (eds) *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*. Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 158.

⁶⁹ Bakken et al. 1995. *Ecology, Justice and Christian Faith: A Critical Guide to the Literature*, 20.

⁷⁰ Bakken et al. 1995: 20.

Within the discourses of ethics, economy and ecology, justice can be understood as the attempt to protect and conserve the web of life for all, encompassing plant commons, constructive human participation in economic and ecological activities, as well as the preserve of the biophysical integrity of other creatures, such as plants, animals, rivers, mountains and *et cetera*. This implies that, not only is the economic emancipation or freedom of humanity assured, but, also, that an attempt is made to ensure that the life of the earth and other creatures is guaranteed, and that economic wellbeing corresponds with the protection and conservation of life. It also implies that the abuse of resources of the earth, such as plants, peoples etc is prohibited, which further implies that justice is an essential condition for the exercise of economic freedom, not only because free action presupposes life and health, but because “nature provides meaningful content for choice in the sense of freedom.”⁷¹ When justice is understood in this way, it promotes community reliance on ecological and human resources in such ways that economic wellbeing is sustained [?], while ecology and the web of life are also conserved. It also expresses and supports the notion that, rather than exploit local resources for the benefit of the few who are capital-rich, economic resources are used to sustain the livelihood of all humanity.

4.5. *Justice as Wisdom*

Justice as wisdom “points to the role of knowledge of the good, of the place of humanity in the cosmos, in adjudicating the conflicting demands that are made in the name of justice and in discerning the limitations of all existing efforts to embody justice”.⁷² Wisdom directs socio-political and economics to transcend the self-seeking pursuit of individual and group interest and to pursue a common good which is not reducible to individualism. Justice as wisdom in this sense can therefore be associated with prudence.

Wisdom encourages and facilitates dialogue with existing political, economic, ecological, legal and social processes about which to deliberate, and formulate fair and effective distribution, use and ownership of economic and ecological resources. It entails honest dialogue and agreements which guide the utilisation of economic and ecological resources and knowledge.

4.6 *Justice as Community*

Justice as community is understood within the rubric of *botho/ubuntu* as an inter-generational issue, which means that the resources of the earth ought to be used in a manner by which future generations will also be sustained. Such a notion of justice, also takes seriously the relationship of people to the land. “An individual’s identity is constituted by belonging to a community which includes the land and its non-human creatures not just the human neighbour”.⁷³ The attribution of intrinsic value to non-human beings adds a new dimension to justice, extending the boundaries of community in yet another direction. Community in this way is not only constituted by human beings

⁷¹ Bakken et al .1995:20.

⁷² Sturm quoted by Bakken et al 1995:21.

⁷³ Bakken et al 1995:23.

alone. In the words of Raiser, quoted by Botman, the metaphor of *oikos* (community), “supersedes any narrow vision of history as the central category of interpretation of social reality; it reminds us that history is bound up with community, webs of relationships, belonging, and with life together”.⁷⁴ It comprises both the human and the biotic community. It includes:

A more organic, holistic, and inclusive understanding of persons and society ... Here the biblical theme of covenant - especially the Noachic covenant with all flesh and the Levitical law and prophetic oracles which link distortions in human relations to the disruption of nature - is relevant, as are the metaphors of the church as the body of Christ and the cosmic Christ as the one in ‘whom all things cohere.’⁷⁵

Just communities in this sense facilitate constructive and harmonious relationships based on justice and collective decisions as regards the economy, land and use of resources. When, for instance, the life of a community is threatened by economic exploitation and marginalisation, exploitation or other life-inhibiting conduct, communal justice seeks ways, guidelines and norms that should set the legal and operational limits of such life-denying activities or ideologies.

The intersection of economy, ecology and justice can also be developed ethically and theologically. Particular ethical and policy issues can be analysed using a single norm or set of norms that apply to humans and non-humans, or which include social, economic and environmental values. Such norms tend to be either teleological or deontological.

Process theologians, for example, speak of the *telos* of ethical action as maximizing the richness of experience, and argue both that the ecological context is an essential contributor to the richness of human experience, and also that the experiences (or analogues to experience) of other beings must also be taken morally into account. In more deontological interpretations, the justice, peace and the integrity of the World Council of Churches’ formula ‘justice, peace and the integrity of creation’ may be seen as an expression of the more fundamental and general concept of the integrity of creation. Another possible unitary principle is the common good in its widest sense. Norms at this level of generality and inclusiveness, however, need additional, more specific norms to be usefully applied.⁷⁶

Economic and ecological justice in ethical and theological discourses is understood to refer to a field of normative values, and to the moral claim that ecology and justice belong together. It entails moral claims, including the assertion that “there is an

⁷⁴ Raiser quoted by Botman. <<http://www.crvp.org>.>

⁷⁵ Bakken et al. 1995:23.

⁷⁶ Bakken et al. 1995:27.

overarching moral imperative for human beings to pursue what is ecologically fitting and socially just, and to do so in such a way that each is supporting of each other”.⁷⁷ It includes, among other considerations, “respect and fairness toward all creation, human and non-human...it means social justice in the context of ecological realities; and it means ecological harmony or balance maintained in the context of social justice”.⁷⁸

Economic and ecological justice considers unjust those actions which displace economic and environmental risks onto people and creation “not implicated in their production, particularly subaltern groups”.⁷⁹ It addresses both economic and environmental justice and injustices, and the ecological quality of our lives and practices. Also, it not only concentrates on humanity alone, but is also inclusive of other creatures and creation. Economic justice takes seriously ecological wellness; thus it affirms the “concern for justice as a norm for human relations and the awareness that human species is not a larger natural system whose needs must be respected”.⁸⁰ Economic and ecological justice have emerged as attempts to respond constructively and creatively to the assumed tensions without reducing care for people and the earth to simple, either/or alternatives. These attempts have also emerged as strategies for thinking about the ways in which the relationship between God, human beings, and nature can be understood without promoting sharp opposition between humanity, the web of life and their relationship to God.

⁷⁷ Bakken et al. 1995:xvi.

⁷⁸ Gibson quoted by Bakken et al. 1995:5.

⁷⁹ Wenz quoted by Stevis, Demitris. 2001. “Whose Ecological Justice?” *Journal of Theory, Culture and Practice*. 1.

⁸⁰ John B. Cobb Jr. quoted in Bakken et al 1995:5.

JUSTICE IN THE BIBLE; AND THEOLOGICAL ETHICS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR A JUST AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

5.1 Introduction

Christian theologians and ethicists support the ideal of economic and ecological justice on biblical, doctrinal, and ontological grounds. They argue that “human beings realize their special calling within the divine ordering of creation to the degree that their actions embody caring, just and sustainable relationships with one another and with the rest of nature”.⁸¹ They provide substantial biblical, moral, historical, economic, social, political, theological, and other content for the concept of economic and ecological justice.

The Bible is an essential text in which Christians seek their nurture and direction. It is also important in guiding ethical deliberation. It is an important thought to state that it cannot, and should not, be used simplistically to prescribe one’s life. Several hermeneutical questions also ought to be considered when one uses the Bible to guide ethical discernment. The Bible provides numerous images of life, economic and ecological justice which recognise the good of all creatures.

These include the covenantal community dwelling faithfully and justly in God’s fertile land and righteousness as a/the right order in creation. Eschatological visions of the ultimate goal of nature and history have been expressed using the symbols of the reign of God, wholeness and peace...such goals of divine and human action are more inclusive than recent human centered formulations of Christian hope that have guided social activism---humanization, the spiritual kingdom of ends, the classless society, the responsible society---yet they also take up the commitment to justice that has been integral to those visions.⁸²

There are also numerous examples of ecological justice and human interactions which demonstrate that justice is central to the testimony of the HS (Old Testament) and the Christian Testament (New Testament). The diverse meanings of justice are addressed in Scripture, which is evident in the prophetic, psalmic, sapiential and apocalyptic texts. The preoccupation of the Hebrew Scriptures, with the agenda of justice, “is rooted in the character and resolve of Yahweh...moreover, [justice] is to be enacted and implemented concretely in human practice”.⁸³ Brueggemann terms the above type of justice, Mosaic or distributive justice.

⁸¹ Bakken et al. 1995:xvi.

⁸² Bakken et al. 1995:28.

⁸³ Brueggemann quoted by Sagovsky, Nicholas. 2002 “God’s Passion for Justice: The Testimony of Deuteronomy in the Market-Place of Ideas”, 2-3; Also refer to < <http://www.ocms.ac.uk>>.

The intention of Mosaic justice is to redistribute social goods and social power...this justice recognizes that social goods and social power are unequally and destructively distributed in Israel's world (and derivatively in any social context) and that the well being of the community requires that social goods and power to some extent be given up by those who have too much, for the sake of those who have not enough.⁸⁴

The exercise and application of justice, is understood, among other matters, to entail "fundamental equality - and indifference to money and power - because that is how it is with God and God's primary exercise of justice".⁸⁵

[God] deals with His [sic] people 'face to face' in the light of a primary equality (liberation from slavery). There is also to be a fundamental compassion: people's basic needs - their need for warmth at night (Deuteronomy 24:19), for prompt payment (Deut 24:14-15), for adequate food (Deut 24: 19-22), for periodic remission of debt (Deut 15:12), for rescue from slavery (Deut 15: 12-14) are to be met.⁸⁶

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) also reiterates the importance of biblical resources in rethinking alternatives to economies that reduce or undermine life for the poor and those on the underside, whilst privileging a few. The LWF states that the church is thus called to speak out and engage economic injustices in the light of the Christian faith in order to avoid the risk of compromising the Christian faith. It states that if idolatry is immanent in the economy or economic policies, the church is called to act.

If idolatry is at stake in economic globalisation, we cannot remain silent. By our silence or reluctance to engage these realities in the light of our faith, we risk compromising the very faith we confess. When human construct claims ultimacy for this life or beyond it, God's righteousness denounces them as idols and displaces them with the justification received through faith. Liberated from vain attempts to justify us through activities of the global economy we are freed through Christ to unmask and resist idolatry in our lives and world today.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Brueggemann quoted by Sagovsky. 2000:3.

⁸⁵ Sagovsky. 2000:15.

⁸⁶ Sagovsky. 2000:15.

⁸⁷ Lutheran World Federation. "Engaging Economic Globalization as a Communion-A Lutheran World Federation Working Paper"< <http://www.lwf.org>, 13.> Accessed on October 18th 2006

The LWF, therefore, suggests that an economy which maintains and promotes injustices leads to idolatry. For instance, the LWF refers to the Old Testament (HS) which points out that when wealth and power are abused to undermine the essence of life, and the ontology of the people, they result in injustices, especially to the poor. As stated by the prophets, idolatry is constructed by human beings who manipulate power and abuse it against others. For instance, Jeremiah 10: 1-16 and Isaiah 44:9-20 demonstrate how this occurs and how it leads to a corruption of life. The prophets plead against idolatry and the perpetration of injustices. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) has also encouraged churches and others to embark upon a process of covenanting for justice in the economy through the Accra confession, and subsequent calls for churches to overcome the empire mentality of domination and exploitation.

It is also clear from the brief analyses of the biblical resources referred to above, that one of the primary testimonies “to justice and to Yahweh Himself [sic] is one and the same: it is the life of the people itself”.⁸⁸ This makes it apparent for us that justice is possible, and that communities and people can engender justice in their daily lives with each other and with God’s creation.

There are also a number of references to justice or just communities in the New Testament. However, we shall attempt to underline a few narratives to clarify how the New Testament perspectives on justice can influence the quest for a just and sustainable economy or economic conduct. This is because “God’s intervention to create justice must occur in concrete historical terms and is linked inseparably with the gathering of a new humanity among the peoples, a new humanity in Christ (Rom 5:15ff). The search for justice is thus understood as possible “for those who build communities around Jesus, the Messiah, and are empowered to act by his spirit (Rom 8)”.⁸⁹ Duchrow suggests that one of the lessons from Paul is his humility in acknowledging “God’s act of liberation and justice through the spirit.” This is evidenced in his acceptance faith and of the act of liberation by God of Israel. This faith is nothing other than opening oneself to God’s just—making righteousness. This in turn enables people to become God’s agents of justice.⁹⁰

The concept of justice, particularly within a communal setting, which is quite similar to the understanding of community within the logic of *botho/ubuntu*, is also encapsulated by Paul in Romans 12. For example, Paul explains very graphically how the new humanity in Christ in the shape of a messianic, charismatic *ekklesia* lives in and with the justice of God in love, and hope of the victory of life over death. Living in relation to, and in justice, thus requires mutuality, reciprocity, community and support of the work. It is an inescapable conclusion from reading and analysing the biblical resources referred to above, that justice was one of the bases for the reign of God on earth. Justice was, and continues, to be relevant in attaining the fullness of life that Jesus promises to bring on to the earth. It is therefore important to note that justice to a large extent depends on the

⁸⁸ Sagovsky 2000:16.

⁸⁹ Duchrow, Ulrich. 1995. *Alternatives to Global Capitalism: Drawn from Biblical History, Designed for Political Action*, 194.

⁹⁰ Duchrow, 1995:194.

shared commitment of[?] people, institutions and communities to live together without exploiting each other. Justice requires and calls us to seek to be good and to form communities that aim at promoting and nurturing humanity and all creation.

5.2 The Implications of *Botho/Ubuntu* and Justice for a Sustainable and Just Economy

Christian moral principles and African traditional and spiritual norms, such as justice and the principles of *botho/ubuntu*, are invaluable for the articulation of a just and sustainable economy and ecology for all. They are also complementary to each other. To emphasise this link, Pato, quoted by Mnyaka, makes the following comment; “it must be pointed out, that although there is such a diversity of detail, there is an astonishing congruence in African cultures and Christian religion when one considers the substratum of values and attitudes”.⁹¹ These values, such as respect for human persons, human rights, reciprocity, love, compassion, forgiveness, hospitality and community, are common concerns that are represented in both Christianity and *botho/ubuntu*. “When internalized, these values or principles empower people by serving as guidelines for their conscience and challenging them to grow.”⁹²

Justice, as *botho/ubuntu*, demands that economic wellbeing is secured for all the peoples of God/ humanity, and that those whose lives have been undermined by injustices are assisted to thrive. Justice thus requires the restoration of equilibrium. Furthermore, Ramose suggests that justice as restoration of equilibrium means that *botho/ubuntu* is continually lived out and experienced in the pursuit of economic and ecological justice. They cannot reach finality. They require Christians and Africans to constantly seek the affirmation of the integrity of life of people and the web of life, whenever they are at stake.

In response to the ethical problems that occur as a result of shifting economic systems, the churches in Africa have formulated a body of social and ethical teachings on the economy and economic justice. While these social teachings were responses to the conflict between western capitalism and communism, to economic justice in the context of apartheid and colonisation, these ethical principles and norms can equally be applied to economic globalisation. For instance, in 1995, the South African Alliance of Reformed Churches organised a consultation to explore the intersection between the economy, faith and economic justice, in Kitwe, Zambia. Participants at this consultation concluded that, “the present neo-liberal capitalist economy does not work for everyone.”⁹³

⁹¹ Pato quoted by Mnyaka 2003:165.

⁹² Mnyaka 2003:165.

⁹³ South Africa Alliance unreformed churches reformed Faith and Economic justice [title not quite clear], Kitwe 1995 quoted by Duchrow, Ulrich. 2002. “The Economic State We’re In: Can the Economy Work for Every One?” In *Studies in Christian Ethics*. Vol. 15, Issue 2:25.

Churches have challenged the principles of neoliberal economic ideology that promote individualism, greed, competition, consumerism, the plunder of the earth without regard for the next generations, and the systemic injustices of racism, sexism and classism, that accompany economic globalisation. The churches have promoted life-giving and liberating ethical principles for the common good and the sharing of the resources of the world; solidarity with the vulnerable, alienated, women; and those marginalised by the economy. They have also argued for the sharing of resources and the building of communities that care for the plight of all, not ‘just us’.

Churches have also exposed the weaknesses of economies based on domination, greed and exploitation. They have articulated that; “in all parts of the world, and in all eras of history, economic policies based on greed have failed to generate prosperity”.⁹⁴ They have indicated that in the Bible, God’s justice and compassion are norms and principles of economic justice. Churches and women theologians have expressed principles of economic justice by means of the distribution of resources of the world and demonstrated that the basic needs of the poor ought to transcend the superfluous and unnecessary desires of human rights and needs.

Churches have been critical of greed, stating that greed has harmful effects on the quality of personal relationships, the just distribution of goods, the future of the earth, and the web of life. The church has further stated that the Christian ethic of love, with its commitment to sharing and generosity, as well as a relationship with God, is contrary to “the selfishness of greed toward the building of caring communities”.⁹⁵

They have judged greed as sinful. “Human greed, being a manifestation of sin is not, of course, a modern phenomenon. Throughout history, it has taken various forms but consistently has been evident in the economic culture of the times. In our time corporate ethos of capitalism, driven by individualism and a belief in the limitless potential for economic growth, encourages greed.”⁹⁶

It is vital, therefore, that sharing ought to be understood both as “‘constitutive of community’ and as an expression of community in giving everyone a fair chance.”⁹⁷ When sharing is understood as a constitutive element and as part of the identity of the community on both pragmatic and ethical grounds, justice in the economy will more easily be achieved. The message of Christianity, such as “love your neighbour as oneself” [source], which has also been rearticulated by theologians such as Luther, will translate to the care of the poor and those on the underside of the economy. It could also, in today’s economic culture, be translated into acts of love and care, as well as compassion, generosity and readiness to share the world’s resources and God’s gifts to all.

⁹⁴ From “Economic Justice and Fairness”: accessed from <[http: www.justiceplus.org/](http://www.justiceplus.org/)>. Accessed on October 10th 2006

⁹⁵ Childs, James Jr. 2000. “Greed, Economics and Ethics in Conflict”, quoted in Richard Wheatcroft 2000: 1. <http://www.tpc.org>. Accessed on October 18th 2006

⁹⁶ Childs, James Jr. 2000. “Greed, Economics and Ethics in Conflict”, quoted in Richard Wheatcroft 2000: 1. <http://www.tpc.org>.

⁹⁷ Childs, James. 2000: 1.

Whilst so-called mainline churches in South Africa and the ecumenical movement have advocated principles of social and economic justice such as sharing of the resources of the earth, equality, the common good of all people and the environment, compassion and the option for the alienated, poor, women, and those who have fallen through the cracks of the economy, an irruption of prosperity theology, which supports economic globalisation to the fullest, has also taken place. Prosperity theology and prosperity churches often suggest that those who are poor are so, either because they do not work hard, or since they are sinners. They also exaggerate the teaching on blessings from God, by affirming and upholding the rich without systematically analysing why, in the context of South Africa, others are poor and some are rich. The distortion of theology to soothe the conscience of the affluent, to be individualistic and self-centred, poses radical challenges in the articulation of social and economic justice.

ALTERNATIVES AND SOURCES OF HOPE

The WCC suggests that it is essential to develop alternatives to economies that put emphasis on economic growth, and which are designed according to the prescripts of economic globalisation whilst undermining the values of some of the following strategies of creatively engaging and resisting a neoliberal economy. It states that it “reject[s] the neo-liberal model because it serves the all-pervasive and totalitarian power of transnational capital through the mechanisms of the global economy and instruments like the IMF and the World Bank”.⁹⁸ Churches ought to participate in alliance with constructive social movements in order to encourage campaigns, programmes, and strategies aimed at fundamental transformation of any neoliberal economy and economic globalisation. A new ethic, which acknowledges that fact that people want to participate and cooperate in the economy and that they do not want to live by bread alone, is required. Such an ethic should therefore engender hope, justice, creativity, community and sharing.

Some local initiatives for alternatives could entail, among others:

- Working with local money;
- Avoiding commercial banks and the micro-credits of the World Bank and creating independent cooperative unions;
- Developing alternative [use of?] energy resources employing schemes such as wind, sun , water and biomass/gas;
- Supporting local marketing by building and supporting consumer-producer cooperatives;⁹⁹ and
- Calling for the de-funding of the institutions that promote poverty.

The development of alternative economies and strategies that aim at economic justice ought to embrace strategies such as responding to and resisting economic globalisation by making conscious shifts from exploitation to social justice. These could involve, among others, a shift from:

- Trying to justify ourselves through economic activity to being justified by God’s grace through faith;
- A focus on individual wants to social needs;
- What will profit me to what will enrich others;
- The interests of stockholders to the interests of the most vulnerable;
- Using nature to participating in and enjoying nature;
- Economic growth to human flourishing;

⁹⁸ World Council of Churches. 2001. *Lead Us Not Into Temptation –Churches’ Response to the Policies of International Financial Institutions- A Background Document*. Geneva: WCC-Justice, Peace and Creation, 37.

⁹⁹ Adapted from World Council of Churches 2001 *Lead Us Not Into Temptation –Churches’ Response to the Policies of International Financial Institutions- A Background Document*. Geneva: 39.

- Accumulation to serving;
- Standing in awe of virtual money to reverence for actual human beings; from being controlled by the random movements of faceless economic transactions to being empowered to act in relation to what matters in our lives and the world.¹⁰⁰

Another alternative and task for ecumenical endeavour regarding the theological and ethical search for economic and ecological justice should entail, among other options, the idea of undoing or breaking “the cultural myth that there is no alternative to neoliberal capitalism”.¹⁰¹ Christians, churches and ecumenical organisations ought to challenge the ideological weapons of economic and ecological injustices, including their strategic partners, for example, prosperity theology and the prosperity churches, which undermine the efforts for economic wellbeing and justice. These challenges ought to be posed by linking the advocacy initiatives of all those who stand for economic justice at the local, regional and global level, both as individuals and as collectives, as well as linking the ecumenical efforts of the churches with the strategic alliances of those in the social and community movements. ESSET should also encourage church members, as well as those in solidarity with social justice and economic issues, to organise themselves and cooperate against ecological and economic injustices.

Other alternatives include the development of criteria that will enable our communities, churches and those involved in the promotion of economic justice, to envision small, medium and large-scale approaches, to affirm and advocate justice. The churches and ecumenical organisations must [should?] also develop ethical and theological criteria that could assist and be meaningful in evaluating and transforming economic injustices. These could be developed in such a way that they are consistent with the message of *botho/ubuntu* compassion, sharing and distributive justice which are evident in the notions of *botho/ubuntu* and justice. They could also emulate the life and ministry of Jesus Christ which sought to bring life and hope to all, including the most marginalised members of society. The churches and ecumenical organisations could also call for:

- Accessibility to economic participation for as many people as possible so as to address their needs;
- Encouragement of fair and equitable distribution of resources and wealth among people;
- Environmental awareness and commitment to ecological justice and care;
- Those who have other disabilities to be attended to – the poor, the marginalised, alienated, etc;
- The economic and social balancing of the gap between the poor and rich, not just in terms of money, but also of factors such as knowledge, resourcefulness, motivation, networking with allies *et cetera*.

¹⁰⁰ Lutheran World Federation. “Engaging Economic Globalization as a Communion-A Lutheran World Federation Working Paper” page 17. <http://www.lwf.org>.

¹⁰¹ Duchrow, U. 2002. “The Economic State we’re in: Can the Economy Work for Every One?” *Studies in Christian Ethics: Global Capitalism and The Gospel of Justice*, 49.

ESSET therefore needs to work with individuals, agencies and churches to unearth, advocate and promote life-affirming economic alternatives which have the potential to promote economic and ecological justice in South Africa, Africa, in our world today and for the future.

CONCLUSION

We should acknowledge that in Africa, the economic incentive for the entrenchment and consolidation of the hyper-capitalist and market economy was promoted by coercion, colonialism/ neo-colonialism and apartheid. These conditions, alongside the might and power which resulted in economic imbalances, still to a large extent impact and shape the post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa and Africa. These legacies and their possible impediments to the affirmation and nurture of life, whether in politics, the economy or socio-ecological policies, ought to be named and transformed so that economic wellbeing, justice, and *botho/ubuntu* are guaranteed. These actions ought to be undergirded by the values and resources derived not only from our convictions of faith, but also from our cultural heritage, which are rich in life-giving and life-affirming values, as suggested in the present study.

A strong need exists, amongst those seeking socio-economic and ecological justice, to subvert the ideology of selfishness and greed, which are embedded in, and central to, economic policy frameworks that focus on economic growth to the exclusion of other values that measure the wellbeing of life for humanity and the earth., It is ESSET's contention that these ought to be guided and undergirded by economic policies which engender community (both human and bio-community), compassion, justice, sharing and affirmation, for abundance or fullness of life as it is articulated in the message from our scriptures and in the words of Christ, the liberator, in solidarity with those on the underside, expressed in John 10:10 in the following words

“MY PURPOSE IS TO GIVE LIFE IN FULLNESS”.

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