



Research article

## Ecclesiastical Response on Economic Justice – A Biblical Theology of Wealth

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### ABSTRACT

The fundamental needs of humans are food, shelter and clothing. Despite progress, the existence of absolute poverty for many hundreds of millions of people involving malnutrition, illiteracy, disease and starvation is a fact of today's world. What is Jesus's attitude and teaching of Jesus on Poverty? What does the church as a community say when there is economic injustice going on in society? What does the Bible teach about the economic welfare of people? How can the Church at the local, national, and global levels play a vital role in the economic welfare of people? I attempt to briefly present the Biblical Theology of wealth or Economic Justice in the light of the present-day global economic inequalities.



## I. INTRODUCTION

We live in a strange world, where there is ever-growing poverty amidst plenty. There is a widening gap between the rich and the poor due to the absence of moral and ethical principles in the ecological, economic and ecumenical life of humanity. The fundamental needs of humans are food, shelter and clothing. To achieve these, they have to make use of the land and their labor with capital investment. Therefore, the land, labor and capital form the basic components of the economy. Despite progress, the existence of absolute poverty for many hundreds of millions of people involving malnutrition, illiteracy, disease and starvation is a fact of today's world. The very separation of religion from economics and science provides a climate where the main activities of human beings have lost their ethical foundations. World hunger, global inequalities, human rights and diminishing energy resources have forced the church to address this issue. Economic development and fair distribution of wealth are everyone's concerns and rights. The tangibility of economic crisis is not an optical illusion rather a sensible reality. For Noble, Ivana. "Economic Crisis: Crisis of an Ideology." the roots of the crisis lie in an uncontrolled desire for profit at the expense of sense. Debts were accumulated that were clearly in the long term unserviceable, and short-term greed was made into an economic program. This was not an accident, but a deliberate policy of exploitation<sup>1</sup>.

Exploitation was intensive covetousness which is visible as stated by Noble, Ivana; "If previously the victims of most of the exploitation were to be found in the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, the current crisis has also hit America and Europe"<sup>2</sup> grow as a global phenomenon. It seriously hurts the economic balance and right to live in third-world countries.

Here, the question is what is Jesus's attitude and teaching of Jesus on Poverty?. Jesus is truly on the side of the poor; he is a leader who represents the popular struggles of the poor<sup>3</sup>. What does the church as a community say when there is economic injustice going on in society? What does the Bible teach about the economic welfare of people? How can the Church at the local, national, and global levels play a vital role in the economic welfare of

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<sup>1</sup> Noble, Ivana. 2009. "Economic Crisis: Crisis of an Ideology." *Communio Viatorum* 51 (1): 1–3.  
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLA0001735136&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>3</sup> Theoharis, Liz. 2017. "The Poor We Have with Us: A Deeper Look at Jesus' Words on Poverty." *The Christian Century* 134 (9): 26–29.  
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLAI8W170515001948&site=ehost-live>



people? I attempt to briefly present the Biblical Theology of wealth or Economic Justice in the light of the present-day global economic inequalities.

## II. AN OVERVIEW OF ECONOMIC INEQUALITY.

The gap between the have and have not are widening every day even in socialist countries which is an oxymoron phenomenon.

According to the official United Nations data, in the late 1960s, 32.5% of the World's population accounted for 87.5% of its income.<sup>4</sup> A decade later, in 1978, global income was 8.5 trillion. But 7 trillion or 82% of it was monopolized by 25% of the world population of 4.5 billion. Ten years later in 1988, 984 million or 15% of the world's population of 5, 101 million accounted for 78.2% of the total income of 17,135 billion.<sup>5</sup> According to the recent estimates, 80% of the world's income is today enjoyed by 15% of the population living in the North.<sup>6</sup>

These facts show us the economic inequality that is prevalent in the world today. Almost all of the 1.3 billion desperately poor people live in what used to be called the Third World. Unless major internal and external changes come, there is little prospect of a significant improvement in the appalling conditions for many of the people in the low-income countries like India, China, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, etc.<sup>8</sup> Hunger and related disease will continue to strike down millions every year. There are more than one billion people in India alone. The rise of communalism and religious fundamentalism at the time of economic reforms in India has caused increased insecurity among the poor. The Globalization of the market economy in India seems to be more beneficial to the upper class and the middle class than the poor and the people below the poverty line. Therefore, it is crucial for us, as Christians to look into Bible to derive the principles of Biblical theology of wealth.

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<sup>4</sup> Stanly Johnson, *Population Problem* (London: Newton John Publication, 1974), 58.

<sup>5</sup> Michel Chossudowsky, "Global Poverty and the New World Economic Order", *Economic and Political Weekly* 26 (November, 1991):41, cited by Walter Fernandes, op.cit., 10.

<sup>6</sup> Ajit Muricken, ed., *Globalization and SAP: Trends and Impact* (Mumbai: Vikas Abhyayan Kendra, 1997), 21.

<sup>8</sup> Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990), 5.



### III. CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF WEALTH

God did not ordain one specific economic system for the world. While the Bible does challenge the economic misbehavior of individuals in areas such as stealing, cheating, exploitation of others, miserliness, the worship of wealth, indifference to the poor and lack of compassion, there are no economic structures, which are recommended for all time.<sup>9</sup> Since the issue is quite complex, it is not easy to arrive at an absolutely fitting system from where we can operate. It does not in any way mean that Bible does not talk about economics. The Bible does talk about the management of wealth and its proper distribution. Therefore, it is exceedingly important for Christians to look into Bible for guidelines and apply the Biblical principles on economic justice in this corrupt world. The word ‘economy’ comes from the Greek words ‘*oikos*’, meaning house or household, and *nomos*, meaning law or rules. Economics is about people’s daily life: procuring food, shelter and clothes.<sup>10</sup> It also deals with “the production, distribution and consumption of material goods and services”.<sup>11</sup> Let us briefly look into the Basic Biblical Concept on Economics, both from the Old Testament and from the New Testament.

#### A. The Old Testament Perspective

The Old Testament gives detailed laws regulating economic relationships. Although we need not feel bound by these laws, the general concern of justice and peace found there is repeated in the New Testament and is meant for us. The topic of wealth and poverty should not be discussed apart from the consideration of the law of God and its relationship to the covenant, for it is in God’s law that we find God’s blueprint for economic justice.

Biblical justice, Biblical law, and economic growth are interrelated. The crucial section of Scripture, which explains this relationship, is Deuteronomy 28. There are external blessings for those societies that conform externally to the laws of God (vv.1-14), and there are

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<sup>9</sup> William E. Diehl, “The Guided-Market System”, in *Wealth & Poverty*, edited by Robert G. Clouse (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1984), 107-108.

<sup>10</sup> Rob van Drimmelen, *Faith in a Global Economy* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), 11.

<sup>11</sup> Nicholas Lossky, et eds., *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999), 313.



external curses for those societies that fail to conform externally to these laws (vv. 15-68).<sup>12</sup> Deuteronomy 28 is an extension and expansion of Deuteronomy chapter 8, which reveals to us the foundations of economic growth. First, God grants His people the gift of life, which is an act of grace. Second, God provides them with land (vv.7-8). Here are the two fundamental assets in any economic system. Human labor, combined with natural resources over time, is the foundation of all productivity. The third familiar feature of economic analysis, capital, is actually the combination of land plus labor over time.<sup>13</sup>

God not only provides life and land. He also provides a law order, which enables His people to expand their holdings of capital assets and consumer goods. But these assets are not held by men apart from the ethical terms of God's covenant. Deuteronomy 8: 17-18 lays the foundation of all sustained economic growth. While it is possible for a society to experience economic growth without honoring God's law, eventually men's ethical rebellion leads to external judgment and the termination of economic growth (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). The Bible instructs a nation's rulers not to respect persons when administering justice (Deuteronomy 1: 17). Both the rich man and the poor man, the home-born and the stranger are to be ruled by the same law (Exodus 12:49).

The Old Testament presents God as the creator of the universe and everything in it. He is the source of all riches. Wealth is often described in the Old Testament as a blessing from God and a sign of His favor. God gives wealth for the purpose of meeting the needs of the poor (Deut.15: 10) and not for accumulating it for selfish motives (Proverbs 23:4). The Bible says "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Psalms 24:1, NIV). Here the Biblical witness is clear. We are to be stewards, not owners of what God created. How different everything would be if we acted as stewards instead of owners.<sup>14</sup> If we understand this truth, then we can no longer see the creation as something we can manipulate and exploit in any way we choose, but rather as a gift to be received with gratitude and respect. Stewardship is a long-term, not a short-term view of economics. The

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<sup>12</sup> Gary North, "Free Market capitalism", in *Wealth & Poverty*, op.cit., 28.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

<sup>14</sup> Art Gish, "Decentralist Economics", in *Wealth & Poverty*, *Ibid.*, 134.



American Heritage Dictionary defines “stewardship” as “one who manages another’s property, finances or affairs.”<sup>15</sup>

The Bible makes it also clear that what God created is good. The goodness of creation is to be enjoyed by all. We should also note that the promise of prosperity is made to the collective people of God, not to greedy individuals who exploit others. There is a big difference between wealth, which is a gift of God and is shared, and wealth, which comes from exploitation. With the promise of prosperity, however, comes the warning that wealth poses a great spiritual danger (Deut. 8:11-20).<sup>16</sup> Wealth can bring alienation from God and neighbor and can lead to enslavement. All through the Old Testament, when things went well for the people of Israel, they forgot the Lord their God and fell into captivity.

We must not forget that the promise of prosperity was dependent on social justice (Jeremiah 7:5-7). God wants equality and justice. After the Hebrew people entered Canaan, the land resources were distributed equally among the various families and tribes. But by the time of Amos in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century, there was a marked distinction between the rich and the poor areas.<sup>17</sup> In the Old Testament, one of the most serious violations of God’s covenant with His people was injustice and exploitation of the poor. God at times even allowed the destruction of nations who oppressed the poor (Ezekiel 16:49-50).

The Old Testament often portrays God as having a special concern for the poor. In the Exodus, he acted to end economic oppression and bring freedom to slaves. God not only acts in history to liberate the poor but in a mysterious way he identifies with the weak and the destitute. Two Proverbs state this beautiful truth. “He who oppresses a poor man insults His maker” (Proverbs 14:31). “He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord” (Proverbs 19:17). What a statement! Helping the poor person is like helping the creator of all things with a loan.<sup>18</sup> When God selected a chosen people, he picked poor slaves in Egypt. When God called the early church, most of the members were poor folk. When God became flesh, he

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<sup>15</sup> Cited in P.J.Titus, *Theo-Economics* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2002), 89.

<sup>16</sup> Art Gish, *op.cit.*, 134.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>18</sup> Ronald J. Sider, *op.cit.*, 47.



came as a poor Galilean. When the rich oppress the poor and the weak, the Lord of history is at work pulling down their houses and kingdoms (Isaiah 3:14-25).<sup>19</sup>

Since God cares so much for the poor, it is hardly surprising that he wants his people to do the same. God's command to believers is to have a special regard for the poor, weak and disadvantaged. Equal justice for the poor in court is a constant concern of Scripture. The law commanded it (Exodus 22:21-24). Widows, orphans and strangers also received particularly frequent attention (Exodus 22:21-24). Charging interest was also prohibited (Exodus 22:25).

According to Ronald J. Sider, the theme 'God is on the side of the poor' does not mean the following. "First, God is not biased, Second, material poverty is not a Biblical ideal, Third, the poor and oppressed, just because they are poor and oppressed, are not thereby members of the church (the poor sinfully disobey God just as do middle-class sinners, and they too need to repent and be saved by God's justifying grace), Fourth, God does not care more about the salvation of the poor than the salvation of the rich, Fifth, God does not overlook the sin of those who are poor because of sloth. God punishes every sinner."<sup>20</sup> It is also said, "there are over a hundred verses in the Bible that relate poverty to oppression."<sup>21</sup> The rich are considered responsible for the condition of the oppressed. The major causes of poverty in the world today are oppression and injustice. Not only does the whole Bible condemn the whole cycle of oppression and poverty and show that God liberates the oppressed but the Bible also calls us to establish justice, hate evil, and love good (Amos 5:15, 24). Another important thing regarding maintaining economic justice in the Old Testament is the teaching on the Jubilee Year.

#### **a. Jubilee Year**

According to the Old Testament law, every fiftieth year was to be the year of Jubilee, a time when all the land was to be redistributed to the slaves and the poor (Leviticus 25). This was a way of maintaining the original equality that existed when the land was first divided among the tribes. If all land were redistributed with no compensation to the rich, actually, people never were to buy the land. According to Art Gish, "private property is not a Biblical

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>21</sup> Tom, Hanks, "Why do people suffer", *Sojourners* 10 (January, 1981): 19, cited in Art Gish, op.cit., 135.



concept.”<sup>22</sup> The year of Jubilee envisaged an institutionalized structure that affected all Israelites automatically. It was to be the poor person’s right to receive back his inheritance at the time of Jubilee. The Jubilee principle also provided self-help and self-development, with his land returned, the poor person could again earn his living. “The Biblical concept of Jubilee underlines the importance of institutionalized mechanisms and structures that promote justice.”<sup>23</sup> Just like the Jubilee year, God also provided His people with the provision of a Sabbatical Year to promote economic justice and equality.

### **b. Sabbatical Year**

According to the Mosaic Law, every seventh year was a Sabbatical year in which all debts were to be canceled and all slaves freed (Deuteronomy 15:1-6). Any inequality that existed was to be remedied every seventh year. Here again, the concern is justice for the poor and the disadvantaged. Poverty sometimes forced the Israelites to sell themselves as slaves to more prosperous neighbors (Lev. 25:39-40).<sup>24</sup> But this inequality, God decrees, is not permanent. At the end of six years, the Hebrew slaves are to be set free. The law also demanded that the slaves should not be sent empty-handed, but to give them liberally out of every blessing (Deuteronomy 15:13-14, Exodus 21:2-6). The free slaves would thereby have the means to earn their way. The Sabbatical provision of loans is even more revolutionary. According to Sider, “the release of debts was an institutionalized mechanism for preventing on the overgrowing gap between the rich and the poor.”<sup>25</sup> An important aspect of the Sabbath reminds one’s dependence on God. To stop work every seventh day and year challenges concepts and feelings of self-sufficiency.

Ronald Sider points out that, “Yahweh is Lord even of economics! There is no hint here of some sacred law of supply and demand independent of Biblical ethics and the leadership of Yahweh. The people of God submit to him, and he demands economic justice among His people rather than mere charity.”<sup>26</sup> One central theme that runs through the Old Testament regarding economic justice is the portrayal of the covenant God as the defender of the poor and needy, a motif found alike in the legal, prophetic, hymnic, and wisdom literature. The

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ronald J. Sider, op.cit., 66.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ronald J. Sider, op.cit., 66-67.





development of this basic affirmation includes a word of divine judgment against the exploiters of the poor and the perpetrators of social injustice, as well as the divine promise of God's righteous vindication of the poor, which in the later literature offered the hope of a coming age of justice and righteousness.<sup>27</sup> Now, let's turn to the New Testament to derive the Biblical concept of economic justice from the teachings of Jesus as well as from the apostles.

## **B. The New Testament perspective**

In the New Testament, we have the same themes as in the Old Testament, only they are stated even more radically and universally. Therefore, I will be brief in my investigation to derive the New Testament principles of economic justice. Jesus showed profound concern for both rich and the poor. Jesus was the message of the Old Testament made flesh. Jesus announced in His "Nazareth manifesto" that the Scripture was fulfilled in his personhood (Luke 4:18-19). God's taking on flesh included liberating the oppressed and the poor. It was not an accident that Jesus was born in a stable and slept in a feeding trough. God became poor to identify with poverty and oppression and to liberate the oppressed. The sign of Jesus' Messiahship was that he identified with the poor and served them (Mathew 11:2-6).<sup>28</sup> Jesus' teachings continue the Old Testament concern for justice. The parable of a rich man and Lazarus, the rich fool, and the Good Samaritan, all point to the same concept. The same concern is shown in the following sayings of Jesus also.

"Blessed are you, who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20), "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry" (Luke 6:24-25), Give to the one, who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you (Mathew 5:42). Jesus also said that you cannot serve God and money (Luke 16:13). He also told the rich young ruler to sell all he had and give to the poor (Mathew 10:21). "If Jesus, the God incarnate gave up everything for a cross, we should take Jesus seriously about our lifestyles, even our economic life."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Walter E. Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor* (Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1981), 38.

<sup>28</sup> Art Gish, *op.cit.*, 136-137.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.



After the resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the early Christians were given the power to live out what Jesus taught them. We read that, “All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to everyone as he had need” (Acts 2:44-45). Here the Old Testament Jubilee was fulfilled. Only for Christian, the Jubilee occurs not every fifty years, but daily in the ongoing lifestyle of the Christian community. Private prosperity is abolished.<sup>30</sup> The distinction between social classes is also supposed to be abolished (Galatians 3:28). Although we need not initiate every detail of the early church, if the same Spirit guides us, the sharing of our church and economic life will not be much different.

When Jesus chose His disciples, the persons who were to carry on his mission, all except Mathew were fishermen and another common folk. Those who think that only the rich and powerful change history continue to take offense at Jesus’ preoccupation with the poor and weak. If we look forward to the time when God’s kingdom is fulfilled when there will be justice for all when love and sharing will characterize all relationships, why not begin living that way now? Why should we pattern our lives after the fallen world with its private property, competition, exploitation and alienation? One of the most important words in the New Testament to describe the life of a Christian community is *Koinonia* (Greek word), which means communion, community, fellowship, partnership, connectedness, mutuality and solidarity. *Koinonia* and Jubilee are the New Testament economic programs.

For the world, economics is a question of power. Probably the most important teaching of Jesus on the subject of power economics and politics is found in Mark 10:42-45. Here Jesus speaks against power politics and emphasizes the servant attitude that is expected from rulers. This puts economics in a new perspective. The purpose of economic activity in God’s kingdom is not to acquire wealth and power, but to praise God and serve our neighbor. Time is not money but an opportunity to live, love and share. The goal is not profit but supplying people’s needs, supporting a fulfilling lifestyle, teaching kingdom ways of relating to each other and establishing justice.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.



#### IV. SUMMARY

Are there certain principles, which consistently carry through both the Old Testament and New Testament? It seems that the principles of freedom, justice and responsibility can be found in the Bible from beginning to end about maintaining economic justice among the people. Let me sum up each of these.

##### a. Freedom

God has been forever leading His children out of captivity into freedom in various ways. The Exodus event stands as a prime example in the Old Testament. Not only was God concerned about releasing His people from political captivity, but also the vision of the Jubilee year speaks of freedom from economic and social captivity. The New Testament is filled with the good news that God does not want his children to be enslaved by a legalistic burden of the law. Jesus said, “You will know the truth and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). Not only does our creator want us to be free from all forms of physical, economic and social domination by others, but He also gives us a most liberating assurance that we belong to Him.

##### b. Justice

A second theme, which runs throughout the Scripture, is God’s call for justice. From the above discussion, we understand that God is not only demanding us to be just in our treatment of one another, but moreover, He calls us to create political and social systems in which people will be justly treated. The prophet Amos is calling for justice in the nation when he demands, “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” (Amos 5:24). Jesus also dealt with individual and corporate justice. His parables were full of examples of just and unjust people. He also condemned the systemic injustice of his day (Mathew 23; 23). The Biblical dimensions of justice are: care for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lame, the orphans, the widow, the prisoner, the stranger and the children. How is justice distributed? According to William E. Diehl, “justice is distributed by meeting people’s immediate needs through charity and by ultimately eliminating the need for charity.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> William E. Diehl, op.cit., 88-89.



### c. Responsibility

The third Biblical theme, which can be used to measure the economic system, involves responsibility. In the Genesis story of creation, God entrusts to man all the plants, fruit trees, animals, birds and reptiles and asks him to be fruitful. Throughout the Bible, we are reminded that God is the owner of all creation and men and women are merely the stewards or managers. The New Testament use of the word *steward* has provided contemporary Christianity with an understanding of our responsibility before God. We are to use the talents God has given us to care for His creation, liberate His creatures and provide justice in the land.

As mentioned above, the principles of freedom, justice and responsibility run through the whole Bible concerning maintaining economic justice in the world.

## V. THE IMPLICATIONS TO THE CHURCHES

The Second Assembly of WCC (Evanston – 1954) summarized the ecumenical concern about economic and social issues as follows, “The Church is concerned with economic life because of God’s concern for human beings who work to produce goods and services, who use them, and for whom business exists.”<sup>32</sup> The Bangkok Conference of WCC in 1973 defined salvation as:

- a. Economic justice against exploitation
- b. Human dignity against oppression
- c. Solidarity against alienation and
- d. Hope against personal despair.<sup>33</sup>

In ecumenical thinking, economics has never been dealt with in isolation. The objective has been and still is to provide churches, Christian communities, and individual believers, with criteria and guidelines for judgment and action in social and economic matters.<sup>34</sup> In the ecumenical dialogues on economic matters “the value of social justice has always been

<sup>32</sup> Nicholas Lossky, *op.cit.*, 313-314.

<sup>33</sup> Jacob Sudhakaran, “Biblical Models of Economic Order”, *Mission Intelligence* 2/182 (December, 1999): 4.

<sup>34</sup> Nicholas Lossky, *op.cit.*, 319.



underlined. Social justice was understood as a translation of the commandment of God in Jesus Christ to love one another, and to work for it, which is, therefore, a permanent task of the ecumenical movement. Practically, the task has been translated in efforts to eradicate poverty through inter-church channels of co-operation and solidarity”<sup>35</sup>

Though many evangelical believers did not accept WCC’s stand at their Lausanne Conference in 1974, they, however, made a declaration at Wheaton in 1983 that, evangelism and social responsibility were to be considered on equal terms and a holistic approach to development was to be adopted.<sup>36</sup> Both the ecumenical and evangelical views have inspired the Universal Church to look at the economic welfare of people and work out strategies to use Biblical Theology of economic justice in an unjust world today. The economic problems of the Third World countries must be given priority at the Church levels so that the International Bodies of the Church may come together to draw a model economic system. The Church must lead the world by setting itself an example for the stewardship call of humans in preserving and developing the ecology and natural resources for a fair sharing of all humanity. The Church as the transformed community must be prepared to take initiative in proclaiming a just economic order as per the Biblical principles for the peaceful co-existence of all, in the world. Following are some of the steps according to George Peters, the Church should initiate to provide a viable world economic order.

a. The Church must teach and direct its members to honor God’s will that humans as stewards of the earth must cultivate and advance the earth. As humans are not made for the Sabbath, so are they not made for the earth. They are responsible for the earth, to use it for the welfare of humanity.

b. The Church must encourage its members to involve in nation-building endeavors. She must prepare and motivate them to occupy relevant positions of guidance, legislation and administration, as well as general service, in order to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Jacob Sudhakaran, *op.cit.*, 4.



c. The Church must exercise her prophetic role in the world and function as the conscience of society. This involves not only proclaiming God's concern for the poor and the marginalized but also warning the rulers against all forms of oppression and economic exploitation.

d. The Church must be prepared to form counter-culture communities and demonstrate the operation of God's precepts of love, peace, justice, equality, compassion, service and sacrifice.

e. The Church must be prepared to take initiative to demonstrate the higher and nobler principles of life by actively participating in the struggle for equality and human dignity.<sup>37</sup>

The Church as the body of Christ has no alternative except to work for the total welfare of all humanity. True spirituality has its natural implications on the social life of people. If the Church takes the above-stated Bible-based economic initiatives, the history of the world will never be the same again.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Christians must view wealth not as an evil substance but as God's gift. According to the Old Testament, many of God's children like Abraham, Solomon and Job were wealthy, because God has prospered them and blessed the work of their hands. Since we own His wealth, we are stewards and thereby accountable to Him for the proper administration of wealth. Since the excess of wealth can tempt us to forget God and become selfish, one should not be ruled by wealth, rather one should rule it by having a compassionate heart and by being away from injustice. Christians, as God's children, should become models for today's economy. Believers should not draw their security and status from worldly riches. Though wealth is a gift from God, hard work and diligence are demanded in the Scripture. Therefore, let us begin practicing the Biblical theology of wealth in the face of economic injustice and poverty.

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<sup>37</sup> George W. Peters, "The Church and Development: A Historical Vies." *The Ministry of Development in Evangelical Perspective*, ed. R.L.Hancock (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1979), 26, cited in Jacob Sudhakaran., *ibid.*, 13.



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