

# Globalization, justice and solidarity: an ethical approach to the cotton market in Benin in light of Catholic social teaching

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**BOSTON COLLEGE**

**SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY**

**S.T.L. THESIS**

**GLOBALIZATION, JUSTICE AND SOLIDARITY:**

*An Ethical Approach to the Cotton Market in Benin in Light of Catholic Social Teaching*

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement  
for the Licentiate in Sacred Theology**

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Globalization is a social and economic fact. It is best described as the ascendancy of the free market regulated by supply and demand. By the manner in which trade has been extended, along with the ease of financial investing and reinvesting and the migration of people, globalization has engineered a global growth and stimulated the creation of wealth in such a way that for many it “has been an economic godsend,” “a common climb to the top, a rising tide raising all boats.”<sup>1</sup> However the growth generated has not always benefited all nations. The African countries, including Benin, have been deeply hurt by the negative aspects of globalization and they have been marginalized by increasing poverty, inequality and injustice resulting from the expansion of privatization and liberalization.

These negative impacts of globalization were one of the main concerns of the October 2009 African Synod of the Roman Catholic bishops. The *Instrumentum Laboris* of this African Assembly acknowledged that African societies are partly responsible for and partly victims of their own economic problems. But this same synod observed that globalization is tending to marginalize Africa and that “to speak of problems and solutions in Africa is impossible without considering the other continents, their economic institutions, financiers and their network of information, all of which have a considerable impact on African Society.”<sup>2</sup> A practical example of the operation and mechanism of the globalizing economy is the situation of the global cotton market in which the Benin Republic, a West African country, is involved. The global cotton market has strengthened Benin cotton production with new techniques and assistance, but it has

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<sup>1</sup> Albino Barrera, *Globalization and Economics Ethics: Distributive Justice in the Knowledge Economy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> II Special Assembly for Africa, *Instrumentum Laboris*, no 13.

weakened the economic situation of local farmers and it is creating a favorable social context for conflict and intolerance. Indeed, despite the growth resulting from the increased production of cotton, the free market system has had a deteriorating effect on the Beninese economy. It has seen an increase in poverty and caused great environmental damages. In reference to the economic crisis which affects Benin and other African societies in an acute manner, the observations given in the *Instrumentum Laboris* require that a thorough analysis of the global market be made. What is the mechanism of the free market? What are its principles and values? How does it influence the manner in which justice is distributed and safeguarded in the cotton market, particularly in Benin? What ethical problems does it raise? What ethical insights and values of the Catholic Church in Benin and Catholic Social Teaching in general provide assistance in understanding and dealing with the impact of the free market on the economic life of the citizens?

One assumption which undergirds the global free market is that the human being chooses to act rationally. “Human beings are assumed to behave rationally,”<sup>3</sup> is the common observation that includes the corollary that all persons work to maximize self-interest. On the basis of this assumption, the market is supposed to regulate itself in conformity to supply and demand. A market of competition is then set up in which capital and transnational corporations control global trade and in which African countries are subject to the fiat of the strongest countries and foreign corporations. Indeed, the poor countries forfeit much of their freedom in the free market. Their people are forced off their own land with inadequate recompense for the benefit of multinational firms. At the same time, the privatization of social institutions increases unemployment and rural-urban migration. This creates conditions rife for conflict and crime. As

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<sup>3</sup> Amartya Sen, *On Ethics and Economy* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 11.

Paul Collier observed, “Africa has become a home to international crime in two important areas: drugs and financial scams.”<sup>4</sup> In agricultural markets, and particularly in the cotton market, the exchange is deregulated through subsidies given to the farmers in the developed countries.<sup>5</sup> Besides, the intensive production causes great ecological damage: “Though extremely important, the economic aspect is not the only and most important aspect that is obstructing the future of cotton production in Benin. Increased production was essentially obtained through an increase in acreage. The intensification of the production has multiple destructive consequences on the ecological system.”<sup>6</sup> Such activity and economic theory has seen “the number of poor increased by nearly 10 percent between 2002 and 2006, leaving more than one third of the country’s population living in poverty.”<sup>7</sup>

The market theory assumption of rational human agency also paints a portrait of the *homo economicus* who is a selfish human being focused only on his or her personal interest. Such a selfish and self-absorbed person engaged in the global world market is contrary to the African philosophy of person in general and to the Beninese philosophy in particular. Both of these stress, as will be demonstrated in the present study, the social dimension of the person and the importance of the common good. When market theory and activity are based on Cartesian and individualistic anthropology, the market becomes an impediment to human flourishing as understood by Africans. For Africans, individual flourishing and social good encompass one

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<sup>4</sup> Paul Collier, “Africa and Globalization,” Ernesto Zedillo (ed), *The Future of Globalization: Exploration in Light of Recent Turbulence* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 46.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Thomas J. Basset, “Producing Poverty, Power Relations and Price Formation in the Cotton Commodity Chains of West Africa,” in G. Mosely and L. C. Gray (ed), *Cotton, Globalization and Poverty in Africa: Hanging by a thread* (Uppsala: the Nordic Africa institute, 2008), 36.

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Marc Gandonou, “Precision Agriculture and Cotton Production in Benin: Policy Relevance Summary,” (Strategies and Analysis for Growth and Access), 2. Cf. <http://www.saga.cornell.edu/images/caurepts/gandanou-polrel.pdf> accessed October 30, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> UNDP, “Benin: Assessment of Development Results, Evaluation of UNDP Contribution,” (2008).

another. As John Mbiti stresses, “I am because we are and since we are therefore I am.”<sup>8</sup> This fundamental understanding of the individual as a member of the community shapes the entire life of the African community. “The paramount moral goal of the person is to contribute his or her best to the well-being of the community and the community’s aim is to let him or her be all that he or she can be, develop all his or her capabilities so that his or her personhood is not diminished or threatened, but enhanced.”<sup>9</sup> The universal dominance of the global free market with its excessive promotion of self-interest does not advance freedom and development as they have been proposed by Amartya Sen.

The transformation that is happening in African society as a result of the intrusion of globalization is creating a breakdown in the culture. This cultural breakdown is having a negative effect on the shared understanding of common good especially as it is being understood by new generations of Africans.<sup>10</sup> This phenomenon is one ethical concern brought about by the intersection of traditional African culture with the onslaught of globalization. Its development and present force will be explored briefly as part of this study. Although it is certainly necessary today to be aware of globalization as a set of market forces that shape economic reality, those who favor its exploitative aspects should be aware that any intercultural dialogue must take into consideration the historical and social milieu of those with whom they will dialogue. This understanding is pivotal for any positive dialogue and for safeguarding peace in the local

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<sup>8</sup> John Mbiti, Cf J. K. Kahiga, “Polygamy, a pastoral challenge to the Church in Africa,” *African Ecclesial Review* 49 (2007), 123.

<sup>9</sup> Nimi Wariboko, *The Depth and Destiny of Work: An African theological interpretation* (Trenton: African World Press, 2008), 111.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Uzoichukwu Jude Njoku, *Examining the Foundations of Solidarity in Social Encyclicals of John Paul II* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2006), 397.

societies. As Bénézet Bujo argues, “[b]ecause the importance of culture is so fundamental, intercultural dialogue is the indispensable precondition for peace.”<sup>11</sup>

Consequent on the above description of the global economic reality, it should be asked: How should the global market be regulated to allow for the growth and well-being of all nations particularly in poor countries like Benin? What reforms would be ethical as well as feasible? This thesis will explore, in a particular manner, the economic and market situation as described above, and it will suggest some possible answers to these questions. These answers will have their basis in Catholic Social Teaching. The intent of such reflection is to provide a human face to globalization by attempting to suggest ways in which international trade would better serve the common good and support solidarity. Undergirding this study is the paradigm of “Christ the Transformer of Culture,”<sup>12</sup> a paradigm which gives rise to and strengthens the hope that a new world, a new market, a new and healthy economic system are possible. In this perspective, such reflection highlights the transformation and changes that would be required in an economy informed by a Christological call to a covenantal society. The present study proceeds in three chapters. The content of the chapters is as follows.

Chapter one focuses on the analysis of the free market, its mechanism and its impact on the Beninese and African economy. Using the cotton market of Benin as an example, this chapter analyzes economic globalization and highlights the ethical and cultural concerns raised by its negative impact on poor countries. The focus in the second chapter is on theories of justice which critique wealth and the distribution of good. These theories of justice are reviewed and discussed. Among these theories are: Robert Nozick’s theory of entitlement, the utilitarian theory

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<sup>11</sup> Bénézet Bujo, *The Ethical Dimension of Community, The African Model and the Dialogue Between North and South* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 1993), 142.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 190.

developed by Jeremy Bentham and John S. Mill, the need-based satisfaction theory proposed by Karl Marx and fostered by David Copp, and John Rawls's theory of Justice as fairness. These theories leave room for the church to reaffirm certain values which should direct the production and distribution of wealth especially in African countries. Following on this thought process, the third chapter stresses the Christian approach to solidarity and the common good which are both rooted in the covenantal relationship of Israel with God. God blessed the Israelite people by allowing them to enjoy the fruit of their work and live in justice and solidarity. The collection initiated by Saint Paul in the first century for the poor of Jerusalem will be used to demonstrate how the spirit of solidarity was expressed in the economic life of early Christian communities. Nourished by this biblical perspective, Catholic Social Teaching emphasizes justice, solidarity and the common good. Solidarity reflects human interdependence and it entails, when necessary, sacrifice, charity, opposition and liberation. The theology of liberation defended by Latin American theologians has been given an African expression by Engelbert Mveng and Jean-Marc Ela in nurturing a constructive approach to solidarity in the African context. A productive solidarity should promote a globalization that is ethical and one that calls for new policies and regulation in the global market. An attempt is made in this work to facilitate the understanding and the hopeful fructification of the ideas that have been presented above.

## **I. THE FREE GLOBALIZING MARKET AND ITS WEAKNESSES: THE COTTON MARKET IN BENIN**

Globalization, an undeniable phenomenon, describes a contemporary process involving the integration of regional economies, societies and cultures through a global network of communication and exchange. Economically, globalization refers to the interdependence and integration of national economies with the international economy through trade, foreign direct investment, capital flow, labor flow and the spread of technology. This interdependence generated a global market which operates on the basis of the capitalist principles of free exchange. As Alain Touraine highlights, “[t]he very idea of globalization, in effect contained the desire to construct an extreme capitalism, released from any external influence, exercising power over the whole of society. It is this ideology of a capitalism without limits that has provoked so much enthusiasm and so much protest.”<sup>13</sup> While positive aspects of globalization should be recognized as in increased Gross Domestic Production, it should be noted that the global free market provokes and fosters poverty and social insecurity in many countries. Benin is one such country in West Africa. Furthermore, individualistic rather than communal understanding of the person has threatened some African cultures.

In the first section of this chapter, I will discuss the capitalist principles of the global market, which give rise to ethical concerns about the market’s relationship to the full and healthy development of the human person. In a second section I will offer some reflections on the free globalized market for cotton in Benin. These reflections will unveil concerns about justice and equity. My present case study will demonstrate the necessity for a better regulation of the free

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<sup>13</sup> Alain Touraine, *A New Paradigm for Understanding Today’s World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 21.

market which affects the poor countries involved in the global economy. My focus in the third section of this study will be on social and anthropological concerns and, in particular, concern about the notion of personhood which the global capitalist market fosters.

## **I.1. The Free Market: The Missing Social Good**

Economic globalization is driven by the capitalist system which is based on the principles of private property and a free market. However it is precisely these principles of globalization which have contributed to social inequalities and unemployment, especially in countries such as Benin. These principles are also a hindrance to the full and healthy development of the human person in these poor countries. An analysis of the notion of private property in the free market will shed light upon the lack of concern for the common good which integrates the individual flourishing.

### *I.I.I. Human Flourishing and the Right to Private Property: The Necessary Social Dimension of the Goods*

Human flourishing is replete with complexities. This flourishing is more than the maximization of positive emotions and the epicurean notion of pleasure. It includes the growth of the whole person, physically, mentally and socially. In a nutshell, it involves the individual's self-realization. Whether considered as subjective or objective, the individual's happiness is pursued in a community and it includes an economic interaction and exchange which is today regulated by the capitalist system. In this economic system, everything of value is owned by someone. These property rights give a person the exclusive power to use, consume or change the

object owned. Property rights then express the exclusive claim of absolute disposal of a product or material by a person. These rights include the individual's freedom to use the things he owns. "A private property right is one assigned to a specific person and is alienable in exchange for similar rights over other goods."<sup>14</sup>

Private property is a prerequisite, a preliminary requirement for the market and for the economic transaction through which individuals respond to their needs. "Unless some agency has the right to control the use of whatever resource is in question, nobody can set prices, and there will be no incentive for anyone to calculate costs of production."<sup>15</sup> In a laissez-faire economy it is assumed that properties are privately owned and such ownership allows the pursuit of one's own interests within the limits of the law. Hence, private property produces a stimulus for economic activities and growth. It provides economic incentives and contributes to the pursuit of individual happiness.

But the question arises as to whether private property is directed solely to the individual good or to the common good. This concern about private property has been debated by some economists and philosophers as an aspect of the issue of social justice and human flourishing. Plato, in his *Republic*, located human flourishing in contemplation rather than in the material world and advised the Guardians not to own material property. But Aristotle, more realistically, perceived "the institution of private property as pertaining to the utility of the law and social arrangements."<sup>16</sup> For Aristotle, private property is in the interest of the public good, for everyone takes good care of his/her belongings. He sees communal ownership as producing conflict.

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<sup>14</sup> John Eatwell, Murray Milgate, Peter Newman (eds), *The New Palgrave: A Dictionary of Economics*, (New York: The Stockton Press, 1987), 1031.

<sup>15</sup> John Eatwell, Murray Milgate, Peter Newman (eds), *The New Palgrave: A Dictionary of Economics ...*, 1029.

<sup>16</sup> Lionel Robbins, *A History of Economic Thought*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 18.

Aristotle argues, “[i]ndeed, we have seen that there is much more quarrelling among those who have all things in common, though there are not many of them when compared with the vast numbers who have private property.”<sup>17</sup> This insight of Aristotle exerted an important influence on authors such as John Locke, David Hume and Adam Smith.

Considering justice in an individualistic approach to the economy, John Locke claims that property rights derive from labor which has been expended on raw materials. The labor invested in raw material accords the rights of the worker to own it. “The labor of his body and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his.”<sup>18</sup> Hume develops the same ideas but stressed also the responsibility and care for the goods as rationales for private property. “Property will be, in the majority of cases, more carefully looked after if the owners of property and the persons or small groups have a direct interest in its preservation.”<sup>19</sup> But Hume also proposed the idea that the laws governing private property may evolve as the conception of its usefulness to the general public changes. Adam Smith, who was influenced by John Locke, concluded that property rights derive their validity from labor. This view of property right is also shared by Gouverneur Morris. According to him the goal of society is that individuals own property. Nothing will bring people together for a cause more than the protection of the individual good. “It was only for the sake of property that men gave up the greater freedom of the state of nature and submitted themselves to the constraints of society and government.”<sup>20</sup> Private property, therefore, is not only the stimulus to form a society, it is also the source of

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<sup>17</sup> Aristotle, “*Politics-Ethics*” in Arthur E. Monroe (ed.), *Early Economic Thought: Selections from Economic Literature Prior to Adam Smith* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948), 25.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Bowles, *Capitalism* (Harlow: Pearson/Longman, 2007), 30.

<sup>19</sup> Lionel Robbins, *A History of Economic Thought*, 109.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Jennifer Nedelsky, *Private Property and the Limits of American Constitutionalism: the Madisonian Framework and its Legacy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 68.

many of civilization's benefits. It is this principle of private property which has and still does strongly influence international trade.

In the global market, private property plays the same role in trade where the corporations and transnational firms are the main economic actors and owners. Charles Clark thinks that "globalization can be seen as the assertion of the right to private property on a global scale and that the benefits of globalization are merely the result of the efficiency benefits of private property."<sup>21</sup> But the question is raised: what are the proper limits to property right? Should it lead to an accumulation of wealth in the hand of a few rich people when the majority is deprived? Does the current expression of property rights achieve justice and efficiency, particularly when it affects and deprives certain social groups or countries from reaching their flourishing? Charles Clark stresses this concern in the particular case of HIV/AIDS:

At the more tragic level, we see the role intellectual property rights have played in denying life extending medications to HIV/AIDS patients in Africa. Low-cost production of these drugs (which is easily possible) is prevented in order to maintain the scarcity value of the drugs and thus their economic value to the holders of the patents on these drugs. That this is a perverse situation should be obvious to all, yet for the economist the sanctity of private property is not questioned.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, the right to private property plays an ambivalent role. While it provides incentives to the economy, it also deprives the lower social sector of some basic needs. Such an ambivalent role poses ethical questions concerning justice, the common good and human dignity. Does private property ownership take into consideration equity and social flourishing? Is economic profit more important than human life? Taking into account this concern, Catholic Social Teaching stresses the social dimension of private property. Acknowledging the necessity to

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<sup>21</sup> Charles M. A. Clark, "Greed Is Not Enough: Some Insights on Globalization from Catholic Social Thought," *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 2: 1 (2005), 43.

<sup>22</sup> Charles M. A. Clark, "Greed Is Not Enough...", 43.

protect private property, Catholic Social Teaching highlights the social nature and the universal end of property. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, recognized the efficiency and care of goods brought about by individual property ownership. “Human affairs,” he said, “are conducted in more orderly fashion if each is charged with taking care of some particular thing himself.”<sup>23</sup> However Thomas Aquinas directs his argument to the end and purpose of private property ownership which is the common good and well-being of society. This perspective of the social dimension of private property is what Catholic Social teaching promotes. “The right to private property comes from and through the community and it is both right and reasonable that the community have its interests promoted and protected in this institution.”<sup>24</sup> All goods, property and income, which come from natural resources generated through social activities by the cooperation of members of society, are universally oriented to human flourishing. This social and universal dimension of goods is not part of the laissez-faire market philosophy which is based on the maximization of individual interest.

### *1.1.2. The Capitalist Market: An Economic System Based on Freedom and Its Discontents*

Capitalism based on the prerequisite of private property is not an anarchic system. It is structured and ruled by law, the law of freedom. The capitalist system is based upon the freedom of people who come to the market seeking to engage in exchange. For its defenders, the free market reflects the natural relationship of communication and exchange between free human beings.<sup>25</sup> This is the approach of Adam Smith who thinks that “market exchange, being based on

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<sup>23</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologia*, Q. 66 art 2. Pt. II-II, 1471.

<sup>24</sup> Charles M. A. Clark, “Greed Is Not Enough...”, 46.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Paul Bowles, *Capitalism*, ..., 23.

a natural propensity, is common to all people and all places.”<sup>26</sup> This natural propensity for exchange allows for growth and therefore, should then be regulated not by the government but by competition and the interplay between demand and supply. In that way “the market solution is to allow each individual to follow their own self-interest and have the price mechanism coordinate the needs and wants of the community with its resources and efforts.”<sup>27</sup> Competition within capitalism regulates the free market as the best suited economic exchange for individual material advancement. Therefore, for the most efficient functioning of the free market, no external forces including those of the government should be allowed to intervene. The proper role of the government is to ensure the free function of the market and to protect the freedom and right of every member of society to seek his own interest. The government’s role is to facilitate, based on some principle of equality, the goals of individual.<sup>28</sup> From this perspective, a direct involvement of the government in the market is viewed as an obstacle or a threat to normal economic life. “Capitalism is a market economy to the extent that it rejects all external controls and tries, on the contrary, to act on the whole of society as it pursues its own interests.”<sup>29</sup>

But does the free market operate in a truly free way? Isn’t it aided by the state especially in time of crisis? The free market theory does not reflect the reality of this market. The state or government plays a key role in the free market. The three following arguments may be employed to explain the necessary influence of the government in economic life. First, it is the society that creates wealth and the condition for its improvement. According to Mark Martinez, who built his analysis upon the work of Jeremy Bentham, life in its natural state does not provide the opportunities which are only created in the structure of a governed society. Unlike the solitary

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Charles M. A. Clark, “Greed Is Not Enough...”, 34.

<sup>28</sup> Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments* (London: Havard University Press, 1995), 186.

<sup>29</sup> Alain Touraine, *Beyond Neoliberalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 11.

life of Robinson Crusoe, the social order gives value to the individual's skills and work by turning them into a concrete asset that can be exchanged in the market. "The utility and convenience of an asset in the state of nature are enhanced by market value and commercial potential in civil society."<sup>30</sup> Martinez goes further and explains that government's interventions "in forms of tariffs, infra-structure subsidies, land grants, legislation to protect producers, import restrictions, and the like have both undermined the logic of free markets and contributed to significant wealth creation."<sup>31</sup>

The second argument is that the state is a key actor in setting up the economic legislations which guide the free market. Economic laws can be issued only by the government. "Respect for uniform rules, the protection of private property, and the protection of civil liberties crucial for human dignity and creativity exist because states make the effort to get laws right."<sup>32</sup> Jeremy Bentham even establishes a strong tie between property and law in society. According to him, "before the laws, there was not property; take away all laws all property ceases."<sup>33</sup>

The final argument states that, in periods of crisis, the government takes certain strong measures to re-stimulate the economy. The recovery from the current (2008-10) economic crisis is a telling example. The U.S. government facilitated the rescue of the economy by its stimulus money of more than 780 billion dollars distributed to financial institutions. The state not only regulates civil and political life but it gives life to capital. The argument suggesting that the government should stay out of the market does not coincide with reality. "When markets fail and banks won't lend and foreclosures and unemployment are rising, the only thing that can save us

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<sup>30</sup> Mark A. Martinez, *The Myth of the Free Market: The role of the State in a Capitalist Economy* (Sterling: Kumarian Press, 2009), 28.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 30.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 26.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

is government as the spender of last resort.”<sup>34</sup> Market opportunities are embedded in an environment fueled and controlled by the state according to legislative choices and social practices. Indeed, the market is helped by the very visible hand of the state. This involvement of the government in rescuing the free market demonstrates the social nature of economic activity, at variance with the capitalist claims regarding individual interest. As John S. Mill pointed out: “whoever undertakes to sell any description of goods to the public, does what affects the interests of other persons, and of society in general; and thus his conduct, in principle, comes within the jurisdiction of society.”<sup>35</sup>

Aside from this systemic limit and timely necessity, the free market does not enhance the common good. Depicted as the ‘invisible hand,’ the free market is supposed to generate wealth through the pursuit of the maximization of the individual self-interest. The interplay of individual interests allows for the creation of wealth. As Adam Smith argues “[i]t is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self love, and never talk to them of our necessities but of their advantages.”<sup>36</sup> This statement which stresses mutual advantages in trade is considered the principle of the capitalist economy which has led to nothing but self interest. By pursuing their own interest, economic agents contribute to social flourishing better than when their intention is to promote social welfare. But as Amartya Sen observes, “... what Smith is doing here is to specify why and how normal transactions in the market are carried out, and why and how division of labor works.”<sup>37</sup> The creation of wealth is

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<sup>34</sup> Howard Kaplan, “We need a rescuer”, *The Boston Globe*, December 19, 2009, A10.

<sup>35</sup> Steven G. Medema, *The Hesitant Hand, Taming Self-interest in the History of Economic Ideas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 51.

<sup>36</sup> Adam Smith quoted by Amartya Sen, *On Ethics and Economics* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 23.

<sup>37</sup> Amartya Sen, *On Ethics and Economics* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 23.

described as mutual needs supplementing each other. The wealth of the free market does not enhance the social good which is, at best, an indirect effect of the individual search for profit. Moreover, the market encounters failures and external pressures. The actors in the market are asymmetrically informed. Unemployment and inequities are realities which persist in the free market.

The expansion of the free market into a global market provides for choices that are not subject to external reference. “To be free, then, is equated with a state of *autosovereignty*, with respect to both the power to choose and the freedom to determine one’s own good.”<sup>38</sup> Therefore, making the free market a global market fosters and permits reliance on a nonteleological conception of an autosovereign freedom. But such freedom only allows for a flourishing market in terms of growth and for unlimited goods in order to satisfy consumption. Autosovereign freedom to make choices is indifferent to autodeterminism and it provides an environment conducive for the domination of powerful firms, corporations and countries. This market approach to freedom is in opposition to any Christian understanding of human freedom, which in the Augustinian and Thomistic framework, is driven by a strong interior desire towards God. “Ordained to Him who is the Good by His essence and the Good by essence, it has as the object of its vision and the substance of its beatitude, God as He is Himself.”<sup>39</sup> In the Christian understanding of freedom, the human person is a creature pulled by and towards God Who is his ultimate end. The human person is endowed with the desire for God. “Freedom, then, is less a matter of ‘choosing’ and more a matter of ‘accepting’ a gift or ‘consenting’ to the in-built

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<sup>38</sup> James K. A. Smith, “The Gospel of Freedom, or Another Gospel? Theology, Empire, and American Foreign Policy” in Bruce Ellis Benson and Peter Goodwin Heltzel (eds.), *Evangelicals and Empire, Christian Alternatives to the Political Status Quo* (Grand Rapids: BrazosPress, 2008), 81.

<sup>39</sup> Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 21-22.

orientation of one's being."<sup>40</sup> The economic agent, in understanding and following this approach to freedom, is propelled by a powerful attraction to God, Who is his ultimate good, and the One Who should influence his ordinary and daily life and choices. The indifferent agent according to the laissez-faire market disorients the human person denying this very personal vocation. To recognize the work of God, "the puller," or the director, requires the formation of a new global community which is no longer indifferent, but is a community which opts for the individual and community good as part of its desire for God and its orientation towards the ultimate good.

According to the Christian understanding of freedom, the free market does not take into consideration the theocentric orientation of the human being. Besides, the free market faces some crucial limits both for the individual and for society. The present economic reality is an illustration of the limits and of the failure of the capitalist economy. The current economic crisis forces business and companies to reduce the number of their employees in order to maintain their profits and to remain competitive in the market. Such action results in an increase in the unemployment rate. The effects of unemployment in the lives of people are significant and include the loss of their houses. Along with unemployment, the just distribution of income is also an ethical issue in the free market economic system. Equality, as promoted by capitalism, consists of equal freedom for persons to access the exchanges. Its justice remains commutative, expressing equivalence between what is offered and what is received. Commutative justice demands reciprocity but does not take into account the disparity between the individuals and their conditions. As an example, fostered by this capitalist system, the global cotton market has received only an ambivalent appreciation in African countries such as Benin.

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<sup>40</sup> David Burrell quoted by James K. A. Smith, "The Gospel of Freedom, or Another Gospel? Theology, Empire,...", 85.

## **I.2. Cotton Market, Justice and Inequalities in Benin**

The Republic of Benin is a country of 43,484 square miles in West Africa. It borders Nigeria to the east, Togo to the west, Burkina Faso and Niger to the north and Atlantic Ocean to the south. An estimated 8,500,000 people live in Benin. After having gained its independence on August 1<sup>st</sup> 1960, Benin Republic experienced political instability until the Marxist Leninist model of government was put into place with the installation of General Mathieu Kérékou in 1972. In 1990, the country embraced a democratic model of government and since then Benin has enjoyed political peace with regular democratic elections. From the economic point of view, the country is considered to be a developing country. According to the 2007/2008 UNDP's Human Development Index which measures the average achievements of a country on the basis of three central dimensions of human development – such as a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living – Benin is in 163<sup>rd</sup> place out of 177 countries.<sup>41</sup> Beninese life expectancy is at 55.4 years. Its Gross Domestic Product per capita, which is based on the purchasing power parity measure, is estimated to be \$1,500.<sup>42</sup> The Benin Republic embraced the free global market in 1991 after discarding the Marxist-Leninist political system in 1990. The country then committed itself to the principle of free trade which led to the privatization of public companies and enterprises. Although the informal business sector is vibrant, especially in the lower social class, free market and globalization regulate the economy especially through the trade of cotton, the dominant economic product of the country.

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<sup>41</sup> United Nations Development Programme, Benin: Assessment of development results, evaluation fund contribution, December 2008, 9. Cf. [http://www.undp.org/eo/documents/ADR/ADR\\_Reports/Benin/Benin-ADR.pdf](http://www.undp.org/eo/documents/ADR/ADR_Reports/Benin/Benin-ADR.pdf) accessed on January 07, 2010.

<sup>42</sup> United Nations Development Programme, Benin: Assessment of development results..., 10.

### *1.2.1. Improvement and Modernization of Benin Cotton Production through the Global Market*

The Beninese economy which is being integrated into the global economy depends principally on agriculture, which employs about 80% of the working population.<sup>43</sup> Even though the Beninese agriculture sector provides crops such as maize, manioc, sorghum, yam and millet for domestic consumption, its principal products are cash crops, particularly cotton grown for export and international trade. Life in Benin is lived in the rhythm of planting and harvesting cotton. As for other countries of the African continent, cotton is a key product of the trade for Beninese economy and cotton has a direct impact on the livelihood and well-being of Beninese farmers and that of all Beninese people. As the Malian president Amadou Toumani Touré has stated, “Cotton is our ticket to the world market. Its production is crucial to economic development in West and Central Africa, as well as to the livelihoods of millions of people there... This vital economic sector in our countries is seriously threatened by agricultural subsidies granted by rich countries to their cotton.”<sup>44</sup> Although Africa accounts for only 15 percent of global cotton export, its production is an important source of income for the continent and, particularly, for Benin which is one of its main producers in the francophone West Africa Zone along with Mali, Côte d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso. Cotton fiber production, from the plant to cloth “was one of the first manufacturing activities to become organized globally, with mechanized production in Europe using cotton from various colonies.”<sup>45</sup> It is one of the chief agricultural products in the international market for West African countries. It is the second largest agricultural commodity in sub-Saharan Africa, behind cacao and ahead of tobacco,

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<sup>43</sup> United Nations Development Programme, Benin: Assessment of development results..., 10.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. William G. Mosely, and Leslie C. Gray, eds. *Cotton, Globalization and Poverty in Africa: Hanging by a Thread* (Uppsala: the Nordic Africa institute, 2008), 2.

<sup>45</sup> William G. Mosely, and Leslie C. Gray, eds. *Cotton, Globalization and Poverty in Africa...*, 5.

coffee, tea and oil palm. Global cotton production in 2008-2009 is estimated at 107.5 million bales. West Africa progressively plays an important role in the export of cotton. West African production doubled from the early 1990s to 2009.<sup>46</sup> The national incomes from cotton production indicate the importance of the cotton sector in West African countries.

***Importance of cotton exports and proportion of national export revenues in Africa Franc Zone***<sup>47</sup>

Average 1998-02 (millions of US\$)	Cotton fiber exports	Share of total West - African cotton – exports in %	Share in total exports of the country	Share of the agricultural exports of the country
Benin	144.2	24.98	36.60%	72.60%
Burkina Faso	107	18.53	51.40%	70.60%
Côte d'Ivoire	114.9	19.90	3.40%	6.00%
Mali	167.3	28.98	25%	62.10%
Niger	0.4	0.07	0.20%	0.60%
Togo	43.5	7.54	11.10%	41.10%
Total	577.3	100.00	-	-

The table highlights both the important part of Beninese export of cotton in African Franc Zone on the one hand and the key role of cotton production in the national economy on the other hand. A study<sup>48</sup> of different years also demonstrates that from fifth place in the 1990s, Benin now provides the third greatest amount of cotton exports of these countries for the last four years. Annual production has increased considerably from 146 thousand tons in the 1990s to around 500 thousand in the 2000s. Cotton is grown by roughly one-third of the farm households in Benin but “it supports over 50% of the population.”<sup>49</sup> According to the survey conducted by

<sup>46</sup> OECD, “Economic and Social Importance of Cotton Production and Trade in West Africa: Role of Cotton in Regional Development, Trade and Livelihoods” (2005), 18. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/19/8/34352756.pdf>, Accessed on February 06, 2010,

<sup>47</sup> Table realized on the basis of the data from OECD, “Economic and Social Importance...”, 20-21.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. <http://www.cottoninc.com/MarketInformation/MonthlyEconomicLetter> Accessed on December 21, 2009.

<sup>49</sup> EJF, *The Deadly Chemicals in Cotton*, (London: Environmental Justice Foundation/Pesticide Action Network UK, 2007), 16. Cf. [http://www.ejfoundation.org/pdf/the\\_deadly\\_chemicals\\_in\\_cotton.pdf](http://www.ejfoundation.org/pdf/the_deadly_chemicals_in_cotton.pdf) Accessed on February 06, 2010.

Nicholas Minot and Lisa Daniels, the average annual growth rate in cotton production over the 1990s was 10.7 percent.<sup>50</sup> The cotton exports account for 40% of GDP and represent roughly 80% of official export receipts. Cotton is the basic and most important export product and the main source of income for the country. Exporting cotton has placed the Beninese economy in the global free market. The positive aspect of this integration into the global market is the improvement of cotton production which can be highlighted at two levels.

The first level is related to the modernization of the cotton production industry. Before the integration of the Beninese economy into the global free market and under the Marxist Leninist model of government, cotton production, as with all important agricultural production, was part of a monopolistic and national corporation. SONAPRA (National Corporation for Agricultural Promotion), the state-owned company, controlled agricultural production and provided the necessary materials and the necessary technical assistance to farmers. Cotton production relied primarily on physical labor. But under the pressure of the Paris Club and international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the privatization of the sector introduced foreign companies. These foreign companies brought their experience and technology to Benin to modernize agriculture and cotton farming. The collaboration with the exchange students, professors and researchers from western countries with Benin helped the Beninese to incorporate better techniques in agriculture. These techniques included irrigations, agricultural engineering, genetics, seed improvement crop protections and disease control. Moreover, the privatization of the cotton sector and the interaction with transnational societies allowed for the establishment of biotechnological policies regulating

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<sup>50</sup> Nicholas Minot and Lisa Daniels. "Impact of global cotton markets on rural poverty in Benin," in *Research for World Bank* (2002), 3.

bioengineered crop varieties in the market. A mechanism for monitoring, inspecting and a system to educate the general population of Benin have been put in place.

The second level of the enhancement of the cotton sector brought about by globalization is related to the improvement of production. As a result of its modernization, the cotton sector was moved forward and the production increased remarkably. The analyses of Corinne Siaens and Quentin Wodon highlight this enhancement very well. According to these two researchers,

Following the renunciation of Marxism by Benin's government, the sector was modernized in order to improve its efficiency. This led to a large increase in production as it became easier for cotton farmers than for other farmers to gain access to input and credit, while also benefiting from guaranteed prices for their crop. The second phase of the reforms is often referred to as the Structural Adjustment Period, during which the input supply function was privatized (starting in 1992) and ginneries were also partially privatized (starting in 1995). In a third phase, starting in 1999, a new interprofessional structure was put in place to govern the sector, with the participation of the various stakeholders but still under the control of the government in key sensitive areas such as the setting of annual guaranteed prices to be paid to producers.<sup>51</sup>

Despite modernization and increased production, privatization, which is experiencing a rapid rise in Benin, is fraught with negative aspects which severely affect the farmers' well-being.

### *1.2.2. Liberalization of the Cotton Sector: a Competitive Market and Deregulation*

Although the liberalization of the Benin cotton market has generated an improvement in production, it did not always contribute to the well-being of the farmers and their families. This

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<sup>51</sup> Corinne Siaens and Quentin Wodon, "Cotton Production, Poverty, and Inequality in Rural Benin: Evidence from the 1990s" in William G. Mosely, and Leslie C. Gray (eds), *Cotton, Globalization and Poverty in Africa: Hanging by a Thread* (Uppsala: the Nordic Africa institute, 2008), 161.

liberalization was an integral part of the general liberalization of the economy which prompted many public companies and sectors to privatize. The government privatized such state enterprises as breweries, producers of cement, textiles, tobacco, telecommunications, electricity, water, postal services and insurance. This privatization increased competition. The cotton sector passed to private associations such as the Inter-professional Association of Cotton (AIC), the Corporation for Purchase and Management of Agricultural Inputs (CAGIA) and the Centre for Safety of Payment and Recovery (CSPR).<sup>52</sup> As a result, the cotton sector and farmers were directly exposed to the increased cost of the operating and to the competition and the deregulation of the market. All of this reduced the demand for labor and increased unemployment.

Indeed, one of the critical negative impacts that the cotton farmers encountered in the free market is the increased cost of the materials. The production of cotton demands a great amount of agrochemical products and materials. Each year the cotton producers spend a large proportion of their assets to purchase fertilizers, pesticides and seeds. With the liberalization of the sector, the farmers who were previously supplied by the public corporation SONAPRA (which had provided them with accessible chemical products), now depend on private and transnational companies. In this new situation, the materials become more and more expensive and the farmers are obliged to rely on credit which they have to repay with their income from the cotton crops. This need for credit reduces their profit and weakens their economic security. Thus the farmers are pressured to reduce the number of their workers. As Nicholas Minot and Lisa Daniels analyzes, "... the second type of indirect effect on households outside the cotton sector is the reduced demand for labor. Cotton is more labor-intensive than many other crops, so a reduction

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. Peter Ton and Eustache Wankpo, *La production du coton au Bénin* (Arnhem : Agritera, 2004), 11. My translation.

in cotton area is expected to reduce the demand for agricultural labor, thus reducing the wage income of households that depend on agricultural labor.”<sup>53</sup> This reduction of labor causes an increase in unemployment. The initiatives which are attempting to reduce poverty, are greatly impaired by such actions while these countries have a critical challenge to provide employment for their citizens. This increase in unemployment demonstrates the negative impact of the globalization economy in Benin. An ethical question also arises here about justice, equity and the dignity of the Beninese farmers.

Further, the decline of the price of cotton in the global market is also a crucial difficulty for the cotton sector in Benin. Controlled by the principles of the free market, the prices of cotton are theoretically determined by the interplay of supply and demand. The price of cotton in the market is supposedly based on global production and global needs. But the prices constantly decrease because of the subsidies that developed countries grant to their farmers. Such deregulations are the main reason for repeated substantial decreases in the price of cotton in the world wide market. The current global economic crisis fosters this impact because cotton products like clothing are more income-elastic than products made from other non-cotton crops. The liberalization of the cotton market in Benin has also had a negative economic effect on the Beninese cotton farmers. Before the liberalization of the cotton sector, SONAPRA ensured the farmers a fixed price against the price for this product. This fixed price gave them some protection from the insecurity and vulnerability of the global market. But since the liberalization was initiated, the farmers have been exposed to the instability of the market and to the competition of the producers in the developed countries who receive the financial support of their government. This government subsidizing by developed countries severely impacts the

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<sup>53</sup> Nicholas Minot and Lisa Daniels. “Impact of global cotton markets on rural poverty in Benin,” ..., 7.

livelihood of the farmers and families who depend on income from the cotton crops, and it emphasizes the question of justice and equality in the free market. Indeed, the farmers in Benin and in Sub-Saharan Africa are disadvantaged by the deregulation of the market and by government subsidies to their competitors in developed countries, especially in China and in the United States. Each year the cotton farmers in developed countries receive substantive subsidies in order to stay competitive. Minot and Daniels noted that:

In 1999 Cotton farmers in the U.S. received over US\$ 600 million from the production flexibility contract (PFC) program which is untied to production levels. The same year, they received more than US\$ 1.5 billion in loan deficiency payments and marketing loan gains. Finally, they received about US\$ 600 million in economic and disaster assistance to compensate for low prices and/or poor weather. Cotton exporters and U.S. mills also received roughly US\$ 200 million in “Step 2” user marketing certificates, designed to keep U.S. cotton exports competitive.<sup>54</sup>

In spite of the claim of the developing countries that a fair cotton trade exists through trade in the international agreements (especially at the World Trade Organization), the farmers in the developed countries are still subsidized. As William G. Moseley and Leslie C. Gray observed, “[y]et the United States and European Union continue to give billions of dollars in subsidies to their cotton growers, ginner, and exporters, leading to overproduction, dumping, and depressed world market prices.”<sup>55</sup> These subsidies depress the prices of cotton and prevent the cotton growers in developing countries from obtaining the just fruit of their work. “A study by the International Cotton Advisory Council estimates that rich country export subsidies and domestic support to cotton in 1999 depressed prices by 20 percent, resulting in \$300 million in

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<sup>54</sup> Nicholas Minot and Lisa Daniels. “Impact of global cotton markets on rural poverty in Benin,” ..., 1 note 2.

<sup>55</sup> Thomas J. Basset, “Producing poverty: Power Relations and Price Formation in the Cotton Commodity Chains of West Africa” in William G. Mosely, and Leslie C. Gray (eds), *Cotton, Globalization and Poverty in Africa...*, 36.

lost value for African cotton exporters.”<sup>56</sup> The cotton growers in China and in the United States depend more on the government than on proper prices of the market. This deregulation also constitutes a question of inequality in the free market. While the producers in Sub-Saharan African are denied the assistance of public corporations, the government in the countries such as China and the United States support their farmers with huge subsidies. This impact on the developing countries is worsened by the fluctuation of the dollar currency and especially its depreciation in 2009. In Benin, the decline of prices in the global market and the privatization of the cotton sector are disadvantageous. They reduce the financial power of the farmers who have to cut their expenses on other goods and services and are unable to afford education for their children. Such actions have deleterious effects on the social security of the farmers and of all the people in Benin. Indeed as poverty increases, so does social unrest and crime increases. The resultant social unrest and its concomitant crime have escalated in Benin in recent years. Banks have been robbed and hijackings have occurred on the roads. The exodus from rural areas to the cities of Benin has increased, as many young people from these rural farming areas, having lost their jobs, left to relocate in the cities. Their situation did not improve in the city.

In addition to the decline in prices and the deregulation of the market through subsidies in the developed countries, the Beninese farmers encountered environmental concerns. In Benin, the improvement of cotton production was essentially obtained through an increase in acreage and the use of chemical fertilizers. The intensification of production induced multiple destructive consequences on the ecological system. According to Jean Marc Gandonou, “the profitability of cotton production led to a significant reduction in the soil rotation traditionally observed that

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<sup>56</sup> Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, "The WTO's Cotton Crisis and the Crisis in Commodities." Cf. <http://www.iatp.org/iatp/factsheets.cfm?accountID=451&refID=88936> accessed on March 25, 2010.

resulted in the deterioration of soil fertility.”<sup>57</sup> The increased production of cotton is then done through the extension of arable lands. And as the fertile soil becomes depleted, the farmers extend their production to non-appropriate soils and by destroying the forests to make way for more land. The search for increased production and the liberalization of the market induces deforestation. In Banikoara, a region in the north of Benin, where most cotton is grown, many, if not most of local forests have been destroyed. The destruction of these forests has been an important factor in the climate change in these regions and in the same regions, this destruction has, to a large degree, added to the aridity of the climate. The amount of rain has also decreased in a remarkable manner. Wildlife has suffered. According to Leif Brottem, “Benin loses around 100,000 hectares of forest every year, a loss that is most pronounced in cotton producing regions.”<sup>58</sup> This forest destruction has deleterious effects in social life such as traditional medicine which relies on the leaves, roots and bark of the trees of the forest. The resources for constructions also are reduced. As the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy observed, “[i]n Benin, where 80 percent of export revenues derive from cotton, the costs of massive deforestation and soil exhaustion in land cleared for cotton planting have yet to be calculated, let alone paid for by meager cotton export revenues.”<sup>59</sup>

Moreover, the intensive use of pesticides impoverishes the soils. As the World Bank observes in its report, “globalization raises incomes in most of the world and intensifies competition. The higher consumption that this enables poses a potential threat of environmental pollution. The intensification of completion also creates a potential for ‘race to the bottom’ and

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<sup>57</sup> Jean-Marc Gandonou, “Precision Agriculture and Cotton Production in Benin: Policy Relevance,” ..., 2.

<sup>58</sup> Leif Brottem, “The Limits of Cotton: White Gold Shows its Dark Side in Benin,” *Seatini Bulletin* 8: 11 (September 15, 2005). Cf. [http://www.fpif.org/articles/the\\_limits\\_of\\_cotton\\_white\\_gold\\_shows\\_its\\_dark\\_side\\_in\\_benin](http://www.fpif.org/articles/the_limits_of_cotton_white_gold_shows_its_dark_side_in_benin) accessed on March 25, 2010.

<sup>59</sup> Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, “The WTO’s Cotton Crisis and the Crisis in Commodities.” Cf. <http://www.iatp.org/iatp/factsheets.cfm?accountID=451&refID=88936> accessed on March 25, 2010

‘pollution havens.’ Governments may try to attain a competitive advantage by lowering their environmental standards.”<sup>60</sup> The use of pesticides also induces crucial damage on the farmers’ health. Cotton farmers in Benin encounter dramatic diseases related the chemical product used in the farms. “In Benin, where 80 percent of export revenues derive from cotton, the costs of massive deforestation and soil exhaustion in land cleared for cotton planting have yet to be calculated, let alone paid for by meager cotton export revenues.” Reliance on agrochemicals often has contaminated the soil and water resources in these regions and has poisoned many workers and ordinary people living near areas where cotton is produced.<sup>61</sup> Some commonly used pesticides such as endosulfan are responsible for sickness and deaths in Benin. According to the survey of Environmental Justice Foundation,

At the end of the first season after endosulfan was introduced in Benin (1999-2000), stories of poisonings and deaths among farming communities in the cotton growing areas emerged. In one area, the authorities reported that cotton pesticides had claimed at least 37 lives, and an additional 36 were identified with serious health problems... Following these stories, the local non-governmental organization, Organisation Béninoise pour la Promotion de l’Agriculture Biologique (OBEPAB) carried out an independent investigation in 2000 and, among families interviewed, confirmed 24 fatalities. They estimated that at least 70 deaths occurred just in the cotton areas it investigated. OBEPAB followed this with investigations in the following two seasons, from 2000-2003. During this period they investigated and recorded 577 poisoning incidents in the villages visited, which included 97 fatalities.<sup>62</sup>

Endosulfan is a widely used chemical product in Africa, especially in cotton production. Investigations on farmers reveal detectable levels of endosulfan in blood samples from cotton farmers and farmworkers countries such as Cameroon, Mali, Senegal, Benin and Burkina Faso.

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<sup>60</sup> World Bank, *Globalization, Growth, and Poverty: Building an Inclusive World Economy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 130.

<sup>61</sup> USAID, *Summary and Findings and of the West African Cotton Assessment* (January 2005), 24.

<sup>62</sup> EJF, *The Deadly Chemicals in Cotton*, (London: Environmental Justice Foundation/Pesticide Action Network UK, 2007), 16.

The farmers suffer from burning eyes, blurred vision, difficulty in breathing, vomiting, nausea, dizziness, muscle cramp, tremors, loss of consciousness and seizures which are symptoms of acute endosulfan poisoning. “Some of the worst cases of poisoning were found in Benin, which included deaths of dozens of farmers or their family members including their children, after being exposed to endosulfan.”<sup>63</sup>

This entire analysis depicts the liberalization and privatization of cotton production and the market as an ambivalent agent of development in Benin. While it facilitates increased production for farmers, its globalised character exposes concerns about its links to wealth, poverty, and environmental destruction. The issues raised concerning cotton production echo the many discussions about globalization and its controversial aspects, some of which are privatization, free market, agricultural subsidies, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development. Deregulation through subsidies and price dumping is an illustration of the impact of international trade and globalization in Sub-Saharan Africa. This impact includes concerns regarding political and social stability. As stated above, the increase in poverty fosters social unrest and insecurity. This free market in developing countries raises ethical concerns about economic justice and inequality, individual interest and common good and calls for solidarity and respecting the dignity of the human person. The human person is more than “homo economicus;” he or she is a social being. This social dimension of human being is a key aspect of African consciousness. But great cognitive dissonance is introduced in societies where the free market is extending the individualist culture.

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<sup>63</sup> “Organic Cotton in Benin: *Harvesting health and security for generations to come*” Cf. [http://www.panna.org/files/Organic\\_Cotton\\_in\\_Benin.pdf](http://www.panna.org/files/Organic_Cotton_in_Benin.pdf) Accessed on February 06, 2010.

### **I.3. The “Homo Economicus” and the African Approach to Human Personhood**

In addition to the economic impact, the free market described in the cotton trade also affects African cultures which are the backbone of the Africans’ economic life. The capitalist economic system exhibits conception of the human person which emphasizes individualism and sees society as a mere collection of individuals. By means of economic power and reliance upon the free market system this conception has had deleterious effects on African societies and their traditional values, namely community, family, respect for life and hospitality.<sup>64</sup>

#### *I.3.1. The Approach to the Person in the Free Market*

The capitalistic approach to the person which undergirds the free market is atomistic. The “homo economicus” is an individual person who comes to the market to maximize his/her interests. Capitalism, through the mechanism of the free market and the maximization of self-interest encompasses and favors individualism. In capitalism, each individual works and advances his/her material interests and claims his/her freedom.

In capitalism, the motivations of the economic agent are exclusively and selfishly oriented and everyone is assumed to be capable of calculating his or her own self-interest. “The individualism of current economic theory is manifest in the purely self-interested behavior it generally assumes. It has no real place for fairness, malevolence, and benevolence, nor for the preservation of human life or any other moral concern. The world that economic theory normally pictures is one in which individuals all seek their own good and are indifferent to the success or

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. Peter Henriot, S.J., “Globalisation: Implications for Africa” in Michael Amaladoss, S.J. (ed), *Globalization and its Victims, As Seen by the Victims* (Kashmere Gate: Vidyajyoti Education and Welfare Society, 2000), 70.

failure of other individual engaged in the same activity.”<sup>65</sup> In this perspective, society is nothing but a collection of discrete individuals. In this perspective the community exists not as a community with its own personality and historical connections, but only as a collection of individuals who have come together with their own self-interest as primary. The vision of the society integrated into capitalism is then a collection of individuals seeking the achievement of ends which are primarily individual. In pursuing his or her own interest, the individual can contribute best to society. The “prisoners’ dilemma” in “game theory” characterizes the function of capitalist economy and shed lights on the way individuals think and act in the society where cooperation is considered difficult to attain even though this cooperation would be mutually beneficial. According to this game theory, two prisoners arrested for the same offence are held in different cells. Each has two options: confess or stay silent. Three outcomes are then possible. One could confess and testify against the other as state witness, receiving a light sentence while his fellow prisoner receives a heavy sentence. Or they can both say nothing and may be lucky and receive light sentences or even be set free. Or, fearing the confession of the other, both confess and probably receive lighter individual sentences than one would have received had he said nothing and the other had testified against him.<sup>66</sup> In the capitalist system economic agents don’t trust one another. Each one has to consider the optimal situation for himself.

Capitalism envisions a society where each individual has a conception of a good or worthwhile life and, accordingly, works rationally. The ethic here is individualistic and promotes individual rights through competition. This assumption encourages and advances globalization and international trade. However, this approach does not expose all the motivations underpinning

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<sup>65</sup> Herman E Daly and John B. Cobb, *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 159.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Matthew Bishop, *Essential Economics: An A-Z Guide* (New York: Bloomberg Press, 2009), 249.

the action of economic agents in the free market. The question is whether self-interest is the exclusive reason which drives the persons or whether there are various motivations. The economic agent may act for various motivations including the care for others. As Amartya Sen argues, “why should it be uniquely rational to pursue one’s own self-interest to the exclusion of everything else? It may not, of course, be at all absurd to claim that maximization of self-interest is not irrational, at least not necessarily so, but to argue that anything other than maximizing self-interest must be irrational seems altogether extraordinary.”<sup>67</sup>

This capitalist approach is in opposition to the African perspective which situates the individual’s well-being in the society. Like the Christian approach, which sees economics as the management of a household related to the production, distribution and consumption of the necessities of life,<sup>68</sup> economy in the traditional African viewpoint is a business which is conducted collectively for the common good.

### *1.3.2. Business and Human Being in African Perspectives*

Unlike the capitalist market which institutes business and exchanges between anonymous individuals who are supposed to act for their own interest, business in African societies has a more corporate and collective dimension. Nimi Wariboko, in his analysis of businesses in the Kalabari Society, as it existed before western colonization, demonstrates the positive aspects of this African approach. Business in the Kalabari culture is an activity of corporations which operate like a house, a canoe house, where the members are considered partners or shareholders

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<sup>67</sup> Amartya Sen, *On Ethics and Economics* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 15.

<sup>68</sup> Douglas Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God in Political Economy*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 3.

rather than as employees or anonymous factors of production as in the capitalist free market. The house is not a community of members of a blood family, but a community of workers dedicated to their common flourishing. The creation of the “canoe house” or “community” is based on the concept of trade not on any biological covenant such as blood or marriage. This understanding of common interest affords an opportunity to all to work at all levels and to participate in the decision-making process. “The majority of the people who worked and lived in a canoe house were not even related by blood. Usually those who were not direct descendants of the chief outnumbered the founder’s descendants. ‘Blood’ and house relatives were melded together by shared goals and all house members were socially conditioned to treat the corporation as their own personal family.”<sup>69</sup>

The corporation bears a common and personal interest such that the members are willing to give their life for its sake. This makes every member, at the same time, a family member, a partner, an employee and defender. The individuals are tied to the corporation and are not merely entitled to a wage, but must show solidarity in the risk and profit of the corporation. In spite of the risk of low productivity, members are rewarded according to the average group productivity. However the management of business and corporation is influenced and shaped by a cultural approach to income distribution. “The basic concept of distribution is that the bottom of income distribution should not be too low, so as to provide some insurance against disastrous economic outcomes.”<sup>70</sup> The common understanding of wealth distribution aims to provide at least a minimally adequate level of vital resources for the worst-off individuals. But this view of welfare distribution does not equalize all incomes, and the rich and owners of businesses work against

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<sup>69</sup> Nimi Wariboko, *Pattern of Institutions in the Niger Delta: Economic and Ethological Interpretations of History and Culture* (Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, 2007), 29-30.

<sup>70</sup> Nimi Wariboko, *The Mind of African Strategists: A study of Kalabari Management Practice* (London:Associated University Presses, 1997), 77.

the common understanding which affects their accumulation of wealth.<sup>71</sup> Moreover this traditional concept of wealth distribution is not embraced by the younger generation and in the cities where globalization is more influential. However, this approach to business is human-centered and not capital-centered, as in the free market. From this manner of organizing business, the meaning of work becomes clear.

Work, in an African perspective, is undertaken in a social relationship. The social character of human life is incorporated in work as a specifically human activity. It is then more than a factor of production sold in the labor market. As Nimi Wariboko argues, in African societies, “work is a communal moral category which depends for its sustenance and progress not only on the moral web of interpersonal relationships but also on the capacities of persons to participate in its process, and on the right relations that are to be maintained among them.”<sup>72</sup> Production is possible only as a collective-cooperative activity, because even an activity done individually bears some social influence. An activity is determined and regulated in a given society which is the first great force of production. From the African approach, cooperation is completely immanent to labor activity itself. This approach to work and business is embedded in the African understanding of personhood.

In spite of the diversity of African traditional cultures, common traits may be noted about their approach to personhood. In Africa, the person is understood within a threefold relation: with God, the community and the individual. The theocentric dimension is less explicit because it is the inner aspect. However, the relation to God pervades African life. In Benin, a human being has no existence without “Mawu,” God the Almighty. God “Mawu” is the creator and ruler

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 78.

<sup>72</sup> Nimi Wariboko, *The Depth and Destiny of Work: An African Theological Interpretation* (Trenton: African World Press, 2008), 247.

of the world, rewarding the good and punishing the bad. This understanding influences the social and moral life of people and the way they construe the individual and social events. As Benezet Bujo argues, “It is hardly conceivable that the African, whose thinking is always set in religious context, could have a morality without God.”<sup>73</sup>

The theological relationship constituting the human person plays a fundamental role in African life but, at an existential level, the emphasis is put on the communal dimension. Indeed at the existential level, personhood is primarily understood in community. In this perspective, the members of a community share and carry on the obligation to contribute to the growth and flourishing of the whole community by their economic and moral actions. The entire community including its leaders and the citizens share the responsibility of communal growth.

To guard the common welfare and to promote the growth of life are the responsibility first of all of the community leaders. Yet the people as a whole are co-responsible, because the fate of the leaders essentially depends on every single community member. Between leaders and single members there exists a dialectical relationship: the life-strength, coming from God, gets new vitality not only from above but also in the way that all the members reinforce one another, to circulate in waves through the whole ‘body,’ i.e., the clan community.<sup>74</sup>

This communal life includes visible and invisible elements such as the ancestors who are believed to interact with the community and individuals. This understanding, which integrates mutuality and communion, considers human beings concretely, in their existential dimension. The person does not exist in an ontological abstraction but by being in communion.

However, the theological and communal dimensions of personhood do not dissolve the individual into the community. The individual has a specific identity and is accountable for

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<sup>73</sup> Benezet Bujo, *The Ethical Dimension of Community: the African Model and the Dialogue between North and South* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 1997), 25.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* 27.

his/her deeds. The individuality of the person is stressed by Benezet Bujo in the practice of name-giving. “Usually, it is not the father’s name that is just passed on to the child; every child gets his or her own name according to the circumstances of birth. Therefore, the name is never without individual meaning, but expresses something of the person’s being. It characterizes the personal ontological reality.”<sup>75</sup> The name sometimes expresses a mission or a goal endorsed by the individual. And a person attains self-realization by contributing to the well-being of the community which provides the person with the opportunities to develop all of his or her capabilities. The promotion of the well-being of the community includes the protection of life which is seen as the continual maintenance of the bond of communion between God, community, and the individuals. As Nimi Wariboko argues, “the person and community are so interwoven that one cannot talk of the welfare of one without automatically implying the other.”<sup>76</sup>

The African life is expressed through the interplay of the threefold relationship of the person. This life flourishes in a culture which is “a person-centered culture, a culture that values people and human life over things and material gains, a culture of caring, sharing and hospitality.”<sup>77</sup> This approach determines the foundation on which the economic and marital life are built. The common good is not met by the impersonality of the market exchange but by the work of each member of the society to meet common and individual needs. Community and social practices play a major role in this approach and help over time to transform human nature. They shape and reshape self-images and the way people interpret themselves and their achievement. In Benin, there is an expression that says: “A do yi aton non fli zen a,” strength is in union. People flourish when they work together and support one another. But the encounter

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 28.

<sup>76</sup> Nimi Wariboko, *The Depth and Destiny of Work...*, 118.

<sup>77</sup> Teresa Okure, “Africa: Globalization and the Loss of Cultural Identity,” in Jon Sobrino and Felix Wilfred, *Globalization and its Victims* (London: SCM Press, 2001), 69.

with the culture of the free market devastates this supportive environment of solidarity, hospitality, the spirit of sharing and concern for common good which are substituted by the ‘me first’ and the competitive and money-centered culture. “The greatest casualty in all this is the growing loss of respect for human life, since this cannot be measured in terms of profits returned at the end of a business day.”<sup>78</sup> The African approach to economic life shares many of these concerns with Christian perspectives, and may help to address the limits of the free market in order to allow African flourishing in the global economy.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter, focusing on the way the globalized economy impacts African countries, discussed the capitalist principles which ground the global market and has exposed the ethical concern attached to the market in relation to human flourishing. The example of the cotton market in Benin shed light on this impact with the example of decreased income of farmers due to the deregulation of the market and on account of the subsidies of the developed countries to their farmers. Furthermore, the mind-set of the global capitalist system orients economic progress towards growth and individual maximization of profit and does not consider the economic agent or worker as a person whose dignity requires greater consideration in the labor market. The global market, into which the poor countries are forced to integrate, is grounded on private capital as the driving force of economic interaction. This chapter reveals also that the idea of an economy freed from political controls and influences is irrelevant. Governments in developed countries empower their economic agencies at the expense of the poor countries. As the example of the cotton market in Benin illustrated, a healthy environment is also a concern for

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<sup>78</sup> Teresa Okure, “Africa: Globalization and the Loss of Cultural Identity,” ..., 69.

liberal capitalism. Finally, it has been shown throughout this chapter that the capitalist approach to business grounded on the individual search for profit hurts the African societies which are grounded in solidarity, sharing, hospitality and concern for the common good. This chapter has described ethical concerns about economic and social justice and common good which will be addressed in the second chapter especially in regard to growth, income distribution and justice.

## **II. JUSTICE AND WEALTH DISTRIBUTION: ETHICAL CONCERNS**

As has been demonstrated in chapter one, global trade is a system rife with inequality and inequity at the expense of developing countries. This situation of inequality prompts reflection on the place of justice in the free global market. How should justice be understood in the context of the global market? What principles and values should be engaged to foster economic justice? Various theories based on differing perceptions of social relationships have addressed these questions. Among these theories are: justice viewed as entitlement; the greatest utility for the greater number; the satisfaction of basic human needs; and the maximization of opportunities given to each one to satisfy his own needs. A critique of these theories will help to highlight the position and teaching of the Catholic Church relating to social justice issues.

### **II.1. Justice as Entitlement and the Theory of Utilitarianism**

Reflection on economic justice has led some thinkers and moralists to focus on entitlement and utility as the key criteria by which to describe just relations in economic life. While entitlement stresses only free exchange and individual rights, utilitarian theory points out the need to understand the consequences of economic decisions for society.

#### *II.1.1. Entitlement and Agreement in Free Exchange*

The entitlement theory of economic justice was proposed by Robert Nozick to address ethical concerns about fair acquisition and exchange in the free market. This theory claims that

“the justice and injustice of a distribution of property or other goods among the members of a society depends entirely on the justice of the specific transactions through which that distribution was produced including both the acquisitions of previously unowned things and transfers of owned things from one person to another.”<sup>79</sup> This conception of justice clearly states that justice arises in the process of the interaction and exchange among people. In such transactions, justice is not a predetermined notion or principle to be applied to the exchange. There is no structural or specified pattern of just distribution by which to govern the market. No central institution or person is entrusted to control and to decide on the distribution of the resources and there are no pre-defined notions or criteria of justice to govern the distribution. Because there are no structures of distribution, people can only receive what they need by means of this distribution or by receiving a gift. Justice supposedly happens through this process of interaction. A pre-set definition of justice would be an external interference in the life of people. Moreover, a definite model of justice would be a paradox in this theory because such a model would deny the individual the freedom to dispose of his property. In such a theory there is no obligation which governs the disposal of one’s property because freedom to do so would upset any preconceived notion of justice on the part of the distributor. Therefore, justice is fulfilled only in the process of the original acquiring and exchanging of goods and services.

The original acquisition of goods describes the initial process of appropriation of unowned things. Robert Nozick grounded his description of original acquisition on John Locke’s approach to ownership according to which the labor expended on a raw material gives a person the property rights. In justice a laborer has a claim on what he has worked. The only basis a person has to make a claim on property or goods on which he has worked is by the process of

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<sup>79</sup> Laurence Bonjour and Ann Baker, *Philosophical Problems: An Annotated Anthology* (New York: Pearson Education, Inc., 2005), 772.

exchange. Robert Nozick outlined three basic principles which are necessary to ensure a just transaction: a person who acquires a holding (property or goods) in accordance with the principle of “justice in acquisition” is entitled to that holding; a person who acquires a holding (property or goods) in accordance with the principle of “justice in transfer” from someone else who is entitled to the holding is thereby entitled to the holding; no one is entitled to a holding (property or goods) except by applications of the above two premises.

The achievement of justice does not depend on considerations beyond these principles. A transaction is, then, just only when it stems from a just situation and through a just process. This approach implies that everyone receives what he deserves. It supposes equality of situation between people who exchange freely. Thus, whoever produces a good or acquires a product through a purchase or a contract is entitled to it. A person comes to possess a legitimate title to an item in the process of making it or exchanging it. Goods and services are produced in a way that confers upon people legitimate ownership. There is no gap between an item made and the process of acquiring it. “Things come into the world already attached to people having entitlements over them.”<sup>80</sup> But this notion of justice which confers to an additional labor the property right in the market and in the social order poses the question of the limits of labor. Is an Astronaut who clears a place on a planet entitled to the ownership of the whole planet? And what about social goods produced through the work of successive generations?

It should be noted that Robert Nozick’s approach to justice focused on the mechanism of the free market and endorsed the freedom of economic actors in the market. Individuals have the right not to be obstructed in their freedom to exchange in the free market. According to Onora

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<sup>80</sup> Robert Nozick, “Anarchy, State, and Utopia” in Laurence Bonjour and Ann Baker, *Philosophical Problems: An Annotated Anthology ...*, 776.

O'Neill, "justice, in Nozick's view, precludes any restriction of individual property right, and so is not merely compatible with but requires a capitalist economic order."<sup>81</sup> In line with the philosophy of the free market, Robert Nozick advocated for a minimal involvement of the state in the free market. He pointed out that preconceived models of justice in the market would hinder the freedom of people and would dissociate the process of making and the process of acquiring the ownership from the laborer. A patterned justice correlated to references such as merit, need and social utility creates necessarily a deregulation in the just transaction.

Even Robert Nozick acknowledges himself that the entitlement theory has no safeguards against injustice or fraud. "Not all actual situations are generated in accordance with the two principles of justice in holdings: the principle of justice in acquisition and the principle of justice in transfer. Some people steal from others, or defraud them; or enslave them, seizing their product and preventing them from living as they choose, or forcibly exclude others from competing in exchanges."<sup>82</sup> Robert Nozick proposed dealing with fraudulent practices through the principle of rectification of injustice which should correct a past injustice in exchanges of property by reversing the projected evolution of the previous unjust context. Because past transactions, circumstances or actions of people can create differential entitlements or differential rewards to things, it is necessary to correct the process to practice justice. Thus, "any theory of justice that employs voluntary disposition as the ground of entitlement to already owned objects must also incorporate a rule for just initial acquisitions. Such a rule, as Nozick says, determines the legitimate 'first moves' which may be made in constituting a set of individual holdings."<sup>83</sup> But this rectification remains on the level of the ideal and the hortatory. All injustice cannot be

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<sup>81</sup> Onora O'Neill, "Nozick's Entitlements" in Paul Jeffrey (ed), *Reading Nozick: Essays on Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1981), 306.

<sup>82</sup> Laurence Bonjour and Ann Baker, *Philosophical Problems, An Annotated Anthology ...*, 774.

<sup>83</sup> Hillel Steiner, "Justice and Entitlement" in Paul Jeffrey (ed), *Reading Nozick ...*, 381.

corrected. It is only theoretical to think that an unjust situation can be returned to its original state. This is particularly true when there is no pattern of justice by which to model or evaluate what constitutes a just transaction. As Hillel Steiner argues, “the application of such a rule might, conceivably, be a fairly straightforward matter in a group whose membership is constant; that is, it might not entail any redistribution ... For here we have a situation in which membership is continually changing, and yet we are required to treat each member as possessed of inviolable rights.”<sup>84</sup>

The theory of entitlement suggests that justice is fulfilled if the transaction is accomplished with respect to the principles of acquisition, transfer or rectification. According to this theory, the actual operation of the cotton market fulfills justice. The global cotton market is fair because the trade of cotton is done freely between countries. The free agreement among cotton traders guarantees a just exchange. However, as has been demonstrated in the first chapter, the cotton market, in fact, encompasses inequalities, inequities and injustice through subsidies in the western countries and unemployment in the poor countries such as Benin. For Nozick, the distribution of holding could be seen as just even though the shares of different people are unequal. This exchange is a commutative justice which is not sufficient to ensure the correct interaction. As David Hollenbach stresses, “the quid pro quo standard of commutative justice, however, does not give a complete picture of what justice requires. Determination of what constitutes an equivalent exchange of wages for work is dependent on an assessment of the social context within which the exchange takes place.”<sup>85</sup> To this category of commutative justice, Catholic Social Teaching has added the categories of distributive and contributive justice. In Catholic Social Teaching, the agreement between unequal partners can no longer be seen as fair

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<sup>84</sup> Hillel Steiner, “Justice and Entitlement” in Paul Jeffrey (ed), *Reading Nozick ...*, 381.

<sup>85</sup> David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 193.

and just simply because the exchange was done freely. A trade of cotton in the global free market is not a just trade because it is governed by a so-called free exchange. Justice respects the dignity of the human being and seeks human excellence in the transaction. Excellence is acting according to one's true nature which is directed to the infinite. "The degree of excellence is the degree to which somebody is striving for and able to affirm increasing levels of human flourishing. Excellence in this light is the ontological foundation of human flourishing and virtue altogether."<sup>86</sup> The notion of human excellence calls for a market and trade which contribute to healthy human development instead of solely focusing on individual profit and economic growth or Gross Domestic Product.

Even though this approach of Nozick to justice does not present a specific model for justice, it recognizes merit. A person is entitled to that which he is able to produce with his talents and abilities. He is entitled to the rewards of his labors whether he labors alone or in collaboration with others. People in the free market exchange and receive according to a certain notion of what they deserve or contribute. Therefore entitlement is linked to the merit and the contribution of the traders. The exchange is not blind to the notion of justice. It is then necessary to acknowledge a public or common value which would take into account the social context of the exchanges and would direct the economic relationship for the individual and common good. From the perspective of utilitarianism, utility would be such a value.

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<sup>86</sup> Nimi Wariboko, *The Principle of Excellence: A Framework For Social Ethics* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), 182.

### *II.1.2. The Greater Utility for the Greater Number*

Unlike the theory of entitlement, utilitarianism indicates a clear criterion for governing a just transaction. This approach to justice specifies utility and focuses on consequences rather than the processes by which justice is attained. In utilitarianism, “human nature is measured by the utility levels of individuals, that is the degree to which their preferences are satisfied.”<sup>87</sup> Justice is not a particular concept that can be contrasted to utility. Rather justice is a very general moral concern that can be easily reconciled with social utility. Utility, favoring the good of the individual, abides by principles which approve or disapprove every action in accordance with their impact on the happiness of the individual. At the same time, utility gives expression to justice when it favors the good of the majority.

Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill are the originators and classical defenders of the utilitarian viewpoint. Jeremy Bentham built his theory on two basic premises. The first is borrowed from David Hume who theorized that “the overall good of the community is the basic aim of morality.”<sup>88</sup> The second premise is derived from the epicurean notion of pleasure. Influenced by epicurean hedonism, Jeremy Bentham argued that the good is pleasure or the absence of pain and that evil is pain or loss of pleasure. On the basis of these two ideas, Jeremy Bentham developed the principle of the greatest happiness which advances the happiness for the greatest number. Justice is accomplished when the state or the society achieves the utility and happiness of the greatest number. Human life is a struggle between pleasure and pain and human beings strive to maximize pleasure. “Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do as

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<sup>87</sup> Albino Barrera, *Globalization and Economics Ethics ...*, 7.

<sup>88</sup> Gerald J. Postema, “Bentham’s Utilitarianism,” in Henry R. West (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Mill’s Utilitarianism* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 28.

well as to determine what we shall do.”<sup>89</sup> It is the different interests of individuals that govern and characterize the community’s interest. The government’s task is to assist each member of the community to avoid pain and to be happy. The value of pleasure or pain will depend on its intensity, duration, certainty or uncertainty and on its propinquity or remoteness. Thus, Bentham favors the universalistic consequentialism and claims that the rightness of an action is the effect of its consequences on everyone because moral justification depends on the ripple effect it has on others. Bentham defended individual dignity and happiness but at the same time, specifies the need for universal interest in those principles and ideas which promote the good of the greater number of members of the society.

Although John Stuart Mill was greatly influenced by Jeremy Bentham, their understanding of utilitarianism differed. While Jeremy Bentham treated all forms of happiness as equal, Mill states that intellectual and moral pleasures are superior to the more physical forms of pleasure. “It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognize the fact, that some *kinds* of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others. It would be absurd that while in estimating all other things, quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasures should be supposed to depend on quantity alone.”<sup>90</sup> John Stuart Mill favors the maximization of happiness that recognizes a gradated scale of quality. He gave his viewpoint through a discussion of various modes of action and arrangements of human affairs which are considered just or unjust. He noted that justice was built on righteousness, desert and impartiality. “In the first place, it is mostly considered unjust to deprive any one of his personal liberty, his property, or

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<sup>89</sup> Jeremy Bentham, in Steven M. Cahn and Christine Vitrano, *Happiness: Classic and Contemporary Readings in Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 99.

<sup>90</sup> John Stuart Mill, *What is Utilitarianism?* in Henry R. West (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Mill’s Utilitarianism ...*, 69.

any other thing which belongs to him by law.”<sup>91</sup> Generally, it is just to respect law. At the same time it is unjust to violate the legal right of any one. However, John Stuart Mill observed that a person may sometimes be deprived either because he has forfeited his rights or because the law which confers on him these rights, may be a bad law.

John Stuart Mill also noted that “it is universally considered just that each person should obtain that (whether good or evil) which he deserves; and unjust that he should obtain a good, or be made to undergo an evil, which he does not deserve.”<sup>92</sup> A person deserves good if he does right and evil if he does wrong. From the same perspective, it is unjust to break faith with any one, to violate an agreement. Justice requires impartiality and equality. But justice here consists in returning to people according to their deserts, giving good for good and repressing evil with punishment.

John Stuart Mill observed that these various applications of ‘justice’ only pointed to the ordinances of and conformity to the law which requires reward or punishment. “Justice is a name for certain moral requirements which, regarded collectively, stand higher in the scale of social utility.”<sup>93</sup> John Stuart Mill embraced the notion of the greatest good for the greatest majority. This search for happiness accepts self-sacrifice but does not consider it an end in itself. “The utilitarian morality does recognize in human beings the power of sacrificing their own greatest good for the good of others. It only refuses to admit that the sacrifice is itself a good. A sacrifice which does not increase, or tend to increase, the sum total of happiness, it considers as wasted.”<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism on Liberty Considerations on Representative Government Remarks on Bentham’s Philosophy* (London: Everyman/J.M. Dent, 1993), 45.

<sup>92</sup> Jonathan Westphal, *Justice* (Indiapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1996), 160.

<sup>93</sup> Robert C. Solomon and Mark C. Murphy (eds.), *What is Justice? Classic and Contemporary Readings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 173.

<sup>94</sup> John Stuart Mill, “*What is Utilitarianism*” in Henry R. West (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Mill’s Utilitarianism...*, 75.

Both Bentham and Mill state that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote the happiness of the greater number and that they are wrong insofar as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. The aim of utilitarian morality and justice is to promote the overall good of the community by considering the consequence of the individuals' actions. But the utilitarian argument was, in fact, the traditional criterion of welfare economics. Utility is the foundation of justice and happiness which are the effects of the pleasure provided to members of the society. This utilitarian perspective may consider that the global cotton trade is fair since the cotton exchange contributes to the well-being of the more inhabited countries in the West. Whether small countries such as Benin suffer from cotton exchange would not be a concern for this theory. The small countries could be sacrificed as long as the production and exchange of cotton advance the greater number. This theory encompasses here the same weakness as the theory of Darwinism, according to which it is natural that the stronger flourish at the expense of the weaker. But is the common good merely the sum of goods enjoyed by individuals? Isn't it a good shared in common? Justice requires a better foundation than the utilitarian notion of utility. Such a better foundation would be the dignity of the human being and the idea of a good and meaningful life. Besides, utilitarianism appears to be socially helpful. But, in essence, utilitarianism is in reality a justifying selfishness theory. "The social welfare is a function of individual well-beings."<sup>95</sup> The good of the community is only considered an aggregation of individuals' good. The good is good because it benefits individuals. Moreover, happiness in utilitarianism philosophy is identified with pleasure. As Charles Taylor observed, "what people find satisfying is satisfying"<sup>96</sup> Utilitarianism failed to satisfy Immanuel Kant's maxim that individuals should be treated as ends in and of themselves, not just as means for promoting the

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<sup>95</sup> Amartya Sen, *Inequality Reexamined* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 100.

<sup>96</sup> Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Argument* (London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 128 -130.

social good. Utilitarianism may sacrifice the interests of a minority to produce greater aggregate utility. “The life of the worst off under utilitarianism may be pathetic, very badly off indeed.”<sup>97</sup> According to Rawls, “the principle of utility is incompatible with the conception of social cooperation among equals for mutual advantage. It appears to be inconsistent with the idea of reciprocity implicit in the notion of a well-ordered society.”<sup>98</sup> This inconsistency in the idea of utility has oriented other theories to the notions of needs, fairness and freedom.

## **II.2. Need Satisfaction, Fairness and Freedom**

Need satisfaction, fairness and freedom have also been the focus of some theorists in order to accomplish justice in the social and economic life. The concern of these theories was primarily to improve the condition of the worst-off in the capitalist economy and trade. Need satisfaction intends to treat equally all members of the society while fairness and freedom emphasize the establishment of policies which allow a decent life and the participation of all in economic activities.

### *II.2.1. Needs – Based Justice*

The need based theory of justice claims that “justice basically consists in satisfying the most fundamental needs of everyone.”<sup>99</sup> It is particularly the Marxist and Socialist philosophers who hold that each should be provided according to one’s needs and that from each resources

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<sup>97</sup> Olatunji A. Oyeshile, “A Critique of the Maximin Principle in Rawls’ Theory of Justice” *Humanity & Social Sciences Journal* 3:1 (2008): 66.

<sup>98</sup> John Rawls, “Justice As Fairness” in Laurence Bonjour and Ann Baker, *Philosophical Problems: An Annotated Anthology ...*, 784-5.

<sup>99</sup> Ragnar Ohlsson, *Morals Based on Needs* (Lanham: University Press of America Inc., 1995), 54.

should be claimed according to his or her capacity to contribute. From this perspective, justice consists in a distribution which satisfies the basic needs of as many as possible in the society.

A just distribution of social resources is one which meets the needs of all members of the group or society. According to David Copp, the necessity to have our needs met is a right to goods to be provided by the state. The individual has the right to have his or her needs satisfied and the state has the duty to meet those needs. This theory suggests, then, a redistribution “under which a state would transfer resources from better-off to worse-off members of society to enable the latter to meet their basic needs.”<sup>100</sup> This right is a duty of the state but not a duty of the individuals. If it were the duty of the individual, it would follow that each individual has the obligation of assuring that others’ needs are met. Few individuals are in a position to address the large-scale economic and social issues such as providing for the basic needs of the members of an entire society. The state ought, then, to strive to enable members to meet their needs. This also requires giving each person an equal chance of being able to meet his or her needs. The goal of the state should be to provide the society with policies which allow for each person to meet basic needs.

A need-based theory of justice promotes social economics which overlap the aim of Karl Marx who criticized capitalist economics. For Karl Marx, the human being is the result of a social milieu and the interaction therein. According to Karl Marx, man’s actions “are rooted in the whole social organization of man which directs his consciousness in certain directions and blocks him from being aware of certain facts and experiences.”<sup>101</sup> Man is a product of social conditions. It is not consciousness of the human being which determines his being, but on the

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<sup>100</sup> David Copp, “Equality, Justice, and the Basic Needs” in Gillian Brock, *Necessary Goods, Our Responsibilities to Meet Others’ Needs* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998), 113.

<sup>101</sup> Erich Fromm, *Marx’s Concept of Man* (New York: Continuum, 1991), 21.

contrary, his social being that determines his consciousness. The individual cannot realize himself outside the society. He cannot live a human life unless he stays in relationship with others. Marx's approach to the market was embedded in this anthropological view and it strongly stressed the human social dimension. From this point of view, the cotton market in Benin should be oriented to the social well-being instead of being run by the national interest supported by the subsidies. A regulatory institution would control the production and distribution in the global market.

According to this need-based theory, basic human need is the determinant for justice and the marker of the good life. Satisfying basic human needs makes it possible for a person to live free from norms and unfair manipulative practices. According to Albino Barrera, "most people would agree that this [satisfaction of basic needs] should include the commonly acknowledged necessities of food, clothing, shelter, and medical care."<sup>102</sup> But who is to judge when life is harmed or a person is unfairly manipulated? The need-based theory is general in its description and does not make precise the concept of needs. Primary goods are "general purpose means or resources useful for the pursuit of different ideas of the good that the individuals may have."<sup>103</sup> Besides, while it stresses the right of individuals to have needs met, it does not define the duties of the individual to be responsible for the general social good. It may even seem that the individuals have rights without responsibilities, or that it is the duty of the state to enable that right without due thought given to the responsibilities of all individual members of the society.

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<sup>102</sup> Albino Barrera, *Globalization and Economics Ethics...*, 7.

<sup>103</sup> Amartya Sen, *Inequality Reexamined* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 81.

As Thomas Massaro argues, the “right should always be placed in the context of solidarity and concern for the well-being of the wider community.”<sup>104</sup>

Furthermore, the person as portrayed in a Marxist perspective based on the theory of needs loses her individuality and is absorbed into the society. No difference is observed between the human person as person and society as the city of persons. The dictatorship of the collectivity represented by the governors here replaces the domination of capital and owners of capital. The Catholic Church claims, against this new serfdom, the dignity and rights of human beings regarding labor conditions. The positive aspect of this theory is that it calls the government’s attention to the fact that people should not be excluded from the market and social resources. But a need-based theory fails, in that, while it focuses on needs, it does not look upon the individual as a subject who has some responsibility, but rather looks upon the individuals as merely an object who has needs. John Rawls introduced into the debate the notion of justice as fairness which stresses institutions and policies which contribute to the good of all members of the society.

### *II.2.2 Fairness and Freedom*

John Rawls elaborated his approach to justice in his 1971 book *A Theory of Justice*. The concerns of this volume include the ability of public institutions like government to satisfy the demand for justice. According to John Rawls, “justice is the first virtue of social institutions as truth is of the systems of thought.”<sup>105</sup> John Rawls reflected on how income, wealth and other

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<sup>104</sup> Thomas Massaro, *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 84.

<sup>105</sup> John Rawls, “Justice As Fairness,” in Laurence Bonjour and Ann Baker (eds.) *Philosophical Problems ...*, 782.

results of social cooperation should be distributed among the members of a particular society. He was concerned about the way the major social institutions could insure fundamental rights and duties and share in an equitable manner the advantages of social cooperation. He also strived to propose a rational study of social ethics to determine what a just society should look like and how a rational group of people would organize themselves. John Rawls argued from a hypothetical original position which corresponds to the state of nature in the traditional versions of social contract theory.

The hypothetical original position features no distinctions in society. Social status, class, individual abilities and modes of social interaction were not part of the consciousness of the human person. This situation provided a veil of ignorance which ensured that nobody was advantaged or disadvantaged in the quest for justice. Ignorance of these details about oneself allowed for principles that are fair to all. A person unaware of any distinction among people in a society would not have been inclined to establish strata of importance. There would have been no privileged class and a system of equitable justice would have been the outcome of disinterested deliberation. John Rawls claims that those in the original situation would all have adopted a '*maximin*' strategy which would have maximized the position of the least well-off since each one could have ended up being the worst-off. People would then have chosen "the principles that free and rational persons concerned to further their own interests would accept in an initial position of equality as defining the fundamental terms of their association."<sup>106</sup> In a just society members who are ignorant of any strata of importance would choose the following principles: "the first requires equality in the assignment of basic rights and duties, while the second holds that social and economic inequalities, for example inequalities of wealth and authority, are just only if they

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<sup>106</sup> John Rawls, "Justice As Fairness" ..., 784.

result in compensating benefits for everyone, and in particular for the least advantaged members of society.”<sup>107</sup> John Rawls’s theory of justice, and especially his second principle, includes the so-called ‘Difference Principle’ which focuses “on producing ‘the greatest benefit of the least advantaged,’ with advantage being judged by the holding of primary good.”<sup>108</sup> Justice is understood here as fairness and equality of opportunity. Fairness is not a claim for equality as such but for equity in the sense that the advantage of few could be accepted as long as the situation of others is improved. “An injustice is tolerable only when it is necessary to avoid an even greater injustice.”<sup>109</sup>

John Rawls’s approach to justice considered society as a cooperative venture for mutual advantage which requires a regulation of the free market for the common good. The aim of John Rawls is to mitigate the social contingencies and natural fortune which could foster inequality and unacceptable gaps between the wealthiest and the worst-off. John Rawls’s viewpoint implies a political responsibility and the need for further basic structural conditions in the social system. “Free market arrangements must be set within a framework of political and legal institutions which regulate the overall trends of economic events and preserves the social conditions necessary for fair equality of opportunity.”<sup>110</sup> The cotton market in Benin, according to the thought of John Rawls, should then operate in the way that best contributes to the improvement of all farmers whether in the developed or in the developing countries. It should incorporate a system which works for the profit of the farmers in the poor countries. In the view of John Rawls, the laws, institutions and structures governing the cotton market in Benin should be changed if they don’t promote the improvement of the entire society.

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<sup>107</sup> John Rawls, “Justice As Fairness,” in Laurence Bonjour and Ann Baker (eds.) *Philosophical Problems ...*, 785.

<sup>108</sup> Amartya Sen, *Inequality Reexamined* (Cambridge: Havard University Press, 1995), 75.

<sup>109</sup> John Rawls, “Justice As Fairness” ..., 783.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.* 788.

Rawls's approach to justice is opposed to utilitarianism and holds that "each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override."<sup>111</sup> For John Rawls, the concept of justice as fairness was a viable alternative to the utilitarian tradition. He developed the rational preference between the two principles of justice and the principle of average utility of the utilitarians. Unlike utilitarianism, "The function of the basic structure of society is to distribute the burdens and benefits of social co-operation among the members of society. The benefits of social co-operation include wealth and income, food and shelter, authority and power, rights and liberties. The burdens include various liabilities, duties and obligations e.g. the paying of taxes."<sup>112</sup>

John Rawls's approach to justice strives to eliminate the worst outcome for the weakest of society and to provide some principles which could improve their life and introduce equity into the social interaction. However, this approach does not take into consideration the existential reality and is more attuned to the state of nature replete with ignorance of distinctions. Justice needs open eyes. As Charles Taylor argues, "Rawls is trying to establish for us the principles of justice, almost without heed to historical and cultural variations in the kinds of associations we form and goods we seek."<sup>113</sup>

At the same time, John Rawls's reflection encompasses, according to Robert Nozick, a paradox. Rawls argues that utilitarianism sacrifices the interests of a minority for a greater utility of the greater number. The life of the worst-off in utilitarian society may then be a means for the advancement of the majority. The first principle of Rawls is to safeguard equality, equity and the

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<sup>111</sup> John Rawls, "Justice As Fairness," in Laurence Bonjour and Ann Baker (eds.) *Philosophical Problems ...*, 782-3.

<sup>112</sup> Olatunji A. Oyeshile, "A Critique of the Maximin Principle in Rawls' Theory of Justice", *Humanity & Social Sciences Journal* 3:1 (2008): 65.

<sup>113</sup> Charles Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 308.

right of every member of the society. However, Rawls allows for the regulation of society which could impede the right of some for the improvement of others, particularly the worst-off. Robert Nozick, with his notion of entitlement, noted that Rawls' viewpoint can only be understood when people do not exert labor to acquire a product. "The maximin principles can only be applied if primary goods fall from heaven like manna and, in that case no one would have special entitlement to it. But if people exert their labour in the production process then the maximin principle is unjust."<sup>114</sup> According to Robert Nozick, it is unjust to use the individual gains for the benefits of others or the worst off. The maximin principle prevents the better off from enjoying their entitlements which they have acquired through their effort and ingenuity. To Nozick's viewpoint, John Rawls also is treating persons as means to ends of others and this violates the categorical imperative doctrine of Kant which Rawls embraced. Moreover, Rawls's maximin principle may discourage hard work. Whatever an individual gains has to be viewed and controlled in relation to the worst off. Is it more just to use the most advantaged to aid the least than it is to use the least advantaged to the benefit of the most advantaged? However, these critiques of Nozick do not take into consideration Rawls's approach to the human being. Nozick reduces human being to rights and entitlement while Rawls values the social dimension of the person. In the same perspective, Amartya Sen advocates for freedom and equal opportunity and intends to avoid the unbalanced position of the veil of ignorance of John Rawls. A theory of justice should integrate the real situation of people involved in the market and should focus on their flourishing.

Amartya Sen shapes his approach to justice in line with his idea of development. He stresses a preliminary requirement of freedom for the agency to participate in the market.

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<sup>114</sup> Olatunji A. Oyeshile, "A Critique of the Maximin Principle in Rawls' Theory of Justice," ..., 68.

Amartya Sen raised some concerns about the capitalist economy and the mechanism of the free market. Does the economic system give to the economic agents the capacity and capability to interact properly in the free market? Is the market really free for all the agents? For Sen, to practice justice and achieve human or social development requires the expansion of *real freedom*<sup>115</sup> that people enjoy. “The particular approach to equality that I have explored,” said Amartya Sen, “involves judging individual advantage by *the freedom to achieve*, incorporating (but going beyond) *actual achievements*.”<sup>116</sup> This capability approach points out the social freedom to achieve one’s goal in general and the capabilities to function in particular.

Amartya Sen observed that free market thinking ignores, “whether certain political or social freedoms, such as the liberty of political participation and dissent or opportunities to receive basic education are or are not conducive to development.”<sup>117</sup> According to Amartya Sen, a quantitative conception of development fails to consider whether the outcome of the economy is beneficial to all or to a few individuals who control the majority of the wealth. Even in a developed country, there are some social groups that are denied freedom, basic civil rights and the opportunities to enjoy the income of the market. In Amartya Sen’s view we should first examine the foundational requirement which allows the agencies to be active in the economic system. Economic justice requires that people are empowered to participate in economic life.

Justice makes no sense if it does not give all members of society the means to interact freely in the economic life. “The freedom to enter the market can itself be a significant contribution to development quite aside from whatever the market mechanism may or may not

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<sup>115</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>116</sup> Amartya Sen, *Inequality Reexamined* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 129.

<sup>117</sup> Amartya Sen, *Development As Freedom* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999), 5.

do to promote economic growth or industrialization.”<sup>118</sup> Therefore, justice encompasses an adequate conception of human growth and flourishing which must go further than the accumulation of wealth and other income-related variables. To do so, the lack of economic freedom must be removed. Lack of economic freedom breeds social inequities and social inequities, in turn, breed unfair economic situations. The process is circular and non-productive of human growth. Injustice in this perspective is a deprivation of elementary capabilities. Truly just development includes providing security and protection to vulnerable groups.<sup>119</sup> Amartya Sen’s perspective makes the person and human activity the primary focus. The global cotton market which affects Benin should be oriented to the human good. The producers of cotton, especially the poor countries, should be empowered to interact equitably and fairly in the market.

Participation in economic life by all who are affected by this economic life is seen by Amartya Sen as being of prime importance. Sen sees the individual as a member of the public life of the community and, as such, the individual should be a welcome and active participant in the economic and political actions of the community. Participation of the individual, freely encouraged and supported by the manner in which the society is organized, leads to successful accomplishments because such agency attributes to the individual an active role in that society. Participation requires involvement of the individual in the process of decision making both at the national and international levels. “If a traditional way of life has to be sacrificed to escape grinding poverty or minuscule longevity (...) then it is the people directly involved who must have the opportunity to participate in deciding what should be chosen.”<sup>120</sup> In order to facilitate such participation, educational opportunities which provide the skills necessary for such

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid. 7.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. 288.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. 31.

economic life must be made available. To deny this education to any group or individual is in opposition to the very idea of the freedom to participate in the economic and political life of the community.

This perspective reflects one of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching which stresses the dignity of human person. Persons by their very nature are called to contribute to economic life and participation in the decision-making process of the community. This perspective sees people as actors in their destiny and not just as passive spectators. According to a 1991 encyclical letter of John Paul II, “what is being proposed as an alternative is not the socialist system, which in fact turns out to be State capitalism, but rather *a society of free work, of enterprise and of participation*. Such a society is not directed against the market, but demands that the market be appropriately controlled by the forces of society and by the State, so as to guarantee that the basic needs of the whole of society are satisfied.”<sup>121</sup>

Participation in the affairs of the economy and thereby contributing by working for the common good of all is an essential component of the African and the Beninese approaches to Justice. The word "Justice" in Fon, a Beninese language, is not defined or understood as only a theoretical concept. The word "Justice", “nou wa do houè jijo liji,” or “nou wa kpo houè jijo kpan” denotes a specific manner of living in that society and this manner of living demands that persons act in accordance with sensitivity and with good judgment. Accordingly, this attitude of sensitivity and manner of judgment will enhance and strengthen any contribution to the common good. A just act is the one which advances the possibility of all to flourish and, at the same time, does not exclude or frustrate those who need to have a voice. From this perspective, the role of justice is to preserve the cohesiveness of the community while also

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<sup>121</sup> John Paul II, *Centesimus annus* (1991), n°35.

advancing its opportunities to grow and flourish. Justice has not always been and is not always practiced now in the traditional Beninese society. Jealousy, betrayal and witchcraft have and do often bring harm to individuals and, by extension to the community and to society in general. But Justice, in the Fon language, denotes a virtuous manner of inter-relationships in society. It includes recognizing the personal and human value of the other. It demands the consideration of the personhood of the other in a fair and respectful relationship of equality, mutuality, and solidarity. Justice is, then, a social value which facilitates both the flourishing of the individual and consequently the advancement of the common good. It guides the members of society to healthy fulfillment in social relationships. “A man [person] is considered just if the moral impact of his [or her] practical activities and his [her] exercise of all other virtues contribute to the good of the community, that is, the preservation and promotion of community and communion.”<sup>122</sup> This approach to justice demands that people rise above the free market notion of justice which is based solely on a free agreement and a contractual arrangement for the distribution of the social wealth.

Conceptions and theories of justice depend on an understanding of human nature and human dignity. Various concepts and meanings of justice derive from the different understanding and definitions of the nature of the good. “Different principles of distributive justice are related to conceptions of the human good and in particular to different notions of men’s dependence on society to realize the good.”<sup>123</sup> According to the philosophical theories of justice that have been explored in the present work the human person is not considered an end in itself. Capital, utility, freedom and social greater good are the primary concern of those theories. African and Catholic approaches to justice which take into consideration these concerns primarily stressed the dignity

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<sup>122</sup> Nimi Wariboko, *The Depth and Destiny of Work...*, 133.

<sup>123</sup> Charles Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences ...*, 291.

and social dimension of the human being. The Catholic perspective emphasizes this fundamental dignity of human being in relation to God. This approach will be analyzed in the following section.

### **II.3. Economic Justice in the Christian Perspective**

The Christian approach to justice is concerned with a just society which guarantees that individuals and communities receive what is due them according to their nature and vocation. Economic justice in Christian perspective is grounded in Christian anthropology which stresses the primacy and inalienable dignity of the human being as image of God.

#### *II.3.1. Human Dignity and Sociality: The Marker of Christian Economic Justice*

Catholic Social Teaching which has developed, since the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, a rich and deep analysis of economic life, has highlighted a notion of social and economic justice that relies on the rights and fundamental dignity of human persons. “At the very foundation of Catholic doctrine on the person is the conviction that each and every person is an image of God, created for his own sake and therefore possessed of a value (dignity) as an end in itself.”<sup>124</sup> All creation reflects God but the human person constitutes God’s unique image. In light of this, the human being cannot be used simply as a means for production or for a greater good of the society. As image of God, the human being enjoys an undeniable freedom to work for his flourishing, freedom to love others, freedom for friendship and freedom to build a supportive community for

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<sup>124</sup> Robert G. Kennedy, “Business and the Common Good,” in Philip Booth (ed.), *Catholic Social Teaching and the Market Economy* (London: The Institute of Economic Affairs, 2007), 170.

the happiness of each member. As an image of God, the human being has dignity and a purpose which transcends the material creation and his own social situation. As Jacques Maritain points out, “The privilege connected with the dignity of the person is inalienable, and human life involves a sacred right.”<sup>125</sup>

The dignity and destiny inherent in the human person has a transcendental value incomparable to the present situation and social life. The end of the human person, his ultimate good, is his divine communion. The human being is made for God and eternal life before all else and before any position in political and economic society. However Catholic social thought also stresses the social dimension of human being. The human person is a social being by nature. He/she is not an atomistic individual, but a social being. Created in the image of the Trinitarian God, the person finds true being in the relation of giving and receiving love. This giving and receiving of love characterizes the social life of persons. The emphasis on both the individual and social dimensions is an appropriate way to defend, on the one hand, the primacy of the person and his rights to private property and, on the other hand, the common good and solidarity.

Catholic analyses of and responses to social questions and debates are the product of this anthropological frame. From this perspective, the Catholic Church has reflected on economic life and pointed to a human development, a human flourishing which is beyond economic development and which rejects both purely capitalist and socialist approaches to economy. “Catholic Social Teaching rejects any theory or social system that makes profit the only norm and ultimate end of economic activity. Whether totalitarian, atheistic, communistic, unbridled capitalism, or individualistic, if these theories or systems make humans means to the end of

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<sup>125</sup> Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good* ( Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 68.

profit, thus idolizing money and dehumanizing persons, they are morally unacceptable.”<sup>126</sup> Catholic economic ethics is not an economic theory and does not embrace any one particular economic thought or system. Instead, it directs economic activity towards the service of individuals and to that of the whole human community. In Catholic thought, economics is not meant only for the increase of goods, profit or power but for the human happiness and flourishing. Economics accordingly, should have as its focus the human person. “Humans must be the author, center, and goal of economic and social life. Everyone must have access in justice and love to the goods of God’s creation.”<sup>127</sup> The African Bishops embraced the same viewpoint and pointed out that the fundamental norm for judging the success of any economic reforms is the service of all people.<sup>128</sup>

This human-centered approach to the economy encompasses human flourishing which is not an epicurean style pleasant life but one which seeks the total well-being of the person. In light of Christian faith, the economy should be assessed on the ability to help people to have a life that is meaningful. “Economic decisions have human consequences and moral content; they help or hurt people, strengthen or weaken family life, advance or diminish the quality of justice in our land.”<sup>129</sup> In order to advance the kingdom of God on each by proclaiming Christian faith and gospel imperatives, it is necessary that Christian faith influence the manner in which to approach economics. Economics is an area where Christians can experience the love of neighbors and answer God’s call to holiness. By stressing a human-centered economy and the respect for human dignity, Catholic Social Teaching stands for the ethical dimension of economy

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<sup>126</sup> Michael Francis Pennock, *This Is Our Faith* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1998), 262.

<sup>127</sup> Michael Francis Pennock, *This Is Our Faith*, ..., 267.

<sup>128</sup> Zambian Catholic Bishops, “The Future is Ours” in Edward P. DeBerri et al. (eds.) *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985), 190.

<sup>129</sup> U.S. Catholic Bishops, “Economic Justice for All” in David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (eds.), *Catholic Social Thought: The Document Heritage* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992), 572.

and market. From this perspective, as the African Bishops have stressed, “the mechanisms of the free market must always be subject to social control to assure a more equitable distribution and more effective protection of all the various goods of society.”<sup>130</sup> The bishops also critiqued the international system which contributes to the economic burden and debts of poor countries. Justice in economic life should be oriented to human development. Participation is one of the ethical dimensions of economic life which the Catholic Church emphasizes and promotes.

### *II.3.2. Participation: A Key Dimension of Christian Approaches to Economic Justice*

The Catholic approach to justice in economics proposes some principles and priorities which should influence economic life. Those principles and priorities are highlighted by the U.S. Bishops’ Pastoral Letter, *Economic Justice For All*, published in 1986. Those principles are: respect for human dignity, pursuit of the common good, opportunities to participate in economic life and solidarity. Dignity and sociality have already been studied here as an anthropological foundation for the Christian approach to economic justice. According to the U.S. Bishops: “Every economic decision and institution must be judged in light of whether it protects or undermines the dignity of the human person.”<sup>131</sup> Human dignity does not come from economic status, neither from nationality, race or sex but from God. But human dignity is only realized and protected in community.

In order to be truly healthy, the social dimension of life requires the participation of all members of society. For the Church, “everyone has a basic right to participate in economic

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<sup>130</sup> Zambian Catholic Bishops, “The Future is Ours” in Edward P. DeBerri et al. (eds) ..., 190.

<sup>131</sup> U.S. Catholic Bishops, “Economic Justice for All” in David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (eds.), *Catholic Social Thought: The Document Heritage* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992), 574.

affairs according to his or her ability and talents, tempered by the common good. Work is the basic right because God created us to share in the tasks of co-creation and subduing the earth. Its value stems from humans themselves who are both the authors and beneficiaries of labor. Work is also a duty that helps us provide for our families and serve each other.”<sup>132</sup> Participation in economic activity is, therefore, a key criterion for the Christian approach to the economy. Participation is both a right and a duty. The Catholic Church in Africa, based on African notions of togetherness and sociality, has also underlined the necessity and importance of participation in economic life. The African Bishops stated that social responsibility is a duty.<sup>133</sup> For the Bishops, justice requires a dedication to the common good for an economic life which is truly human. “Basic justice demands that people be assured a minimum level of participation in the economy. It is wrong for a person or group to be excluded unfairly or to be unable to participate or contribute to the economy.”<sup>134</sup> Participation, from the Catholic viewpoint, involves three types of justice: commutative, distributive and legal or contributive.<sup>135</sup> Commutative justice stresses the fairness of agreements and contracts between individuals, distributive justice emphasizes the common right to share the common human and social resources (e.g., social services) and contributive justice highlights the necessity and duty to participate in the common good (e.g., taxes and military service).

These three types describe three different relationships: individuals to individuals, society to individuals and individuals to society. The first relationship describes the relationship between employer and employee and calls for “fundamental fairness in all agreements and exchanges

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<sup>132</sup> Michael Francis Pennock, *This Is Our Faith*, ..., 267.

<sup>133</sup> SECAM, “Justice and Evangelization in Africa”, in Edward P. DeBerri et al. (eds) ..., 186.

<sup>134</sup> U.S. Catholic Bishops, “Economic Justice for All” in David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, ..., 574.

<sup>135</sup> Kenneth R. Himes (ed.), *Modern Catholic Social Teaching, Commentaries and Interpretations* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 480.

between individuals or private social groups.”<sup>136</sup> This relationship requires respect for human dignity by means of the provision for just wages. The Catholic approach to justice maintains that all members of society should have access to sufficient goods for a decent life. This approach to justice surpasses both the individualism of the free market and the need-based theory because it emphasizes the minimum access to the goods necessary for a dignified life. It enables individuals to participate in the common good through work which is inherent to human life and is the primary aspect of an economic life, trade and globalization. As Nimi Wariboko argues, “Globalization is work.”<sup>137</sup> Any approach to justice involves then an understanding of work.

In the Christian and Catholic approach to economic justice, work is a humanizing experience enabling persons to come to a better realization of themselves. Through work, the person can learn selflessness. Work is a means of transformation and humanization. From a Protestant perspective, Miroslav Volf speaks of work as a charisma and grace of the Holy Spirit. In his pneumatological view, Volf maintains that human work is cooperation with God. “When people work exhibiting the value of the new creation (...) then the Spirit works in them and through them.”<sup>138</sup> Cooperation with God implies involvement in the eschatological transformation of the world. The Spirit of God is at work in Christian labor which is seen as a mode of cooperation with God for a new creation in which human flourishing is achieved. In the Catholic perspective, John Paul II insists on the subjective dimension of work which contributes to self-realization and social transformation: “The primary basis of the value of work is man himself,

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<sup>136</sup> U.S. Catholic Bishops, “Economic Justice for All” in David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, ..., 595.

<sup>137</sup> Nimi Wariboko, *The Depth and Destiny of Work: An African theological interpretation* (Trenton: African World Press, 2008), 243.

<sup>138</sup> Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work...*, 114.

who is its subject.”<sup>139</sup> Catholic Social Teaching claims the priority of labor over capital in the free market and demands that any and all exploitation of workers be halted.

Christians believe in a Trinitarian God, a community of Persons, yet distinguished as Father, Son and Spirit, who live a communal life of giving and receiving love. Created in the image of the Trinitarian God, persons find their true being in the relationship of giving and receiving love. This example of love should be a characteristic of an individual and social life. By proclaiming faith in a Trinitarian God, the Catholic approach to justice emphasizes both the individual and social good as an appropriate way to defend, on the one hand, the primacy of the person and his rights to private property and, on the other hand, the common good and solidarity. Catholic Social Teaching states that justice calls for love and solidarity. As Pope Benedict XVI stresses, “in addition to justice man needs, and will always need, love.”<sup>140</sup> Justice and love supplement one another to promote and achieve human growth and happiness.

### *Conclusion*

This present chapter has explored both the demand of and the demand for justice. The original question posed in chapter one regarding the question of integrating the Beninese Cotton Industry into the global market. While most theories of justice are based on philosophical arguments, the Christian approach and the particular Catholic approach to justice are grounded on theological conviction. Justice in Christian and Catholic perspectives is nourished by faith in a Trinitarian God. This faith demands mutual love and solidarity. Through her reflections on Justice, the Catholic Church stresses a moral dimension of the economic life. “The moral

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<sup>139</sup> John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* (1981), No 6.

<sup>140</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (2006), No 29.

economy provides the cultural context within which the private and public economies must function. Without moral guidance and restraint, there can be no assurance that either the private or the public economy will serve the long-term interest of society.”<sup>141</sup> The social and moral values to which people of a given society subscribe must provide the moral context within which their economy functions. The moral economy guides and constrains the public and private economies by providing the fundamental principles by which both must function. In Catholic social teaching the common good and solidarity are both essential for just economic policies and the growth and development of individuals. Although corruption in governments and the unavailability of education to some citizens are presently obstacles in the pursuit of economic equity, and although every effort should be made to overcome such obstacles, emphasis on solidarity and the common good are legitimate and necessary goals to pursue in order to bring about a just and fair international economic system. Such a system would be of great benefit to the economic flourishing of all countries but particularly poor countries such as Benin. In suggesting means to facilitate the flourishing of individuals and, at the same time, supporting the common good and solidarity, this study will continue by explaining and developing these principles proposed in Catholic social teaching which are specific to economic life.

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<sup>141</sup> John Ikerd, *Sustainable Capitalism, A Matter of Common Sense* (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, Inc, 2005), 139.

### **III. ECONOMY AND TRADE IN SOLIDARITY AND FOR THE COMMON GOOD: THE CATHOLIC CONTRIBUTION**

The purpose of economics and trade, in the Catholic perspective, is to serve human development and fulfillment. The Catholic approach to economy, while also concerned with economic development, is more focused on the flourishing of the human person within God's relationship with humankind. The Catholic principles regarding the common good and solidarity will be presented in this section in order to assist in and facilitate the search for and the achievement of a more human global market and a market which is supportive of humanizing endeavors. Some practical policies for guiding economic activities will be explored in reference to the cotton market of Benin.

#### **III.1. Solidarity and Common Good: Biblical foundations**

Grounded in faith that emphasizes the sacredness of human life, Catholic theology teaches respect for all life and forbids anything which would affect life in a negative manner. This conviction is rooted in the original covenantal relationship of God with Israel. This covenantal relationship of God with Israel renewed and reinforced for all humanity in the Christian call for love, explains the Catholic call for justice and solidarity in economic life.

##### *III.1.1. A Covenantal Society: Toward a Promised Land for the Good of All.*

The covenantal relationship of God with Israel is one of the foundational aspects of Catholic thought regarding justice and solidarity in the economic life. The covenantal society

reflects the image of the Trinitarian God. “God is not a radical individual but rather a community of diverse persons that finds unity in self-giving love rather than in substantialist or subjectivist principles of identity”<sup>142</sup> Catholic faith, growing out of the Israelite experience, continues in a covenantal relationship with God. This covenantal relationship fosters an economic life that takes all the members of society into consideration. The covenantal relationship with God is concerned with all human life, including social and economic life. “That a concern for economic well-being lies at the heart of the Covenant can be seen in the matters mentioned in the matching blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 28: 3-6, 16-19.”<sup>143</sup> God blesses the Israelite people by allowing them to enjoy the fruit of their work and to practice justice and solidarity.

In Israelite society, religious life and political and economic life were inseparable. God was concerned with all aspects of life. God gave the Israelites a Law, the Commandments for their religious life, and God’s Law also should guide social life. In giving instructions for social economic welfare to the Israelite people, God forbade any exploitation or oppression of the powerless by the powerful. This instruction is still pertinent to any political or economic policy of present-day societies. The Decalogue given to Moses on Sinai was a guide for healthy and respectful communal living. The prohibition in the Decalogue against stealing and coveting one’s neighbors’ goods deals specifically with those aspects of communal living which are directly concerned with economic fairness. “Concern for the powerless emerges first as part of the ‘Covenant Code.’”<sup>144</sup> In order to understand these instructions, the Israelites were required to meditate on them and to keep them in their heart as a guide for a good life. “Repeated hearing of

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<sup>142</sup> Douglas M. Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 11.

<sup>143</sup> Richard A Horseley, *Covenant economics: A Biblical Vision of Justice for All* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 30.

<sup>144</sup> John R. Donahue, S.J., “The Bible and Catholic Social Teaching: Will This Engagement Lead to Marriage?” in Kenneth R. Himes et al. (eds.), *Modern Catholic Social Teaching, Commentaries and Interpretations...*, 20.

the covenantal torah and statutes supposedly had the effect of the people internalizing them, so that they would be ‘written on their heart,’ informing their social-economic interaction.”<sup>145</sup>

Within the parameters of its peasant society, the Israelite people strove to establish a community in which all could enjoy the fruit of their labors and find mutual support. They sought first the happiness and the flourishing of the members of families which were the first economic unit of society. This focus was far removed from the current free-market individualistic society. “The standard focus of modern neoclassical economics, the maximization of profit, is utterly inapplicable to the ancient Israelites. They did not raise crops for market, since there was no market. The problem around which peasant life revolved was raising enough to sustain the family until the next harvest.”<sup>146</sup> For the Israelites, God was the source and provider of all resources. This conviction informed and characterized the way the Israelite people organized their social and economic life. “The land belonged to Yahweh and was, in effect, leased to Israelite families for their use.”<sup>147</sup> Therefore, production was basically to provide the family with the livelihood and the resources needed. But family life was embedded in a communal life. Families developed cooperation and mutual support. All participated actively and shared responsibility in the community’s social and cultural life. Subsistence brought a moral-social dimension beyond the physiological one to the entire community. “In Israel, responsibility for the well-being of such people devolves on the covenant community as a whole, not simply on the king”<sup>148</sup> The structure of Israelite society “manifests a fundamental value that is increasingly threatened by the premium placed on privatization and maximization of profits in a consumer-capitalist society; all members of society are entitled to an adequate living out of the available

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<sup>145</sup> Richard A Horseley, *Covenant economics: A biblical vision of justice for all ...*, 29.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.* 35.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.* 38.

<sup>148</sup> Paul Hanson quoted by John R. Donahue, S.J., “The Bible and Catholic Social Teaching...”, 20.

resources within the village.”<sup>149</sup> As in any peasant society, there were arrangements and mechanism to protect families from social-economic ruin due to droughts and other natural or social-political contingencies. The greatest importance was placed on allowing all families to live a decent life free from any type of exploitation.

Covenant economics took into consideration orphans and widows who are the weakest and worst-off of society. Laws governing lending advocated for no interest (Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-15). Borrowing and lending were regulated in such a way as not to keep the weakest under a burden of perpetual repayment of the debt. The covenant economics regulated the debt operations in a way that neither the lender nor the borrower should be abused or exploited. Borrowers could be given work to do for the lenders when the borrower had no money to pay the debt. There were also rules for debt cancellation.

The story of God’s covenant with God’s people expresses God’s act of delivering the people from slavery. This act of deliverance served as a model for socio-economic conditions necessary for avoiding new types of slavery. The history of Israel is a story of social, political and economic liberation. Yahweh is the divine liberator who leads the people to a promised land where everyone is provided with the necessary resources and where justice and equality are the social and economic values. More than a physical place, the promised land indicates a society where all members are well treated. “The Promised land is not so much a geographical place as a goal and vision – the dream of a just social order.”<sup>150</sup> Justice has various aspects in the biblical perspective but a dominant aspect is that of being responsive to the needs of the community as a whole. Later, Saint Paul would stress this point of responsibility by reminding the Corinthians

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<sup>149</sup> Richard A Horseley, *Covenant Economics: A biblical vision of justice for all ...*, 36.

<sup>150</sup> Kamran Mofid, *Globalization for the Common Good* (London: Shepherd-Walwyn, 2002), 50.

that God's righteousness consists of providing abundantly and making available his bounty to all. "The promised land, in a nutshell, is a land abundant in justice, love, compassion, sympathy, empathy, a sense of community, sharing and caring. It is not a land of individualism, self-interest, greed, materialism, unethical behavior, sleaze and corruption."<sup>151</sup> In this covenantal society, as Douglas Meeks argues, economy is the management of household, the Lord's household connected with the production, distribution and consumption of the necessities of life. It is a site of human livelihood. And "God's 'law of the household' is the economy of life against death and cannot be disregarded by our economy with impunity."<sup>152</sup>

Informed by a covenantal relationship, the cotton market in Benin could then be seen as a place to provide God's household with its necessities. It is imperative then that the economic and trade systems allow the opportunities for all to benefit. Competition and distortion in the market should not facilitate the domination of powerful countries over the weakest countries. "The most extreme understanding of Sinai is that Moses sought to fashion procedures, structures, and values to order a genuinely egalitarian community in which the political process and economic resources of the community are made available for the sake of all members of the community, without reference to privilege or priority."<sup>153</sup> The social vision of the covenant seeks to inspire the building of a society in which the weak, powerless, and vulnerable are guaranteed protection. Paul's virtue ethics and the life of early Christian communities, as narrated in the Acts of the Apostles, highlight this same vision.

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<sup>151</sup> Kamran Mofid, *Globalization...*, 52.

<sup>152</sup> Douglas M. Meeks, *God the Economist: the Doctrine of God and Political Economy...*, 3.

<sup>153</sup> Walter Bruggemann, *The Covenanted Self* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 49.

### *III.1.2. Imitating Christ's Impoverishment and Expressing Concerns for the Neighbor*

Jesus' life and preaching also provide a key basis for Catholic teaching on justice and solidarity in the economy. Jesus' incarnation was and is an act of solidarity with the human race and stemmed from the Father's love for and the Son's acceptance of the human condition. As Paul says in the *Letter to the Philippians*, "though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2: 6). In solidarity with the human condition, Jesus became a human being; though he was rich he became poor to enrich humanity. In addition to his act of impoverishment, Jesus in the Gospel, manifests a preferential option for the poor and needy to whom he proclaimed the Good News (Lk 7:22), and to whom the kingdom of God belongs (Lk 6:20) and who have their treasure in heaven (Mk 10:21). The parable of the "Rich man and the Poor Lazarus" (Lk 16: 19-31) reveals what God values the most in social and economic life: a desire to ease the burden of the less fortunate and heed the advice of the prophet regarding justice. In the same way, the early Christian communities expressed great concern for the poor and provided a special diaconal ministry (Acts 6:1-5). The community held everything in common; there was no needy person among them because those who owned property sold it and brought the income to be distributed according to the needs of the members (Acts 2:43-47; 4:32-37). Jesus tied together the love of God and the love of neighbor. He intertwined loyalty to God with solidarity in social economic interaction. This is illustrated in the early Christian community and, in a particular instance, by the collections initiated by Paul for the poor of Jerusalem. From this experience of working with and for the early Christian Community, Paul developed his Christological ideas of solidarity.

In the letter to the Corinthians, Paul organized a collection of money in different churches for the “poor of Jerusalem.” Organizing this collection was for him an act of solidarity based on the example of Jesus who first manifested God’s solidarity with humanity. Christ acted out of love for humankind. Though rich, Christ became poor so that by his poverty, humanity may be rich and enjoy the plenitude of happiness (2 Cor. 8:9). In addition to the conditions of his birth, Christ became poor in the fact that he “fully participated in the limitations and weaknesses as well as the finitude of human life.”<sup>154</sup> This example of Christ gives reason and motivations to the Corinthians to show their solidarity with the poorer community at Jerusalem. According to Paul, this act of solidarity, in imitation of Christ’s solidarity with humanity, was also an act of thanksgiving to God (2 Cor. 9:12), an act for the glory of God (2 Cor. 9:13) and an act of equality among all (2 Cor. 8:8-15). For Paul an act of solidarity is, in light of Christ’s example, an opportunity to give glory to God who provides for all. It is also an act of thanksgiving for God’s grace acting in our life. The collection for Jerusalem was “a religious offering consecrated to God.”<sup>155</sup> Solidarity is an act in which the core value of Christian faith is expressed: glorification of God, gratitude to God, equality with one another, mutual support and expression of God’s blessing.

The notion of equality, in Paul’s writing, is not only to be expressed among citizens of the same city but is a necessity among communities of different cities and nations. At this cosmopolitan level, Paul called for equal relationship between Greeks and Palestinians in spite of the political differences between them. The collection was, for Paul, an opportunity to affirm equality in the church. In this sense, “there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all and in all” (Col 3:11).

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<sup>154</sup> Jan Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 137.

<sup>155</sup> David J. Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 130.

According to Paul, the Church is the unique body of Christ and the reflections of the divine Trinitarian community. The collection expresses this unity to be desired and the real equality between Jews and Greeks in the church. Equality implies reciprocity so that one will not have to suffer more than the other (2 Cor. 8:15; Rom. 15:27). The Gentile community's financial support to the Jerusalem church was a response in reciprocity for the Gospel the church at Rome received from them. As Keith Nickle pointed out, "the act itself was in response to an indebtedness already incurred."<sup>156</sup> According to Stephan Joubert, "the collection was a caritative project, but, at the same time, a project that was embedded within the reciprocal relationship marked by mutual obligations between himself, his churches, and Jerusalem."<sup>157</sup>

An act of solidarity gives testimony to the blessing of God on both the giver and the receiver. It is the manifestation of God's grace, a "χάρις," (1 Cor. 16:3a). As Stephan Joubert argues, the collection "was not merely a λογεία [gift]; it was also a χάρις, a gift of love on the part of the Corinthians; and, as such, it also constituted part of their religious responsibilities. The implication, then, is that solidarity is also a duty of faith. That is the reason why Paul instructed the Corinthians to perform their acts of solidarity by gathering their gifts during the celebrations of the Lord's day. Acts of solidarity are an integral part of Christian worship. "Money which had been honestly gained in the toil of the week is to be brought to the assembly of the Church and thus made part of the Sunday worship."<sup>158</sup> A Christian community which is provided by the grace of God with material resources should take it as a duty to help the poor, no matter where they are, whether in the same or in another community (1 Cor. 16:1-4). The act of solidarity that Paul proposed to the Corinthians is then a test of their faith and of their concern

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<sup>156</sup> Keith F. Nickle, *The Collection: A Study in Paul's Strategy* (Naperville: Mackay & Co, 1966), 14.

<sup>157</sup> Stephan Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 133.

<sup>158</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, in David J. Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles...*, 131.

for others. Christians are called to witness to the Gospel in the world by putting their faith into action. Charity is the essential expression of Christian faith. Charity is the greatest virtue. Faith and love are theological virtues which cannot exclude each other. In the Christian perspective, there cannot be faith without love nor love without faith. Love expresses faith and faith motivates and gives dynamism to love. For the Corinthians, then, the collection was an opportunity to put their faith into practice.

Paul illustrated his notion of solidarity and motivated the early Corinthian community to take the collection for the poor by giving the example of the Macedonian churches that had been generous beyond their means (2 Cor. 8:1-7). Paul sees their example and their enthusiastic generosity as a “grace of God,” (2 Cor. 9:14). The generous response of the Macedonian churches is not just a humanistic material gift but a sign of God’s grace working in them. The Macedonian churches gave with enthusiasm because they were moved by God’s action in them. Their solidarity is not merely a result of human action or Paul’s successful ministry. Neither is it a selfish action on the part of the Macedonians inspired by their pride or richness. “It is God’s grace working in them, just as it will be when the Corinthians have completed their contribution to the fund.”<sup>159</sup> In spite of their poverty, the Macedonians were moved by their concern for the other churches. Their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality (2 Cor. 8:2). Their concern was in imitation of Christ’s self-giving on the cross. In the same way God, as source of every grace, will enrich the generosity of the Corinthians so that their gift will be “acts of thanksgiving to God.” And through their generosity, the Corinthians will give glory to God. By means of the collection, Paul developed a Christological approach to solidarity in economic life. His approach to solidarity is an ethical teaching that is embedded in

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<sup>159</sup> Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1984), 413.

his experience of Christ. Paul ultimately understood, through his conversion, that Christ's call was to perform such actions out of love and justice. The Christological act of redemption through death and resurrection became for Paul the foundation for Christian thought and teaching about social and economic life.

In light of the Gospel and Paul's teaching, economic relationships can be understood primarily from the perspective of solidarity and the common good. Unlike the capitalistic approach to economy which values assets, productivity and profit, the gospel perspective emphasizes the human person. "The central task of an economic system is always to meet human needs and at the same time to provide for the development of human beings who exist in a context of social relations and support systems."<sup>160</sup> This Christian understanding of economic and social life can be a means of shedding new light on the international cotton market. In such an understanding, farmers, corporations and countries would be expected to act fairly and in solidarity for the common good of all concerned. The global cotton trade offers an excellent opportunity to manifest the glory of God and to advance the Kingdom of God through the improvement of the human condition. As in any economic activity, the cotton market should not favor some people or corporations or countries at the expense of those who are the worst-off. These ideas of solidarity and common good stress the inherent social dimension of the human person and oppose the individualism of the free capitalist market. Solidarity and common good are central to Catholic Social Teaching.

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<sup>160</sup> Richard C. Bayer, *Capitalism and Christianity: The Possibility of Christian Personalism* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1999), xv.

## III.2. Solidarity and Common Good: Catholic Approach to Economy

All economic activity, according to Catholic teaching, should focus on human flourishing. More important than production, the human person should be the primary concern in any economic thought and theory. Paul's call for solidarity in the early church demonstrated the importance of the common good and its necessity for this flourishing of the individual.

### *III.2.1. Solidarity: A Way to Live Christian Faith in Economic Life*

Catholic teaching, based on the covenantal social life of the Israelite community and Paul's introduction of the "collection" in the early Christian community, has developed an approach that can influence and facilitate improvement and fairness in the modern capitalistic economy. In recent years, the Church has made her position on contemporary issues of social and economic justice a vehicle in which she engages the world in order to advance the flourishing of individuals. The Church has done so particularly by issuing social encyclicals which respond to and counter the theories and practices which inhibit such flourishing. Living in solidarity is virtuous, complements justice and brings to light the full meaning of justice. Solidarity is "a Christian virtue that sees to the just sharing of both spiritual and material goods, fair pay for services and peaceful effort to establish a just social order both nationally and internationally."<sup>161</sup> Solidarity is the well-being of the community with no exclusion. According to John Paul II, solidarity is "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good."<sup>162</sup> It is a moral and social attitude, a virtue that corresponds to the recognition of

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<sup>161</sup> Michael Francis Pennock, *This Is Our Faith*, ..., 268.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987, no 38.

interdependence. Solidarity expresses the social dimension of the human person and implies a reciprocal relationship between individuals, between individuals and society and between communities or nations. “[S]olidarity acknowledges that all are responsible for all, not only as individuals but collectively at every level.”<sup>163</sup> It goes beyond mere assistance to the poor with only the surplus of the condescending rich. It first requires a just relationship and it implies a mutual relationship of support among the poor themselves, between wealthy and poor, between employers and employees, between communities and nations. Solidarity is a dimension of the mutuality of Christian love. “Christians cannot escape the call of others, especially the weak. Love of God is united to love of neighbor. We are one human family, dependent on one another, and have the Christ-given call to be one.”<sup>164</sup> This mutual love is actually a dimension of human life emphasized by Catholic Social Teaching.

Many, not wishing to ignore the plight of the poor or those devastated by natural catastrophes, volunteer their time and services in social works. The international response to the disastrous earthquake in Haiti in January 2010 is a good example. There are many selfless individuals throughout the world. “Nobody wants the problems of poverty, homelessness, inadequate health care, and underfunded legal assistance for vulnerable populations to continue unchecked or to worsen in the future. To be human is to have a heart that is moved by stories of desperate need and crying injustices. Humanitarian responses to people in crisis are practically instinctual.”<sup>165</sup> But there is no agreement about the nature of inequities and injustice or about how to alleviate them.

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<sup>163</sup> Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, *Choosing the Common Good* (Stoke on Trent: Alive Publishing, 2010), 8.

<sup>164</sup> Michael Francis Pennock, *This Is Our Faith*, ..., 268.

<sup>165</sup> Thomas Massaro, *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action...*, 4.

By focusing on and supporting solidarity, Catholic Social Teaching strives to give a human face to the capitalistic economy which is individualistic and is directed to self-interest. Economic exchanges informed by solidarity can provide a new human shape to the free market which excludes some social categories. Unlike the capitalistic market, solidarity is manifested in providing opportunities for work and just remuneration. “It also presupposes the effort for more just social order where tensions are better able to be reduced and conflicts more readily settled by negotiation.”<sup>166</sup> The Catholic emphasis on solidarity in social and economic life is a call for both personal and institutional change and improvement to bring about a humanized and humanizing economy. Whether Christian or non-Christian, whether believer or non-believer, all are called, as economic agents, to transcend their narrow particularities and self-interest in order to arrive at a higher and deeper level of sharing among all human beings. The call for solidarity demands a self-transformation from within which results in a social relationship of acceptance of others as sisters and brothers. As Tissa Balasuriya argues, “[o]ur growth to a planetary dimension is an invitation to spiritual deepening, a purification from selfishness to a more universal communion in real life to our own humanization.”<sup>167</sup> The call for a humanized economy also requires the renewal of international institutions such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These international institutions are areas of opportunities in which to express and experience global solidarity as a human family.

Such an understanding of international institutions calls for the strengthening of the positive aspects of globalization. It calls for the creation of networks and links between these communities and societies which could be threatened by isolation and the lack of sharing of human resources. Michael Amaladoss shares this viewpoint when he suggested that the plan of

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<sup>166</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1940.

<sup>167</sup> Tissa Balasuriya, *Globalization and Human Solidarity* (Thiruvalla: Christiana Sahitya Samithi, 2000), 136.

God for humanity and the world has global dimensions. “God’s salvific will is universal, not merely in space and time, but also in its human and cosmic depth. The goal of history is the reconciliation of all things so that God will be all in all. (1 Cor. 15:28)”<sup>168</sup> There is, then, an imperative to transform the global market to a global human community of sharing and mutual service, a global community in which all become individually and communally more truly civilized and humanized, and in which all pursue the deepest and best aspirations of the human family. Solidarity is “... one of the fundamental principles of the Christian view of social and political organization”<sup>169</sup> and, in this perspective, it is a positive notion that could shape the global community. This position is shared by the Second African Bishops Assembly which first learned to appreciate the manifestation of solidarity through the good work of some international agencies, especially in their fight against HIV/AIDS. But the African Synod sought to expand solidarity and expressed the hope that “[w]hen it comes to issues of reconciliation, justice and peace, we all meet at the deeper level of our common humanity. This project concerns all, and calls for our common action.”<sup>170</sup> For the African Bishops,

A new and just world order is not only possible but necessary for the good of all humanity. A change is called for with regard to the debt burden against poor nations, which literally kills children. Multinationals have to stop their criminal devastation of the environment in their greedy exploitation of natural resources. It is short-sighted policy to foment wars in order to make fast gains from chaos, at the cost of human lives and blood. Is there no one out there able and willing to stop all these crimes against humanity?<sup>171</sup>

In light of this conviction, the African Bishops state that “[t]he best globalization must be a globalization of solidarity.”<sup>172</sup> This globalization of solidarity is not international aid or

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<sup>168</sup> Michael Amaladoss, S.J., “Towards Global Community,” in Michael Amaladoss (ed.), *Globalization ...*, 217.

<sup>169</sup> John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, No. 10.

<sup>170</sup> African Synod II, final Draft No. 29.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.* 33.

<sup>172</sup> Propositions Presented to the Pope in Second African Synod, No. 31.

assistance which keeps people passive and excluded from world activities. Rather it emphasizes interdependence in which each person needs the other as much as the other needs him. For the Second African Synod, solidarity is not limited to international aid through international agencies, an aid which, unfortunately, does not always arrive at the optimal time to the people for whom it is intended. This type of aid requires conditions which do not reflect the needs of the people. Solidarity expresses a co-operation for the welfare of all, living in unity which leads to responding to the needs of people in the actual context of their lives. In this manner, the Synod Fathers call upon African governments and intermediate agencies to be more responsible and transparent in building and managing international solidarity for the sake of the common good.

<sup>173</sup> According to Uzochukwu J. Njoku, at times solidarity “could demand sacrifice, at other times charity, at other times opposition.”<sup>174</sup> It requires a process of liberation which has been emphasized by many African theologians. For Engelbert Mveng, it is liberation from “anthropological impoverishment”<sup>175</sup> in which the African societies have been confined in international relationship. This liberation, according to Jean-Marc Ela, goes beyond social and economic dimension and “demands a true conversion to the Gospel, for us to find again our dignity as persons.”<sup>176</sup> Moreover, the liberating dimension of solidarity is not simply an aspect of theology but it “constitutes the basic context and methodology of the theologizing.”<sup>177</sup> As John Paul II stresses, “[t]he process of development and liberation takes concrete shape in the exercise of solidarity, that is to say in the love and service of neighbor, especially of the poorest: ‘For

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<sup>173</sup> Propositions Presented to the Pope in the Second African Synod, No. 31.

<sup>174</sup> Uzochukwu Jude Njoku, *Examining the Foundations of Solidarity in the Social Encyclicals of John Paul II*. (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2006), 343.

<sup>175</sup> Engelbert Mveng quoted by Meinrad P. Hebga, “Engelbert Mveng: A Pioneer of African Theology” in Bénédet Bujo and Juvénal Ilunga Muya (eds.), *African Theology: The Contribution of the Pioneers 1* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2003), 45.

<sup>176</sup> Bénédet Bujo and Juvénal Ilunga Muya (eds.), *African Theology: The Contribution of the Pioneers 2* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006), 186.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.* 232.

where truth and love are missing, the process of liberation results in the death of a freedom which will have lost all support.”<sup>178</sup> Integrated which the principle of solidarity is the common good which determines the direction of the economy.

### *III.2.2. Common Good: A Good of and for the Individual and of and for the Society*

As described in the second chapter of this study, the common good is, in some theories of justice, utilitarian. But in utilitarianism, the common good is merely a sum of individual goods. In the Catholic perspective the notion of common good surpasses the utilitarian conception and is a substantive concept, related to the good of the community, of the social body. It is the communion in good living of individuals and communities.<sup>179</sup> It is “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.”<sup>180</sup> The common good is about how to live well together, how to enable the individuals and groups to flourish and live a decent human life.<sup>181</sup> This Catholic conception encompasses three important requirements: respect for the fundamental, inalienable rights of the human person, the social development and spiritual and material well-being of the society (e.g., food, clothing, health, work, culture etc.); and the fostering of conditions that enable a society to exist in peace with security and justice.<sup>182</sup> The common good calls for the complete development of the person and the participation of the members in the life of the society. It “embraces the sum total of those conditions of social living, whereby men [women] are enabled more fully and more

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<sup>178</sup> John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, No. 46.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 50-51.

<sup>180</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1906.

<sup>181</sup> Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, *Choosing the Common Good...*, 8.

<sup>182</sup> Michael Francis Pennock, *This Is Our Faith, ...*, 261.

readily to achieve their own perfection.”<sup>183</sup> It is “a social reality in which all people should share through their participation in it.”<sup>184</sup> The common good stresses the social dimension of persons and the interdependence of the person with the society. “Man’s social nature makes it evident that the progress of the human person and the advance of society itself hinge on each other.”<sup>185</sup> Like solidarity, the common good influences and enriches justice. As Lisa S. Cahill highlights, the common good “provides the meaning of justice for social relations, and in a way that also includes the personal good of every individual member of society. In principle, the notion of common good complements an idea of justice as fairness to individuals with an idea of justice as rightly ordered social relations. Hence, it overcomes any possible dichotomy between personal and social justice, since the two are interdependent.”<sup>186</sup>

The Catholic understanding of the common good is not limited to any particular society, community or nation. This universal common good is not something that can be actualized without the combined efforts of all individuals and public officials who have the power and access to the structure and means to create healthy institutions. The building and realization of the common good are part of the Catholic mission which includes charitable efforts. As Thomas Massaro stresses, “[w]here charity tends to involve individuals or small groups of people acting to meet the immediate needs of others, work for justice involves a more communal and even global awareness of problems and their potential long-term solutions.”<sup>187</sup> However the common good transcends charitable activities:

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<sup>183</sup> John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, No. 65.

<sup>184</sup> David Hollenbach quoted by Charles M. A. Clark, “Greed Is Not Enough...”, 43.

<sup>185</sup> Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 25.

<sup>186</sup> Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Feminist Theology and Sexual Ethics,” in Maura A. Ryan and Brian F. Linnane, S.J., *A Just and True Love* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2007), 27.

<sup>187</sup> Massaro, *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action...*, 11

It is not just a matter of eliminating hunger, nor even of reducing poverty. The struggle against destitution, though urgent and necessary, is not enough. It is a question, rather, of building a world where every man [women], no matter what his race, religion or nationality, can live a fully human life, free from servitude imposed on him by other men or by natural forces over which he has not sufficient control; a world where freedom is not an empty word and where the poor man Lazarus can sit down at the same table with rich men...<sup>188</sup>

The common good demands progress in the pursuit of the complete development of the person, and that of all humanity. In Christian teaching, salvation implies humanization, although human salvation is not limited to nor is it completed in human actions. Salvation is Christ's work for humanity. But it also encompasses true humanization and calls for responsible human actions in life. The orientation of economic and social life is a dimension of this humanization and of the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, global trade and the cotton market should be seen as areas and activities which should be directed to the advancement of humanization and the Kingdom of God. This orientation requires a sense of unity between individuals, between communities and also with the entire human community. African theologians have highlighted this sense of unity and mutual support as it exists in traditional African life. "In the African concept of life, however, it is not simply religious and political leaders who have the obligation to preserve and transmit life. Every member of the community, down to the least significant, shares the responsibility for strengthening the force of the tribe or clan and of each of its members."<sup>189</sup> An economically good act, in this approach to life, is then, the one which contributes to the vital force of the community. The emphasis on common good in the global economy is, then, in tune with the African traditional conception of life which is presently eroding due to the influence of globalization and the power of capital. This emphasis is also a

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<sup>188</sup> Kishor Thanawala, "Globalization and Economic Justice: A Social Economist's Perspective," *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 2: 1 (2005): 56. Cf. Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (March 1967), No 47.

<sup>189</sup> Bénédzet Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Context* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 22.

way to foster the integration of all human communities which should be active participants in the global economy. Global solidarity and common good imply a real autonomy and unfettered self-determination. They demand a readiness on everyone's part to accept the sacrifices necessary for the good of the entire world community.<sup>190</sup> Without abolishing the competitive and incentive dimension of the market, the cotton trade should be kept within the regulations which take into consideration the good of the weakest. But in order to reach this goal, there is a need to revise some international policies including the international monetary system.

### **III.3. New Policies to Build a New Global Economic System**

A global economy directed to the common good and sustained by a global community gives rise to a key practical concern: that of moving from exclusive global interactions that neglect poor individuals and poor nations to a more inclusive and reciprocal economic relationship. What Pope John Paul II called "globalization in solidarity, globalization without marginalization"<sup>191</sup> can only be achieved if new policies are introduced into the international relationship. For African countries, these policies will foster economic freedom after a span of fifty years of political freedom that did not promote their common good and flourishing. Economic freedom will allow for their participation in individual and communal economic initiatives.

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<sup>190</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, No. 45.

<sup>191</sup> John Paul II, "From the Justice of Each Comes the Peace of All, World Day of Peace Message" quoted by David Hollenbach, "Economic Justice for All' Twenty Years Later," in *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 5:2 (2008): 319.

### *III.3.1. Protection of Small Business in Environment dominated by an Emphasis on Economic Incentives*

Catholic Social Teaching, by maintaining that economic justice is always linked with the common good and solidarity, does not abolish freedom in the market, but calls for policies which allow all to exercise this freedom. According to Robert Pecorella “[i]n terms of market operations, the Catholic common good is compatible with both the exercise of responsible individual initiative encouraged by the voluntary and free-flowing exchanges of market economics and with the creation of individual and social wealth that such a process entails.”<sup>192</sup> But the current globalized economy, as the cotton market has illustrated, is primarily dominated by transnational firms which overwhelm individual initiatives. The transnational firms impede the development of small businesses in developing countries such as Benin and thus cause unemployment or under-employment. It is necessary to regulate, through policies and economic legislation, the market in poor countries such as Benin in order to protect the small businesses against the globalizing pressures associated with transnational firms. Large transnational firms operate in the global market and exert various forms of control in order to make huge profits at the expense of the individual’s activities. There is a need to create new policies both at international and local levels in the interest of the well-being of the weakest local economic agents. Equity issues are interwoven with social values and political policies and “policies that promote equity can help, directly and indirectly, to reduce poverty.”<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Robert Pecorella, “Property Rights, the Common Good and the State: The Catholic View of Market Economies” in *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 5: 2 (2008), 256-7.

<sup>193</sup> Fiscal Affairs Department of IMF, *Should Equity Be a Goal of Economic Policy?* (Washington D.C.: IMF Publication Services, 1998), 2.

Policies at an international level should target primarily those subsidies which create inequalities in the international market. Poor countries have been requesting in vain for decades the curtailment of subsidies to cotton farmers in the western countries. These subsidies, especially in the cotton market, place a burden on farmers in poor countries such as Benin. Eliminating the billions of dollars in handouts to some American and Chinese cotton growers would greatly help those countries in Africa, such as Benin, which produce cotton and for whom exporting cotton is of immense economic importance. There is a need to establish a fair international economic system more thoroughly informed by the values of justice and solidarity.

At a national level, policies should protect small businesses consisting of enterprises or services that are run on a small scale and which involve individuals or small groups of few associates. Such enterprises are common activities in poor countries in Africa and usually constitute the first activities in which people gain business experience and prepare themselves to understand the world of trade. Most of the transnational firms and companies have evolved in this manner. They begin as individual or family enterprises and grow into the national and eventually the international level. Such small businesses are important for the economies of countries such as Benin. “They give more scope for initiative, innovation and risk-taking which the more bureaucratic modern corporation permits to a much lesser degree.”<sup>194</sup> But with the phenomenon of globalization, they are very quickly controlled by the transnational firms or are forced to cease their activities. These small businesses must be protected from the international firms in the interest of social well-being by means of fiscal policies. In the cotton market, the local farmers should not lose their land and forfeit their role the profit of the powerful

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<sup>194</sup> Nwokedi Francis Ezumezu, *Freedom as Responsibility: The Social Market Economy in the Light of Catholic Social Teaching for the Nigerian Society* (Bonn: Borengässer, 2003), 363.

multinational firms. Rather, they should benefit from the new technologies so that they can develop and be able to create jobs.

In order to allow the local economic agents to maintain and to develop such activities in the global market, it is necessary to set up a legislative environment which fosters their activities. The setting up of this incentive-based economic environment requires effective political participation by the population. Populations have to elect political representatives willing to foster an economic environment more thoroughly dedicated to the value of equality. The electorate should be able to exercise political pressure that could be translated into more equitable economic policies in countries such as Benin. Benin already enjoys, due to its democratic system, independence and inter-dependence among the different political institutions which can promote genuine national economic debates aimed at establishing constructive economic legislation. The improvement of political participation requires an expansion of education and the establishment of appropriate human resources which also create opportunities for employment. The improvement of political environment includes good governance, transparency, and the fight against corruption which affects economic incentive and the business climate and productivity. Bad governance and corruption also obstruct the country's ability to mobilize foreign resources and economic opportunities.

The Church in Benin can also provide expert ethical advice to the representatives of the population. This expertise can be offered on two levels. First, the Church in Benin can address economic issues in pastoral letters as it already does regarding other issues such as elections and political disputes. The 1986 statement of the U.S. bishops *Economic Justice for All* provides a

good model for such pastoral letters in Benin.<sup>195</sup> These pastoral letters display the potential to inform the political and economic leaders and decision-makers on how to direct the economy. They can shed light on the importance of an incentive-driven legislative environment which allows local economic agents to flourish and eventually extend this growth to the entire nation. The Catholic Church should also exercise her ethical influence through education in her schools where the Church enjoys respect for its educational excellence. Second, institutional lobbying in the public forum could add momentum to the Church's efforts for economic and social justice. In this regard, the experience and work of the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Conference and that of the South African Ethical Committee can be of great help. The experiences of the U.S. bishops' office and the South Africa Ethical committee could be very enlightening. As Thomas Massaro has mentioned:

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, DC, for example, includes an office dedicated to lobbying members of Congress and the executive branch of government. The purpose of these advocacy efforts on the part of the Bishops' Conference is not to win special favors for the Church, as if Catholic religious leaders were just another special interest pushing a selfish agenda. Rather, the goal is to encourage influential government officials to enact programs that will advance the causes of peace, public morality and social justice.<sup>196</sup>

The South African Catholic Committee lobbies the country's House of Representatives to sensitize them to the Catholic approach to economic issues. These two examples of institutional efforts have the possibility of inspiring a similar office or a committee in Benin whose work would be to improve the economic situation of the country in general and the cotton market in

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<sup>195</sup> The pastoral letter may be extended to the West African Bishops for a greater impact.

<sup>196</sup> Thomas Massaro, *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 10.

particular. Hopefully, from such work, a change in the economic environment will come about.

As Maria Arcella Gonzales Butron argues:

The ruling ‘market logic’ of free market globalization strategy requires, among other things, a change in the role of the state: it has to become a servant of the economic model described above. To achieve this, the structural adjustment through which our societies are still being transformed has incorporated measures for the drastic reduction of state intervention in the economy. These include: privatization not only of state enterprises but also of social security services; reduction in public spending, including spending on social services. This has a significant effect on the majority of the population, and on women in particular.<sup>197</sup>

In addition to improving its economic environment, the Benin Republic must also further diversify its economic sectors. Cotton production and exportation play a key role in the country’s economy and the evolution of this industry strongly affects the well-being of the population. Benin’s economy should not be dependent on only one economic sector. There is a need to promote the production of other goods and services and economic activities to ensure a balanced national economy. Benin’s government has been taking actions to encourage cotton farmers to diversify their production and include more food crops in order to reduce exposure to the increased risk of fluctuating or declining commodity prices they now face. The Government has also encouraged farmers to alternate their production practices. Many of the alternatives the government is attempting to introduce have not yet been successful. Industry is relatively underdeveloped and restricted to simple import substitution products and to basic agro-industrial processes. The necessity of diversifying confirms that local entrepreneurship will be promoted. Among other urgent changes is the improvement of the international monetary system which would govern the global market.

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<sup>197</sup> Maria Arcella Gonzales Butron, “The Effects of Free-Market Globalization on Women’s Lives”, in Jon Sobrino and Felix Wilfred (ed.), *Globalization and its Victims* (London: SCM Press, 2001), 47.

### *III.3.2. An International Monetary System for the Improvement of All*

International trade and the global cotton market are facilitated by a monetary system which affects the just transaction between traders and nations. This system is always in need of careful monitoring. Michael Amalados raised this set of concerns about financial speculation.

Behind this international economy of industry and trade are the money markets. In the past money generated profit through being invested in industry. Today money makes more money through financial speculation. Vast amounts of capital are moved from country to country to profit by differences in tax laws. A whole country can be ruined through such flights of capital which has nothing to do with industry or production. International debts can be multiplied by the creditor country simply raising its interests rates to meet its own internal financial needs. (sic)<sup>198</sup>

Aside from the danger of unmonitored speculation, the influence of an imperial international currency, such as the U.S. dollar, affects the value to be gained or lost in trade activity. The fluctuation of the U.S. dollar is a powerful mechanism for the projection of the power of the U.S. economy in the international market. As John Paul highlights, “[t]he world monetary and financial system is marked by an excessive fluctuation of exchange rates and interest rates, to the detriment of the balance of payments and the debt situation of the poorer countries.”<sup>199</sup> This monetary inequality in the international market requires an analysis of the international monetary system and of the role money should play in global trade.

Beyond a mere means of transaction, money encompasses social relationships. Social relationships are constitutive to money itself. “Money is not only embedded in social relations, it

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<sup>198</sup> Michael Amaladoss (ed.), *Globalization and Its Victims: As Seen by the Victims ...*, 221.

<sup>199</sup> John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, No. 43.

is created out of social relations.”<sup>200</sup> As a social relation, money is meant to contribute to human fulfillment and mutual well-being. Money is more than a unit of exchange, a conventional thing which fulfills the payment of goods, services, debts and represents individual wealth and financial means. Social relationships undergird the use of money which is also powerful in the international economic relationship. The unequal power of money undercuts sternly the economy of poor countries such as Benin. It undermines their full participation and the value of their products in the global market. “The severe imbalance of power between rich and poor countries in the global trade and payment system severely undercuts the ethical quality of the system. The imbalance inhibits especially the full participation of sub-Saharan African economies and other developing economies in the ongoing globalization process.”<sup>201</sup> The present monetary system affects African social life negatively by fostering inequalities between poor African countries and rich countries. In the present international monetary system, the poor of Africa and other continents are forced to keep their monetary reserves in the United States and to finance the American economy. Indeed the national currencies used in international trade generate invaluable interest for their countries. The dollar is a valuable export whose quality, or integrity, is strongly protected. Monetary distortions reveal that money creates differences, inequalities and discriminations especially in the devaluation of local currencies. Such devaluation weakens the developing countries’ ability to interact properly in the international market particularly when they need to import goods.

The introduction of money into the economy which was meant to ease the economic transaction and bring about social peace may be today achieving the opposite, and creating

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<sup>200</sup> Nimi Wariboko, *God and Money: A theology of money in a globalizing world* (Plymouth, U.K.: Lexington Books, 2008), 99.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.* 152.

conditions for conflict. There is a need to renew the international trade system, to transform the international monetary system and create an international currency which does not favor some countries at the expenses of others. A “*global money*” is necessary for the global economy. The rules guiding the printing of the bills should be also informed by equity, and justice and solidarity because distortions could occur which would profit the powerful countries. The Church’s contribution here should be to demonstrate the necessity for a renewal and to call for a transformation of the relationship between individuals, corporations and nations.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has highlighted the Catholic idea of solidarity which goes hand in hand with justice. Based on the original covenantal relationship and on Christ’s example, solidarity and the common good provide a human face to the economy. Taking this ethical approach into account requires change and transformation in and by institutions and in the economic system nationally and internationally. There is a need to encourage local entrepreneurship which should be informed with the value of income equity, justice and solidarity in managing their human resources. Such a transformation implies an expansion of government’s economic role in improving the economic environment and legislation. Transparency and accountability in the management of economic activities and particularly in the production and exportation of cotton are positive actions which can help to improve the economy in Benin. Good government, unhindered by the influences of corruption, will then be free to facilitate the establishment of a productive economic environment. It is also necessary to strengthen the educational system to reverse the negative effects of the structural adjustment regimes imposed on poor countries such

as Benin by international financial institutions. In turn, these policies will strengthen social and political cohesion. As has been highlighted by the Fiscal Affairs Department of the IMF, “Policies that promote equity can boost social cohesion and reduce political conflict.”<sup>202</sup> Benin must also diversify its economic sectors in order to deal with the possibility of a fluctuating market or a crisis in the international market.

Some defenders of capitalistic free markets may judge Catholic thought which deals with economic issues as one which inhibits and squelches motivation in economic areas and also as one which restricts the freedom of economic agencies. Such a judgment is not accurate and leads to a misunderstanding and a misrepresentation of Catholic teaching. The Catholic approach to the economy and economic activity does not foster the limitation of individual freedom or economic activities. Instead, it adds an ethical dimension to the free market economy and empowers those who have been excluded from economic activities to be part of the economic process and, therefore, to have the freedom necessary to have a voice in its activity. Catholic thought and teaching regarding the economy encourages the development and flourishing of an economy enriched with and by new and more inclusive economic agency. Catholic thought, in its essence, seeks the establishment of an economic environment which accords a place to those members of society who are the worst-off and often have no voice in economic activity. It is, as always, focused on promoting positive social development for the common good.

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<sup>202</sup> Fiscal Affairs Department of the IMF, *Should Equity Be a Goal of Economic Policy?...*, 2.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

To give a human face to the international economy has been the principal concern and objective of this study. Interest in a humanized global market resulted from the analysis of the cotton market in Benin. The deregulation and inequalities market encountered in the cotton market in Benin shed light on the impact of the globalizing economic system on the well-being of the population of the poor countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The operation of the global cotton market influences the global economy. This economy has had a deleterious effect on African countries. The analysis of the capitalistic manner of acting has raised concerns about how the market is affecting human flourishing. Indeed, this study has demonstrated that the global capitalist system is basically interested in economic growth and the individual's ability to maximize production toward this end. It does not give due consideration to the agent, the worker, in the economic process. It does not recognize the dignity of the person and does not allow for that dignity to be seen as integral to the economic process.

The globalizing economy impacts particularly African countries in which the local governments are powerless against the rich international companies. As private assets, corporations and transnational firms gain greater influence, the power of local government is weakened. As Mark Martinez has pointed out, globalization is “a social and political transformation, the loss of political and social influence over the economy and the constraints they have historically had on ‘markets’ and individual economic self-interest.”<sup>203</sup> The global market, into which the poor countries are forced to integrate, is grounded on private capital being the driving force of economic interaction. Furthermore, governments in developed countries

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<sup>203</sup> Mark A. Martinez, *The Myth of the Free Market...*, 25

empower their economic agencies to act at the expense of poor countries. In addition to the economic impact, the capitalist approach to business based on individual searching for profit hurts African cultures which are based on solidarity, sharing, and hospitality. “We have in reality moved from integrated national models to an international situation in which the various dimensions of economic, social and cultural life have become separated and divorced from one another”<sup>204</sup> The global economic system treats African countries merely as a market for production and exchange of goods and does not take into consideration the life and well-being of people affected by the economic policies. Peter Henriot aptly stated, “[g]lobalization views Africa and Africans as components of a global free market, independent of considerations of livelihoods and integral human development.”<sup>205</sup> Economic and cultural impacts on poor countries have raised ethical concerns about economic theories and the manner in which social justice and common good can be strengthened.

The demand for justice in the global economy was raised when the Beninese Cotton Industry was integrated into the global market. This integration gave strong testimony to the fact that justice in economic activity was not something which could be taken for granted. Most theories of justice are based on philosophical arguments such as entitlement, utility, free exchange, fairness, need satisfaction. The Christian approach and the particular Catholic approach to justice are grounded on theological conviction. Justice in Christian and Catholic teaching is nourished by faith in a Trinitarian God. This faith demands mutual love and solidarity. Through her reflections on Justice, the Catholic Church pointed out a moral dimension of the economic life. The social and moral values to which people of a society subscribe must provide the moral context within which their economy functions. Traditional African societies in

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<sup>204</sup> Alain Touraine, *Beyond Neoliberalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 17.

<sup>205</sup> Peter Henriot, S.J., “Globalisation: Implications for Africa” in Michael Amaladoss, S.J. (ed), *Globalization ...*, 72.

general and Beninese society in particular stress the communal dimension of the economy and of business. A moral economy should guide and constrain the public and private economies by providing the fundamental principles by which both should function. In Catholic Social Teaching the common good and solidarity are both essential for just economic policies and the growth and development of individuals.

The Catholic understanding of solidarity goes hand in hand with justice. Based on a covenantal relationship and on Christ's example, solidarity and the common good give a human face to the economy. Following this ethical approach requires a transformation of economic institutions and practices nationally and internationally. There is a need to encourage local entrepreneurship which should incorporate the value of income equity, justice and solidarity in managing their human resources. This transformation implies an expansion of the governmental economic role in the improvement of the economic environment through legislation. It is also necessary to strengthen the educational system to reverse the negative effects of the programs imposed on poor countries such as Benin by international financial institutions. In turn, policies suggested in this study, hopefully, will strengthen the social and political cohesion. Benin also must diversify its economic sectors in order to have the capability to adjust to any crisis in the international market.

These changes and transformations in the market at national and international levels may very well have the power to improve the well-being and happiness of people, especially the poor in African countries such as Benin. Happiness, as stated here, is not the same as the epicurean notion of hedonism. Rather, it is a happiness that is the result of the fulfillment of the individual and the well-being of a society. It includes a sense that one's life is going in the right direction. Such happiness is assessed in terms of self-realization and life-satisfaction.

Traditional African culture has always been in agreement in principle with Catholic Social Teaching in stressing the ethical dimension of the economic system. The moral approach to the global market calls for a globalized solidarity. Globalized solidarity is not merely an international aid or assistance program which keeps people passive and excluded from the world activities. Rather, it emphasizes an interdependence in which each person or nation needs the other as much as the other needs him. It encompasses an active participation of all in economic life. In the moral approach to the market, solidarity may require, at times, sacrifice, at other times charity, at other times opposition. It also implies a process of liberation from any structural system which enslaves people. This liberation in the teaching of African theology calls for a true individual and institutional conversion to the Gospel, for the purpose of safeguarding the dignity of the human person. Both the African tradition and Christian approach to economy emphasize the social dimension of the person and the pursuit of personal well-being. In line with Catholic Social Thought and with African culture, work and business are intrinsic to the common good and the distribution of just wages which should be determined in a fair and equitable contract between the worker and the employer. Even though their conceptions of God differ, the traditional African approach to work and the Christian view of the economy situate the human being in relationship with God and with the community. African and Christian approaches enrich each other with their different perspective. While the African approach to work stresses more the sociality of work, the Christian approach highlights better the dignity of the worker as image of God. Human labor has both subjective and communal dimensions. Taking both dimensions into account facilitates the humanizing of the economic system and the global market.

The Catholic approach to economy may be seen by the advocates of the laissez-faire market as an economic perspective which discourages competitive initiatives and inhibits

motivation. Such a judgment misunderstands and misrepresents Catholic teaching. The Catholic approach to the economy and economic activity is an ethical dimension to the free market economy and claims the expansion of freedom and economic power to those who have been excluded from economic activities. Catholic teaching regarding the economy promotes the development and flourishing of an economy enriched by new and more inclusive economic agency. Catholic thought calls for the establishment of an economic environment which gives opportunity to the voiceless and most disadvantaged members of society. A Catholic view of economy focuses on promoting positive and complete development of the individual and the society. This study has highlighted the humanizing approach to economy which allows both individual and social flourishing. It fosters justice and solidarity which intertwine with social peace. Hopefully, the ideas and suggestions put forth in this study will facilitate a better understanding of the effects of the phenomenon of globalization on the market, on economic life and on the dignity of the individual.

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