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**Toward an evangelical social justice:
an analysis of the concept of the Kingdom of God
and the mission of the Church**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses a diversity of Christian understandings of the Kingdom of God in relation to the church's mission for social justice. Its central argument is that the Christian *praxis* of the eschatological reality of the Kingdom is the church's alternative to philosophical and ethical theories for social justice.

Through an in-depth analysis and evaluation of previous scholarship, this study examines secular philosophical and ethical theories of both ancient and modern times as means of transforming the systemic injustices of society, and affirms their inadequacy to attain the highest good for humanity without a true knowledge of the justice of the sovereign God. Through a hermeneutic approach to the biblical material, the study finds the fundamental concept of God's justice in narrative and thematic form throughout the Bible. God is the source of love, power, righteousness and justice, and practising justice is a divine mandate for believers.

Critical analysis of the diversified concept of the Kingdom of God finds that each view of eschatology, whether premillennialism, postmillennialism, or amillennialism, has its unique characteristics and insights, but without a comprehensive, coherent and integrative conceptual framework for the Kingdom, any one view of eschatology poses difficulties and jeopardizes the advancement of the Gospel of the Kingdom. The study finds that the two-kingdom doctrine of Luther and Calvin, together with Barth's doctrine of Law and Gospel, support an understanding of the universal Lordship of Christ over both the church (the spiritual realm) and the world (the civil realm), that Ladd's 'inaugurated eschatology' appropriately synthesises the views of 'consistent eschatology' and 'realized eschatology' as 'one redemptive event in two parts', and that E. Stanley Jones' 'total Kingdom' concept effectively summarises God's comprehensive plan for human life.

For the last century, however, the evangelical church has been preoccupied with an overemphasis on individual pietistic experience, vertical relationship with God, personal conversion and over-reaction to the social gospel movement. The relative non-participation of the evangelical church in action for social justice evidences an uneasy conscience; their narrow interpretation of the Kingdom of God has resulted in the

church's withdrawing from social involvement as well as obscuring the horizontal relationship between humanity and creation.

The study concludes that Christianity is not an abstract concept but is concerned with the eschatological hope of the Kingdom of God and with its embodiment through the church on earth, which implies the formation of a renewed socio-political reality. The church is thus the prototype of the Kingdom of God, with a mandate to display God's justice as the divine redemptive plan that will culminate in the restoration of the communion of all humanity in God. In seeking a balance between this concept of the Kingdom and the church's mission of evangelism and social justice, the study finds that there is a need to call the evangelical church to incarnate the Word of God in proclamation and action—an integrated mission of evangelism and social justice.

Key words: The Kingdom of God, Social Justice, Divine Justice, Eschatology, Chiliasm, Mission, Evangelism, Theories of Justice.

PREFACE

In a world trapped in systemic and structural evil there are many cries for social justice. Where does the evangelical church stand? Does it have a vision of the eschatological Kingdom of God, and does it see itself as an embodiment of the Christian hope, an agent for human emancipation and redemption? Many people of the world, vulnerable and seeking genuine fairness and equality in the free market economy, especially in the midst of a global recession today, will answer that the evangelical church is no concrete blessing for others but is lost in its own exclusive faith community, guarded by defined institutional walls; it is irrelevant, inadequate, infertile, claiming to possess distinctively the peace of the Kingdom while being unconcerned with the darkening and decaying world. While the rationally based secular philosophical and social theories are inadequate to construct the highest good and regulate all social relations on earth, there is no knowledge of justice possible without the knowledge of God's law through the mission of the Christian church. Nevertheless, though the evangelical church has prided itself as a 'doctrinal people' with particular individual Christian experience in spiritual rebirth, conversion, and a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, it has limited its discernment and worldview by focusing primarily on the future arrival of God's Kingdom. If the evangelical church continues to live without an all-encompassing solution to the much hurting world, I just wonder how it can be the blessing of all nations and make faithful disciples, teaching them to obey everything that Jesus Christ has commanded, including the proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and the healing of the desperate world in immense need of social justice. The answer is not either in evangelizing the lost or in reclaiming the culture, but a holistic mission that includes both.

The uneasiness of the evangelical church about social involvement reflects its predominantly premillennial pessimistic view of the present world, partly as a counter against the postmillennial optimism of the social gospellers, a liberal social reform movement of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. This narrow interpretation of the Kingdom of God leads conservative evangelical Christians into a pessimistic view of human nature: there is no hope and no betterment possible for an ethical world. With the aim of rediscovering the biblical witness to evangelism, and in accordance with basic doctrinal affirmations regarding both heavenly and earthly contexts, I take E.

Stanley Jones' 'total Kingdom' approach to identify diversified insights relating to the *telos* and *chronos* of the Kingdom of God and the *parousia* of Jesus Christ. This biblical witness consolidates the total order of God's Kingdom, encompassing both present and future, both spiritual hope and life reality, for both the particular and the universal people of God. The two-kingdom doctrine of Luther and Calvin, plus Barth's doctrine of Law and Gospel, also support an understanding of the relationship between the church (the spiritual realm) and the world (the civil realm). Both realms are established in the universal Lordship of Christ who became human and proved Himself a neighbour to humans in the world. The church, as a body of Christ, must stand for social justice as the model or prototype of the Kingdom of God in order to have an impact advancing God's sovereign on earth.

A thorough understanding of God's mission in the world and the church's role in that mission is a profound forward step in intellectual and spiritual development as well as being a foundational pillar of the biblical worldview. The mission that Jesus Christ entrusted to His disciples (and to today's church) is to proclaim and practice the need for transcendence, for a new horizon of eschatological hope and a humanizing social touch; it is to open the institutional walls and to build bridges, so that humanity may prepare to enter into the presence of the Kingdom of God, which is the means for the renewal of the entire world and all dimensions of human life.

My main aim has been to argue for an all-encompassing mission of the Kingdom of God. This argument is based on a careful study of the large amount of literature in the relevant fields, such as the rich diversity of scholarly publications on the Kingdom of God and the mission of the church. By no means can this thesis resolve all the differences of various biblical understandings. There remains much to be done to reconcile the interpretive perspectives for Christians as well as the questions of the struggle of injustice in the world. Nevertheless, I hope this thesis provides a harmonized view of the essence of the concept of the Kingdom of God. Within this view the areas of difference may not be totally reconciled, but I have tried to ensure that it stands true to the faithful position of redemptive Christianity as the obvious solution of world problems.

This thesis would not have been possible without the guidance, support and patience of my two promoters, Prof. B. Rees and Prof. J.M. Vorster, not to mention their

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 TITLE & KEY WORDS

1.1.1 Title

Toward an evangelical social justice: an analysis of the concept of the Kingdom of God and the mission of the Church

1.1.2 Key Words

The Kingdom of God, Social Justice, Divine Justice, Eschatology, Chiliasm, Mission, Evangelism, Theories of Justice.

1.2 BACKGROUND & PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.2.1 Background

The theological understanding of the concept of the Kingdom of God has a profound bearing on the ethical discourse and belief of individual Christians in the church. The diversity of understanding among Christians of the ethical implications of the Kingdom of God suggests that there is some confusion over the differences between personal and social interpretations. Millennial interpretations of the Kingdom of God tend to turn conservative evangelical Christians, especially the fundamentalists away from the need for social justice, through their exclusive focus on personal sin and individual righteousness. The pessimistic attitude toward world conditions leads them steadfastly to proclaim the eschatological kingdom as the certain means for the triumph of righteousness in a moral universe. Carl F.H. Henry, one of the founding members of the neo-evangelical movement that defended modern evangelical, political and social thought in the 20th century, charged his contemporary conservative evangelicals with the failure to engage with the social relevance of the Gospel (Henry, 2003, 16). He admitted that “that there is little agreement concerning the Kingdom, as shown from the contrast between the writings of Stanley Jones (evangelical) and A.C. Gaebelain

(fundamentalist) and the question becomes a hopeless puzzle to men unless the form of the Kingdom is recognized with coterminous principles and ends” (Henry, 2003: xxi).

The concept of the Kingdom of God was never seriously addressed as a central theme by evangelicals until the second half of the 20th century. Their reviews, though not conclusive, resulted in some positive improvements. Examples include the Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern (Sider, 1974) made in 1973, confessing the failure to confront injustice, racism and discrimination and pledging to fulfil the complete claim of God on earth, and the subsequent Lausanne Covenant, declared by the International Congress on World Evangelization in 1974, affirming both evangelism and socio-political involvement and denouncing evil and injustice. Yet, both the Declaration and the Covenant, supported by churches in the U.S. and worldwide, had only limited success in offsetting evangelicals’ deficiencies in the work of social justice. One of the key reasons why evangelicals remain hesitant, and that prevents them from becoming actively involved in social concerns, is their fear of being confused with liberal Christians, whose interests lie in social protest rather than in personal evangelism. Evangelicals would rather maintain a distinctly independent position. Yet there needs to be a renewed passion for social concern, transforming the individualistic pietism generated by some Kingdom concepts into relevant social engagement through applying the Gospel to socio-economic and political realities. World Vision International is one of the very few evangelical organizations that engage primarily in humanitarian relief work for the poor and hungry. Such social action may help to ease some pain and hunger, but Samuel Escobar and John Driver (1978: 8) say that “The social action of the missionaries (the church) was only remedial, and that a concern for justice was not part of it.” The church today is engaged in only partial fulfilment of the divinely mandated justice and still remains hesitant in taking a stand against injustice in the world. In the midst of the confusion surrounding the concept of the Kingdom of God, a relevant and systematic study is justifiable in order to address this question again, in conjunction with an investigation into the church’s mission for social justice.

Justice is a difficult concept to understand. Brunner (1945:14-15) points to the inadequacy of the modern definition: “When we moderns speak of justice, we mean a mode of conduct (to render to each person’s due) which certainly belongs to the moral sphere, but neither embraces it entirely nor exhausts its depths.” Christian theology speaks of worldly or human justice and divine justice. In this research a comparative

study will help to clarify the definitions of these as well as the differences between human justice and divine justice by evaluating, on the one hand, modern popular secular theories of justice, e.g. those of Mill (2000), Rawls (1999, 2001) and Nozick (1974), and, on the other hand, understanding of divine justice derived from biblical hermeneutics.

Millennial or chiliastic interpretations of the Kingdom of God were not created in modern times but inherited and developed throughout Christian church history. Augustine's *City of God* sets the scene for further studies into the doctrine of two kingdoms by later theologians like Martin Luther, John Calvin and Karl Barth (Couenhoven, 2002) with various insights into the relationships between the church, society in general and the Kingdom of God, and the relationship between evangelism and justice.

For the above reasons, I propose to research the concept of the Kingdom of God as it was understood by conservative Christians (Scofield, N.D.; Bevan, 1938; Berkhof, 1951) and earlier and contemporary evangelicals (Dodd, 1936; Ladd, 1964; Jones, 1972; Bruland and Mott, 1983; Marshall, 1984; Henry, 2003) as well as Augustine, Luther, Calvin, other Reformers, and Barth (Barth, 1960; Palmer, 1989; Calvin, 2008; Wright, 2010).

In addition, I will undertake a study of biblical justice, seen as an essential application of the concept of the Kingdom of God (Brunner, 1945; Dengerink, 1978; Bruland and Mott, 1983; Wolterstorff, 2008; Wright, 2010).

1.2.2 Problem Statement

There have been a number of scholarly publications focussing on the concept of the Kingdom of God and the divine mandate for justice. Many of these academic works comprise in-depth analyses of their respective areas of interest, but do not attempt to construct a coherent and integrative conceptual framework for earthly justice, heavenly justice, the divine mandate and the church's mission, in the light of the Kingdom of God. These works will, however, help to provide a contextual background for the present study.

An evaluation of such a coherent system in its interpretation of the concept of the Kingdom of God is vital, but cannot be isolated from its holistic application in Christian life. Additional assessments of human nature that begin with the study of injustice (Niebuhr, 1960, 1964; Lebacqz, 2007) will contribute to an evaluation of the effectiveness and adequacy of secular theories (Rawls, 2001; Lebacqz, 1986), natural law theory (VanDrunen, 2007; Porter, 1998), and of ontological and covenantal approaches to fulfilling the divine mandate for justice (Tillich, 1954 and 2000; Horton, 2004). This evaluation will be necessary in order to collate and expound relevant research on the theological understandings of the Kingdom of God and of the attainment of the ultimate Kingdom of heavenly justice.

The central question of this work, therefore, is: ‘What is the biblical and theological basis of the concept of the Kingdom of God, and how is the Kingdom of God related to the church’s divinely mandated mission of doing justice on earth as well as seeking true heavenly justice?’

The questions that naturally arise from this problem are:

- What constitute the main root-causes of injustice in the unjust world of today; and, secondly, how do modern conservative evangelical Christians understand the Kingdom of God, and how do these understandings relate to non-participation in matters of social justice in the public arena?
- What are the inadequacies of the secular moral theories and theories of natural law deployed by philosophers and social moralists in dealing with social justice?
- What are the consistent and universal principles and evidences for justice in the Bible?
- What are the necessary virtues for being a Christian and how will these virtues help a Christian to live out the ethical norm of the Kingdom of God in mediating and uniting justice with love and power?
- How has the Kingdom of God been understood historically up to the present time?
- How should the concept of the Kingdom of God be understood and applied in Christian life today?

- How can a coherent insight of true heavenly justice be attained?

1.3 THE AIM & OBJECTIVES

1.3.1 The Aim

The main aim of this thesis is to harmonize and unify the contemporary church's understanding of the concept of the Kingdom of God in fulfilment of the divinely mandated mission of doing justice on earth and, at the same time, seeking the true heavenly justice.

1.3.2 The Objectives

The objectives of this study must be seen in their relationship to the aim. I intend to approach the subject from the following seven angles:

- To identify the fundamental causes of injustice in the unjust world of today; and to determine how and why the concept of the Kingdom of God has been understood by modern conservative evangelical Christians in the church from the 19th century till now and identify the reasons for their non-participation in social justice in the public arena.
- To critically assess the effectiveness and adequacy of the application of certain secular moral theories and the natural law's 'common good' theory for social justice.
- To identify the will and truth of the justice of God in His divine command of justice in Scripture.
- To understand the source of love, power, and justice as one in God and the unity in God as the fundamental concept in the mutual relationship of people, of social groups, and of humankind to God.
- To establish and trace the historical development of the millennium interpretation of the Kingdom of God from the early church period to the latter debates of the two kingdoms and the relationship between the church and community.
- To assess the diversities of the concept of the Kingdom of God and to establish a theologically unified understanding of the concept of the

Kingdom of God within the contemporary church for the fulfilment of the divine mandate for justice in the witness and manifestation of the Kingdom of God.

- To establish a coherent insight as to how a true heavenly justice can be attained through the task of evangelism and the resulting conversion and transformation of life.

1.4 CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

The central theoretical argument of this thesis is that the divinely-mandated mission of the church to do justice on earth can only be realized and fulfilled when the church adopts a coherent and integrative concept of justice and of the Kingdom of God that are conclusively and responsibly derived from the theological and biblical understanding. This includes the church's evangelistic mission of seeking heavenly justice through the witness and manifestation of the Kingdom of God.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

This study will primarily be based on a broad evangelical approach with no attempt at differentiating between or associating with any particular denominational traditions. The research will employ a hermeneutic approach to biblical materials and modern scholarly studies, particularly for critical assessment of existing contributions with the purposes of:

- identifying the major concerns in relation to biblical and theological interpretation and developing an understanding of existence and situation;
- comparing and evaluating the different and common signs or contexts significant to the areas of concerns; and
- developing an understanding of the issues and concerns and a universally valid foundation for application and a holistic epistemology of the Kingdom of God and Christian social justice.

The methods I propose to employ in this theological study will include:

- an in-depth assessment of existing scholarly contributions as well as situational analysis with a focus on the reality of injustice and an examination of recent past history and its influence on the concerns of Christian non-participation;
- an in-depth analysis of existing scholarly contributions to identify the effectiveness and adequacy of modern secular theories of justice;
- a hermeneutic approach to the biblical material with regard to the nature of the divine justice with secondary sources;
- an epistemological evaluation of current scholarship with a focus on the ontological and covenantal approaches to Christian virtue for justice;
- a critical examination of the historical development of the millennium interpretation of the Kingdom of God from the early church period, including the latter debates regarding the two kingdoms and the relationship between the church and community;
- a hermeneutic approach to biblical materials with regard to the concept of the Kingdom of God by applying categorization theory, comparative hermeneutic works and existing literature;
- a hermeneutic examination to establish the evidence and necessity of the true heavenly justice in Scripture and its application through evangelism with existing literature.

CHAPTER 2: THE REALITY OF INJUSTICE

2.1 INJUSTICE IS A REALITY

2.1.1 Introduction

Christian thinkers and ethicists like Brunner (1945:14) and Lebacqz (2007:10) find the subject of justice notoriously hard to define in general terms. The traditional understanding of justice treats it primarily as a virtue, referring to the moral sphere, but there is ambiguity in regard to its scope in individual and social applications as well as its depth, that is, considering the nature of human moral motives to account for ethical dispositions to neighbours in the society. The justice of individual ethics must be more than a distinctive internal virtue that stops people from lying, killing, and stealing. Natural human morality is found to be highly deficient in granting proper respect to others in the areas of human rights and dignity and in providing just social, political, and economic arrangements in the spheres of equality, fairness, and impartiality. This deficiency of natural human moral motives often develops into a narrow, inconsistent, and individual notion of a fair share of things, either a duty to share or a due to get, as a result of ideological conflict between reason and moral sense, and also as a result of evil impulses. Dodaro describes the dilemma of reason: “Human reason, because of the power of sin, is not capable alone of attaining the wisdom and other virtues necessary for living happily, either in this life or in the life to come” (Dodaro, 2004:9). Even though Niebuhr (1960:23) believes that individual rational ability is the ultimate solution to social conflict, and that by increasing human intelligence and benevolence the establishment of justice can be renewed, he also finds that “men will never be wholly reasonable, and the proportion of reason to impulse becomes increasingly negative when we proceed from the life of individuals to that of social groups” (Niebuhr, 1960:35). With the resultant conflict, there is apparently much disagreement about where to draw the line in any specific case of need and how to assess the basis of merit proportionally to the output of work or performance. Brunner concludes that “what is not constant is the theory of justice” (Brunner, 1945:5). Even sociologist Moore has doubts about the theory of justice because it is difficult “to find a convincing empirical example of a just society” (Moore, 1978:3). The theory of justice is thus not conclusive but offers only a vague sense of justice without the value of substantial criteria (Brunner, 1945:7).

Without a persistent and concrete understanding of what justice is, “even in societies where equality is generally valued, there are bound to be advantaged and disadvantaged people, the strong and the weak, and these inequalities create the field in which the betrayal of hope and the sense of injustice flourish” as Shklar (1990:84-85) shrewdly points out. It is because people “are never told what justice is, only under what conditions a rational order might be said to exist” (Shklar, 1990:24). Whether the condition of a rational order is unjust and harmful or not is not known and explained to the people within that system. In order to approach an in-depth study of justice, the direct and first requisite is to know what the prevalent issues of injustice are in our society today. Ethicist Pettit (2005:202), commenting on a wide variety of theories of justice, writes that “we do not need to theorize beyond this agreement to find a foundation for action. Recognition of injustice is foundation enough. In other words, one need not defend a definition of justice [in order] to ask people to do a better job of talking about injustice.” Using the same approach, Lebacqz (2007:11), in her book *Foundations for a Christian approach to justice: justice in an unjust world*, remarks that “attention to injustice might yield important insights for justice” and “that is why injustice must be the beginning point.’ It seems that injustice is an appropriate starting point for a study of justice.

2.1.2 Injustice and Poverty

Injustice comes in many guises, such as physical abuse; discrimination in employment, housing, education, health care; sexual harassment; disrespectful treatment; and insensitive humiliation. Whether such injustices happen to be unavoidable natural disasters or controllable and ill-intentioned human acts, they lead directly or indirectly to cultural, legal, and economic oppression within the social, political, and economic systems. Because of the denial of opportunities and rights in this material world, the victims and the disadvantaged under this systemic oppression will ultimately fall into economic difficulties and become vulnerable to poverty. Brittan and Maynard (1984:2) also affirm that oppression “is intimately connected with the severity of economic crisis.” Poverty as an economic vulnerability is thus a true reality of all sorts of injustice. Poling (2002:15) defines economic vulnerability as “any situation in which the dominant economic system causes an insecurity and a lack of resources that make daily life desperate for people, or whenever the economic system imposes control and

restrictions that deprive people of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness – in a word, whenever it threatens people with the loss of their humanity.” Economic vulnerability involves not only the shortage of supply of economic resources for the disadvantaged but also damage to their social, psychological, and mental life.

In the Policy Research Working Paper titled “The Developing World Is Poorer Than We Thought, But No Less Successful in the Fight against Poverty” prepared by Chen and Ravallion for the World Bank in August 2008, before the current economic recession began, the findings show that:

Both the US\$1.25 and US\$1.45 (the poverty measure by per day basis) lines indicate a substantially higher poverty count in 2005 than obtained using our old US\$1.08 line in 1993 prices; 1.7 billion people are found to live below the US\$1.45 line, and 1.4 billion people live below the US\$1.25 line. Focusing on the US\$1.25 line, we find that 25% of the developing world’s population in 2005 is poor, versus 17% using the old line at 1993 PPP (Purchasing Power Parity) – representing an extra 400 million people living in poverty (Chen and Ravallion, 2008:22).

This working paper that was commissioned to conduct research on poverty on a worldwide scale indicates an increase of people living in poverty on a year by year basis as compared to the total world population even during a time of economic growth. The analysis of the extent of poverty in the world as a whole is based on the World Bank’s ‘\$1 a day’ Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) measure as a common standard, such that any two people with the same purchasing power over commodities are treated the same way – they are either poor or not poor, even if they live in different countries (Chen and Ravallion, 2008:2). Depending on the income level, an individual is either below or above the poverty threshold, which is a standard measurement. For example, those living below the ‘one dollar income a day’ are extremely poor with no adequate food and those living below ‘two dollars income a day’ per person are moderately poor.

In a collaborative effort between United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, the PSIA (Poverty and Social Impact Analysis) initiative was formed to promote a more systematic assessment of the poverty and distributional impacts of public policy reform as well as poverty reduction. The latest report of the PSIA initiative published in January 2010 reveals that the severity of the prevalent global economic crisis has turned in a human development crisis and “the numbers of chronically hungry people in our world are going up, not coming down – probably 150 million more this year than would have been predicted a couple of years ago” (UNDP,

2010:2). The increase of the numbers of the poor and hungry is due primarily to the loss of jobs and income. This human development crisis will continue to take a serious toll on the poorest long after the current sustained economic recovery finally begins.

Poverty is not a problem exclusively for the developing countries or the ‘Third World.’ The rich and developed countries are not immune from the pain of poverty. They are also facing the challenge of the cries of their citizens for justice despite their comparatively higher averages of GNP and Per Capita Income. The measure of poverty in the United States is determined by comparing annual income to a set of dollar values called thresholds that vary by family size. The US Census Bureau uses these poverty thresholds which are updated annually to allow for changes in the cost of living using the Consumer Price Index. The poverty thresholds for 2009 are:

<u>Size of Family Unit</u>	<u>Weighted Average Thresholds</u>
One person	10,956
Two people	13,001
Three people	17,098
Four people	21,954
Five people	25,991
Six people	29,405
Seven people	33,372
Eight people	37,252
Nine people or more	44,366

(Sources: U.S. Census Bureau-Poverty-Last Revised: September 16, 2010)

According to the US Census Bureau’s report on poverty issued in September 2010,

The 2009 ACS [American Community Survey is one of the two major statistical surveys used by US Census Bureau. The other one is Current Population Survey or CPS] data indicate an estimated 14.3 percent of the US population had income below their poverty threshold in the past 12 months. This is 1.0 percentage point higher than the 13.3 percent poverty rate estimated for the 2008 ACS. The estimated number of people in poverty increased by 3.5 million to 42.9 million in the 2009 ACS (Bishaw and Macartney, 2010:2).

Poverty is a fact of life in the United States, the largest economy in the world, and is increasing. It is public knowledge that the current economic crisis that dragged the whole world down stems from the meltdown of the US sub-prime mortgage market. Countries throughout the world are not spared from the adverse effects of the crisis. The last resort to prevent massive deterioration into a great depression is for governments to inject public funds into major corporations in order to sustain the economy and jobs amid the substantial losses of these corporations and banks. It is unfortunate, and an injustice, that part of the moneys these corporations and financial institutions received

was used to pay out hefty cash bonuses in millions of dollars to those in power, the senior executives, while low-paid workers were facing lay-offs and the loss of income. The US Federal government has tried to reconcile this particular inequality issue between the strong (management) and the weak (workers) by increasing the tax rate specific to these bonuses but the result has not silenced the cries of those who lost their jobs and income. The gap between rich and poor will continue to widen whether the economic times are good or bad. This situation has arguably exceeded the capacity of any ideology to sustain meaningful democracy and social order. Pascale (2007:79) shows the US Congressional Budget Office data “that the average after-tax income of the top 1 percent of the population rose by \$576,000 or 201 percent between 1979 and 2000; the average income of the middle fifth of households rose \$5,500, or 15 percent; and the average income of the bottom fifth rose \$1,100, or 9 percent (Centre on Budget and Policy Priorities 2003).” In the midst of the current economic recession, the unemployment rates in the United States reported by the US Bureau of Labour Statistics remain high – currently 9.6% (October 2010) compared with 5.8% in 2008s and 9.3% in the 2009s (US Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2010:3). Based on the above data, it appears that ‘Third World’ people can be found in virtually all major affluent US cities.

According to another report produced by Charles Nelson of the US Census Bureau in 2006 (Nelson, 2006:9), the ACS survey (January 2004) of those living below poverty shows a breakdown by race as follows: black (26.2%), Hispanic (22.9%), Asian (12.2), and white (8.5%). The total population living below poverty in the same report is 13.1%. This report shows a wide disparity among different races with a small percentage of poverty for whites and much higher percentages for the people of colour. The disparity in daily life, as Pascale (2007:79) records, “is embodied in the struggles of African American, Native American, Native Alaskan, and Hispanic families that, according to the US Census Bureau, have median household incomes \$10-20,000 below government-based calculations for self-sufficiency.” It is not simply a result of the current economic meltdown but an apparent reflection of the existential situation of structural and systemic imbalance in the society at large. Poverty is a real violation of justice, or a violence of injustice, due to the systemic evil in our society whether or not it happens to be in the developing countries or developed countries. It creates negativity with regard to self-worth, limits choices of employment, education, housing and health care, and deprives people of a better future life. How can we believe in and experience a just world when poverty is an inevitable and persistent reality?

2.1.3 Systems of Injustice and Oppression

Poverty is a reality of injustice for vulnerable people. These people, according to Deutsch *et al.* (2006:59), are unwitting participants in a system, from a society to a family, in which there are established but unwritten traditions, structures, social norms, and the like that determine how some kinds of people are treated and that may also give rise to profound injustices for certain categories of people – whites versus blacks, males versus females, employers versus employees, and high versus low in authority. These traditions, structures, and social norms may also be the embedded forms of collective oppressions on those deprived or marginalized at the bottom of the society. They may find themselves in unequal conditions but simply accept them as a fact of life or fate and remain silent. Moore, in his book *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt*, describes his in-depth empirical study of the innate human propensities around the problems of authority, the division of labour, and the distribution of goods and services. He argues that human beings in a stratified society accept hierarchies that are not merely imposed by force, but based upon an ‘implicit’ social contract, which binds together dominant and subordinate groups in a set of mutual obligations, while certain repressive mechanisms may be still at work (Moore, 1978:23). The class and caste systems in many societies represent a different concept of humanity in which the upper classes represent ‘true’ humanity and those at the bottom are furthest removed (Moore, 1978:29). Class and caste systems have their separate characteristics where class has to do with social and economic status and caste is a social stratification defined by descent and occupation, but they consistently share the similar nature of oppression in a hierarchical society. As such, these two systems will not be distinguished but grouped as one essential class system for the examination of various oppressions. Moore (1978:32-34) also finds that division of labour is capable of arousing moral outrage and a sense of social injustice when the poor have no choice between starvation and taking a job at very low wages and exhaustingly long hours. Another principle of inequality, Moore (1978:37-39) sees, is a sense of ‘enough’ of every person or household based upon the value of different tasks and social functions when the dominant stratum claims rights to a larger share of what the society produces. The concept of different categories of people in our hierarchical society, as we check Moore’s arguments, presents the realities of oppression, inequality and injustice against those at the bottom of the stratified society, expressed in forms such as classism, racism, and sexism, whether they

are implicit or explicit. The forms of injustice resulting especially from the implicit social contracts of our structured and established traditions and customs, although they do not cover all aspects of injustice, still pertain to the current situations of our contemporary society and are obvious examples worthy of discussion. There are also more injustices outside of these three 'isms' such as the dominant political and criminal forces of violence against the powerless. These three 'isms' present the typical systemic oppressions in virtually all societies in our unjust world, but are not inclusive of all injustices. On the one hand, classism, racism and sexism demonstrate distinct phenomena of oppression, but on the other hand, are closely interlinked. Brittan and Maynard (1984:21-22) rightly summarize the concept of real life oppression: "oppression is a function of the dynamic interaction of three hierarchical systems – sex, race and class – none of which has any claim to primacy" and conclude that, in the lived experience of human beings, "classism, sexism, racism cannot exist in independent conceptual ghettos for the simple reason that in the real world they tend to cohere together."

Speaking of classism, racism, and sexism in the 21st century may seem a little outdated for many in the Western world. Advances in technology, economic transformation, and public policies of democratic government are arguably the basis of a denial of the existence of these 'isms'. There are fewer working class people engaged in manufacturing activities because of technological advancement, which has created a totally different society from the industrial revolution in the 19th century. The economy is transformed from an industrial base to a free competitive commercial setting. People are no longer ignorant about their rights but have more opportunities to receive education and the right to vote. Do all these really improve the inequality and injustice in this world? When one looks at the widened gap between the poor and the rich, the dominant force of white males on the boards of major corporations and governments, and the poverty figures in North America and elsewhere, there is no doubt about all sorts of imbalance of our society. It is not only that the economic transformation in the Western world does not help to improve the employment, but that it has let lower rank employees face layoffs in the name of down-sizing in their home countries, so that most labour intensive works are transferred or 'sub-contracted' or 'out-sourced' to the 'Third World' countries by multi-national corporations to exploit the very cheap labour costs for marginally larger profits for the senior management and shareholders. In North America, the governments of Canada and the United States have developed two

contrasting policies that are responsive to their growing cultural diversity. These are the 'melting pot' theory for the United States and the 'cultural mosaic' model for Canada. They both share a common purpose, which is to build a society with an emphasis on freedom and equality amongst diverse peoples. It aims at the essential means of reconciling differences in culture, race, and religion for optimum living in social, economic, and political senses for the majority of the population who are not feeling particularly disadvantaged.

The 'melting pot' theory is thought to be working to assimilate people of different cultures, races and religions into a more homogeneous common society, while the 'cultural mosaic' model encourages pluralism or multiculturalism with emphases of tolerance, respect and appreciation for diversity for a multinational society. Grahn-Farley (2008:951), a law professor at Albany Law School in New York, criticizes the 'melting-pot' theory: it is "a metaphor only able to describe the plurality within a horizontal social view of formal equality, while completely missing the point of substantive inequality." She writes that "social equality addresses social life of races, classes, genders, sexualities, and ages, all within a very complex but nevertheless hierarchical structure" and there is a persistent dilemma or even social problem in race relations in American racism and classism (Grahn-Farley, 2008:939, 940). With the recurrent social problems within American hierarchical structure, Grahn-Farley (2008:952) concludes that "the melting-pot is the liberal paradox of the individual freedom's dependence on the threat posed by the collective order." There will not be an identity of an individual but a loss of an identity in substantive inequality of race and class within the melting pot society. In the cultural mosaic approach, each ingredient within the culture, race, and religion retains its integrity, flavour, particularities, and proud traditions, while the society recognizes these as integral parts of a more encompassing whole. Christian sociologist Bibby points out some cracks that have been developing in Canada's mosaic. For example,

cultural minorities and majorities continue to clash over such a basic issue as to whether or not there should even be a multiculturalism policy and program, and over specific matters, such as Sikhs wearing turbans in the revered Royal Canadian Mounted Police, women and men are frequently polarized as they try to resolve issues of equity, and burgeoning numbers of interest groups are championing issues that are limited only by one's imagination, and frequently demonstrate little concern or compassion for anyone or any view other than their own (Bibby, 1993:416).

He asserts that the mosaic dream for a just, free and harmonious society has not materialized for two reasons. (1) The excessive 'individualism' of the me-versus-them

and we-versus-them mentalities that emphasize diversity over commonality is without subsequent vision and cannot achieve an explicit sense of coexistence or identity for the members of occupational, economic, cultural, ethnic, gender, environmental, or other groups. (2) The excessive ‘relativism’ of a wide array of social structures, lifestyles, ideas, experiences, values and beliefs has led the country into a ‘multi-everything society’ that has left everyone fragmented, visionless, and mindless (Bibby, 1993:417, 418-421, 421-423). The mosaic remains a myth. Despite various models for public policies riding together with an ever-expanding and transforming economy, theologian Brown’s 1970 prophecy becomes significant: “it would be naïve to think that the forward surge of the economy wipes out every economic injustice and puts an end to all economic misery ... on the contrary, as an expanding economy showers its gifts on the many, the plight of those who still remain excluded becomes all the more desperate” (Brown, 1970:67). In other words, the ever-expanding worldly economy and liberal public systems would not do away with the reality of injustice. We live, as a matter of fact, in an unjust world. My study of all three ‘isms’ will exhibit briefly their systemic characteristics and, more importantly, the sense of injustice. Therefore, this chapter will not search exhaustively for an in-depth social theory, but will be concerned primarily with the oppressions that incorporate class, race, and gender in our daily life.

Classism is a system of prejudice, discrimination, and institutionalized oppression toward a category of people, particularly the poor. It is a systemic evil that has been deeply embedded in our society, not only in political and economic terms to identify the class differentiation, but also to label certain groups of people in various subjective dimensions such as social status, attitude, and lifestyle. Classism is a relatively new term coined in the twentieth century and rarely defined since. Barone (1998:7), a professor of economics at Dickinson College in the US, attempts to define it as “the systematic oppression of one group by another based on economic distinctions, or more accurately one’s position within the system of production and distribution” and quotes Bowles and Gintis from their book *Democracy and Capitalism*: at the institutional level of classism, “structure allows socially consequential power to be employed against the wills and efforts of those affected thereby.” Fernandez, a theologian from United Theological Seminary in the US, takes the approach of theological anthropology in his study of classism. He writes that:

The heart of classism is commonly defined in political and economic terms, but it also takes on other dimensions such as social status, attitude, and lifestyle. Classism is a societal institution that creates and perpetuates economic exploitation, political

domination, social stratification, and differential treatment. It has to do with unearned privileges of certain groups, alienation of labourers from the fruits of their labour, unequal access to resources and accumulation of the wealth by the few, marginalization, elitist lifestyle, powerlessness, colonization, cynicism and fatalism, and other class injuries (Fernandez, 2004:75).

Although classism happens in virtually all modern societies, especially those under the capitalist system, Fernandez argues against the ideological legitimation of class stratification as a divine arrangement or the will of God. He insists that “it (classism) is not a divine arrangement, nor ordained by God, and it does not serve the purposes of God under the condition of human alienation. Instead, class stratification is a violation of God’s intention for the whole of creation” (Fernandez, 2004:91). Under the free market theory of capitalism, the market is the medium for free exchanges of commodities, products of human labour, money, and capital in a capitalistic system in the defence of efficiency, productivity, and prosperity. This is what Adam Smith describes as the ‘invisible hand’ of the market. It takes the function of a god to govern the laws, competition, and supply and demand of the market. Smith realizes that each one in the market would seek his or her own self-interest but argues that “by pursuing his own interest, he frequently promotes that of society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it” (Smith, 1937:423).

Friedman, a Nobel Prize laureate of economics, is a strong advocate and modern exponent of a market-driven economy. He recognizes that the prices that emerge from voluntary transactions between buyers and sellers in a free market could coordinate the activity of millions of people, each seeking his or her own interest, to make everyone better off (Friedman, 1990:13). This freedom in exchange can bring about coordination without coercion. What Friedman stresses is the political or governmental power as a threat to freedom:

The fundamental threat to freedom is power to coerce, be it in the hands of a monarch, a dictator, an oligarchy, or a momentary majority. The preservation of freedom requires the elimination of such concentration of power to the fullest possible extent and the dispersal and distribution whatever power cannot be eliminated – a system of checks and balances. By removing the organization of economic activity from the control of political authority, the market eliminates this source of coercive power (Friedman, 1962:15).

He tends to undermine the economic and social power that may cause imbalances as well in our economic activities by those who have the authority and power to dominate in the distribution of resources and division of labour. Friedman (1990:27) defends his

concept of self-interest; it is not myopic selfishness but the interests that attract participants whatever they value and whatever goals they pursue, like the scientist seeking to advance the frontiers of his or her discipline, the missionary seeking to convert infidels to the true faith, and the philanthropist seeking to bring comfort to the needy. However, not everyone is a scientist, missionary, or philanthropist and humans are not perfect and can be wrong. He even challenges the concept of corporate ‘social responsibility’ as a misconception and affirms his belief that “there is one and only one social responsibility of business – to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the games, which is to say, engage in open and free competition, without deception or fraud” (Friedman, 1962:133). He concludes by quoting Smith: “By pursuing his own interest, he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good” (Friedman, 1962:133).

Both Smith and Friedman, however, do not realize that self-interest does not provide a basis for empathy for others; it leads one to see others in only utilitarian terms. Self-interest can easily devolve into captivity to desires that fail to be directed to any good outside of oneself. The result of self-interest would thus shape the human urge for dominance and control and cause inequalities in the creation and distribution of wealth and resources (Poling, 2002:87). Therefore, the ‘invisible hand’ does not dictate all the values of human beings and the rules of the market. The welfare of the whole society is not guided solely by this ‘invisible hand’ but is promoted strongly by the self-interest of one’s egoism together with whatever power one has. Fernandez points out that “the appeal to the ‘invisible hand’ hides the fact that economy is not independent from politics (power); it mystifies the question of politics and the market” (Fernandez, 2004:79). He concludes that “since the objects of devotion in the total market are human creations and, more specifically, alienated and reified products of human labour, they are metamorphosed into idols” (Fernandez, 2004:79). It is morally wrong to worship the system of the free exchange of goods and services into the formation of social class and subjugate human life to ‘fetishism of commodities’ (Fernandez, 2004:79).

Living in the bottom and marginalized social class is not necessarily the consequence of one’s own fault for not earning reward and merit from the economic distribution system, nor is it to be seen as a misfortune due to fate. It is, as explained above, not the intention

of God to create fragmentation among human beings. Classism is a structured system of inequality instituted by human self-interest with economic and political power. Barone (1998:11) states that “capitalism has been structured on the basis of classes” and “the three key economic institutions that generate classes are: private ownership; the hierarchical organization of capitalist factories and offices; and the capitalist division of labour.” These three institutions create a class-based system of domination and subordination between owners and non-owners, managers and non-managers, and professionals and non-professionals. Those who are not in the dominant position and lack the power to negotiate are denied their share of the better jobs, resources, and incomes. Pascale (2007:81) also explains what factors constitute class, based on three different theories: Marx’s working class concept, Weber’s description of social and economic stratification, and Dahrendorf’s analysis of the distribution of power and authority. Pascale shares a common theory of class formation with Barrington Moore’s empirical study of authority, the division of labour, and the distribution of goods and services.

Marx formulated his understanding of capitalism toward the development, definition, and function of primary and secondary job categories within hierarchies between bourgeoisie and proletarian. Marx’s study in the division of labour was directed primarily to the exploitation of workers and to class conflict. The relationship between the owner-capitalists and the wage-labourers became class antagonism under the revolutionary production and division of labour settings. The working class must increase proportionate capital from their labour to the bourgeoisie’s capital and, as such, in Marx’s own words:

... must sell themselves piecemeal, (as a commodity) like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market. Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labour, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and, consequently, all charm for the work-man (Marx, 1969:18).

Under the development of that modern industry, masses of labourers are placed under the command of a hierarchical order. Marx (1969:18) writes that “not only are they slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois state; they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the overlooker, and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself.”

Separately, Weber (1969:25) developed a detailed description of class stratification, such that owners of goods in the form of consumption (wealth and properties) were at an advantage over the owners of production (working class) in the overall distribution of goods and services. He, therefore, states that “classes, status groups, and parties are phenomena of the distribution of power within a community” (Weber, 1969:25). This class system is represented by economic possession of goods or skill and property that may yield income or return for its owner. This segregation grows into a ‘caste’ from a mere ‘ethnic’ or ‘race’ differentiation about social dominance and subordination. Finally, Pascale (2007:81) summarizes Dahrendorf’s analysis that the complex meanings of the distribution of power and authority resulting in the manipulation and exploitation are attached to work, wealth, consumer goods, and other commodified cultural forms.

Despite arguments insisting that racism and sexism are distinct forms of discrimination and should be classified independently from classism, people suffering from race hatred and gender inferiority are not totally disassociated from other social relations, especially the sphere of production and division of labour in our commercialized society. Brittan and Maynard write,

Class divisions are accentuated for women and ethnic groups because gender and ‘race’ merely emphasize the impact on them of disadvantages experienced by the working class as a whole ... These additives compound working class females and ‘Blacks’ occupational inequality, making them a particularly disadvantaged sector of this class (Brittan and Maynard, 1984:36).

In the earlier analysis of the ‘melting pot’ theory, the submergence of racial diversity to create a homogeneous society cannot totally eliminate the social inequality problems of racism, sexism, and classism. Brittan and Maynard cite the finding of O.C. Cox in his *Caste, Class and Race* that “racial prejudice is a product of modern times and its origins causally linked to the development of the capitalist mode of production. Racism as an ideology was formulated as a justification for the exploitation of labour power and was, therefore, a direct product of the bourgeoisie” (Cox, 1970:393; Brittan and Maynard, 1984:39). Racism is, therefore, one part of the class conflict making ‘black and coloured’ an expression synonymous with inferiority.

Women’s oppression can be defined “in terms of their position in the productive process”, “in terms of the absence of private property and the corresponding demise of capitalism” and “their exploitation through the wage labour system” as well as “their relations with the capitalist patriarchy of a male dominant society” (Brittan and

Maynard, 1984:51, 58). Racism and sexism are not totally distinct from classism but are produced as a part of classism in our class-based economic system. Taylor (2004:67) calls this ‘the merger thesis’; he writes that “one traverses the social world as a person of a certain race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and class (and more), not just as a person of a certain race.”

Race and gender are generally incorporated into class analysis either as ‘added on’ or ‘fitted into’ the conventional class division because they share the senses of inequality, disadvantage, and subordination within the stratification of the society. Brittan and Maynard (1984:69) think it is unacceptable to take an ‘additive’ approach “because of the implication that gender and race simply increase the degree of oppression which is involved, with no understanding that they qualitatively change the nature of that oppression.” We must understand that race or gender is in itself not simply an expression of racism or sexism. Only when race or gender marks relations of privilege, exploitation, and subordination, in turn, a sense of identity, community, and history, we repeat the problems of racism or sexism by reifying the race or gender difference. People who suffer from race hatred or gender inferiority usually cannot be bought off by improved economic circumstances. They will feel more strongly and increase bitterness about the discrimination as improvements in their economic situation, educational attainments, and level of social achievement all rise (Brown, 1970:73). The terms racism and sexism are frequently used without definition by both scholars and researchers. Indeed, the terms may have such widespread usage that most people assume and generally agree on their meaning. The definitions of both terms are seldom found in research literature. Reid (1994:94) adopts the definition of racism found in the 1975 edition of *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*: “A belief that race is a primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.” Reid (1994:94) does not, however, provide a full definition of sexism but only briefly states that it is “prejudice or discrimination against women” with separate analysis. On the other hand, a Catholic ethicist, Sister Farley, gives a comprehensive definition of sexism in the *New Catholic Encyclopaedia Supplement*:

Sexism refers primarily to the belief that persons are superior or inferior to one another on the basis of their sex. It includes, however, attitudes, value systems, and social patterns which express or support this belief. It is a contemporarily coined term, rising out of the women’s movement, and not ordinarily used neutrally in its application to men or women. Rather, it indicates almost always the belief that it is men who are superior and women who are inferior because of their sex (Farley, 1979:604).

Both racism and sexism are often treated as in a similar category of ideological process, since they both refer to ‘natural’ and ‘biological’ differences (Brittan and Maynard, 1984:6). The human biological difference or ‘human variation’ is perceived as a typological bias that “lumps people into putatively distinct categories on the basis of physiological traits that vary continuously” (Taylor, 2004:49). It simply transposes the idea of natural and inherent inferiority into the sphere of human nature and social and cultural behaviour on the basis of colour and gender, to illuminate inter-group and interpersonal differences. This so-called “biologized” view of social life creates behavioural traits in dominance hierarchies among humans (Taylor, 2004:49). Epstein (1988:60) indicates that many sociobiologists of the (E.O.) Wilson school have been committed to “a model of inequity as a product of the natural order; they argue that male domination (patriarchy) is the most adaptive form of society” and exists in “a wide variety of social forms and much variation between the sexes and among individuals, groups, and races.” The Wilson school believes that “men and women are motivated differently in their reproductive strategies” and that we should recognize “their different placement in the division of labour in the social hierarchy” (Epstein, 1988:47). Epstein (1988:51) shows that humans are enormously malleable and subject to social conditioning, and resists the Wilson school’s simplistic biological explanations and models of ‘man’ (and ‘race’) that indicate an evolutionary and genetic basis for the hierarchy. Brittan and Maynard (1984:14) also argue that there is no way that we can point to a particular racist or sexist act and say of it, that it is a manifestation of a predisposing genetic trait. Sex is a matter of physiology, having to do with the roles of reproductive and nurturing processes. This is, however, not the single determination for all the social roles and locations of women. Similarly, the colour of one’s skin does not dictate a person’s thinking, capability, and decision making. Biology alone cannot really explain and justify oppression.

The study of gender and race ideals tends to distinguish between dominant or hegemonic conceptions and oppositional or marginal conceptions. The systematic domination for whites and men and the correlation of subordination for people of colour and women indicate a class-related racist and sexist stratification. Being non-white consistently correlates pretty well with being poor, poorly educated, or unemployed. And women are considered passive, dependent, and always under the protection of men. People of colour and women are usually excluded from desirable jobs and positions in a

capitalist economy. Exclusion happens because their sex or race becomes the focus of attention rather than their work status and the talents and competence they bring to it (Epstein, 1988:155). Women and coloured people are mostly put at the bottom of all occupational strata and the division of labour no matter how high the academic level they have earned or how talented they are. In addition, they are also excluded from certain housing, education, and health care services in terms of allocation of resources or the distribution of goods and services. This subordination of coloured people and women is a critical component in the organization of modern society and is a primary determinant of people's position in the social structure. The class-related racist and sexist stratification is transmitted through 'socialization' from internal belief to reproduction of power relations within the social structure (Brittan and Maynard, 1984:99). Epstein (1988:101) describes this as the 'sex typing' which "is an important determinant in the acquisition of social roles and statuses." By the same token, the 'race typing' is the deciding and devaluating factor in assigning certain designations, traditions, and ideologies toward different races based on social bias and stereotyping. The power retained by whites and men with the identity of race supremacy and masculinity would place them in the dominant upper class and advantaged positions and in the form of patriarchy. The practice of oppression or exploitation through exclusion and inequality on race and sex can constitute a form of power which women and coloured people do not have. Niebuhr (1996:67) describes these people in power: "They cannot resist the temptations of power any more than the older oligarchies of history. But they differ from previous oligarchies in that their injustices are more immediately destructive of the very basis of their society than the injustices of a less dynamic age." Oppression or injustice in our modern day implies power used against the powerless. This powerful oppression is already embedded in unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols, in collective consequences that refer to vast and deep injustices that are suffered by such groups as women, people of colour, and the poor. The systemic inequalities not only limit but consistently deny women and people of colour the upward movement and better future and push them into chronic poverty.

The connections between modern capitalism and race as well as gender are truly intertwined with the global system of political economy that helps to establish a ground of enslavement of 'Third World' people, mostly the people of colour and/or women, on a profoundly exploitative and unjust basis (Taylor, 2004:23). This involves legitimate transatlantic or cross-border labour trade (for example, the importation of low wage

labourers to work in the fields in North America and Europe) as well as illegitimate human trafficking of sex slaves and prostitutes and illegal alien workers. Fernandez (2004:139) explains how the industrialized countries deal with the transition to a global industrial economy: “while continuing to exploit the economically and racially marginalized, industrialized countries encouraged massive immigration to provide competitive wage labour” and, on the other hand, “jobs are moving from the industrialized North to the struggling South as trans-national corporations seek a ‘favourable investment climate.’” By doing this, multinational corporations enjoy fat tax breaks, low wages, no insurance and social benefits for the ‘Third World’ workers with no labour unions and less governmental regulation regarding environmental safety. Ireland (2010) quotes CdeBaca’s presentation to the Harvard Kennedy School’s John F. Kennedy Jr. forum in 2010: “Worldwide, there are more than 12 million people who exist in some form of slavery; part of a shadow economy that turns a US\$32 billion annual profit for traffickers. About a tenth of those are in what experts call ‘commercial sex servitude.’” Racial and sexual discrimination is no longer a localized problem for a particular nation or country but has become a global issue and business. The people subject to this discrimination are not only exploited by the capitalists but also violated by the human traffickers.

Libertarianism and Egalitarianism have received tremendous support in the last 50 years, primarily from academics and liberal politicians. These theories have resulted in movements for women’s liberation, the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr. in the United States in the 1960s, and the abolition of the apartheid and segregation policies orchestrated jointly by Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk in South Africa in 1990-1996. There are no doubt positive movements in attitude and behaviour toward ending the prejudice and discrimination against people of colour and women in recent years. On the other hand, scholars in social science, Dovidio and Gaertner (1986:9), find that “a significant amount of bias still exists even after a 40-year trend toward egalitarianism” and McConahay confirms the principal tenets of modern racism as follows:

- (1) Discrimination is a thing of the past because blacks now have the freedom to compete in the marketplace and to enjoy those things they can afford.
- (2) Blacks are pushing too hard, too fast and into places where they are not wanted.
- (3) These tactics and demands are unfair.
- (4) Therefore, recent gains are undeserved and the prestige granting institutions of society are giving blacks more attention and the concomitant status than they deserve (McConahay, 1986:92-93).

The ideology of modern racism and sexism does not define the beliefs and attitudes as racist and sexist, and it is true that the pressures for new, less reactive items will continue because of the changed value attached to racism and sexism. There is certainly a shift in the ideology in the direction of less prejudice, but the negative feelings among the dominant whites and patriarchal males are still there to some extent. The dominant whites and patriarchal males believe white men have had to pay for the success of blacks and women. These whites and males will behave as if they are not prejudiced and maintain their interests in a form of 'symbolic racism' or 'sophisticated prejudice' in hiring preferences, interpersonal distance perception, voting preferences, and jury decisions (McConahay, 1986:94, 97, 123). In a word, the discrimination of race and gender, and to the extent of social class, still exists, and the basic inequalities remain, but only in a 'subtle' or 'covert' application. Dovidio and Gaertner conclude that:

White America, although generally complying with a non-bigoted ideology, has not truly internalized feelings and beliefs commensurate with their espoused attitudes. Because the old-fashioned form of racism, the type that is typically tapped by opinion polls, is evolving into more subtle, more rationalisable, and less overtly negative forms, many whites appear (and may actually believe that they are) non-prejudiced and non-discriminatory (Dovidio and Gaertner, 1986:316).

To summarize what we have found regarding the essential characteristics of injustices pertaining to classism, racism, and sexism:

- (1) Identity is the first and foremost prejudice and discrimination of a class oppression based on inherent biological nature, education, property ownership or capital, occupation and position, life style, the race one belongs to, and one's gender. This is the typical classist stereotype that regards the oppressed person or group to be inferior, less talented, and not worth as much as the upper or elite class (Barone, 1998:15). The overt behaviour would further distance, avoid, and exclude the lower and working class from upward movements and from obtaining privileges within the capitalist society because the working class people are perceived to be incompetent or even stupid, lazy, and uncivilized. The systematic economic exploitation and oppression of the working class is thus rooted and enforced in a cultural belief and ideology that regards this structure as just and fair.
- (2) Classism causes a sense of inferiority to lower class people. Fernandez (2004:88) writes that "it is devastating and traumatic for a person, especially

at a growing age, to experience discrimination because of one's class position in the community." There is a feeling of contempt and inferiority about their failure in striving to move up the social ladder when they have been rejected or denied the opportunity for such upward movement. This self-contempt or self-accusation "may include blaming oneself for the failure by being weak, stupid, lazy, or in lacking good character" (Fernandez, 2004:88). They accept this down-graded human value, this social construction of reality, as the natural state of their being and come to terms with the *status quo* of social inequality.

- (3) Classism breeds powerlessness among the working class whether they are women, coloured people, or simply poor. Because of their frequent failure and betrayal of their dreams of a better life, they are unable to generate the power or authority to sustain rights, opportunities, rewards, and privileges from the dominant group, that is, owners, managers, and government. Fernandez (2004:89) notes that "they often express their willingness to volunteer their labour and time, but relegate the planning and decisions to the so-called educated and the wealthy." The system of classification itself is a system of power to distinguish and interpret the hierarchical ranking of importance in each category. The daily practice would express the relationship of a historical and current status in a particular situation as well as in the multiple contexts of social and political systems and the working environment, as stated above, between managers and workers. The working class virtually lose their voice, influence, and power in all aspects of their life and may reach, as Fernandez (2004:89) puts it, the level of 'fatalism' which is the death of hope and the subversion of the future.

Classism, racism, and sexism are systems of oppression and products of human creation. These systems are conceptualized and then presented through a combination of human attitudes (prejudice), behaviours (discrimination), public policies, social structures, and ideologies, developing into an institutionalized collective power in an undifferentiated hierarchy of social, political, and economic inequality. Humans, on the one hand, falsely assert their significance in terms of racial, sexual, and social class identity, and, on the other hand, stubbornly deny their common humanity in creation and their belief that all humans are made in God's image. Humans, whether men or

women, white or black, upper or lower class, are all created equal with intrinsic worth and inherent dignity. Smith (1981:122), quoting Martin Luther King, resolves that “segregation, the social expression of racism, was a denial of the intrinsic worth and inherent dignity imparted to all human personality by God ... Innate worth is shared equally by all ... There is no graded scale of essential worth, no divine right of one race over another.” The Word of God in Paul’s letter to the Colossians reveals in the image of its Creator that “here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all” (Col. 3:11, NIV).

On the contrary, humans deconstruct the divine arrangement but construct the class stratification on the basis of race and gender as well as material worth to defeat the purpose of God by creating the condition of human alienation. Human beings are not in solidarity but continuously against one another and, more importantly, against God in sin. The subject of ‘isms’ is thus constructed on the basis of human sin and out of the debris of human sinful nature and profound alienation.

2.2 SINS THAT MATTER

2.2.1 Introduction

‘This is an unjust world’ is a phrase frequently quoted by Christian and secular writers (Lebacqz, 2007; Shklar, 1990). We are born into the world which is not morally neutral but a place filled with injustices originating from pride, concupiscence, aggression, and violence. Human injustice is not simply a harsh way of life in this world. It is a wilful aggression deeply embodied in our structure, institution, and system through sinful acts and attitudes of the privileged people who confront and do damage against groups of people suffering from various forms of oppression, exploitation and injustice. The roots of these human crises stem from the universal sinfulness of humans, often expressed in corporate forms. Human injustice is evil, sinful, and destructive to our world. Sin is a theological term denoting a violation of the relation between humanity and God and a violation against God because humans ‘miss the mark’ and commands of God. Thus, they are sinners in the sight of God. God’s cultural mandate to humanity in the creation account is a responsibility to keep the world in good order and harmony. There is no

question whether we should be our brother's keeper or not; our duty is to follow the divine command.

Humans are sinners and live in a sinful world. Though humans have the essence of free self-determination or will-to-power, we are not self-sufficient to attain a harmonious relation of obedience to the divine centre and source of life. Instead, we contradict ourselves, as Niebuhr (1996:16, 17) describes, on account of the infection of sinful rebellion in our defective and distorted essence, and wrongly use our freedom. We are inescapably and ultimately responsible for our sin, but no sin's impact is ever private and solely individual. It always has a social effect no matter whether it is committed by a sinful person in explicit action or in the attitude of the mind and heart. Niebuhr (1996:179) distinguishes sin in both religious and moral terms: "The religious dimension of sin is man's rebellion against God, his effort to usurp the place of God. The moral and social dimension of sin is injustice." Injustice is a disturbance of the harmony of creation as all human life is involved in the sin of seeking security at the expense of other life. Niebuhr also points out the tragic discrepancy between the personal and social dimensions of moral behaviour and thus writes:

A realistic analysis of the problems of human society reveals a constant and seemingly irreconcilable conflict between the needs of society and the imperatives of a sensitive conscience. This conflict, which could be most briefly defined as the conflict between ethics and politics, is made inevitable by the double focus of the moral life. One focus is in the inner life of the individual, and the other in the necessities of man's social life. From the perspective of society the highest moral ideal is justice. From the perspective of the individual the highest ideal is unselfishness (Niebuhr, 1960:257).

These two moral perspectives for individual and society are not mutually exclusive. They work closely hand-in-hand in every walk of our daily life as individuals and as groups of individuals. Both the individual (the human) and the collective (the 'world') are sinful. Their weakness and incapability of achieving moral needs and imperatives in ordinary relations between individuals and in the life of social groups beget larger and more complex problems. Sins and moral failures are much more complex than can be simply accounted for by an individual or any collection of individuals. The following study reviews the structural relations between personal sin and social sin and identifies the impacts and problems leading to systemic evils of our world. This will be followed by an analysis of certain radical sins that contribute to these systemic evils.

2.2.2 ‘Structures of Sin’: Social Sin and Personal Sin

The Word of God speaks of injustice with reference to group or collective sin in Isaiah: “Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow” (Isaiah 1:16-17, NIV).

God specifies particularly the ‘city’ in 1:21: “See how the faithful city has become a harlot! She once was full of justice; righteousness used to dwell in her, but now murderers!” (Isaiah 1:21, NIV). The course of action that God prescribes is expressed in redemptive and evangelistic terms in 1:18: “‘Come now, let us reason together,’ says the Lord. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool’” (Isaiah 1:18, NIV).

The apodictic law of command in the Old Testament makes individuals all culpable for their own sins. The book of Deuteronomy clarifies: “Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin” (Deut. 24:16). However, God clearly points out in the book of Isaiah that the oppressive conditions are the results of the evil deeds of the people in the city, and He holds the whole society responsible. It is important for us to understand what the social aspects of sin are, how their ubiquitous nature would impact our society and result in systemic evils, as well as what the relationships between personal and social sin are. In the Old Testament thought, there is a sense of solidarity, as Israel was a people of a divine covenant which was fundamental at all historical stages. Forster elaborates this thought by quoting Eichrodt’s *Theology of the Old Testament* (Volume II): “In interplay with the solidarity thinking we find a living individuality which, as distinct from individualism, is to be understood as the capacity for personal responsibility... This stands ... in fruitful tension with the duty of solidarity” (Eichrodt, 1967:232; Forster, 1978:8). He continues to explain that “an individual’s relation to God is always as part of his community even though there are times when entry into that community is by conversion as much as by birth” (Forster, 1978:8). Though the concept of social sin is not labelled in the OT, the characteristics of its injustices are recognized throughout and divine commands are always given to reduce it.

The ‘world’ (*kosmos*) is in every teaching about evil in the New Testament, giving it a status apart from and independent of any individual human will and a subsistence of its own, an organized or structured basis. It may also refer to the entire population of the human race on the earth. Particularly in the writings of John and Paul, it is “a virtual spiritual force, the antithesis, as it was, of the Kingdom of God” (Erickson, 1998:660). It is not that world created by God in the beginning but a state of the world that represents a countered force, a power and order against the Kingdom of God that controls, as stated in Ephesians 2:2, the life and ways of the unbeliever and the disobedient. Believers are exhorted to separate from the evil attitudes and practices of the world and not to be polluted by the world (Jas. 1:27). That does not mean that all believers should avoid the world totally. Erickson rightfully points out that “The believer is not merely to avoid the world, however. That would be largely a negative and defeatist approach” (Erickson, 1998:663). Instead, “let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16, NIV). It is also clear that Christian faith will overcome the world: “For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4, NIV).

The concept of social sin began to appear initially at the turn of the 20th century in relation to questions of poverty, injustice, war, and peace. Rauschenbusch was one of the leading exponents at the time to introduce the liberal social ideal of Christianity by transforming the structure of society (Erickson, 1998:332). His liberal position virtually obliterated a ‘Christianized’ movement of the world without human conversion which was vigorously rejected by conservative Christians. Social sin was not actively articulated and addressed until the 1960s, after Vatican II, as a modern Roman Catholic social teaching on the weakness that undercut each tradition’s ability to motivate and sustain effective work for justice in our society. On the other hand, a ‘neo-evangelical’ movement in the United States was also launched around the mid 1900s among evangelicals to stress the social relevance of the Gospel and the divine calling of social responsibility for Christians to exercise their priesthood duties on earth. Catholic social teaching has since increasingly connected its robust Christian understanding and praxis of common good guided by a ‘preferential option for the poor’ initiative to engage in gospel-inspired struggles for justice (Hinze, 2009:443). It has explicitly incorporated sin as a social evil. Catholic writer, Kerans, wrote his classic book *Sinful Social Structures*, which has become a reference for contemporary study of social sin. In this book, Kerans

(1974:79) does not provide a clear definition of social sin but, instead, he elaborates the characteristics of a social structure: “It can be sinful in its source: a social structure emerges as people act out a decision which is biased, narrow and destructive. It can be sinful in its consequences: others confronted with a situation so structured are provoked to react defensively and so to reinforce the destructive characteristics of the situation.” A social structure can be sinful in both its source and consequence for the people within. O’Keefe (1990:29), another Catholic writer, finds the definition of ‘social sin’ by quoting Henriot: “‘Social sin’ refers to: (1) structures that oppress human beings, violate human dignity, stifle freedom, and impose gross inequality; (2) situations that promote and facilitate individual acts of selfishness; and (3) the complicity or silent acquiescence of persons who do not take responsibility for the evil being done.” This definition covers sin within structures and situations not only in active or explicit mode but also passive inaction. The scope of social sin extends from active participants to include onlookers as well.

Pope John Paul II considers four different meanings of ‘social sin’ in his *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (1984) as summarized by Hinze:

- (1) Social sin connotes the innumerable ripple effects of every individual sin that occurs ‘by virtue of human solidarity which is as mysterious and intangible as it is real and concrete.’
- (2) Sin is social insofar as it entails the direct mistreatment of others, in opposition to Jesus’ command to neighbour love. Here, social sin applies to ‘every sin against justice in interpersonal relationships, committed by the individual against the community or by the community against the individual.’ Acts or policies that contravene the rights, dignity, or proper freedom of persons are socially sinful in this sense; as are sins of omission or commission ‘against the common good’ by leaders, citizens, workers or family members.
- (3) Social sin may refer to unjust relationships between groups and communities. These situations involve collective dynamics which, when entrenched, are often experienced as anonymous forces.
- (4) A final interpretation completely divorces sinful social structures from participants’ decisions or intentions, blaming institutions or systems, not individuals, for social evils. This is an understanding of social sin that Catholic teaching firmly rejects. (Hinze, 2009:444-445).

This comprehensive meaning of social sin points to ‘a communion of sin’ which comprises unjust acts of commission or omission against the common good of neighbours under the negative social dynamic forces. It is the result of the accumulation and concentration of many personal sins.

O’Keefe (1990:42-56) uses a sociological-theological approach to interpret the development of social structures and the understanding of human injustice as the violation of a relationship with God. He starts with the basic presupposition that “human existence is uniquely personal and social and is inextricably bound up in social, economic, political, and cultural structures.” Human sin becomes embodied in social structure that continues in history from one generation to the next. He then describes how social institutions and structures are formed in three ‘moments’ (O’Keefe, 1990:43-44): externalization (society is a human product); objectivation (society is an objective reality); and internalization (man is a social product). Externalization describes the process by which persons make society—all social structures and institutions are built up over time by human decision, action, and cooperation. Once the pattern of human value from conscious decision is embodied, the structure continues over time and no longer involves conscious human approval. This is the moment in line with what Pope John Paul II refers to in his points (1) and (2) above, on direct personal sin and mistreatment. This patterned structure from original human conscious decision over time becomes relatively independent of any choosing and cooperation of human agents and is called objectivation. It may also be viewed as if this patterned structure was something other than human product, often experienced as an anonymous force as in Pope John Paul II’s point (3). While people are born into societal structures which pre-exist them, people, without their awareness, would adopt certain actions and carry out certain relationships within the shape of that particular structure. O’Keefe (1990:50) confirms that “in large measure persons learn their attitudes, values and views of reality from the societal structures in which they are born. What has become objectified becomes internalized, that is, as a child is socialized through the process of informal and formal education and training, he or she internalizes the value-relationships which are the foundation for the structures and institutions of society.” This internalization moment, however, does not excuse humans for their wilful participation in the sinful social structure. We will examine further on individual’s responsibility, liability and culpability for social sin later in this chapter.

The paradigm of personal sin probably still is pre-eminent in most people’s minds, especially evangelicals and conservative Christians, who may be uneasy with the label ‘social sin’. It is certain that an understanding of social sin must not ignore personal freedom and responsibility. On the other hand, neglect of the social analysis would ‘let society off the hook’ and draw upon a false understanding of human life (O’Keefe,

1990:22). Kerans' study has clearly confirmed the possibility of sinful social structures, and O'Keefe's 'objectivation moment' has indicated the objective reality of the society. O'Keefe (1990:22) makes the point that social sin has in fact taken on a virtually independent existence in the social world and has then become unavoidably part of the individual's experience of sin. It is a social phenomenon that humans enter into, or 'are situated' in, the 'sin of the world'. This social phenomenon is not simply to be equated to 'original sin' or sinful nature. It should be understood as sin that is manifested both internally and externally as structures and situations and as complicity or acquiescence (O'Keefe, 1990:30). The systems of classism, racism, and sexism are not only embedded in our institutions, structures, and systems, but are actually doing their destructive work of injustice and oppression to the subjects of a collective mass. Baum, as quoted by O'Keefe, distinguishes four levels of social sin:

First is the level of the injustices and dehumanizing trends built into various institutions - social, political, economic, and religious - which embody people's collective life.

Second is the level of the cultural and religious symbols, operative in the imagination and fostered by society that legitimate and reinforce the unjust situations and intensify the harm done to people. These symbolic systems Baum identifies as 'ideologies.'

Third is the level of the false consciousness created by these institutions and ideologies through which people involve themselves collectively in destructive action. The false consciousness convinces them that their actions are in fact good. Conversion, as a recovery from the blindness caused by false consciousness, occurs primarily at this level.

Fourth is the level of the collective decisions, generated by the distorted consciousness, which increases the injustices in society and intensifies the power of dehumanizing trends (O'Keefe, 1990:30).

Theoretically we can trace the development of a sinful structure from an externalization moment to the sinful choices of an individual or group. The initial sinful choice of the individual or the group, through the course of history, has become patterned as an embodied external structure and built subtly in the attitudes and perspectives of the generation in the society. In other words, the personal sin has been embodied in structures, in institutions, and in systems. Members involved in the structure, or the institution, or the system may contribute to sin implicitly and continue the situation but with false consciousness, or no real awareness, or no sense of the conviction in which they participate. This ignorance should not be used too quickly to excuse persons who are unaware of injustices even though they are surrounded by the poor and the oppressed (O'Keefe, 1990:70). While Baum calls this situation the 'blindness' of false consciousness, Kerans (1974:68) terms it 'knowingly ignorant', meaning "a person

knowingly choosing to remain ignorant or cherishing illusions.” In two passages in the Bible, Acts 3:17: “Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders” and 1 Peter 1:14: “As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance”, it seems that ignorance is innocent in the sight of God. Yet Peter’s immediate appeal to repent (Acts 1:19) and to be holy (1 Peter 1:15) would suggest responsibility for ignorance as an act of sin.

In an article entitled ‘Social Sin and the Role of the Individual,’ Himes (1986:188) clarifies the role of the individual in social sin in terms of responsibility, liability and culpability and also answers, as quoted by Forster, the uneasiness and concerns of evangelicals in “reducing the responsibility and value of individuals” (Forster, 1978:4) and “the unawareness of the sinfulness of a group of which we are part” (Erickson, 1998:659). Himes designates social sin as “inherited sin” which is formed through the process of socialization. He writes: “Socialization in a world that is made up of unjust structures affects all human consciousness and leads to false consciousness as people adopt ideologies supportive of the unjust system” (Himes, 1986:192). In clarifying the terminology, he points out that responsibility is a term for the cause of an event and culpability is used primarily in the evaluative sense of being blameworthy (Himes, 1986:189). If responsibility comes with the role and duty to fulfil some expectation, and if failure would be blameworthy, responsibility as ‘moral responsibility’ stands on an equal footing with culpability. Liability has a different connotation: a person may be liable for damage without being morally responsible, and is used in reference to guarantees and authorization. Himes holds an individual culpable and morally responsible for social sin on account of the following three considerations.

The first issue is ‘role acceptance,’ the decision whether a person should take on a given role in the first place. A second consideration is ‘role enactment,’ the matter of how a person fills out the role. And the third concern is the ‘role as such,’ a judgment about the nature of the role regardless of who holds it (Himes, 1986:204).

An individual may be ‘morally unacceptable’ to take on a role when he or she has the sense of moral standards and the explicit exposition of the suffering of those victimized in injustice. This role may be ‘distasteful’. He or she may be ‘morally repugnant’ for such role to exist at all. Himes summarizes that “the individual’s culpability, however curtailed, that is judged when she accepts the rules of the game, plays a particular role in the game, or performs in the role according to her talents and abilities” and then concludes that “social sin can distort our self-awareness and our moral judgment but we

cannot excuse individuals from all moral responsibility because of the power of social institutions and ideologies” (Himes, 1986:205, 208). He does not leave it just at that but asks: “Why should a person not be expected to do something to oppose a perceived injustice?” (Himes, 1986:205).

This is a good question. People may be fully aware of the injustice as a structural sin in society and may find themselves capable of making free conscious choices not to participate. Himes does not stop there but is looking for more active opposition to injustice expressed in concrete action. Unfortunately, many citizens including evangelical Christians choose a contrary position and show an extreme tendency to withdraw totally from involvement with the world. This withdrawal in itself is a sin and an injustice. Shklar calls this ‘passive injustice’ not because of “our habitual indifference to the misery of others but a far more limited and specifically civic failure to stop private and public acts of injustice” (Shklar, 1990:6). Pope John Paul II names this as ‘sins of omission’ against the common good in the second point of his four points concerning social sin. It is an obligation of citizens to be actively involved in the preventative and constructive measures to alleviate the circumstances of prevalent injustice. Otherwise, the resulting injustice may be due not only to the unjust systems but to many hands in general, who need to be reminded constantly of the possible consequences of their inaction (Shklar, 1990:6). On the other hand, improving external circumstances alone will not change the corrupt inner person, or the spirit of the society. The social dimension of sin is the composite of the sins of individuals and the culpability of social sin remains with individuals, as we concluded earlier. The emphasis is thus on the individual and his or her conversion, repentance, and redemption. Society as a social structure is not a moral agent. It cannot convert, repent, and be redeemed for its social sin. The onus is on individuals to adopt the strategy of evangelization for conversion as prescribed by God in Isaiah 1:18. Henry (1964:25) asserts that all the persons within society must be transformed in order to see hope for the social order: “Personal regeneration and redemption are inherent in its hope for the social order. It proclaims the Kingdom of God as the new order, not some secular counterpart. And ‘except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God’ (John 3:3).”

2.2.3 The Despair of Defiance

Inherent in sin is a self-deception, the denial of truth, wanting in desperation to be oneself and to be related to the infinite. The title of this section is adopted from Soren Kierkegaard's book *Provocations: Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard*. Chapter 37 describes precisely how humans desperately want to be their own master with power towards existence and all enterprises. Kierkegaard states what the despair of defiance is:

It was desperately to rule over itself, create itself, make this self what it wants it to be, and determine what it will have and what it will not have. The one who lives in defiance does not truly put on a self, nor does he see his task in his given self. No, by virtue of his own 'infinite' he constructs his own self by himself and for himself ... As it acts, there is nothing eternally firm on which it stands. Yes, the defiant self is its own master, absolutely (as one says) its own master, and yet exactly this is despair ... This is because such a self is forever building castles in the air, and just when it seems on the point of having the building finished, at a whim it can – and often does – dissolve the whole thing into nothing (Kierkegaard, 2007:139-140).

The defiant self fundamentally prefers to retain privilege, power, and earthly material needs out of malice, offending all other existence, but ends up undoing itself and objecting to the whole of its own existence. Niebuhr (1996:183) quoting Sirach 10:14 writes: "The beginning of all sin is to depart from God and not trust Him." In religious terms it is unbelief. Niebuhr (1996:183) reiterates that "That is why Christian orthodoxy has consistently defined unbelief as the root of sin, or as the sin which precedes pride." The unbelieving person lives in defiance, trying to become one's own master apart from a relationship with God. On this basis, the defiant and unbelieving self furthers the active and wilful attempt to author the sin of pride and other sensual sins (Allik, 1987:17).

People are ultimately culpable, as explained earlier, for their sinful acts which may cover over unwholesome motives and violence against others in society with a veil of goodness. Human sinful activities become both self-destructive and world-destructive. The dynamics of these human predicaments produce structures of social, political, and economic oppression or to the systemic evils of race, gender, and class discrimination. The following sections will cite three dominant sins – pride, concupiscence and prejudice – as examples of sins which effect destructive results in institutions, structures, and systems of society as well as in individuals.

Pride

While unbelief is the root of sin, pride is the basic sin or the beginning of all sins. The assumption that pride is more basic than other sins is a consequence of humanity's 'self-glorification' and 'self-love.' Niebuhr defines the sin of pride as follows:

What could begin this evil will but pride that is the beginning of all sin? And what is pride but a perverse desire of height, in forsaking Him to whom the soul ought solely to cleave, as the beginning thereof, to make the self seem the beginning ... What is pride but undue exaltation? And this is undue exaltation, when the soul abandons Him to whom it ought to cleave as its end and becomes a kind of end in itself (Niebuhr, 1996:186, 187).

Niebuhr assumes that humans are tempted primarily in their own finitude as a limit and challenge to their desire for undue exaltation and to be like God's infinitude or limitless mastery and control. In his analysis, Niebuhr (1996:188-203) distinguishes between three types of pride: pride of power, pride of knowledge and pride of virtue. He raises the third type to a form of spiritual pride as a fourth type of pride in self-glorification in its inclusive and quintessential form.

The pride of power is a desire for control, the ambition for dominance, the effort to enslave others and render the world subservient (Peters, 1994:98). This desire is based on the human ego's own assumption of 'self-sufficiency' and 'self-mastery' against all 'vicissitudes.' This form of pride is characteristic not only of individuals but also of groups and societies. It is the pretension of an individual or a group of individuals to adopt "more than ordinary degree of social power" (Niebuhr, 1996:189). When the human ego is not sufficiently secure or becomes insecure, it inclines to seek sufficient power to guarantee social class and social power at the expense of others. This pride can be seen as a form of greed, seeking wealth as a means to secure an increase of power. The self-interest of modern economic theory has tempted contemporary people to adopt as a fundamental motive the desire for material wealth and social power, setting the sin of the bourgeois culture. Those who have secure social power and wealth are not willing to forfeit their power, as Niebuhr (1996:193) describes: "The more man establishes himself in power and glory, the greater is the fear of tumbling from his eminence, or losing his treasure, or being discovered in his pretension. Poverty is a peril to the wealthy but not to the poor."

Niebuhr (1960:9) argues in another book, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, that "the disproportion of power in a complex society ... which destroyed the simple

equalitarianism and communism of the hunting and nomadic social organization, has perpetuated social injustice in every form through all the ages". Society as such is intrinsically incapable of self-sacrificial love and unable to establish the obligation of justice to others because of the hypocrisy of humanity's group behaviour. He continues: "It has always been the habit of privileged groups to deny the oppressed classes every opportunity for the cultivation of innate capacities and then to accuse them of lacking what they have been denied the right to acquire" (Niebuhr, 1960:118).

Leviticus 26:19: "I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze" (ESV, 2001).

The pride of knowledge is sometimes called 'the pride of ignorance' simply because of one's ignorance of the finiteness of the human mind. It derives "from an attempt to obscure the known conditioned character of human knowledge and the taint of self-interest in human truth" (Niebuhr, 1996:195). Claiming to be wise and superior in knowledge than others, one must be a fool. There is nothing which humanity has any right to be proud of, since a human only receives knowledge from another person or possesses only a small part of the infinite knowledge that he or she discovers but has not created. All human knowledge is, however, tainted by its own prejudice and failure to recognize its finitude. It pretends to be final and ultimate knowledge and thus makes intellectual pride something more than the mere ignorance of ignorance. The problem with the pride of knowledge is in its explicit character which takes the universalistic note in human knowledge as the basis of an imperial desire for domination over life which does not conform to it. In other circumstances that insecurity must be hidden because of the fear of another competitor or competitive group. A declaration may be made to save the life of the world but, in actual fact, the intention is to save the self from the abyss of self-contempt by destroying inferior forms of culture. Niebuhr cites an apparent example in modern society:

In the relations of majority and minority racial groups for instance, for which the negro-white relation is a convenient example, the majority group justifies the disabilities which it imposes upon the minority group on the ground that the subject group is not capable of enjoying or profiting from the privileges of culture or civilization. Yet it can never completely hide, and it sometimes frankly expresses the fear that the grant of such privileges would eliminate the inequalities of endowment which supposedly justify the inequalities of privilege (Niebuhr, 1996:198).

The pride of virtue is to establish 'my good' or 'my own perfection' as an unconditioned moral value. Niebuhr (1996:199) reveals the moral pride that is in all

‘self-righteous’ judgments in which the other is condemned because he or she fails to conform to the highly arbitrary standards of the self. When one person turns his or her own good into someone else’s duty and judges someone for the failure to perform it according to his or her standards, then his or her wish for well-being becomes something seriously in danger. This would turn self-righteousness to a pernicious pride that works evil in the human soul and that is the very vehicle of sin. Jesus does not preach humility because of good virtue. He preaches it because it is the cure for the deadly pride that makes us judge others or purge someone from our social circle.

In the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15), the younger son’s sins turn out to be less damning than the elder son’s self-righteousness. At the end, the elder son is the one who is standing outside in the dark, perfectly right and perfectly alone. Niebuhr (1996:200) concludes his reflection on the effects of self-righteousness: “The whole history of racial, national, religious and other social struggle is a commentary on the objective wickedness and social miseries which result from self-righteousness.”

Spiritual pride is Niebuhr’s fourth type of pride. It is the moral pride that turns self-righteousness explicitly into the religious sin of self-deification. When people attempt in pride to make themselves their own ground and source of truth, they cannot succeed but fall into the perversion and futility of slavery to idols of their own fabrication. This failure which is caused by pride ruins the imitation of God because it has no firm basis in truth. The person seeks to live for the sake of the self—with self-love. Pride stirs the person to take pleasure in adoring self. Pride moves to idolatry of self as one’s own wilfulness asserts itself, and images of bondage and slavery are appropriate. Niebuhr (1996:200) confirms: “It is merely a final battleground between God and man’s self-esteem. In that battle even the most pious practices may be instruments of human pride.” Not only the ungodly are caught in the sin of pride; anyone may stop seeking to praise God in order to extol oneself. Niebuhr (1996:202) points out that “the Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of all believers may result in an individual self-deification” if one is also lost in the sin of self-righteousness. The true religion and morality of Christianity must possess the attitude of submission to the external absolute authority of God based on the person’s free use of reason. We cannot really and thoroughly know the rules and standards of God except in our loyalty to the standards of our humanity. If not, Proverbs 16:18 states very clearly: “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall” (NIV, 1984). This is all the despair of defiance.

Concupiscence

Concupiscence is a term denoting sensuality which is generally described as a secondary consequence of humanity's rebellion against God. Allik attempts to summarize Karl Rahner's definition of concupiscence in three senses:

- (1) Concupiscence, in its broadest sense, means desire.
- (2) Concupiscence, in its narrower sense, encompasses everything in the person which spontaneously precedes the free decision and needs to be integrated with the free decision. This includes everything that is involuntary, passive, and unconscious, in as far as these things need to be absorbed by the free decision. In this sense, concupiscence is 'the act of the appetite in regard to a determinate good or a determinate value, in so far as this act takes shape spontaneously in the consciousness on the basis of man's natural dynamism and as such forms the necessary presupposition of man's personal free decision.'
- (3) The narrowest sense of concupiscence is defined as the spontaneous desire that precedes the free decision of the human person and resists it (Allik, 1987:21).

As humans cannot be in complete integration of the self with the free decision for God, the free decision never attains the full moral disposition of the person as a whole. As a result, concupiscence induces envy and desire – "the desire to acquire, to own, to indulge, to take pleasure, to consume" what others have (Peters, 1994:125). Niebuhr (1996:233) writes that, in concupiscence, "the self is said to have lost control over the impulses of the body while on the other hand its undue gratification of these impulses is regarded as merely a further form of self-love." The amount of wealth one possesses is irrelevant with respect to this impulse to own. The ownership of huge possessions would not diminish the love of money nor the desire to consume, not to mention those who own nothing. The poor may demand or cheat on unreasonable welfare supports and assistance while idling with no intention of looking for work. Therefore concupiscence infects the poor and the rich alike.

Peters discloses that concupiscence is a sin for both individuals and social structures:

The economic structure of the modern industrial world is fundamentally concupiscent. Capitalism depends on the production of what Karl Marx called 'surplus value,' the excess value or profit that results from the mass production of goods. Surplus value is tied to freedom – or so we have convinced ourselves. The greater our ability to control and reinvest surplus value, the more freedom we have. Marx identified the desire to gain control of the surplus of others as the primary drive between classes and between nations (Peters, 1994:128).

Consequently, concupiscence will lead well-developed countries or upper classes to extract more control over economic process for the purpose of gaining limitless surplus from the Third World as economic colonies and from the poor working classes through

economic exploitation. The human cost is poverty for the oppressed. The three senses of Rahner's interpretation of concupiscence show that concupiscence is something which is unavoidable in this life since it is the result of sin. Paul exhorts in 1 Timothy 6:9-10: "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (NIV, 1984). Concupiscence is also a despair of defiance.

Prejudice

Prejudice is an incorrect set of beliefs and a false generalization which are the grounds of an unwarranted disposition or behaviour towards others or another group. It is a judgment based on one's first-hand experience, learnt from institutions, structures, or systems around a person, and applied to the members of the other group. O'Keefe has explained, earlier in this chapter, how social sin is developed from the second moment (objectivation) to the third moment (internalization) to become a social product of an individual within that social structure or institution. Allport (1958:8) gives this definition of prejudice: "An avertive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group, and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to the group." It can also be regarded as a group process in a socially shared orientation toward a segment or category of people in the society. The net effect of this prejudice simply places the object of prejudice at a disadvantage or in a generalized category not merited by their conduct or misconduct.

Prejudice is a pattern of negative attitudes directed against individual members of a particular group, and is sustained by self-gratifying considerations. Of course, prejudice can also take the positive form of favouritism without any harm to a particular individual or group. Although this positive form of prejudice does not present any direct social problem, it still has a negative effect on those who are not being favoured. Our focus is thus rather on the negative variety than on the positive form of prejudice. It is true that the negative prejudice always tends somehow, somewhere, to express itself in action. Allport distinguishes certain degrees of negative action from the least energetic to the most:

- (1) Antilocution. Most people who have prejudices talk about them. With like-minded friends, occasionally with strangers, they may express their antagonism freely. But many people never go beyond this mild degree of antipathetic action.

- (2) Avoidance. If the prejudice is more intense, it leads the individual to avoid members of the disliked group, even perhaps at the cost of considerable inconvenience.
- (3) Discrimination. Here the prejudiced person makes detrimental distinctions of an active sort. He undertakes to exclude all members of the group in question from certain types of employment, from residential housing, political rights, educational or recreational opportunities, churches, hospitals, or from some other social privileges. Segregation is an institutionalized form of discrimination, enforced legally or by common custom.
- (4) Physical attack. Under conditions of heightened emotion prejudice may lead to acts of violence or semiviolence.
- (5) Extermination. Lynchings, pogroms, massacres, and the Hitlerian program of genocide mark the ultimate degree of violent expression of prejudice. (Allport, 1958:14-15)

Though the fifth action may not happen daily, other actions from (1) to (4) are everyday realities growing in frequency in our neighbouring societies. The victims or scapegoats of this systemic evil of prejudice are the people of colour, women, the poor and lower classes who lack the power and are at a disadvantage to strike back or fight for equality and justice.

Self-gratification is the driving force behind these implicit or explicit attitudes and actions of prejudice. Allport (1958:345-349) analyses the relationships of anxiety, insecurity, and self-esteem to prejudice and finds all correlations come down to the aggression of pride, self-respect, greed, and differential status. Anxiety is masked by an aggression of pride and self-respect to cover up one's own shame and inner feelings of weakness when dealing with the threat from another group which is perceived to be inferior to one's own. One safeguards one's superior power over other members of a particular group in order to regain a sense of courage and self-reliance (Allport, 1958:346). Insecurity occurs in connection with economic insufficiency when there is downward mobility, periods of unemployment and depression. These general economic dissatisfactions are all positively correlated with prejudice. On one hand, the apprehensive and marginal individual is vaguely terrified at any signs of ambition or progress on the part of any member of the out-group, whether or not it may constitute a realistic danger. Any such threat or danger will invoke insecurity and anger (Allport, 1958:347). On the other hand, people may grow fiercely possessive of properties and materials. This outright greed is certainly a cause of prejudice—the grabbing of surplus from the out-group (such as the Third World and the lower working class) and the justifying of it (Allport, 1958:347-348). After surviving economic worries, there is a need for status, prestige, and self-esteem. Allport (1958:348) writes: “The effort to maintain a precarious position can bring with it an almost reflex disparagement of

others.” The theme of status or self-esteem is to sell the idea that one is better than someone else.

Prejudice is to look up to oneself or one person and to look down on another. James 2:1 discloses the incompatibility of such partiality or inequality with faith in our Lord Jesus Christ: “My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favouritism.” Verses 2-4 illustrate the attitude of discrimination: looking down on the poor and looking up to the rich. James continues to show how absurd such deferential treatment of the rich is. Christians must know in the first place that God chooses as heirs of the Kingdom not the rich but those who are poor by the world’s standard. Prejudice is another despair of defiance, and relates to inability to enter the Kingdom.

In summary, individuals are all inescapably products of our societies, just as our societies are products of ourselves. This is a two-way relationship between humankind and the society, as O’Keefe’s theory of three “moments” describes: social sin develops through externalization of personal sin, and objectivation of social sin leads to internalization of personal sin. Humans are ultimately culpable for the structural sins because of our free conscious choices in the disposition of pride, concupiscence, and prejudice as sins of commission towards our neighbours. These sins of commission are destructive not only to the people living within the institutions, structures, and systems of our society, but also lead to the ruin of human life in despair.

2.3 THE INACTION OF DESPAIR: THE VIEW OF MODERN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS

2.3.1 Introduction – Sins of Omission

Are morally discerning Christians any different from non-believers who are also morally good? The basic answer is that human processes of moral discernment are no different among Christians than they are among those who are non-Christians. Nevertheless, Christian life is not simply a replacement of insufficient moral sensitivity with more sufficient. The subject matter of a Christian life is to be “able to test and approve what God’s will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2). Christians are to discern what God commands and enables them to do. It is the

Christian's obligation and responsibility to fulfil the moral question of 'what ought we to do?' If a Christian neglects the moral discourse of Jesus Christ to love his or her neighbours, is he or she still considered morally good or innocent? The best ethical practice of Christianity is to integrate biblically and theologically experiential descriptions, compelling interpretations, and concrete guidelines into explicit action to the neighbours. Ford (1990:121) discloses the most persistent problem in ethics: "Indifference, hardness of heart, apathy, moral sloth, caring less, are problematic because we live in an imperfect world. In a perfect world, indifference would not be a problem. In our world, however, indifference is never morally innocent. Until the *eschaton*, indifference remains a central, if often overlooked, aspect of the moral life."

Traditionally, whether in legal or moral systems, the consideration of human behaviour focuses on the sins of commission rather than the sins of omission. The concern is usually about the outward harmful effect or damage of wrong or bad actions, rather than of inaction or indifference. In Ford's language, indifference is inclusive of inaction, sloth, apathy, hardness of heart, and complacency in regard to prevalent evil conditions. Indifference is both an attitude and a lack of response to what has happened to others. The reason that systemic evils flourish in our society is that most of us do not care and are simply unwilling to inconvenience ourselves for the sake of change. Ford (1990:14) writes that a consideration of indifference "reveals that evil frequently occurs not because of deliberate wrong decisions, but because the process of deliberate decision-making may be pre-empted altogether." Therefore, doing nothing in situations that demand action is a deliberate decision, precisely the sin of omission.

Niebuhr (1960:78) also laments regarding his contemporaries that "to this day religious communities and churches pride themselves on their ability to transcend economic and social inequalities within the pale of their organization; but it does not follow that they will move vigorously against the social injustices in the larger society which they know to be in conflict with their religious and moral ideal." He challenges this inaction as defeatism in which the believer despairs of bringing any ethical values into the situation that demands action. The term 'escapism' is used by Kammer (1981:24-25) to describe evangelical Christians' expectation of the arrival of God's Kingdom and the personal sharing of immortality with Christ while discarding "otherworldliness" to alleviate the feeling of responsibility for changing unjust or unbearable social circumstances.

Indifference is a sin against God for what we have left undone. Not only that indifference is never morally innocent, it is, nevertheless, a sin in the eyes of God. James 4:17 states clearly: “Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins” (NIV, 1984). It is the Christian’s obligation to act well for changing injustice and oppression; if not, it is sin. In theological terms, indifference is the sin that “believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and remains alive because there is nothing for which it will die” (Ford, 1990:33).

H. Richard Niebuhr (1978:61-65) proposes an ethics of responsibility in four elements: (1) the idea of responsibility with interpretation – it is a response with interpretation to action upon us. This interpretation is not simply an affair of our conscious and rational mind but also of the deep memories that are buried within us, of feelings and intuitions that are only partly under our immediate control; (2) the idea of responsibility in answer – it is not only responsive action but responsive in accordance with our interpretation of the question to which answer is being given; (3) the idea of responsibility with accountability – it is an acceptance of the consequences in the form of reactions and an anticipation of reaction to our reaction; and (4) the idea of responsibility in social solidarity – it is the response to action in a continuing discourse or interaction among beings forming a continuing society. A Christian ethics of responsibility must start with a rigorous response of deep interpreted understanding and willing accountability to a collective good for the sake of society. Niebuhr then summarizes the norm of responsibility of the Christian life:

The idea or pattern of responsibility, then, may summarily and abstractly be defined as the idea of an agent’s action as response to an action upon him in accordance with his interpretation of the latter action and with his expectation of response to his response; and all of this is in a continuing community of agents (Niebuhr, 1978:65).

As Christians live in this world, all responses are interrelated with and to God and driven by the movement of the social process to respond and be accountable in nothing less than a universal community around them. Christian faith must, therefore, acknowledge the affirmation of responsibility: “God is acting in all actions upon you, so respond to all actions upon you as to respond to His action” (Niebuhr, 1978:126).

The question repeated by Himes (1986:205) challenges our sense of responsibility and action: “Why should a person not be expected to do something to oppose a perceived injustice?”

Christians within the evangelical movement are subject to repeated criticism by a number of Christian scholars for disengaging themselves from the public sphere and being indifferent toward social injustice. Henry (2003:30) rightly charged his contemporary fundamentalists (a branch of evangelicalism) in 1947 with the failure “to make relevant to the great moral problems in twentieth century global living the implications of its (the Bible’s) redemptive message.” Henry and others, armed with their polemics for a biblically-based contemporary worldview and social ethics, were working together to stir and awaken the hearts of evangelicals and convince them of the biblical sanctions for moral character—for an inward living as well as an outward good life. After years of scholarly work promulgating the responsibility of Christian social involvement, a joint “Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern” was signed in 1973 by 40 evangelical leaders in North America to confess to the Lord Jesus Christ the lack of fulfilment of the complete claim of God on their life, acknowledge God’s love, justice, mercy and commitment to equality of wealth and gender, and proclaim the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the biblical hope of Christ’s second coming to consummate the Kingdom (Sider, 1974:1-2). Subsequent to the Chicago Declaration, the Lausanne Covenant was signed in 1974 to promote active worldwide Christian evangelism with a specific section called ‘Christian Social Responsibility’ at the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Now, more than thirty years later, only limited success has been achieved in offsetting the evangelical community’s independence and reluctance to cooperate in a biblical commitment to social concern. McLaren expresses his disappointment, together with a slight hope:

It’s depressing to see how little effect that document has had on the sectors of the Christian community to which it was addressed. But perhaps its intention has been slowly advancing in secret, and perhaps now is the moment for the Covenant’s promise to be fulfilled. Perhaps now our diverse Christian communities in the United States and around the world – especially their younger generations – are ready to engage more deeply with God’s justice project. Perhaps momentum for change has been quietly building all these years, and now the time has come for a global, Christ-centred, cross-confessional, justice-oriented spiritual/social movement to be born (McLaren, 2009:14).

Social involvement in the form of humanitarian relief programs for the poor and hungry has been the primary targeted engagement of evangelical believers plus some participation by organizations like World Vision International in recent years. Nevertheless, Escobar and Driver remark that “the social action of the missionaries was only remedial, and that a concern for justice was not part of it” (Escobar and Driver, 1978:8). Such social action may indeed mitigate and ease some temporary pain and hunger in the distribution of goods but not the perpetual poverty due to structural evils. The evangelical church must search for and work harder towards a complete reversal of the deficiencies of social justice in order to fulfil the call for the Kingdom of God.

In view of the persistent difficulties of social involvement within the evangelical community, the following two sections will look into the reasons that hinder the evangelical responsibility to illuminate and preserve - to take on the role of light and salt in a darkening and decaying society. One section will be devoted to individualistic pietism and personal spirituality and the other to the pessimistic view of the Kingdom of God.

2.3.2 Individualistic Pietism and Personal Spirituality

Evangelical Christianity was in the mainstream of contemporary life and a leading force in social and political spheres in the Western world during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Stoeffler (1971:4) cites several examples of social involvement of the evangelicals: “The most popular early treatise in England against slavery was that of William Wilberforce, an evangelical. John Howard, the ‘father of prison reform’ was an evangelical and so were Robert Raikes and the people who promoted the early Sunday School movement, which was an institution for the poor.” Henry (1957:40) also describes an early evangelical as one who “creditably reflects a scholarly competence, a refreshing range of interest, an application of biblical Christianity to the wider problems of life and culture, and an avoidance of restrictions and negations frequently associated with fundamentalism in our times.” In the early twentieth century some evangelicals in America turned, from the previous active application of biblical messages in the wider culture, into a passive pietistic community that separated both socially and intellectually because of the threat of liberal Protestantism, humanism, and secularism. They became uncooperative with larger segments that fought social ills, and isolated themselves from the social and structural needs of the world.

Evangelicals have now defined themselves as a 'doctrinal people' with particular emphasis on certain aspects of Christian experience: spiritual rebirth, conversion, and a personal relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. They believe that 'faith' is solely a matter of private or personal experience and this faith has thus influenced the private aspect of their daily life. The doctrine of 'justification by grace through faith' declares each person's radical individuality and is in support of an individualistic pietism toward God. Kammer (1981:33) explains the individuality of the Christian experience: "Each person is now alone before God; each totally responsible for his/her own salvation. There are no mediators but Christ." The personal 'I-Thou' relationship of the believer with God is the key principle and a real dynamic of the individual faith relationship. The question is whether or not Christian faith should limit its discernment and worldview in regard to what is external and public.

There is no argument about the characteristics of evangelical Christianity in the development of the concept of the individual and personal faith. With the assertion of individual autonomy and creativity in the modern Christian West, individual uniqueness determines one's own identity, destiny, and responsibility only to self and God. The experiential element and personal feeling in encountering God is a subjective matter and an inner spiritual enjoyment of religion. This kind of piety may result in a tendency to be narrow and legalistic as well as to deny the world. Evangelicals recognize the sinful nature of humanity and that only God can save and regenerate sinners from their own sin. The sin which is referred to is exclusively individual sin rather than social evil. Without an accurate appraisal of human society, evangelicals are prevented from fully comprehending the ways in which they are influenced by society and may not be distinct from the prevailing culture. They may divide the world into the saved and the damned and find no human cultural expression identical with God's Kingdom.

The social and personal insecurity of the outer world has changed the hearts of some of the evangelicals from the expectation of the arrival of God's Kingdom on earth to one of a shared immortality with Christ. The hope of immortality is their narrow interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:50-54, which says:

I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will

be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' (NIV, 1984)

This provides, in the hearts of evangelicals, a spiritual hope of immortality that helps to retain their inner resources and strength. The mindset of the evangelical churches is to offer due worship to the true God and to look for its reward in the society of the saints, of holy angels as well as holy humanity (Kammer, 1981:27). They are now more engaged in 'doing church' – worship, leadership, discipleship, and evangelistic activities. McLaren (2009:14-15) gives an update: "Mostly we were preoccupied with the priorities of the 'church growth movement' of the 1990s. Mega-church pastors brought together through Leadership Network did many thing well, one of which was counting attendees." But he adds "We had little to say about matters of justice" (McLaren, 2009:14).

There is no doubt that the passion for a personal conversion and spiritual life is the primary task of Christianity, but this should not prevent Christians from articulating the social relevance of the Gospel. The redemptive solution is that 'all these things,' both personal and social, will be properly addressed only after first 'seeking the Kingdom of God' (Mt. 6:33). The abandonment of the social reference will only lead to a truncated Gospel. Henry professes it clearly:

While it is not the Christian's task to correct social, moral and political conditions as his primary effort apart from a redemptive setting, simply because of his opposition to evils he ought to lend his endorsement to remedial efforts in any context not specifically anti-redemptive, while at the same time decrying the lack of a redemptive solution (Henry, 2003:87).

Since the introduction of a Christian social involvement movement in the 1970s, some evangelicals have been actively engaged in finding a holistic redemptive solution for individuals in the social setting. Nevertheless, many Christians within the evangelical community today remain sheltered within their 'four walls' doing nothing but 'church.' No wonder that McLaren, as quoted earlier, is so disappointed about the limited success of the Christian social involvement movement.

Henry asked a question to more than one hundred evangelical pastors at a conference some 60 years ago:

How many of you, during the past six months, have preached a sermon devoted in large part to a condemnation of such social evils as aggressive warfare, racial hatred and

intolerance, the liquor traffic, exploitation of labour or management, or the like – a sermon containing not merely an incidental or illustrative reference, but directed mainly against such evils and proposing the framework in which you think solution is possible? (Henry, 2003:4)

There was not a single hand raised in response. If this same question is being asked again today, how many of the evangelical pastors will raise their hands in response?

2.3.3 The Pessimistic View of the Kingdom of God

The meaning of the Kingdom of God has significant implications for evangelical theology and its application to life. Moore (2004:11), the Dean of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, cites a number of Kingdom questions: “Is it future or present? Is it spiritual or material? Is it the church or the world, or neither or both? Is it to be found in evangelizing the lost or in reclaiming the culture?” These questions reflect the divergent and contradictory understandings of the Kingdom of God among Protestants and evangelicals and threaten the theological consensus among them.

Entering the twentieth century, conservative evangelicals in North America proclaimed the future Kingdom as a certainty of faith and the triumph of righteousness. They were trying to counter the postmillennial optimism of the social gospellers who envisioned the Kingdom being ushered in on earth by the human effort of believers before the return of Christ. In their protest, conservative evangelicals denounced the liberal social reform movement as futile and deceptive world changing efforts based on a non-biblical formula and therefore totally avoided engagement in socio-political concerns. This was because they held no hope for an ethical world, possessed a pessimistic view of human nature and considered world betterment impossible. This period has been known as the ‘Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy.’

This so-called Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy had provided a common ground for both premillennialists and amillennialists to form a large evangelical segment as tactical alliances against the liberal postmillennialists in order to defend an orthodox position. Despite their various views of the return of Christ, both premillennialists and amillennialists shared a degree of despair over the contemporary social order because there was no hope for the conversion of the whole world. Premillennialists and amillennialists put their focus only on eschatology – the second coming of Christ - as crucial for the introduction of a divine Kingdom. Only when Christ returns to personally

intervene and reign would His Kingdom on earth be realized. On the other hand, liberal Protestantism proclaimed the postmillennial optimism that the Kingdom was a 'Kingdom now' prior to the return of Christ. Henry (2003:22) describes the total failure on the part of conservative evangelicals in facing the global crisis: "It was the failure of Fundamentalism to work out a positive message within its own framework, and its tendency instead to take further refuge in a despairing view of world history, that cut off the pertinence of evangelicalism to the modern global crisis."

While Henry condemned the non-biblical context of the social reformation of the liberal Protestants, he made an effort to reverse the hesitancy of conservative evangelicals' social engagement in his book *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, in which he acknowledged that they could apply the biblical witness to evangelistic endeavours and certain basic doctrinal affirmations but they should not neglect the philosophical, scientific, social, and political problems that agitate our century. He did not agree with a less than complete evangelistic message nor any deletion of Jesus' 'Kingdom now' references in parabolic and earthly contexts, but confirmed that Jesus proclaimed Kingdom truth with a constant, exuberant joy while implying both that "the Kingdom is here, and that it is not here" (Henry, 2003:48). Henry's convictions, as described by Weeks (1998:93) in today's language, led to a call for a "rebirth of apostolic passion" and a "vigorous assault against social evil" in an effort to "recapture the evangelical spirit," to reverse the "abandonment of social concern," and to restore "social vision," "social sensitivity," and "social outreach" among conservative Christians including evangelicals of today.

Henry suggests a four point solution for contemporary evangelicalism:

- (1) To reawaken to the relevance of its redemptive message to the global predicament;
- (2) To stress the great evangelical agreements in a common world front;
- (3) To discard elements of its message which cut the nerve of world compassion as contradictory to the inherent genius of Christianity;
- (4) To restudy eschatological convictions for a proper perspective which will not unnecessarily dissipate evangelical strength in controversy over secondary positions, in a day when the significance of the primary insistences is international (Henry, 2003:53-54).

The goal of this thesis coincides with the thrust of Henry's solution: to restudy the concept of the Kingdom of God and the divine mandate for justice in order to construct a coherent and integrative evangelical theology for socio-political engagement. Evangelical Christians must therefore coalesce around a consensus about the central

concept and meaning of the Kingdom of God, and how the Kingdom relates to evangelical understandings of eschatology, soteriology, and ecclesiology.

Concluding Summary

This chapter highlights the reality of the systemic and structural evils of injustice in the forms of classism, racism, and sexism and the resulting poverty in virtually every corner of the world, whether in developed countries or the third world. Injustice is a wilful aggression rooted in the sinful acts of personal pride, concupiscence and prejudice, which are embodied as social sins in the structure, system and institutions of our society. With the cries for social justice in our fallen world, the contemporary evangelical Christians can only pride themselves on their ability to transcend economic and political inequalities within their faith community; they neglect to fulfil their obligation and responsibility to act according to God's good, pleasing and perfect will against the evils of social injustices in the larger society which they know to be in conflict with their religious and moral ideal (Niebuhr, 1960:78). Their indifference is a result of their over-emphasis on a personal pietistic experience in individualizing conversion and faith and their pessimistic view of a premillennial eschatology that shares a degree of hopelessness and despair over the social order of the whole world. Their withdrawal from social involvement is not only a neglect of the social and political problems but a result of a truncated evangelistic message in the proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. It is necessary to rediscover an all-encompassing concept and understanding of the Kingdom of God within the evangelical church.

CHAPTER 3: SECULAR MORAL THEORIES AND NATURAL LAW ARE INADEQUATE FOR THE ETHICS OF JUSTICE

3.1 CLASSIC THEORIES AND INFLUENCES

3.1.1 Introduction

Now we have grasped the reality of what injustice is or what justice is not. The next question has to be what justice is. This is the very question raised not only by Socrates in Plato's *Republic* but by many philosophers and thinkers throughout our human history as well. The classic answer inherited through the ages is simply stating that 'each person gets his due.' Justice, as defined by this classic convention, is grounded in the nature of equality as an inherent right. This is also the polemic that Wolterstorff has in mind when he defends justice as grounded ultimately on 'inherent rights' rather than 'right order.' Wolterstorff (2008:22) cites Ulpian's definition of justice: "Justice is a steady and enduring will to render to each their *ius*" and translates *ius* as 'right': "justice is rendering to each their right ... to cover not only what we call right but also what we call *desert* as in 'his just desert.'" What Wolterstorff (2008:22-23) is talking about is only the idea of primary justice that one 'possesses' for oneself and the right order that one 'enjoys'. Nash (2002:28) offers his contemporary version of justice: "The word, justice, has several functions ranging from its use as a synonym for righteousness to more particular usages in which people receive their due in commercial, remedial and distributive situations." This justice gives the universal sense "if he possesses all the proper virtues, if he is moral, if he keeps the laws, which Aristotle thought should accord with virtuous behaviour" (Nash, 2002:30).

3.1.2 *The Republic*

In the conversation between Socrates and his philosopher friends in *The Republic* (Plato, 1968:7, 331d), Socrates did not deny the classic convention, as stated above, against Cephalus and Polemarchus as he replied: "Then this isn't the definition of justice, speaking the truth and giving back what one takes" but disputed the adequacy of such a definition. Socrates cited his disagreement with Polemarchus' assertion that "justice is doing good to friends and harm to enemies" (Plato, 1968:8, 332d). This is

also a traditional maxim of classic Greek morality. Socrates denied the truth of this maxim and its inconsistency by citing the fact that it would be problematic to differentiate a friend who is not an enemy in reality or an enemy who is not really a friend. He suggested rather an idea of ‘social contract’ (Plato, 1968:9, 333a) to form a good relationship and partnership with others for the sake of a harmonized society.

Justice is an inherent right as well as a virtue of the human soul. Socrates explains to Glaucon that justice is the twin ideal of the various intrinsic parts of the individual soul along with wisdom, moderation and courage together with various parts of the republic each doing its own assigned tasks and working toward harmony:

But in truth justice was ... what is within, with respect to what truly concerns him and his own. He doesn't let each part in him mind other people's business ... but really sets his own house in good order and rules himself; he arranges himself, becomes his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts, exactly like three notes in a harmonic scale, lowest, highest and middle ... He binds them together and becomes entirely one from many, moderate and harmonized ... In all these actions he believes and names a just and fine action one that preserves and helps to produce this condition, and wisdom the knowledge that supervises this action; while he believes and names an unjust action one that undoes this condition, and lack of learning, in its turn, the opinion that supervises this action (Plato, 1968:123, 443d).

Wolterstorff (2008:26-29) rightly describes Plato's version of justice in *The Republic* as right social order, featuring: “the presence in the community of the virtues of wisdom, courage, and temperance”. In Plato's words:

After having considered moderation, courage, and prudence, this is what's left over in the republic; it provided the power by which all these others came into being; and, once having come into being, it provides them with preservation as long as it's in the city. And yet we were saying that justice would be what's left over from the three if we found them (Plato, 1968:111, 433c).

After the prerequisites of virtues are identified, Plato makes a social order of the sort of right and just order based on the objective norm as one among the forms: “That rule we set down at the beginning as to what must be done in everything when we were founding the city – this, or a certain form of it, is, in my opinion, justice” (Plato, 1968:111, 433a). The right and just order itself is therefore measured up to the objective Right Social Order, whether in rules or contracts, making a right social order (Wolterstorff, 2008:29). This is Plato's idea of justice in terms of positive law for social order. But Dengerink (1978:11) finds there is tension and confusion of a more universal kind among the absolute forms of beings, the ideas, and the perishable world of matter in Plato's argument. Dengerink then comments that Plato's idea of justice in general law is simply to establish a balance between freedom and order but subject to the virtuous

and complete life of the lawmakers (Dengerink, 1978:11). This may well conclude Plato's central thesis that justice is performing the functions and tasks for which one's nature is best fitted whether one is a philosopher, warrior, or farmer to make oneself consistent and good as well as to make one's society internally harmonious and good.

In *The Republic*, Plato does not differentiate clearly the aspects of obligation as a duty or interest. He basically thinks that justice "applies mainly to people (and their souls), and only secondarily applies to the things they do" (Plato, 1968:123, 443d; White, 1979:12). What Plato presents are the complex issues of justice, where duty and interest are synonymous terms, without the modern distinction between duty and interest. The good and just things that Plato looks for arise from the inner person and lead toward the final human end with a more permanent nature. "Greater prizes than these [that is, the good and just things] are available to excellence or virtue, as we can see when we realize that the soul is immortal, and that what is immortal should be concerned with eternity rather than with this short time during which we are alive" (White, 1979:74, 259). Plato holds the idea, though not explicit, of an ontological ethics, a widespread popular belief repeatedly asserted in *The Republic* (612b-614b) which the human souls of the deceased to be judged for their deeds by the gods after death. This is, as Pakaluk puts it, a belief in that sort of judgment serves to reinforce our motives for virtuous action (Pakaluk, 2005:85).

3.1.3 *Nicomachean Ethics*

Unlike Plato's use of dialogue and point-counterpoint argumentation to elucidate the subject of justice, Aristotle approaches the same subject systematically and employs classification to expound his theories. The dialogue in Plato's *Republic* does bring up many issues that stimulate thinking on what is just and unjust but never gives an explicit definition of the contents. Aristotle, on the other hand, seems to anticipate and reason the entire scope of justice in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, which is the name normally given to Aristotle's best known and the most important historical and philosophical work on ethics. Aristotle focuses on the metaphysical truth of justice from the prospective of reasoning rather than acting to improve any class of people relative to another in the city. Similar to Plato's virtue of the inner human soul, the central argument of Aristotle's idea of justice is a state of character, a cultivated set of dispositions, attitudes, and virtues. Aristotle takes the literal meaning of *dikaiosune* as righteousness

for justice and claims that “this form of justice ... is complete virtue ... not absolutely, but in relations to our neighbour” (Solomon and Murphy, 2000:35). The ethics of justice is, in Aristotle’s conception of teleology, the natural function of human reasoning. To reason well is to reason in accordance with virtue. The intrinsic character or virtue of a moral agent is, through reasoning, a driving force for ethical behaviour, rather than rules. The emphasis is on its being a quality of disposition rather than of doing in following the objective principles or rules. This is Aristotle’s virtue ethics about making the ultimate end of a good life.

Aristotle’s concept of justice in *Nicomachean Ethics* does not explain precisely the right or wrong but begins with a teleological concept of the good (versus bad) as the ultimate end. He first identifies in Book I what humans, for their own sake, ultimately aim for: “Every sort of expert knowledge and every inquiry, and similarly every action and undertaking, seems to seek some good. Because of that, people are right to affirm that the good is ‘that which all things seek’” (Aristotle, 2002:95, 1094a1). This ultimate end is called, *eudaimonia*: “Pretty well most people are agreed about what to call it: both ordinary people and people of quality say ‘happiness’, and suppose that living well and doing well are the same thing as being happy” (Aristotle, 2002:97; *NE*, 1095a15). The word *eudaimonia* may connote overall success and prosperity and achievement, or the contemporary term ‘human flourishing’, and may argue for harmonization with one’s own account. *Eudaimonia*, in this sense, is not an external good, nor a good of the body, but a good of the soul, which is the highest kind of good: “We commonly say that those relating to soul are goods in the most proper sense and good to the highest degree, and we count actions, and soul-related activities, as ‘relating to soul’” (Aristotle, 2002:103, 1098b15; Bostock, 2000:11). The goodness of happiness totally belongs to the soul but also involves and requires external goods such as blessing and good fortune: “Well, if anything is a gift of the gods to mankind, it is reasonable to suppose that happiness is god-given – more than any other human possession, by the same degree that it is best” (Aristotle, 2002:103, 1099b10). Despite some process of training to be happy in life, the prize and fulfilment of excellence appears to be something godlike and blessed and is not totally under the control of mankind. This statement is not contrary to Aristotle’s ‘complete good and self-sufficient’ for not requiring external goods:

The ‘self-sufficient’ we posit as being what in isolation makes life desirable and lacking in nothing, and we think happiness is like this – and moreover most desirable of all things, it not being counted with other goods: clearly, if it were so counted in with the least of other goods, we would think it more desirable, for what is added becomes an

extra quantity of goods, and the larger total amount of goods is always more desirable (Aristotle, 2002:101, 1097b15-20).

Aristotle speaks primarily of the state and condition of goodness and says nothing on how the goodness is acquired. Therefore, it is the condition of the human soul that is satisfied solely by *eudaimonia* and by nothing else. Even pleasure, honour, and wealth cannot reasonably be regarded as a highest good in this sense, and *eudaimonia* alone is the goal of all that we do (Bostock, 2000:14). Pakaluk (2005:72-73) also tries to explain the confusion of the ‘self-sufficiency’ criterion that it seems most naturally to direct us to use selection to identify the ultimate good and to apply to goods, not to the persons who attain, possess, or enjoy goods. The phrase ‘complete good’ is explained thus: “The human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with excellence (and if there are more excellences than one, in accordance with the best and the most complete)” (Aristotle, 2002:102, 1098a15). The best and most complete *eudaimonia* includes all activities and functions which, carried out accordingly by a good human being, manifest specifically human excellence (virtue or *arete*). Pakaluk concludes that “the good appropriate for a human being turns out to be: actualization of the soul as brought about by virtue” (Pakaluk, 2005:81).

Aristotle’s emphasis on the pursuit of one’s own ‘complete’ and ‘self-sufficient’ *eudaimonia* leads to a view of selfishness or an egocentric good life. Nevertheless, what Aristotle describes centres on the pursuit of *eudaimonia* as the fulfilment of one’s ‘function’ as a human being: “Well, perhaps this would come about if one established the function of human beings. For just as for a flute-player, or a sculptor, or any expert, and generally for all those who have some characteristic function or activity, the good – their doing well – seems to reside in their function, so too it would seem to be for the human being, if indeed there is some function that belongs to him” (Aristotle, 2002:101, 1097b25). The function of a human being is human nature. The distinctive feature of this human nature is that humans have reason: they can think (Bostock, 2000:27). All human beings share the same human nature but they may not develop to their full capacity because of differing levels of intellectual reasoning. In Aristotle’s own words:

If the function of a human being is activity of soul in accordance with reason, or not apart from reason, and the function, we say, of a given sort of practitioner and a good practitioner of that sort is generically the same, as for example in the case of cithara-player and a good cithara-player, and this is so without qualification in all cases, when a difference in respect of excellence is added to the function (for what belongs to the citharist is to play the cithara, to the good citharist to play it well) – if all this is so, and a human being’s function we posit as being a kind of life, and this life as being activity of

soul and actions accompanied by reason, and it belongs to a good man to perform these well and finely, and each thing is completed well when it possesses its proper excellence: if all this is so, the human good turns out to be activity or soul in accordance with excellence and if there are more excellence than one, in accordance with the best and the most complete (Aristotle, 2002:102, *NE*, 1098a10).

Aristotle's idea of the function of human being as a 'human excellence' receives strong criticism from Bostock (2000:28-29): "We cannot say that the life in accordance with human nature is what man is for, is the purpose of man, for we have no warrant for that. But that is just as well, for the argument would fall foul of the distinction we have noted between 'the good man' and 'the good for man.'" And Bostock (2000:29) continues to cite an example: "there is a well-known theological doctrine that man is born sinful, and consequently it urges us to transcend our human nature, not to conform to it. (A secular version of this approach urges us to transcend the natural 'selfishness' of our genes.)" There is no reason to support the idea that human nature must be good and the argument for the function of human being as a 'human excellence' cannot stand.

Aristotle claims that the good life for humans is an activity of the soul in accordance with excellence (virtue). His approach is first to examine the human qualities that make one virtuous and able to act well by choice in a variety of situations. He then begins his account in Book II (*NE*, 1103a20, 1105b20) that virtues of character, unlike feeling and capacity, are not natural but acquired through training as dispositions of 'habituation.' The training or teaching, through experience of action and time, becomes habituation into behaving in another. He thinks that human virtue must be disposed and moderated with intellectual excellences (*NE*, 1103a5) as a response to the conflict between reason and desire (*NE*, 1102b30) in self control for the sake of achieving harmony and good. After describing virtue as a disposition, Aristotle introduces his doctrine of the mean: virtue is a kind of mean, that is to say something in the middle, between two extremes which are the faults of excess and deficiency (*NE*, 1104a25; Bostock, 2000:38; Pakaluk, 2005:108). The mean or intermediate, similar to the moderation of self control, is a choice belonging to virtue. Aristotle says, "Excellence, then, is a disposition issuing in decisions, depending on intermediacy of the kind relative to us, this being determined by rational prescription and in the way in which the wise person would determine it" (*NE*, 1106b35). It, the mean, is also relative to us or our particular situation. The basic principle is to reach an intermediate point between each of the two extremes, but that point will not be the same for everyone (Bostock, 2000:40; *NE*, 1106b30). The question is, what scale is Aristotle thinking of as the one on which virtue aims for the mid-point

consistently? Aristotle distinguishes the virtuous person from the one who performs virtuous action, on the basis that a virtuous person acts “in accordance with one’s own expert knowledge of letters” (*NE*, 1105a25) and “knowingly” (*NE*, 115:1105a30). Virtue, in Aristotle’s thought, must be determined by rational prescription (*NE*, 1107a1) and even the determination of the ‘relevant middle’ must also be determined by reason and by that method by which the person of practical wisdom would determine it (Bostock, 2000:44). Aristotle’s virtue ethics is determined by the practical wisdom of the virtuous person for the needs of others in order to achieve a harmony. It may not be a selfish initiative but an egoistic ethics and, as such, may present a contest concept for different people with different views or a consensus on what counts as virtuous (Bostock, 2000:50).

Aristotle returns to the topic of *eudaimonia* in Book X, saying that happiness is activity in accordance with the virtue of philosophical wisdom. Pakaluk (2005:318) finds that happiness consists in the exercise of knowledge about theology and metaphysics – God and first principles – and perhaps also in thinking about other things, through these. This is confirmed by Aristotle:

Then this activity will be the complete happiness of man, if it is given a complete length of life, since nothing about happiness is incomplete. But such a life will be higher than the human plane; for it is not in so far as he is human that he will live like this, but in so far as there is something divine in him, and to the degree that this is superior to the compound, to that degree will its activity too be superior to that in accordance with the rest of excellence (Aristotle, 2002:251, *NE*, 1177b25).

This contemplation of God in the happiness of humans, in Aristotle’s thought, is only of the necessary and universal truths of this earthly world, unlike the religious or spiritual reliance on and submission to God in Christian belief. Aristotle thus states:

And the person whose intelligence is active, and who devotes himself to intelligence, and is in the best condition, seems also to be most loved by the gods. For if the gods have any sort of care for things human, as they are thought to do, it would also be reasonable to suppose both that they delight in what is best and has the greatest affinity to themselves (and this would be intelligence) and that those who cherish this most, and honour it, are the ones they benefit in return, for taking care of what they themselves love, and acting correctly and finely (Aristotle, 2002:254, *NE*, 1179a25).

As long as one commits to one’s own intelligence, what one does will be pleasing to the gods and falls under the theoretical wisdom of the gods’ thinking.

Aristotle dedicates the entire Book V to his search for justice as a virtue in an analysis of fairness. He begins by remarking that justice is a condition of character that makes

someone to do just action: “Well then, we seen everyone using ‘justice’ to mean the sort of disposition that makes people such as to do just things” (*NE*, 1129a5). Moreover,

... justice is the disposition in accordance with which the just person is said to be the sort to do what is just, as a result of decision, and to distribute things to himself in relation to another and between two others not in such a way as to give himself too much of what is desirable and his neighbour too little, and the reverse with what is harmful, but so as to give what is proportionately equal to both, and similarly where the distribution is between two others (Aristotle, 2002:167, *NE*, 1134a1).

Aristotle basically divides justice into two broad types: general justice (*NE*, 1129a5) and particular justice (*NE*, 1129b1). General justice is the character-related virtue which involves virtuous action which is lawful whereas particular justice is the character related virtue which aims at specific good action which is fair or equal. Pakaluk (2005:184) shows there is a difference between Socrates and Aristotle on the virtue of justice. He indicates that Socrates does not find that each part of the virtue is distinct from other parts. Socrates’ idea is similar to Aristotle’s idea of general justice. Nevertheless, Aristotle finds a second particular sense of the virtue of justice. Pakaluk (2005:184) says that “the latter alone indicates a particular virtue, and ‘just’ when used in that special sense cannot be applied meaningfully to other virtues, whereas ‘just’ used in general sense can be so applied.” Bostock explains the general justice or universal justice in his own terminology that “the man who is just in this universal sense will actually have complete virtue without qualification, but still all that is meant by saying that he is just (in this universal sense) is that he behaves to others with complete virtue” (Bostock, 2000:55; *NE*, 1129b15-1130a13). The general justice is based on two assumptions: that the just human is to practise all the virtues in compliance with the laws and that the laws are good laws. Aristotle presumes that these laws aim at the common advantage of all, or of the best people, or of those in power, or something similar (Bostock, 2000:56; *NE*, 1129b14-17). Pakaluk identifies this particular justice to be defined solely with regard to its characteristic effects in a distinct state or condition of a thing and in contrast to the characteristic effects of injustice (Pakaluk, 2005:187; *NE*, 1129a16-25). This justice is the highest and complete of all the virtues: “The proverb goes ‘But justice gathers in excellence entire.’ And it is complete excellence to the highest degree because it is the activation of complete excellence; complete, too, because the person who possesses it has the capacity to put his excellence to use in relation to another person as well” (*NE*, 1129b30).

Applying the same doctrine of the mean to justice, Aristotle discloses that “Justice is an intermediate disposition, only not in the same way as the other excellences, but because it achieves something intermediate, while injustice achieves the corresponding extremes” (*NE*, 1133b30). The difference between the virtue of justice and other virtues is that the two vices, too much or too little, of other virtues are not comparable to only one vice of the virtue of justice. Injustice is grasping for more. On the other hand, if a person who is the recipient wants too little or nothing or that to which this person is entitled, this is a virtue and not a vice of too little. Bostock (2000:68) clarifies the understanding of the ‘doctrine of the mean’ to particular justice: “For perhaps we may accept that there is a disposition which can be described as wanting more than one’s fair share, which is a vice. And we may add also that there is a ‘mean’ disposition of wanting just one’s fair share, which might be called virtuous.” In one word, justice as fairness is thus a mean between the excess of taking or receiving more than the entitled fair share of goods, honours, and security and the deficiency of taking or receiving less than the entitled fair share of these goods. One gets what one deserves.

The three forms of particular justice that Aristotle identifies are distribution, rectification, and reciprocity (*NE*, 1130b30 and 1132b25).

(1) **Justice in distribution.** A fair ‘distribution’ is essentially an application of fairness by dividing goods in proportion to the merit of the recipients because people are not equal (*NE*, 1131a20-25). If the persons are not equal, their fair shares will not be equal (*NE*, 1131a22). Justice as fairness is, therefore, getting what one deserves as opposed to the same criterion for everyone else because of different things deserved by different people. This kind of geometrical proportion in distribution may well allow for equality of opportunity but also result in much inequality of outcome between persons. Bostock (2000:59) also points out that the criteria for need and merit are different and should be relative to the particular burden or benefit in question. This is in agreement with the principle of Karl Marx: “From each according to his ability (i.e., his ability to bear whatever burden is in question); to each according to his need (i.e. his need for whatever benefit is in question)” (Bostock, 2000:59). Aristotle’s distributive justice is problematic and more complex than his theory. There are so many differences in persons and situations, for example, different worth, different needs, different abilities, different desires, and different deserts, that it cannot be appropriate to apply the same methods or criteria to all in order to achieve a suitable and fair distribution. Despite the

complexity of distributive justice, fairness is essentially a must in distribution in our daily living and should not be distorted, for example, by employers who use their power unfairly in the distribution of salary or responsibility.

(2) **Justice in rectification.** This applies primarily to private transactions between one person and another in voluntary and involuntary forms (*NE*, 1131b25). Voluntary transactions are economic or financial in nature, such as selling, buying, lending with interest, making guarantees, giving free use of something, depositing, or hiring out, whereas involuntary transactions are criminal or immoral in nature, such as theft, adultery, poisoning, procuring, enticement of slaves, killing by stealth, testifying falsely against someone, violence or murder (*NE*, 1131a1-5). Any dispute would fall under what is called today the civil law, determining the damage done and the compensation due by dividing according to arithmetical proportion, and rectifying or restoring the *status quo* (*NE*, 1131b30-1132a5). The justification of an arithmetical proportion is based on the shares rather than the persons and assumes all persons are equal rather than unequal. Secondly, Aristotle also offers the same account of treatment for a wide variety of offences which are not so straightforward as simply to have the offender pay the price to the victim in compensation (Bostock, 2000:61). In the case of murder, the scheme for restitution can never be repaid justly to the victim who is no longer there to receive it. A significant problem has therefore emerged in Aristotle's theory of justice in rectification to restore a fairness or *status quo*.

(3) **Justice in reciprocity.** Reciprocity is an account of proportional terms in the associations for exchange (*NE*, 1132b30). Exchange, Aristotle argues, arises out of three accounts. The first is that the system is built on 'mutual need,' or in contemporary terms 'supply and demand': "it is need that holds them together, being as it were a single thing" (*NE*, 1133b5). The second account is that this mutual need fosters exchange from the diversity of individuals and specialization of functions, for example, a doctor and a farmer as partners in an exchange (*NE*, 1133a15). These different sorts do not occur in a relation of equality to each other. But they have to produce or exchange in a somehow comparably equalized combination in accordance with the diagonal measure (*NE*, 1133a20). The third account is the necessity of money in exchange as a kind of guarantor into a reciprocal form of exchange (*NE*, 1133b10-20). Money is thus a crucial part of justice and commensurable to a sufficient degree in relation to people's needs (*NE*, 1133b 20). Money, in this scenario, may equate human beings and skills and even

human nature into some sort of material forms. From our own contemporary perspective, it is our question on whether or not it is just and fair that prices should be determined by the 'supply and demand' in the free market (Bostock, 2000:65). Given the self-interested individualism of today that searches for material gain in mutual exchange, it is also questionable whether or not the universal justice would measure up to all virtues to be lawful and can sum up to the various particular virtues of justice. The negative result may only lead to factions and threatens descent into social strife.

The Republic and the *Nicomachean Ethics* both have their defining places in the development of our contemporary theories on the virtue of justice. The influences of Plato and Aristotle upon all later Western thoughts have been immense. Their accounts may not be fully complete but have been taken up by later generations of philosophers and thinkers because their teachings have led to further studies along similar streams of thought. Some of their thoughts may only reflect the prevailing views of their times and may not be applicable to every aspect of the human life of today. On the other hand, some other principles remain strikingly modern by today's standards. Our discussion will only pick up a few modern philosophers and writers who adopt or react to the thoughts of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle on the subject of justice. These will include John Stuart Mill's argument for the 'greatest happiness principle' in his *Utilitarianism* as a search for the ultimate good, John Rawls's proposition of the natural rights of 'social contract theory' in *A Theory of Justice* to support the primacy of justice as fairness, and Robert Nozick's 'entitlement theory' in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* to honour the free decisions of people. These three thinkers focus on the distributive justice, as most of the modern ethicists do, to identify and draw their respective theories to either maximize overall utility, benefit the least advantaged, or give the choice of entitlements for their notions of justice and equality in the society. This chapter will conclude with the 'natural law' theory of Thomas Aquinas and his claim of perfect virtue relative to the common good goal of human nature and will compare that to the eternal ultimate goal of the will and grace of God.

3.2 THE UTILITARIANISM OF JOHN STUART MILL

3.2.1 Utility – The Greatest Happiness Principle

Utilitarianism is a popular moral philosophy with extensive influence in law, public policy, economics, and other realms of our everyday moral thinking. The theory of utilitarianism was initially advocated by Bentham in the eighteenth century in England to provide a basic framework of social interaction for the pursuit of the individual's own well-beings. His principle of utilitarianism regarding good in life is to produce the greatest amount of pleasure and the minimum amount of pain. This moral philosophy represents an appeal to consequences, as opposed to deontology, by identifying the goodness of an act's consequences with the amount of happiness produced by this act. What is right or good to do is what produces the greatest happiness overall. It also represents a universalistic moral view to treat sentient individuals as moral equals in precisely the same weight of happiness according to individual choices by transforming resources of distribution into a maximum overall happiness.

Following Bentham on this happiness principle, but offering a more complex utilitarian analysis of the grounds for moral liberty, John Stuart Mill continued the utilitarian tradition and also ably expounded, defended, and enriched the utilitarian theory to become the centre of contemporary ethical application. Like Aristotle, Mill introduces 'utility' or the 'greatest happiness principle' as the right thing to do that produces the most good: "The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals 'utility' or the 'greatest happiness principle' holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness" (Mill, 1957:10). His utilitarian principle is based on two presuppositions.

First, happiness is the goal or ultimate end of life inherently desirable by humans: "That pleasure and freedom from pain are the only things desirable as ends" (Mill, 1957:10) and "The utilitarian doctrine is that happiness is desirable, and the only thing desirable, as an end" (Mill, 1957:44). Similar to Bentham, Mill does not offer much proof of the presupposition of happiness as the goal of life. He agrees that "questions of ultimate ends are not amenable to direct proof" (Lebacqz, 1986:16) by saying that "no reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness" (Mill, 1957:44). He insists

and cites the fact that people do desire happiness universally: “This, however, being a fact, we have not only all the proof which the case admits of, but all which it is possible to require, that happiness is a good, that each person’s happiness is good to that person, and the general happiness, therefore, a good to the aggregate of all persons” (Mill, 1957:45).

Second, ‘actions are right’ is the means determined by the contribution to happiness. Happiness is good as well as the end to determine what is right. Thus, Lebacqz (1986:16) concludes that “this makes utilitarianism a form of teleology” as the ‘good’ is prior to the ‘right’ and the right is dependent upon it.

The presuppositions of Mill’s principle are not without objection. Moore criticizes Mill’s utilitarianism as naïve and fallacious on basically two fronts. Moore (1969:98) identifies first the failure of Mill to defend his assertion that ‘pleasure alone is the object of good of all our desires.’ He finds it a contradiction (that Mill himself admits) that “other things than pleasure are desired; and this admission is at once a contradiction of his Hedonism.” Pleasure, as such, is not the sole object but only in part the cause of desire. It is not the only thing desired by the human mind. He concludes that “the doctrine is that the idea of a pleasure not actual is always necessary to cause desire; whereas my doctrine was that the actual pleasure caused by the idea of something else was always necessary to cause desire” (Moore, 1969:100). Human beings are not always searching for pleasure only but for things that they may desire without any calculation as to whether it will bring pleasure or pain.

The second challenge Moore raises is the definition of ‘good’ in pleasure leading to the ‘difference of quality in pleasures.’ Mill rejects Bentham’s quantity of pleasure as the only standard and instead acknowledges ‘quality of pleasure’ as another ground for estimating sentient humans’ pleasures. Mill holds the view that a pleasure so preferred is more desirable. Moore (1969:107) finds Mill contradicting himself again when Mill says that: “to think of an object as desirable and to think of it as pleasant are one and the same thing.” If pleasure is the only object of all things, there is no one pleasure pleasanter than and distinct from another. Sosa (1969:167) supports Mill’s idea of “one pleasure qualitatively superior to another” but admits that the various meanings of ‘favour,’ ‘approval,’ and ‘liking’ are too inconclusive to defend the superiority in quality of one pleasure over another. Mill’s argument of a quality of preference that is

more desirable but not necessarily more desired is only a judgement of preference and is not at all conclusive and feasible.

3.2.2 Justice and Utility

Mill explores in detail the connection of justice and utility in Chapter 5 of his *Utilitarianism*. His goal is to reconcile the utilitarian moral theory of the greatest good for the greatest number with a common concern of justice, the fear that the principle of utility may be used to validate a denial of the good of a minority for the sake of a majority, thereby resulting in situations of unjust and immoral inequality. It is true that utilitarianism does not view everyone as equally deserving the same share of things and Mill admits that utilitarianism indeed allows for the differential treatment of individual human beings: “The utilitarian morality does recognize in human beings the power of sacrificing their own greatest good for the good of others” (Mill, 1957:22). But he denies that the sacrificial action in itself and of itself is good:

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. The only self-renunciation which it applauds is devotion to the happiness, or to some of the means of happiness, of others, either of mankind collectively or of individuals within the limits imposed by the collective interests of mankind (Mill, 1957:22).

He agrees to the equality of individual human beings but makes a qualified statement about the duty of one’s deserts:

If it is a duty to do to each according to his deserts, returning good for good, as well as repressing evil by evil, it necessarily follows that we should treat all equally well (when no higher duty forbids) who have deserved equally well of us, and that society should treat all equally well who have deserved equally well of it, that is, who have deserved equally well absolutely (Mill, 1957:76).

The parenthetical exception here highlights that there are higher duties more binding than the liberty of equality of how one deserves to be treated. This may imply that so long as the ‘greater good’ required it, all individual rights and claims would be ignored (Lebacqz, 1986:18). Mill acknowledges the strength of human feeling for justice, the ‘sentiment of justice,’ and concludes it is not separate principle from utility but as a part of utility. He claims that the social sympathy to defend and preserve human interest in security is basically grounded in utility:

The interest involved is that of security, to everyone’s feelings the most vital of all interests. All other earthly benefits are needed by one person, not needed by another; and many of them can, if necessary, be cheerfully foregone or replaced by something else; but security no human being can possibly do without; on it we depend for all our

immunity from evil and for the whole value of all and every good, beyond the passing moment, since nothing but the gratification of the instant could be of any worth to us if we could be deprived of everything the next instant by whoever was momentarily stronger than ourselves (Mill, 1957:67).

Each individual has his or her own desire to protect their interests from others. This desire may lead to conflicts if they defend their own strong feelings in securing particular interests of their preference (Mill, 1957:60). Commonly accepted standards of justice will have to come into place and settle in the explanation of the utilitarian view. Therefore, Mill concludes that justice is ultimately dependent on utility because conflicts in the common rules of justice can be adjudicated only by reference to utility (Lebacqz, 1986:20). Mill writes, "From these confusions there is no other mode of extrication than the utilitarian" (Mill, 1957:72). As criticized by Moore, utilitarianism cannot provide a concrete meaning of happiness. The principle of maximum happiness for the greatest number may not be the most fair way to deal with the inherent human claim for justice. Thus, utilitarianism appears to provide no guarantees against grossly inequitable distribution (Lebacqz, 1986:27).

Utilitarianism is often under the criticism of denying the inherent right of human beings and fails to avoid the pitfall of treating individuals or groups of people as a means to social ends rather than as ends in themselves or the community themselves. This may lead to unjust social hierarchical stratification and an elitist justification of social inequality on the grounds of a moral hierarchy of individuals and groups of people as discussed in the last chapter. Rawls states his objection to the unnatural way of balancing satisfactions and dissatisfactions between individuals and society under utilitarianism in his famous book *A Theory of Justice*:

... [E]ach man in realizing his own interests is certainly free to balance his own losses against his own gains. We may impose a sacrifice on ourselves now for the sake of a greater advantage later. A person quite properly acts ... to achieve his own greatest good, to advance his rational ends as far as possible. Now why should not a society act on precisely the same principle applied to the group and therefore regard that which is rational for one man as right for an association of men? ... Since the principle for an individual is to advance as far as possible his own welfare, his own system of desires, the principle for society is to advance as far as possible the welfare of the group, to realize to the greatest extent the comprehensive system of desire arrived at from the desires of its members ... so a society may balance satisfactions and dissatisfactions between different individuals ... so by these reflections one reaches the principle of utility in a natural way: a society is properly arranged when its institutions maximize the net balance of satisfaction (Rawls, 1971:23-24).

There is a discrepancy, as Rawls finds, between the individual and the society in the attempt to maximise the welfare of the greatest good. Some individuals within the society may experience the losses and others the gains, or the losses may fall disproportionately on some and the gains go disproportionately to others. The question of equality may only arise in the case of the society instead of the single individual, and is not explained and addressed in utilitarianism. Rawls explains the problem of utilitarianism in the recognition or ignorance of distributive justice between individual and society and among different persons:

The striking feature of the utilitarian view of justice is that it does not matter, except indirectly, how this sum of satisfactions is distributed among individuals any more than it matters, except indirectly, how one man distributes his satisfactions over time. The correct distribution in either case is that which yields the maximum fulfilment. Society must allocate its means of satisfaction whatever these are, rights and duties, opportunities and privileges, and various forms of wealth, so as to achieve this maximum if it can. ... Thus there is no reason in principle why the greater gains of some should not compensate for the lesser losses of others; or more importantly, why the violation of the liberty of a few might not be made right by the greater good shared by many. ... For just as it is rational for one man to maximize the fulfilment of his system of desires, it is right for a society to maximize the net balance of satisfaction taken over all of its members (Rawls, 1971:26).

In light of Rawls' objection, utilitarianism may appear to allow the society to adopt unfair and exploitative structures in distributive justice in order to promote the overall welfare or aggregate utility.

What Mill (1957:46) offers is a convincing psychological analysis in defence of his theory of greatest happiness derived from the satisfaction of virtuous desires that are "not as a means to happiness but as a part of their happiness". As long as the greatest happiness becomes the goal and action, Mill finds that virtue is a means of desire to pursue and experience the higher pleasures to satisfaction. His assumption is that every individual has a right to the higher pleasure and has the right to the security of a society which expediently defends the possession of that right. Rawls (1971:15) refutes this utilitarian expediency and charges: "It may be expedient but it is not just that some should have less in order that others may prosper."

Mill recognizes that the ideal of utilitarianism is to pursue the highest virtue and thus the greatest happiness according to the 'Golden Rule' of Jesus: "'To do as you would be done by, and to love your neighbour as yourself,' constitute the ideal perfection utilitarian morality" (Mill, 1957:22). The question remains: how can it be perfection that

utilitarianism allows for the sacrifice of minorities or for the unjust treatment of some individuals? Despite the ideal of taking into consideration the greatest happiness for everyone in the same or equal weight, objections do sufficiently reveal inadequacies in the underlying utilitarian conception of justice as a function of efficiency in promoting overall happiness.

3.3 THE SOCIAL CONTRACT OF JOHN RAWLS

3.3.1 The Original Position

Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* is indeed one of the most influential and important books on moral and political philosophy of the 20th century. The task of his book, on one hand, is to challenge the weaknesses of classical utilitarianism, but, on the other hand, to propose an alternative theory of justice while maintaining the fundamental strengths of utilitarianism. His challenge is to identify the deep and pervasive values held by the moral intuition of rational persons as members of a particular community, and their power to develop principles and practices through certain common agreements on specific notions of liberty, equality, and fair distribution of the social good. The end result is justice as fairness. The method that Rawls adopts aims to apply the device of the social contract by using a procedural interpretation of Kant's conception of justice that applies to the relations between individuals with autonomous choice as the basis for ethical principles (Lebacqz, 1986:33).

Searching for the principles of justice in order to establish a just society, Rawls endorses a hypothetical situation of equal liberty named the 'original position' (Rawls, 1971:12). Rawls defines the original position as "the appropriate initial *status quo* which insures that the fundamental agreements reached in it are fair. This fact yields the name 'justice as fairness'" (Rawls, 1971:17). This situation is a stable equilibrium to balance individuals' estimate of hatred and hostility positions without the notion of right or just (Rawls, 1971:120). In the original position, individuals are situated behind a 'veil of ignorance' to ensure that "no one is advantaged or disadvantaged in the choice of principles by the outcome of natural chance or the contingency of social circumstances" (Rawls, 1971:12). Rawls explains further:

No one knows his place in society, his class position or social status; nor does he know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence and strength, and the like. Nor, again, does anyone know his conception of the good, the particulars of his rational plan of life, or even the special features of his psychology such as his aversion to risk or liability to optimism or pessimism (Rawls, 1971:137).

Rawls's presumption is that rational individuals, under such circumstances, would examine the general facts of social position or the 'circumstances of justice' to ensure that each represents an autonomous human choice (Rawls, 1971:128). Without any knowledge of particulars in advance such as his or her social class, race, gender and so on, an individual would make the choice of principles of justice that could entice the majority to consensus among rational individuals within a particular community. The 'veil of ignorance' is a simple and useful device which makes parties mutually disinterested, preventing particular interests or the institutionalising of self or the group's aims and purposes; then these parties enter jointly into the testing of visions and justice claims without the kind of envy that makes things worse (Rawls, 1971: 143-144; Lebacqz, 1986:34-35). Beckley points out a good question that Rawls fails to acknowledge: the importance of religious belief as the subjective circumstances of justice or particular interest. Beckley (1985:222) uses the process of abstraction (the veil of ignorance) to discover general beliefs instead. He adds, "The original position ignores the reasonable beliefs of communities with distinctive moralities and arbitrarily imposes upon them an implicit conception of the good to which they cannot consent without violating a commitment to their reasonable beliefs" (Beckley, 1985:231). For example, the distinctive Christian belief in love affirms the freedom and equality of humans and is part of the Christian conception of the good. This Christian love is not only a commitment to the good of beloved individuals but also regards the third person and has a primacy for Christians that requires them to test whether justice is consistent with its demands (Beckley, 1985:239).

The principle of justice chosen in the initial situation should accommodate the commonly shared convictions about justice derived from actual conditions and experiences of the contractual circumstances through a mutually corrective, dynamic praxis approach of adjustments according to the ideal principles. This state of affairs is what Rawls refers to as 'reflective equilibrium' (Rawls, 1971:20). Rawls's approach is to determine the primary subject of justice in the basic structure which is "the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation" (Rawls, 1971:7).

The central concern of Rawls is how rational individuals within the structure of a particular community practise justice ‘as a virtue of social institutions’ (Wolff, 1977:25). The decision of justice as fairness relies, therefore, on a pure procedural justice without a standard for deciding what is ‘just’ apart from the procedure itself (Rawls, 1971:85-89). Justice applies not to the outcome, but to the system as Rawls stipulates: “A distribution cannot be judged in isolation from the system of which it is the outcome or from what individuals have done in good faith in the light of established expectations” (Lebacqz, 1986:39; Rawls, 1971:88). In Wolff’s analysis, he finds that the members of the society must possess four kinds of characteristics in order to achieve the outcome in good faith:

- 1) They make decisions on the basis of enlightened self-interest, and are capable both of discovering their own preferences and of evaluating with reasonable success the consequences of their and others’ actions.
- 2) They have roughly similar needs and interests, or at least needs and interests that make self-interested cooperation among them rational.
- 3) They are ‘sufficiently equal in power and ability to guarantee that in normal circumstances none is able to dominate the others’.
- 4) They are not envious; which is to say, ‘the bare knowledge or perception of the difference between their condition and that of others is not, within limits and in itself, a source of great dissatisfaction’ (Wolff, 1977:28).

Members of the society begin with rational self-interest for their own welfare as well as that of others. They all share the basic needs and interests with no conflict but cooperate to engage in the system. They all share equal power without domination or submission but with differentiation and integration for mutual benefits. Lastly, they, behind the veil of ignorance, have no envy but contentment and satisfaction with the distributive system in place. Rawls elaborates on the subject of envy and equality in some speculative moral psychology, writing that “a well ordered society as much as any other offers constructive alternatives to hostile outbreaks of envy” but still leaves unclear his conclusion that “it is difficult to settle this matter in the absence of the more detailed knowledge of social forms available at the legislative stage” (Rawls, 1971:537). His assumption that “the principles of justice are not likely to arouse excusable general envy (nor particular envy either) to a troublesome extent” (Rawls, 1971:537) is not convincing at all. Wolff (1977:29) comments that if he is correct “those speculations are strictly *post hoc*.” On rational self-interest, Wolff (1977:11) criticizes Rawls’s theory of justice; it has fatal weaknesses similar to utilitarianism in connection with issues of procedural justice: “The two most obvious weaknesses of utilitarianism are its inability to explain how rationally self-interested pleasure-maximizers are to be led to substitute

the general happiness for their own as the object of their actions, and the manifestly counterintuitive, sometimes genuinely abhorrent implications of its fundamental principle.” Rational individuals can and do disagree about the good and about the morality based upon the deliberative conceptions of the good. Wolff (1977:13) thus concludes: “Clearly, the bare notion of rational agency is insufficient for a rationally defended morality.”

3.3.2 The Two Principles of Justice

After reviewing how a fair fundamental agreement is derived from a hypothetical situation of an ‘original position’ behind a ‘veil of ignorance’ among rational individuals within a particular community, Rawls proposes a conception of justice, ‘justice as fairness,’ that is committed to the individual’s rights (liberty) and an ideal of fair distribution (equality). His statement of these two principles reads as follows:

- First: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others.
- Second: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone’s advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all (Rawls, 1971:60).

On the basis of a hypothetical situation which Rawls thinks most people would agree with, he continues to stipulate the liberty principle that each individual has a right to the greatest equal liberty. His theory of justice, which views a society as a cooperative venture for mutual gain in rights, liberties, powers, opportunities, income, wealth, and self-respect is consistent with most social contract theories. The first principle guarantees the basic liberties of others so long as their own basic liberties are also guaranteed in return. The second principle applies generally to the distribution of income, wealth, and benefits within the design of an organisation that makes use of differences in openly accessible power and duties to meet needs on an equal basis while working to everyone’s advantage. Both the first and second principles which address and endorse the issues of human rights and distributive social justice catch the wind of our time and draw universal acceptance.

These two principles are designed to apply to the basic structure of society and are regarded in a lexical ordering for application. The first principle must always precede and have priority over the second principle. Rawls would rather choose a situation of slightly more equal liberty than a situation of greater economic justice. He presumes

that even inequalities in the economic arena do not affect the equality of basic liberties but the liberties themselves can nonetheless be distributed equally (Rawls, 1971:204; Lebacqz, 1986:43). This emphasizes the primacy of the basic freedom of the individual and the gain of individual values in a community as a fundamental form of liberal individualism. But liberties under individualism can be conflictual and different liberties of rational individuals in the original position would not solve the problem.

The first principle is primarily concerned with the definition of the basic equal liberties of all individuals in four spheres (Rawls, 1971:61): (1) political liberty (the right to vote and to be eligible for public office) together with freedom of speech and assembly; (2) liberty of conscience and freedom of thought; (3) freedom of the person along with the right to hold (personal) property; and (4) freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure as defined by the concept of the rule of law. Despite the 'hot' issues of human rights drawing attention in the fields in politics, academics and media, these liberties conferred to individuals are founded on the inadequacy of the substructure of the hypothetical original position and their restrictive nature. The hypothesis of an original position is not a solid foundation for a theory. All hypothetical particulars and settings to form the priority condition of liberties are only illusions and cannot be the basis of a complete conclusion. The attempt of Rawls to devise the original position as an absolute of the primacy of justice in basic liberty must then make the individual autonomous choice of a finite human an ultimate. The reality is that human as a finite particular cannot be a sufficient final reference point. For Christians, the only sufficient foundation for the assertion of any particular liberties and rights is established in the one created order of God. It is not only that the original position is inadequate to be the absolute, but it cannot generate any fixed liberties over time because it is constructed by human autonomous choice in relation to one another. With Rawls's notion of reflective equilibrium together with unstable infinite minds of autonomous selves, there must be a constant changing and shifting order of the theory of justice.

The second principle, simply referred to as the difference principle, is intended as a qualification on the first principle rather than as a separate principle addressing a different subject. What Rawls states in the second principle is on the presumption that equal distribution can be set aside or invoked as justification for deviating from an equal distribution of a different sort of good, namely 'equal liberty' (Wolff, 1977:39). Rawls's

notion of the above equal liberty in a distributive sense is, on the other hand, thoroughly unclear and mysterious (Wolff, 1977:39).

This second principle addresses the maximization of the least advantaged. Rawls moves from his first principle of libertarianism to that of egalitarianism as his second principle. He basically uses income and wealth as a sufficient measure of his 'index of primary goods' but fails to account for racial discrimination or other characteristics, that is, opportunities and powers, not necessarily correlated with income, but correlated with disadvantage in society (Lebacqz, 1986:44). Rawls (1971:72) clearly rejects the notion of initial equal distribution of assets: "Intuitively, the most obvious injustice of the system of natural liberty is that it permits distributive shares to be improperly influenced by these factors so arbitrary from a moral point of view." The traditional distribution of income and wealth has been the cumulative effect of prior or initial distributions of natural assets such as natural talents and abilities, and its result is an injustice of favoured or disfavoured distribution over time through social circumstances. Rawls (1971:152-153) then proposes his own systematic approach of the 'maximin rule' to rank alternatives but allow some risk taking above the floor of worst outcome. He explains this as the principle of efficiency based on Pareto optimality (a game theory measuring efficiency) to apply to the basic structure which is roughly a free market system, after satisfying the first principle of equal liberty, by the arrangement of raising the expectations of any representative person without at the same time lowering the expectations of some other representative person to the maximum efficient positions (Rawls, 1971:66-71). His argument for the maximin rule is to avoid calamity but, on the other hand, let those in the original position choose to take their chances on maximising their expectations (Lebacqz, 1986:45).

Wolff finds this second principle problematic. Members of a society are ignorant of their relative roles and positions: "Under the veil of ignorance, however, the players have no idea whatsoever of their purposes, plans, and interests" (Wolff, 1977:67). Lebacqz (1986:44) also asks, "How are the 'least advantaged' to be identified?" Secondly, this difference principle is not a version of the principle of fair opportunity but the generalization of all social values including natural talents and capabilities: "All social values – liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases of self-respect – are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any, or all, of these values is to everyone's advantage" (Rawls, 1971:62). This implies that all natural

advantages do not in themselves create any claims to greater benefits or rewards but are to be viewed as common assets for equal distribution. Nozick, a strong critic of Rawls, points out that the difference principle is not neutral between the better and the worse endowed and cites an inequality of this principle:

If the better-endowed group includes those who manage to accomplish something of great economic advantage to others, such as new inventions, new ideas about production or ways of doing things, skill at economic tasks, and so on, it is difficult to avoid concluding that the less well endowed gain more than the better endowed do from the scheme of general cooperation” (Nozick, 1974:193-194).

Nozick (1974:224-225) insists on the recognition of people’s entitlement to their natural assets: people deserve their natural assets and thus people deserve their holdings; people are entitled to their natural assets and thus people are entitled to their holdings. Nozick’s view is in contrast to that of Rawls, who effectively precludes all individual claims to specific attributes along with any resulting benefits. Lebacqz provides an in-depth analysis of Nozick’s arguments to show the outrage of the difference principle:

First, he argues that goods are not ‘manna from heaven’ but products of a productive process. Nozick argues that precisely because the ‘utility surplus’ that can be created through special incentives involves additional effort on the part of some, they are entitled to part of that utility surplus. The surplus cannot simply be distributed as though no one deserved any part of it.

Second, Nozick proposes that we imagine the best-off saying to the worst-off, ‘Look, you gain from this cooperative venture; therefore, we will participate only if we get as much as possible’ (Nozick, 1974:198; Lebacqz, 1986:46).

There are noticeably two important developments in this difference principle. First, it is the omission or erosion of individual liberties as well as Rawls’s own first principle of justice because of the emphasis on egalitarianism at the expense of the individual. Second, the interference of individual natural assets violates the principle of market efficiency of any free market and productive capitalistic system.

Despite the inconsistency and inadequacy of Rawls’s theories of justice as interpreted above, Rawls proposes an assumption sufficiently widely shared today for the hope of a common grounding for justice. Lebacqz concludes with a positive note on Rawls’s theories:

If Rawls’ movement from method to principles works, or if the principles themselves are accepted, then this common ground for justice would appear to require protections for the least advantaged in society. While critics may find fault with the reasoning used to formulate Rawls’ principles, the challenge raised by those principles to any future theory of justice is their stress on the position of the least advantaged. The requirements of equal rights, and of only those social and economic inequalities that make the least advantaged better off than they would have been otherwise, provides a standard that can

be used to judge social policy and has a strong intuitive appeal to many in our contemporary world (Lebacqz, 1986:50).

3.4 THE ENTITLEMENT THEORY OF ROBERT NOZICK

3.4.1 The Formulation of Individual Rights and Liberty

Nozick rejects the justice theories of utilitarianism that assert the greatest overall good for the greatest number, and Rawls's theory that protects the least advantaged because he charges these theories for their respective violation of human rights and failure in equality. For this reason, he offers an alternative 'entitlement theory' which is formed on a purely rights basis to approach the principle of justice. He firstly spells out very clearly his argument in the preface to *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*: "I begin with a strong formulation of individual rights" (Nozick, 1974:xi).

Nozick (1974:ix) holds the idea of a minimal state to justify his formulation of the rights and liberty of citizens; that the only legitimate state is nothing more than the minimal state to protect the rights of its citizens from force, theft, fraud, enforcement of contracts, and others, leaving them free to pursue their individual ventures without any unjustified violation of personal rights by an extensive state. The minimum state gives priority to individual rights within an apparatus over all other considerations, including considerations of efficiency, of all material welfare and of all types of utilitarian goals. Nozick (1974:149), therefore, accepts only the minimum state in distributive justice: "The minimum state is the most extensive state that can be justified. Any state more extensive violates people's rights." This does not mean he is a supporter of anarchy. On the contrary, he starts on the basis of the moral philosophy to establish an apparatus on what persons may and may not do to one another as the source of legitimacy of the state's fundamental coercive power has (Nozick, 1974:6). There are disagreements, based on moral judgments, that prevent a general consensus about anarchy. Nozick (1974:10-11) explains why he has doubt about a state of nature (anarchy), which is "a state of perfect freedom to order their actions and dispose of their possessions and persons as they think fit", he understands that "the natural law may not provide for every contingency in a proper fashion where Locke makes this point about legal systems, but contrast, and men who judge in their own case will always give themselves the benefit of the doubt and assume that they are in the right." The result of a state of

anarchy is that “the private and personal enforcement of one’s right leads to feuds, to an endless series of acts of retaliation and exactions of compensation” (Nozick, 1974:11). Thus, for Nozick, a limited set of near absolute rights in the form of side-constraints upon the actions and treatments to others constitutes the foundation of morality in the minimal state, in contrast to incorporating rights into the end-state for the distributive consequences of a current social arrangement, as long as no actions are permitted that violate fundamental human rights (Nozick, 1974:29; Lebacqz, 1986:51).

The end-state is a state that incorporates the distributional patterned principle of justice with an insistence on a certain pattern in distribution according to moral merit or need. Such principles look only at what the final distribution is and ignore the manner by which the distribution came into effect (Lebacqz, 1986:56). Nozick (1974:163) finds that this patterned principle violates the value of individual liberty because of the unfavourable interference with people’s lives: “no end-state principle or distributional patterned principle of justice can be continuously realized without continuous interference with people’s lives.” He rejects this patterned principle because the distributive justice necessitates redistributive activities and ignores the right which a person might have to give something to someone (Nozick, 1974:168). In this case, he finds that “taxation of earnings from labour is on par with forced labour” and sees this as an extreme form of intervention (Nozick, 1974:169). The net result of this reasoning, as Lebacqz concludes, is that “freedom of choice is violated by any state or system that imposes ‘patterns’ of ‘redistribution’ or attempts to achieve any ‘end-state’ of allocation of goods” (Lebacqz, 1986:58). In Nozick’s theory, justice is not ‘distributive’ but depends on just acquisition and transfer of holdings.

The minimal state occurs by a natural or invisible-hand process of the formation of a dominant protective agency by rational and moral individuals coupled with the principle of compensation that is to cover unusual actions only for those disadvantaged without a compelling contract nor disadvantaged sacrifice plus adequate knowledge of circumstances (Nozick, 1974:82-87). It is, therefore, a legitimate moral entity. Nozick, however, stresses that there is no single way of life or utopia for everyone under the minimal state but a framework of respecting human rights and utopia on a purely voluntary basis:

Treating us with respect by respecting our rights, it allows us, individually or with whom we choose, to choose our life and to realize our ends and our conception of

ourselves, insofar as we can, aided by the voluntary cooperation of other individuals possessing the same dignity (Nozick, 1974:334).

Since people are at liberty to choose and join together voluntarily as a community to pursue and attempt to realize the balance among competitive values, a community may redistribute goods among its members bound by the legitimacy of a certain pattern (Nozick, 1974:321). This affirmation by Nozick in shifting slightly the position on the minimal state does not necessarily show that his vision of the minimal state with utopian communities is mistaken but it does indicate that the political availability under his theory based on radically individualistic human rights and liberty as absolute status may be quite limited and may rest on some basic misconceptions (Langan, 1977:356).

3.4.2 The Entitlement Theory

Nozick proposes the subject of justice in holdings in three major topics:

- The principle of justice in acquisition – the original acquisition or appropriation of un-held holdings.
- The principle of justice transfer – the transfer of holdings in voluntary exchange to another.
- The principle of rectification – the rectification of injustice in holdings (Nozick, 1974:150-152).

He gives an inductive definition of entitlement theory as follows:

- A person who acquires a holding in accordance with the principle of justice in acquisition is entitled to that holding.
- A person who acquires a holding in accordance with the principle of justice in transfer, from someone else entitled to the holding, is entitled to the holding.
- No one is entitled to a holding except by repeated applications of the above two (Nozick, 1974:151).

The foundation of Nozick's principle of distributive justice is the entitlement of everyone to the holdings if the distribution arises from just distribution by legitimate means (Nozick, 1974:151). Whatever arises from a just and legitimate situation, that is, the first move in acquisition or the means of transition from one situation to another (transfer), by just steps is itself just and justice-preserving. He bases this theory on John Locke's idea that individual liberty is the fundamental political value. On that basis, he adopts Locke's proviso: "Locke views property rights in an un-owned object as originating through someone's mixing his labour with it"; this justifies the moral and political legitimacy of private appropriation. Secondly, he agrees with Lock that "enough and as good left in common for others" is meant to ensure that the situation of

other is not worsened” after the private appropriation (Nozick, 1974:174-175). Both Locke and Nozick see that as long as the legitimate appropriation of private property does not violate others’ rights it is not merely compatible but required by justice. The fundamental human right is the freedom to acquire and transfer property. O’Neill (1981:312-313) argues that “certain sorts of acquisition of property clearly violate others’ basic rights. For example, slavery is incompatible with the right to liberty.” Scanlon (1981:112) also points out the inequality from acquisition of holdings, particularly the initial resources, in that “Nozick, while being generally hard on egalitarian claims, allows that the demand for a justification of inequalities in initial resources would be valid if these were the result of some centralized mechanism of distribution.” The centralized mechanism of distribution is the result of differences between rich and poor, especially where wealth is concentrated in a few hands; the wealthy come to have an unacceptable degree of control over what jobs there are to offer what products there are to be owned, over what is to be produced and over political processes as well. Scanlon (1981:112) concludes that “for this reason, the growth of inequality can turn acceptable institutions into unacceptable ones even when this inequality is generated through what otherwise appear to be innocent means.” The rights that Nozick proposes are not absolute and obviously exist in uneasy tension as Lebacqz describes: “If liberty is the primary value, then equality may have to be sacrificed. If equality is upheld, there will be violations of liberty. These trade-offs are clearly perceived by Nozick” (Lebacqz, 1986:65).

Nozick believes that voluntary exchange is both necessary and sufficient for justice in transfer. His focus is the governing manner in which one might justly come to own something previously owned by another or sell something previously owned by oneself.

Nozick confirms:

We should note an interesting feature of the structure of rights to engage in relationships with others, including voluntary exchange. The right to engage in a certain relationship is not a right to engage in it with anyone, or even with anyone who wants to or would choose to, but rather it is a right to do it with anyone who has the right to engage in it ... Adults normally will have the right to such a relationship with any other consenting adult who has this right (Nozick, 1974:264).

Nozick’s point is about people’s liberty to transfer in a free market economy characterized by exchange. On the other hand, Walzer, as quoted by Lebacqz, argues that market exchange is problematic as a basis for justice because, in ‘blocked exchanges,’ money cannot and should not be able to buy (Lebacqz, 1986:61). Brunner

(1945:181) also supports the argument of the problem of a free market exchange: “For exchange, if left to itself, generates phenomena which destroy free exchange, among others economic monopolies and powerful organizations of the nature of monopolies.” Lebacqz (1986:62) continues to challenge Nozick by using quotes from Ackerman and Walzer respectively: “*laissez-faire* will systematically give some people special transactional advantages to exploit ignorance” and “a radically *laissez-faire* economy would be like a totalitarian state, invading every other sphere, dominating every other distributive process.” It is not only that the free market exchange cannot work perfectly and efficiently as the capitalists predict, but also individuals do not simply create and exchange goods. Brunner (1945:149) states clearly that “all property is acquired under conditions which the acquirer has not himself created.” He makes a theological point that “from the standpoint of the order of creation ... even this property which belongs to him does not belong to him unconditionally, since it is held under God” (Brunner, 1945:149).

The second part of Nozick’s version of Locke’s proviso is that private appropriation is justified only where others are left with enough and good in common without harming their situations. Everyone has the right to own goods, as long as that ownership does not harm others. This is Nozick’s principle of justice in rectification to govern the proper means of setting right previous injustices in acquisition and transfer. However, as Lebacqz (1986:57) shows, Nozick gives several interesting twists to the Lockean proviso. She cites an example: “Instead of remaining firm on the notion that one may not acquire severely limited goods, he argues that one may indeed acquire them so long as one compensates others so that their situation is not worsened” (Lebacqz, 1986:57). Nozick’s principle of compensation is different from Rawls’s welfare system for the least advantaged under the patterned structure because the former is to be conducted in a voluntary basis. In addition, O’Neill expresses dissatisfaction at the inadequacy of Nozick’s principle of justice: “No argument yet given explains how one rather than another individual acquires a particular holding. Nor does consideration of the ‘enough and as good’ proviso show that there would be anything unjust about reassigning holdings, provided that the ‘general post’ of holdings does not violate the proviso” (O’Neill, 1981:314).

Nozick’s principles of distributive justice concern how it came about rather than the final ends of the distribution. His view is solely ‘historical’ and represents a ‘pure

procedural justice' in that, as Lebacqz (1986:59) states, "whatever the end result is, it is just so long as it arose from procedures that are themselves just." This is seemingly different from the patterned principle which is a process governed by rules that reflect the suitability of certain patterns, the desirable good result versus evils, and a respect for individual rights of differing importance (Nagel, 1981:201). Nagel finds Nozick's non-patterned historical principle to allow individual transactions by natural rights of acquisition and transfer does not stand because of its partial consideration. Nozick erroneously interprets the notion of a patterned principle as specifying a distribution of absolute entitlements to the wealth or property distributed (Nagel, 1981:201). Lebacqz (1986:63) also points out that "Nozick ignores the extent to which all transactions are protected and promoted by the community, and hence, the extent to which the community has a 'partial right to private property which it claims, for instance, in the form of taxes." Taxation is thus not a 'forced labour' but rather a recognition of the community's contribution to and proper share of the earnings of its citizens. Langan (1977:357) charges that Nozick's principle of distributive justice, like natural-law theory, rejects the restrictions to put on state activity in the name of individual rights, or like social gospel traditions, seeks to use the activity of the state to achieve higher and more equal levels of welfare which meet wider human needs. He then concludes that the Christian way of promoting justice should "take the form of trying to vindicate the rights of all, especially those who are least well off, rather than the traditional form of trying to bring about a *societas Christiana*, which usually involves at least some restriction of the rights of others, especially in the areas of freedom of thought and expression" (Langan, 1977:357).

3.5 THE NATURAL LAW OF THOMAS AQUINAS

3.5.1 The Epistemology of Natural Law

Aquinas regards natural law as the basis of morality and, as such, forms his moral philosophy based on the concept of the natural law. Unlike the secular theories of justice on a purely philosophical base, Aquinas's natural law doctrine is theologically grounded with a strong metaphysical foundation on theoretical judgments of value. The method by which Aquinas approaches his natural law and theology in general in the

Summa Theologica is a synthesis of both philosophy (science) and theology (higher science):

We must bear in mind that there are two kinds of sciences. There are some which proceed from a principle known by the natural light of the intelligence, such as arithmetic and geometry and the like. There are some which proceed from principles known by the light of a higher science: thus the science of perspective proceeds from principles established by geometry, and music from principles established by arithmetic. So it is that sacred doctrine is a science, because it proceeds from principles established by the light of a higher science, namely, the science of God and the blessed. Hence, just as the musician accepts on authority the principles taught him by the mathematician, so sacred science is established on principles revealed by God (Aquinas, 1948:2, *ST*, I, A2, Q1).

Aquinas owes his thinking to the Greek philosophers, especially Aristotle. His work is simply a heavily Christianised version of Aristotelianism that illuminates and rationalizes Christian theology and thought (O'Connor, 1967:4). He was himself a theologian who used philosophy as a rationalized foundation and a framework for his theological edifice. On this basis, Aquinas defines the natural law thus:

Wherefore, since all things subject to Divine providence are ruled and measured by the eternal law, as was stated above (A1); it is evident that all things partake somewhat of the eternal law, in so far as, namely, from its being imprinted on them, they derive their respective inclinations to their proper acts and ends. Now among all others, the rational creature is subject to Divine providence in the most excellent way, in so far as it partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself and for others. Wherefore it has a share of the Eternal Reason, whereby it has a natural inclination to its proper act and end: and this participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is called the natural law (Aquinas, 1948:997; *ST*, I-II, A2, Q91).

Aquinas finds human beings, as rational creatures, are a product of an infinitely wise designer or creator and might reasonably and rationally be expected to discover the origins of natural science and participate in the eternal law through human wisdom. He sees reason as the first principle of human action and happiness as the last end of human life (*ST*, I-II, A2, Q90). As every part of human principles is associated with the whole, a rational application is to discover a law to matters of common good, that is, the relationship to happiness as the common end. God is the one who instilled the natural law into the human mind so as to be known naturally. This natural law is something rationally directed to the common good by responsible humans and properly promulgated. It is not the only kind of law but works under the divine order or eternal law manifested in the universe as the law of nature. Aquinas distinguishes four kinds of law: eternal law, natural law, human law, and divine law. For Aquinas, the divine law (Mosaic Law and the Law of Gospel), human or positive law, and natural law are located in the context of eternal law, namely God himself (Kerr, 2006:253). Divine,

human, and natural law, working together, are how eternal law is realized and manifested in and for human beings. Everything in Christian doctrine is related back to God because the world is ruled by Divine Providence (*ST*, I-II, A2, Q91).

Barth, a strong critic of Aquinas on the reason-based natural law, states that even Christians with reason alone are living in a state of ignorance; he then offers his own version of natural law, a theory dependent upon the natural revelation of God:

By 'natural law' we mean the embodiment of what man is alleged to regard as universally right and wrong, as necessary, permissible, and forbidden 'by nature,' that is, on any conceivable premise. It has been connected with a natural revelation of God, that is, with a revelation known to man by natural means (Barth, 1968:163-164).

Barth continues to argue:

The reason is not that the true 'natural law' has been discovered, but simply the fact that even the ignorant, neutral, and pagan civil community is still the Kingdom of Christ, and that all political questions and all political efforts as such are founded on the gracious ordinance of God by which man is preserved and his sin and crime confined (Barth, 1968:164).

Aquinas's natural law is rooted in the inclinations proper to human beings or 'rational animal': toward happiness, social life and friendship, and truth-seeking (Keys, 2006:189; *ST*, I-II, A2, Q94). Consequently, all acts of virtue are prescribed by the natural law, since human reason dictates one's natural inclination to act virtuously (*ST*, I-II, A3, Q94). If we consider what human nature is, we shall know what our natural inclinations are and what our duties are in light of the natural law (O'Connor, 1967:61). Since all humans are rational beings, the natural law is the same to all and can be apprehended to do good: "Whatever the practical reason naturally apprehends as man's good (or evil) belongs to the precepts of the natural law as something to be done or avoided" (*ST*, I-II, A2, Q94). According to the nature of human reason and inclination, goods are the preservation and evils are the avoidance of one's own life, marriage and family life, social and community life, and the desire for knowledge, including the knowledge of God. Keys outlines Aquinas's position on the natural law theory:

He that seeks the good of many, seeks in consequence his own good, for two reasons. First, because the individual good is impossible without the common good of the family, or kingdom... Secondly, because since man is a part of the home and political community, he needs to consider what is good for him by being prudent about the good of the many. For the good disposition of parts depends on their relation to the whole; thus Augustine says (*Confessions* 3.8) that 'any part which does not harmonize with its whole is offensive' (Keys, 2006:130-131).

The common good referred to here is the moral virtue of justice also called political prudence and should be extended to serve the family, the civic community, and the community of the universe, for the sake of God (*ST*, II-II, A10, Q47). We will discuss more on common good in the following section.

The structure of Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* illustrates his method of synthesis of philosophy and theology to pursue revealed truths. He thinks humans do partake of the higher intellect of God and thus are enabled to be illumined unto understanding. As McGaughey (1962:70) rightly points out, Aquinas, under the influence of Aristotle's matter of epistemology in the form of sense, looks upon the mind, before receiving an impression from experience (*tabula rasa*), as an 'agent intellect' rather than a 'passive intellect'. Human intellect is potency with regard to its objects, because it is potency in the order of knowing and not in that of existing or experience. But Aquinas admits that God is not matter, and is incommunicable: "'person' in God is the incommunicable existence of the divine nature" (*ST*, I, A4, Q29). How then can the agent intellect acquire knowledge of God based upon God's sensible impressions made upon the agent intellect? McGaughey (1962:70) then confirms that "the nature of the divine being can be known only through revelation - but even here in terms of finite reality. Thus 'we know of God *that* He is, rather than *what* He is.'" "

Reason has its limitation and cannot go beyond a certain point in dealing with revealed higher truths. McGaughey refutes Aquinas's notion of reason to prove the higher truths of revelation (McGaughey, 1962:75; *ST*, I, A7, Q1) but finds that "reason is subordinate to faith which is the basis of theology. Philosophy is at the lower end of the scale, as it were, and points upward to theology" (McGaughey, 1962:71). Barth, as quoted by Kerr, also denies the effectiveness of the human mind in that "the unity of divine and human natures in the person of the Word incarnate effectively denies the presence of a human mind or soul. Human nature as a whole, and particularly human rationality and moral development, are so marginalized as not to be included in what is redeemed" (Kerr, 2006:250). Kerr also criticizes O'Donovan's argument of a highly epistemological programme for natural ethics in created order and natural knowledge: "the order which God has created depends solely upon God's own disclosure of Himself and of His works" (Kerr, 2006:250). The understanding of nature thus involves all human beings and culture and certain natural knowledge which is part of our created endowment. In terms of culture, natural law does not appreciate cultural difference, nor does it view

existing societies as making real contributions to human moral and spiritual development (Kammer, 1981:30). Kerr sums up thus: “Nothing but God, as known and loved in the beatific vision, can fully satisfy the human desire for (the human end) truth and the good” (Kerr, 2006:252).

Aquinas’s theory relates natural law to the concept of conscience and *synderesis* (natural habit) and posits a full-fledged natural inclination of human will toward goodness and moral virtue. Aquinas argues that human will is naturally inclined toward good in general:

For the principles of intellectual knowledge are naturally known. In this manner the principle of voluntary movement must be something naturally willed. Now this is good in general, to which the will tends naturally, as does each power to its object ... Wherefore man wills naturally not only the object of the will, but also other things that are appropriate to the other powers; such as the knowledge of truth, which befits ... to live and other like things which regard the natural well-being ... as so many particular goods (*ST*, I-II, A2, Q10).

Niebuhr (1960:39) comments on the limitation of conscience against human desires: “Conscience is a moral resource in human life, but it is not as powerful as those moralists assume, who would save mankind by cultivating the sense of duty. It is more potent when it supports one impulse against another than when it sets itself against the total force of the individual’s desires.” Stob (1985:62) points out that one of the mistakes of Aquinas is to assume that the ethics of natural law or moral law are domiciled in the natural order of things and possessed by the human mind. Stob (1985:62) explains: “These are metaphors that figuratively express the fact that the law is ‘present’ to our conscience, that we know the law with a certain degree of immediacy.” He cites the well-known passage in Jeremiah: “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts” (31:33, NIV). Stob’s further explanation: “There is presented to them a manifestation of the law that, under favourable conditions, their conscience can comprehend, but there is not law actually ‘written on their heart.’ The law is always above and beyond them, and only so much of it as God has revealed to them is available for their perception” (Stob, 1985:62-63). To prove his argument, he asks us to read attentively what Paul says about the Gentiles and the natural law in Romans 2:15, and then interprets it carefully: “Using a metaphor, Paul does say here that something is ‘written in their heart.’ But it is not the law: it is ‘the work’ of the law (*to ergon tou nomou*)” (Stob, 1985:63). Therefore, there is nothing to suggest that there

the law is to be possessed and remains in our heart independent from God. It is only that God is free to reveal his will and purpose for our lives as He pleases.

Stob continues to show that the sinful nature of the unredeemed may allow the conscious heart to obtain only a dim and distorted form of knowledge but prevents them from receiving the true knowledge outside of the revelation of Christ and the prophets and apostles (Stob, 1985:63). Aquinas admits that “the natural law can be blotted out from the human heart, either by evil persuasions, just as in speculative matters errors occur in respect of necessary conclusions; or by vicious customs and corrupt habits ... Sin blots out the law of nature in particular cases, not universally” (*ST. I-II, A6, Q94*). What Aquinas presents here is after the fact, a problem of the sequential order of obtaining the natural law. He assumes humans would receive full knowledge of the truth through their own human reason and only after they sin the law of nature will be blotted out from their heart. What Stob observes is that the unregenerate are fugitives in flight from God and in rebellion against God and grow blind and ignorant morally and spiritually (Stob, 1985:63). They are never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (2 Tim. 3:7). In addition, sinners resist a real revelation of God and His law to humanity in general and wilfully reject the divine instruction but “suppress the truth by their wickedness” (Rom. 1:18). As a result, we can hardly look to the unregenerate for reliable or full knowledge of the created nature of God and God’s will or for a definitive statement of our duties to be fully righteous and just.

Of course, humanity cannot deny that there is operative in the world the common grace of God which does help the unthankful and reluctant unredeemed to apprehend certain relevant morality and perform services to others. Despite the fact that Aquinas begins with reason above and before the revelation of God, the chief fault lies not in the intellect but the will in trusting God. McGaughey (1962:76) spells out that such a procedure, reason before revelation, is highly dangerous because of human weakness and is in fact impossible. Rather, humans must be confronted by God and must respond affirmatively in faith. Faith thus becomes the guide to human reason, leading it into correct and fuller understanding. McGaughey (1962:76) puts his theological idea simply by quoting St. Anselm’s aphorism about faith seeking understanding: “Unless you believe, you will not understand.”

3.5.2 The Common Goods

Aquinas develops his common good theory on the social and civic foundations of the philosophic origins in Aristotle to shape a just and beneficial social order in the community (*polis*). The theory is rooted in the idea of the common human nature which encompasses an inherent rational inclination toward participation in the common good of others or of all. Keys confirms: “Aquinas follows Aristotle in endeavouring to found his theory of politics securely on traits and inclinations of our common human nature, specially on characteristics of rational and social animals drawn to converse and deliberate and debate about what is just and good or unjust and harmful or evil in human affairs” (Keys, 2006:65). She also finds that Aquinas’s common good theory is based on Aristotle’s three political-philosophic foundations. Following Aristotle, Aquinas (*ST*, I-II, A2, Q94) designs his theory along similar, though not exactly equivalent, lines: the human inclination toward good would seek the preservation of one’s own being, human life, and all animals in society according to nature and natural law.

The First Foundation: Human Nature as ‘Political and Social’

It is the nature of humans to be social and political animals (*ST*, A4, Q72). Aquinas confers an order of nature and perfection by putting individual and households prior to political society so that the latter would establish and secure a more universal order of justice, peace, and virtue among humans (Keys, 2006:81; *ST*, I-II, A2-3, Q105). Like Aristotle’s emphasis on the topic of *eudaimonia*, Aquinas, after confirming that humans are naturally social and civic, underscores the idea that the political community by nature finds its justification in the extent to which it promotes the happiness of its people. This common good of virtue is preferred to the good of the individual (*ST*, A2, Q105). Aquinas says that this human virtue reflects the search for the perfect good in God:

The summit of man does indeed touch the base of the angelic nature, by a kind of likeness; but man does not rest there as in his last end, but reaches out to the universal fount itself of good, which is the common object of happiness of all the blessed, as being the infinite and perfect good (*ST*, A8, Q2).

The end of human nature is happiness and all action of human life is for the sake of an end with deliberation of reason (*ST*, A1, Q1). In other words, all human practical thinking is to be concerned with the means to the last end, which is the perfect good of God. Part of human action begins with law as Aquinas says: “The nature of law needs to

be in accord with some rule of reason ... Law is always directed to the common good as to its end ... Now the order to the common good, at which the law aims, is applicable to particular ends” (ST, A1-2, Q90). Aquinas rightly points out that, despite the active mind or reasoning of humans, the final perfection of happiness cannot be attained:

But in men, according to their present state of life, the final perfection is in respect of an operation whereby man is united to God: but this operation neither can be continual, nor, consequently, is it one only, because operation is multiplied by being discontinued. And for this reason in the present state of life, perfect happiness cannot be attained by man. Wherefore the Philosopher, in placing man’s happiness in this life, says that it is imperfect, and after a long discussion, concludes: We call men happy, but only as men. But God has promised us perfect happiness, when we shall be as the angels ... in heaven (ST, A2, Q3).

Aquinas finally confirms that nothing but God can lead us to supreme good, not even our human reason: “Now the last end of the human will is the Sovereign Good, namely, God. Therefore the goodness of the human will requires it to be ordained to the Sovereign Good, that is, to God” (ST, A10, Q19). In summary, humanity in this earthly life has a duty to search for common goodness or happiness, despite its imperfection, in accordance with the revealed order as a social being, while faithfully depending on the ordained perfect and ultimate good from God.

The Second Foundation: Human Beings and Citizens

To be a citizen, in Aquinas’s terms, is synonymous with showing excellence or virtue. A citizen is one who has the common virtue in performing an active role in either the administration of the regime and its justice, or the establishment of the guiding policy with a view to the welfare of the community (Keys, 2006:92). A common virtue relative to the regime is thus required from its citizens for the regime to function and govern in proper justice, policy, and welfare. What counts as a good citizen? Aquinas defines the fundamental political or civic character of human nature that is required as a virtue for a right social order:

Since justice, by its nature, implies a certain rectitude of order, it may be taken in two ways: first, inasmuch as it implies a right order in man’s act, and thus justice is placed amongst the virtues, - either as particular justice, which directs a man’s act by regulating them in relation to his fellow-man, - or as legal justice, which directs a man’s acts by regulating them in their relation to the common good of society ... Secondly, justice is so-called inasmuch as it implies a certain rectitude of order in the interior disposition of a man, in so far as what is highest in man is subject to God, and the inferior powers of the soul are subject to the superior, i.e., to the reason; and this disposition the Philosopher calls ‘justice metaphorically speaking’ (ST, A2, Q113).

Aquinas realizes the religious transcendence in character on the part of ordinary and non-philosopher citizens who are aware, as an intrinsic disposition, of their citizenship in a universal community under God, and perhaps through grace are cognizant as well of being members of God's own household (Keys, 2006:98). Keys (2006:103) finds that Aquinas's emphasis on the social or relational sense of human existence is strongly posited originally in a full-fledged natural inclination of the human will toward goodness and virtue in two dimensions: the vertical (human-God) and the horizontal (human-human). This natural inclination is in the context of the analogy between the naturalness of virtue and the naturalness of social and political life. Aquinas affirms that "Virtue is natural to man inchoatively. This is so in respect of the specific nature, in so far as in man's reason are to be found instilled by nature certain naturally known principles of both knowledge and action, which are the nurseries of intellectual and moral virtues, and in so far as there is in the will a natural appetite for good in according with reason" but he adds to clarify that "All virtues are in us by nature, according to aptitude and inchoation, but not according to perfection" (*ST*, A1, Q63). Aquinas's stand on moral virtue is different from Aristotle's as a philosopher who opines that humans naturally have the capacity to receive the virtues and that good habituation transforms that potency into a virtuous act (Keys, 2006:104; *NE*, II.1, 1103a24-5). Aristotle insists that education is crucial for virtuous character formation. Aquinas's second foundation on human virtue is thus not in line with Aristotle's account but is considered by Keys to be in line with that of the Platonists. Keys offers evidence of Plato's theory of the inherent virtue of the human soul: the Platonists "considered all the virtues to be 'wholly from within' the human psyche, so that all the sciences and virtues would pre-exist in the soul naturally" (Keys, 2006:106). One explanation of Aquinas's position on virtue is that human virtue is natural, not additional, but not according to perfection. On the other hand, Aquinas mentions "the theological virtues, (which) are entirely from without" (*ST*, A1, Q63) and returns to his definition of civic and political character (justice) for highest perfection and common good: "justice is so-called inasmuch as it implies a certain rectitude of order in the interior disposition of a man, in so far as what is highest in man is subject to God" (*ST*, A2, Q113). The highest good in virtue that can satisfy the internal happiness and desire of our human nature must correspond to God; it is to know Him intimately and personally.

The Third Foundation: Human Action and Excellence as Social, Civic, and Religious

Langan (1977:186) quotes Aquinas from the latter's *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, 143: "It is admitted by all men that man, through works of virtue ... may attain his ultimate end, which is felicity." Morally right action or good work may lead to the desired end according to the will of the natural human reason. Aquinas, however, adds that these actions do not bring about the end intended but are conducive to it only indirectly because they are, in turn, necessary that man may receive happiness from God and achieve relative or inchoate happiness in this world (*ST*, A5, Q7). Not only must human receive goodness from God to be good, but also the foundation of the end is not formed exclusively on individual particular good but must corresponding to the common good: "But a man's will is not right in willing a particular good, unless he refers it to the common good as an end; since even the natural appetite of each part is ordained to the common good of the whole" (*ST*, A10, Q19). Even though Aquinas stresses the need for a rightly ordered human will as the rational appetite of the intellectual faculty of human reason to manifest good works, he realizes, as Keys explicates, that a finite being or action may properly be considered good by human reason from one perspective but evil from another, and unassisted, finite human reason is incapable of comprehending the ultimate, universal good that is the object of the divine will and divine providence, and of judging absolutely whether or not something is truly good or best from the perspective of this final common good (Keys, 2006:120; *ST*, A3, Q49).

Vogt, in his article in *Theological Studies*, cites the comments from a couple of contemporary social thinkers. One is Rawls's suggestion that "a shared vision of the good is impossible" and the other is Shklar's argument that "the public, civic pursuit of any comprehensive vision of the good will be at the expense of those who lack the power to define and enforce their own definition of the highest good" (Vogt, 2007:395). Their pessimistic view is understandable, for a purely intellectual or philosophic-based theory of a politic of a common good that is doomed to failure. Some of the social thinkers that were referred to earlier in this chapter propose a practical solution of common good based on the nature of human community through social contract theory. This social contract is artificially created on the basis of calculating reason and becomes the basis for social arrangements without a relational sense among fellow citizens. The result of this social arrangement, as Vogt comments, "has been a dilution of the general public's sense of responsibility toward one another and diminishing expectations regarding society's obligations to support the common good or general welfare" (Vogt,

2007:396). The pressing social problem we face is not simply the pure intellectual or philosophic base but also the problem of the personal individualistic ethics rather than a comprehensive community-based common good. Despite the emphasis of reason in Aquinas's theory, he stresses heavily on a pure relational arrangement of the covenantal model to construct a strong community toward common good, that is, a paradigm of close-knit solidarity within the household that is united with the political community (*ST*, I-II, A2-3, Q105). Most importantly, as Keys asserts, a disposition of virtue toward solidarity and the common good must take into account religious transcendence in order to reify covenantal citizenship in a universal community under God, and perhaps through grace to become cognizant as well of being members of God's own household (Keys, 2006:98). The Christian community should not simply focus on changing institutions and structures, like the secular social thinkers do, at the expense of emphasizing the simultaneous need for regeneration and acceptance of saving grace. God wills all humans to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4) so that they become members of God's own household under the covenant. "He wills such things under the aspect of justice (common good). Wherefore in regard to such things it suffices for man to will the upholding of God's justice and of the natural order" (*ST*, I-II, A10, Q19).

Despite our criticism and disagreement regarding Aquinas's emphasis on the importance of the natural human before the revelation of God, his *Summa Theologica*, after all, directs us to the ultimate perfection of God, His grace and His laws. Aquinas addresses justice in these items:

There are two kinds of justice. The one consists in mutual giving and receiving, as in buying and selling, and other kinds of intercourse and exchange. This the Philosopher calls commutative justice, that direct exchange and the intercourse of business. This does not belong to God, since, as the Apostle says: Who hath first given to Him, and recompense shall be made him? (Rom. 11:35). The other consists in distribution, and is called distributive justice; whereby a ruler or a steward gives to each what his rank deserves. As then the proper order displayed in ruling a family or any kind of multitude evinces justice of this kind in the ruler, so the order of the universe, which is seen both in effects of nature and in effects of will, shows forth the justice of God. Hence Dionysius says: We must needs see that God is truly just, in seeing how He gives to all existing things what is proper to the condition of each; and preserves the nature of each one in the order and with the powers that properly belong to it (*ST*, I, A1, Q21).

Concluding Summary

This chapter presented the secular theories of justice above from *The Republic* of Plato to the Entitlement Theory of Nozick; all base their philosophies upon hypotheses or

presuppositions about human behaviour or virtue in the state of nature in search of the ultimate end of happiness, inherent human rights of personal liberty and the holding of property as well as the construction of justice in terms of equality, fairness, and impartiality. I find these various philosophical and political theories as discussed above to be inadequate to cover all grounds of social justice in relation to rights, liberty, and equality, especially when complex societal organizations or social structures are taken into consideration. The central focus of these theories is the individual human 'self' in the search for his or her personal and ultimate end of happiness. It is the human who is left to construct the essential facts of the cosmos by autonomously placing these facts in relation to one another. It is the human mind that becomes the ultimate defining power of the cosmos. Autonomous selves are thus placed and founded upon non-absolute and equivocal human rights and liberties under such relative conditions. As humans are not absolute but rather finite particulars, they are, therefore, subject to constantly changes according to their changing environment, and vulnerable to the vice of their desires. The result is that there is no fixed moral order produced from secular theories of justice, not even the natural law out of human reason for common good as Aquinas introduced. Maritain, a defender of a natural law ethics, cannot but acknowledge the necessity of a spiritual nature of the created order if human beings are to coherently predicate any fixed notion of human rights and liberties. He explains:

It is because we are enmeshed in the universal order, in the laws and regulations of the cosmos and of the immense family of created natures (and finally in the order of creative wisdom), and it is because we have at the same time the privilege of sharing in spiritual nature, that we possess rights *vis-à-vis* other men and all the assemblage of creatures (Maritain, 1951:95-96).

The overview of various secular ethical theories provided in this chapter includes historical philosophies of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, contemporary theories (Mill's Utilitarianism, Rawls's Social Contract, and Nozick's entitlement theory) and also Aquinas's natural law on human disposition and common good. Respective criticisms on these theories find that they are not only in disagreement with each other with striking conflicting conceptions of justice but also inadequate in constructing an all-encompassing idea of justice to regulate all social relations. The next chapter will begin with a brief discussion on why the secular theories are inadequate and irrelevant without the knowledge of God and His law. This will be followed by an in-depth study of the justice of God and how an individual can transcend civil society as a member of a universal community ruled by God to command common good (justice) to its perfection.

CHAPTER 4: BIBLICAL JUSTICE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The secular and philosophical theories of justice as discussed in Chapter 3 have often been cast in positivist, rationalist or humanist terms. The ideas of human rights, equality, and liberty within the popular democratic realm are often seen, one way or the other, as being the conclusive word on the formation of justice. These theories are engaged and mingled with the assaults of liberal individualistic views on human rights and freedom, or the deconstruction brought about by free market capitalism, albeit the different findings in divisive and conflicting principles. As illustrated in Chapter 3, philosophers who consider the questions of justice based on practical rationality end up with theories and principles which disagree with each other sharply and irreconcilably as to how these questions are to be answered. MacIntyre reveals some particularly striking conflicting conceptions of justice based on pure philosophical theories without the revealed truth of God:

Some conceptions of justice make the concept of desert central, while others deny it any relevance at all. Some conceptions appeal to inalienable human rights, others to some notion of social contract, and others again to a standard of utility. Moreover, the rival theories of justice which embody these rival conceptions also give expression to disagreements about the relationship of justice to other human good, about the kind of equality which justice requires, about the range of transactions and persons to which considerations of justice are relevant, and about whether or not a knowledge of justice is possible without a knowledge of God's law (MacIntyre, 1988:1).

Heller (1987:25) remarks, in relation to formal concepts of justice, that human ideas of justice are irreconcilable. There is not an all-encompassing idea of justice to regulate every social relation on earth. She points out a number of paradoxes in the human theories of justice. For example, there is a paradox regarding the ability of a philosophical framework of rational argument to determine the content of righteousness and to distinguish between good and evil. She sums up thus:

In philosophy, only rational argument can win the wager against evil. However, rational argumentation cannot win the wager because no rational argumentation can prove that it is better to suffer injustice than to commit injustice ... Socrates chose to suffer injustice rather than commit it; he justified it without justifying it; he observed philosophical reason beyond reason (Heller, 1987:65).

On the paradox of freedom, the greatest puzzle is the problematization of moral end or 'good'. Since practical reason cannot decide rightly by applying valid norms to

particular circumstances, the consensual knowledge of the moral end is absent and every discussion of 'human nature' and its moral potential is therefore meaningless (Heller, 1987:76). The faith of a 'just soul' in the philosophical sense is another paradox. Both Socrates and Plato believe the city is the city within us or the city called the 'soul'. This soul, this true city, becomes indestructible and reinforces the resolution in favour of the good in the human soul. But this myth of the immortality of the soul is not wholly a fairytale and everyone who is not yet righteous would be defenceless against the maxims of evil (Heller, 1987:72-73). This city (soul) is no longer functioning for the good nor committing justice, but becoming indifferent to all injustices. Without the knowledge of God's law, as MacIntyre states above, there is no common yardstick, no absolute or universal norm for continuous and consistent application.

The primary precept of the natural law developed by Aquinas is a synthesis of philosophy and theology in order to pursue a human understanding of the knowledge of God's law. Aquinas, having accepted Aristotle's practical reasoning as well as Augustine's doctrine of the defective human will, insists that the human nature, not human sinfulness, is as always presupposing the type of rational knowledge of God exemplified in the conclusions of the *Prima Pars* (MacIntyre, 1988:188). Aquinas's understanding of the Augustinian Christian doctrine of human nature does not merely show the incompleteness of Aristotle's theory of practical life and the inadequate apprehension of the divine nature, but a life of enquiry by each of us into what our good is. He finds that the final discovery of what our good is will indeed reveal to us the inadequacy of all our earlier conceptions and practical enquiries. We then have knowledge of our good which will adequately guide us further to actualize the knowledge (MacIntyre, 1988:193). Aquinas admits that nothing can be the ultimate end of human beings except that state of perfect happiness which is the contemplation of God in the beatific vision, in which contemplation all of human nature finds its completion (*ST*, I-II, A7, Q3). He continues to lead us to recognize the ultimate end and perfect happiness of human beings, a state in which we are moved by a love of our own good and by a love of and desire for God (MacIntyre, 1988:192; *ST*, I-II, A3, Q109). We may reject in large part Aquinas's intellectual precept on the natural law and the justice of common good. However, he points us in the right direction to include the metaphysical theological dimension of justice; that is, justice is one of the names

applied to God who not only conceives of justice perfectly but is justice perfectly (MacIntyre, 1988:198).

We must believe that the moral norm of justice is God's compassion, command, and commission for the people of God to attain the true knowledge in faith, to abide by the divine mandate of becoming righteous and defending the oppressed, to inhabit the orderly city of justice, the faithful city. This divine justice is the prophetic idea grounded on faith and based on divine wisdom with righteousness as its end. Heller summarizes the description of the divine justice:

Divine justice does not contain even subtle utilitarian connotations. No hereafter is promised where all will be judged by their merits or demerits. Justice will be done on earth, and it will be done to peoples. People whose cities have been built by bloodshed will be destroyed, as will people who sell the just man for silver and the poor man for a pair of sandals. The righteous person is neither happy, nor buys other worldly happiness. Being righteous is simply a contribution to the redemption of his people ... What is not beyond knowledge is simply the following: that, if there is redemption, my righteousness contributes to it. Acts of righteousness are thus performed in the view of the absolute moral world, where 'justice surge(s) like water, and goodness like an unfailling stream' (Heller, 1987:58).

Heller thus concludes that the prophetic idea of faith in doing justice or righteousness is not for the actor but for the whole – for 'my people' or 'all people', a particular emphasis in Isaiah, and is supported on three pillars:

1. I must believe that moral norms are God's commandments. I neither test nor query them. Knowledge is the knowledge of God's commandments ... No comparison may be made, no reasoning permitted. Faith and knowledge coincide.
2. I must believe that God sees both everything that I do and that everyone else does. My righteousness may contribute to the possible redemption of my people only because God sees that I am righteousness. If I fight oppression, defend the helpless, plead for the widow, God's eyes rest on me.
3. I must believe that people such as I will be redeemed when God judges nations, that people such as I will inhabit 'the city of justice, the faithful city'. I must be aware that I am a part of the whole (of my people, of humanity), as well as that the fate of the whole depends on individuals and their righteousness, on people such as I (Heller, 1987:59).

The purpose of this chapter is not to set out a full and robust theology of biblical or divine justice. I will point primarily to the meanings of biblical justice and the understanding of several crucial elements of the nature of God's justice as well as the critical importance of the contours of particular narratives in the Bible.

4.2 BIBLICAL JUSTICE: TERMINOLOGY AND MEANING OF JUSTICE

To elucidate the biblical meaning of justice requires vast tracts of references in the Old Testament to law, justice, impartiality, the norms of administering justice, and the injustice of exploitation and imperial domination by rulers and slave-masters as well as the central issue of justice raised in virtually every page of the Gospels and the reign over all human affairs by the justice of God or the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus Christ in the New Testament. The purpose of biblical justice is to make individuals (the people of God), communities, and the cosmos whole and perfect, by upholding both goodness and equality. The study of biblical justice in this chapter attempts to grasp the wide scope of this biblical theme.

4.2.1 Old Testament

Hebrew has two main terms for justice in the Old Testament, מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*) and צְדָקָה (*tsedeqah*). *Mishpat* can be translated as ‘justice,’ ‘judgment,’ ‘rights,’ ‘vindication,’ ‘deliverance,’ or ‘custom,’ to name a few; while *tsedeqah* is ‘righteousness,’ ‘justice,’ ‘deliverance,’ ‘rights,’ ‘upright,’ or ‘vindication’ (Burns, 1998:153). These two words have similarity of translation in many instances or are most of the time used synonymously (Isaiah 28:17) in the Old Testament, though there are a few marked differences in discussing the biblical concept of justice. Most often *mishpat* is translated as justice and *tsedeqah* as righteousness.

Burns (1998:154) explains that the biblical term for ‘having a say’ is *mishpat* as a central concept in the biblical tradition about things that involve the determination and power of what is to be done appropriately or rightly or fairly or justly in human life individually as well as socially. The Hebrew word for the ground of ‘consensus’ in what is right and just, or the sense of what is right, is *tsedeqah* (Burns, 1998:154). *Mishpat* takes on many forms of the established order within political structures and, as many scholars suggest (e.g., E.R. Achtemeier and Jason J. Ripley), a more forensic meaning to do with the actual action of doing justice in accordance with public laws and judicial systems. *Tsedeqah*, on the other hand, focuses on the vision of what is right and a view of life that motivates human actions.

Mishpat is most frequently used in the prophetic books. The theme is often related to a breach of justice by oppressors, rulers, or slave masters, those who ‘have a say’ and render oppression against orphans, widows, poor, and aliens (Isaiah 1:17, 21; 5:7; 10:2; 59:8-9; Hab. 1:4). *Mishpat* as justice is basically a reference of ‘one’s due’ or ‘inherent rights,’ that is, one is obliged to maintain proper justice to one’s neighbours or fellow humans, or otherwise one will receive just reward or just punishment. In return for a breach of justice, judgment (*mishpat*) will thus be entered and vindicated by Yahweh in His wrath for the outcry of these people against not only corrupt oppressors, rulers, and slave masters but toward all the people for their sin (Isaiah 4:4; Jer. 5:1; 7:5; Ezek. 5:6-7; 20:11, 13, 16, 19, 21, 24; Hos. 5:1, 11; Mal. 3:5). Divine judgment or justice is the fulfilment of the will of the Lord at His throne to the nations on earth and the promise of hope to the hopeless in the sense of perfect world government and perfect religion (Isaiah 42:1-4). When *mishpat* is defined as judgment, it refers to both divine and earthly judgment. It is the guiding principle behind every earthly legal process, including legislation, ruling, trial, lawsuit, verdict, and sentences. The earthly judgment should be informed by the laws of the land that are thought to be of divine origin, the heavenly norm and pattern on earth.

Baird (1963:42) explains that the use of *mishpat* expresses the nature of God in righteousness and justice: “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne” (Ps. 89:14; cf. Deut. 32:4; Job 34:4, 12; Isaiah 5:16; Zep. 3:5). God is the ultimate source of justice and what is right is derived from God’s righteousness. In expressing the nature of God, Baird (1963:42-44) takes the use of *mishpat* in four aspects:

(1) *Mishpat* refers to **God as saviour**. “I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion (mercy)” (Hos. 2:19; cf. Ezek. 34:16; Ps. 25:9; Isaiah 1:27; Jer. 9:24). When the noun *mishpat* describes God’s nature, the emphasis is on its meaning as love.

(2) *Mishpat* describes the judgment of **God as a word, a legal precept, an ordinance**. “Keep my decrees and laws (*mishpat*), for the man who obeys them will live by them” (Lev. 18:5; cf. Ex. 21:1; Num. 27:11; Deut. 4:1; I Chron. 22:13; Neh. 1:7; Ps. 18:22; Jer. 5:4; Ezek. 5:6; Zeph. 2:3; Mal. 4:4). This is a strong reference to the aggressive force of God’s being which translates itself into an intelligible word of command.

(3) *Mishpat* is to define judgment as **an equitable act of God in punishment and reward**. “The Lord reigns forever; He has established His throne for judgment. He will judge the world in righteousness; He will govern the peoples with justice” (Ps. 9:7-8; cf. Deut. 1:17; I Chron. 16:14; Job 9-10; Isaiah 26:8; Hos. 6:5). This use of *mishpat* is regularly the reference to God’s saving act followed by a reference to His wrath.

(4) *Mishpat* encompasses **God’s act of condemnation and destruction against those who fail to keep His ordinance**. “My sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; see, it descends in judgment on Edom, the people I have totally destroyed. The sword of the Lord is bathed in blood, it is covered with fat – the blood of lambs and goats, fat from the kidneys of rams. For the Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah and a great slaughter in Edom” (Isaiah 34:5-6; cf. Deut. 32:41; I Kings 20:40; II Chron. 19:6; Ps. 7:6; Jer. 1:16; Ezek. 5:8; Hos. 5:1; Micah 3:8; Hab. 1:12; Mal. 3:5). The predominant emphasis on the negative when *mishpat* describes God’s acts toward humans is a dramatic repetition of God’s judgment action with the emphasis on His wrath.

The Hebrew word *tsedeqah* is also a term to describe the nature of God, particularly His truth and character (Baird, 1963:44). His truth is what is right: “I have not spoken in secret, from somewhere in a land of darkness; I have not said to Jacob’s descendants, ‘Seek me in vain.’ I, the Lord, speak the truth; I declare what is right” (Isaiah 45:19, NIV). The name of God is *tsedeqah* (righteousness): “They rejoice in your name all day long; they exult in your righteousness” (Ps. 89:16). The character of the righteous God is to describe His essence in disclosing His precepts and imperatives: “How I long for your precepts! Preserve my life in your righteousness” (Ps. 119:40), and these precepts and imperatives are the expressions of the nature of God in truth, mercy, steadfast love, and salvation (Hos. 2:19; Ps. 85:11). Wright (2006:108-109) reveals that Yahweh was speaking about Himself as righteous God and Saviour in Isaiah:

Declare what is to be, present it – let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the Lord? And there is not God apart from me, a righteous God and a Saviour; there is none but me. Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength’ (Isaiah 45:21-24, NIV).

The context of the words underlines the Lord’s uniqueness as God and His unique ability, as the only living God in His sovereign power over all nations and all history, to

save. Wright signifies specifically the word righteousness (*tsedeqah*) as a synonymous word to salvation in the context of the Isaiah passage. This interpretation of *tsedeqah* is in line with Baird's explanation of the use of *mishpat*.

Bruckner (2003:225), in the *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, shifts from the understanding of God's nature to explain *tsedeqah* as a human 'justice of well-being'; it signifies human actions that are acceptable to God under the covenant relationship. Under this covenant relationship, God declared Abram righteous based on his faith (Gen. 15:6) and the righteousness of the people of God is the work of God's hands and the glory of God (Isaiah 60:21). *Tsedeqah* as a human justice of well-being comes from the sole source which is God, who is faithful to His people to 'declare' or 'make' them right and just. Ziesler (1972:42) shares the same idea: "When we turn to man's righteousness, it is clearly a possibility only within the covenant. Those outside the covenant, and therefore not in relation to Yahweh, cannot be righteous." The relational concept of *tsedeqah* refers to an idea of 'citizenship' and speaks about righteousness and justice on that criterion.

The use of *tsedeqah* in the theological context describes human interaction with God. *Tsedeqah* most often depicts right human behaviour solely according to the estimation of Yahweh. Reimer (1997:751) uses the story of the Israelites taking quick possession of the land (Deut. 9:4-6) to illustrate Yahweh's action in driving out the nations not on account of their *tsedeqah* but because of the wickedness of the nations. Yahweh is *tsedeqah* and the standard (Deut. 32:4). His standard of behaviour is explicit in the divine law which can lead to reward for those who are faithful in keeping the 'ways of the Lord' (2 Sam. 22:22). Yahweh's action according to His *tsedeqah* reflects naturally His divine being and character (Ezra 9:15).

Reimer offers his in-depth insights regarding *tsedeqah* from the Ancient Near Eastern sources to the analogy of the Old Testament in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*. Reimer (1997:744-746) finds six different uses of *tsedeqah* in ANE materials. It represents (1) self-righteousness or doing right to people; (2) the king's lawful or legitimate acts; (3) the plea of the righteous (to God) against the enemy; (4) just and legitimate behaviour (the former would refer to the individual's behaviour – acting rightly, while the latter refers to claims to a given status – having

right; (5) righteousness as loyalty towards an overlord in a legal or judicial sense and as justified or declared right; and (6) justice as the foundation of the right rule.

Reimer (1997:746-768) surveys the Old Testament for the meanings of *tsedeqah* from Genesis through the books of the prophets. The term *tsedeqah* in the Old Testament comprises both active (acts rightly) and stative (be righteous) meanings under dominantly theological considerations referring to something true about God as the standard. This suggests that the deity acts and has His being in a manner analogous to humankind. Rooy (1982:263-264) says that, despite the fact that humankind might perceive “a ‘heavenly justice’ which receives God’s gracious pardon for human’s personal sins, which makes us brand-new persons inside ... and an ‘earthly justice’ to restrain crime and promote the external public order, humankind forget that justice is a sort of materialization of existence; i.e., it is the incarnation in time and space of God’s relation to His world; it is the creation-form of life in divinely given structures for society without which man cannot even exist”. The righteousness-justice, whether it is heavenly or earthly, that a human needs is all God’s righteousness-justice. God as personal being is sovereign, creator, judge, and father who is supremely and absolutely the God of justice. It is God’s justice that gives meaning and coherence to all that God is in Himself, and all that He does in His relations with humans (Baird, 1963:39). Reimer (1997:747) does not separate the foundation of *tsedeqah* into a secular concept and a purely religious one, but the idea of the division in the form of ranking does assist in the task of understanding what is involved in being righteous in biblical texts. He cites the stories of Jacob and Laban (Gen. 30:33), Judah and Tamar (Gen. 38), and David and Saul (1 Sam. 24-26) to exhibit first the loyalty to an existing community relationship or agreement in the same sense of a relationship between Israel and Yahweh, and secondly the moral question of being more virtuous or righteous than the other as the resolution of moral conflict. Reimer (1997:748-749) then introduces the stative uses of *tsedeqah* in legitimate measures and rightly conforming standards (Lev. 19:36 and Deut. 25:15) and the personal contexts of the righteous, blameless and innocent (Gen. 6:9 and 2 Kgs. 10:9). This stative sense does not refer to something they have done, but to something that they are, whether justified for Yahweh’s vindication or judgment. The sense of innocence implied in David’s rule in 2 Sam. 8:15 shades towards the forensic notion of *tsedeqah* to declare innocence and adjudicate by ‘doing what was just and right’ for all his people. Such ideals are at the heart of instructions in the Pentateuch (Exod. 23:7-8; Lev. 19:15; Deut. 16:18-20; 25:1) concerning the proper behaviour of members of the

community following laws of justice and justice alone in various legal codes and moral principles. This, setting aside the theological content, summarizes the uses of *tsedeqah* in both active and stative senses of right behaviours in relation to some self-evident nature of assumed standard of behaviour accepted in the community.

The set pair of *mishpat* and *tsedeqah* is first used in Gen. 18:19 in the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, posing an idea of the necessity of conforming to the will (way) of God. Thereafter, the two words together (1 Kgs. 10:9; 1 Chron. 18:14; 2 Chron. 9:8; Ps. 99:4; Isaiah 9:7; 32:16; 33:5; 59:14; Jes. 4:2; 9:24; 22:3, 15; 23:5; Ezek. 18:5, 19, 21, 27; 33:14, 16, 19; 45:9; Amos 5:7, 24) represent the ideal of social justice (Wright, 2006:367) and form part of the excellence of the judicial system and administration (Reimer, 1997:749-750), when the people are in conformity to the will of God. Rooy (1982:263) also reveals that “the two different words used by Amos include not only the legal and forensic connotations (just judgments), but also the need for concrete decisive action (defence of the poor). These are not two separate matters; rather they are two aspects of the same theological concern that men be imbued with righteousness – read justice – in the totality of their life.” All the elements of *mishpat* and *tsedeqah* we have found so far are shared in the use of the two terms. By far the main use of both terms is to represent the nature of the character, actions and requirements of God (Wright, 2006:367). God’s righteousness-justice is what people need, as much as His love, to realize an encounter with God and this is also an inspiration to be forgiving and kind to others. Weinfeld (1992:238) confirms that the phrase ‘*mishpat* and *tsedeqah*’ does not refer to the proper execution of justice in the judicial sense, but rather expresses, in a general sense, social justice and equity, which is bound up with kindness and mercy. He continues:

This understanding of the term *mishpat* and *tsedeqah* is implicit in the prophetic exhortations. When Micah (6:8) presents the demands of the divine ideal and says, ‘He has told you, man, what is good. And what does the Lord demand of you? Only to do *mishpat* and love *hesed*, and walk humbly with your God’, he is not referring to the proper execution of justice, since (1) the demand is made of every ‘man’, and not every man is a judge of who is responsible for legal rulings, and (2) the last two demands of loving *hesed* and walking humbly imply that the demands are general and moral in nature, referring to good deeds, and thus doing *mishpat* refers to action of social justice. In a similar vein, Amos (5:24) asks that ‘*mishpat* well up like water, *tsedeqah* like a mighty stream’ (Weinfeld, 1992:238).

Both righteousness and justice are aspects of God’s supreme nature and character giving meaning to all the people of God and relating His will and purpose to humankind. It would seem that for the Hebrew, ‘justice’ and ‘righteousness’ are not only parallel but

synonymous, especially when describing the nature and character of God (Baird, 1963:44-45). Many interpreters insist on discerning differences in meaning between these two words. For example, Bacote (2005:415) documents in *Dictionary for the Theological Interpretation of the Bible* his view of these two terms in relation to God, that “*Tsedeqah* reflects God’s righteousness in moral character and His covenant love and faithfulness, as well as the legislative, judicial, and administrative aspects of His action in the world ... *Mishpat* and its cognates emphasize God’s role as lawgiver and just judge as well as the attribute of rectitude.” Stassen and Gushee (2003:345) also argue that “*Tsedeqah* means delivering, community-restoring justice, and *mishpat* means judgment according to right or rights, and thus judgment that vindicates the rights especially of the poor or powerless.” On the other hand, Wright (2006:366-367) finds that ‘righteousness and justice’ or ‘justice and righteousness’ form what is technically called a ‘hendiadys’ – that is, a single complex idea expressed through the use of two words. Whether it is *tsedeqah* or *mishpat*, the meaning of either word not only represents the ‘status’ or ‘being’ (stative use) but also embraces the sense of action (active use) to commit a whole human life in the redemptive covenant in conformity with the divine will. McLaughlin (2008:208) states that the Lord loves both justice (Isaiah 61:8) and righteousness (Isaiah 61:3, 11) and names those who do what the Lord desires as ‘oaks of righteousness’. McLaughlin (2008:208) explains the meaning of the ‘oaks of righteousness’: “‘Righteousness’ is regularly used in parallel with ‘justice’ and the oak serves as a symbol of solidity and strength.” In light of the hendiadys, the primary focus will be on the intensification of meaning and, as such, justice and righteousness will be intertwined for the purpose of this thesis.

Justice in the Old Testament is expressed by both *tsedeqah* and *mishpat*. These terms describe the nature of God in the context of salvation, deliverance, vindication, and restoration. Yahweh is the righteous God and the Saviour who will betroth His people in righteousness and justice. He is the Lord who reigns, governs, and judges the world and His people with righteousness and justice. Yahweh is the sole source of both heavenly and earthly justice. He faithfully fulfils (active) and maintains (stative) the well-being of humanity in the Kingdom of God. The righteousness-justice, whether it is heavenly or earthly, is all God’s righteousness-justice.

4.2.2 New Testament

Justice is also the central theme of the New Testament. Wolterstorff reiterates the importance of the scope of the justice theme in the New Testament:

Justice is the inextricable context and content of the witness of the New Testament writers concerning Jesus and what God was doing in and by His life, death, and resurrection; and that Jesus, in their narrative, carries forward the prophetic sensibility to injustice – that is, the conviction that the fate of the vulnerable low ones is to be interpreted in terms of justice rather than charity and that their condition is to be given priority in the struggle against injustice (Wolterstorff, 2008:122).

The word justice as a noun does not appear in the New Testament of most English Bibles. The Greek word δικαιοσύνη (*dikaiosyne*) is frequently translated as righteousness in the English New Testament. The word group of *dikaiosyne* includes *dikaio* as upright, just, righteous; *dikaio* as justify, vindicate, treat as just, acquit, pronounce or treat as righteous, make or set free from; *dikaioma* as regulation, requirement, commandment, righteous deed; *dikaio* as justly, in a just manner, uprightly; and *dikaiosis* as justification, vindication, acquittal (Brown, 1978:352). Brown summarizes the sayings of the Greek philosophers: “For Plato *dikaiosyne* is basic to the structure of the state (*Rep.* 1-4) and the human soul, and for Aristotle (who devoted *NE* 5 to the subject) it is the chief of human virtues” (Brown, 1978:353). In one word, the Greek word *dike* or the whole word group shapes the status of the axiomatic and unshakable foundation of all human life.

Wolterstorff (2008:110) charges that the English translation of *dikaiosyne* as righteousness in the New Testament faces a serious linguistic obstacle to apprehending what these writings say about justice.

It goes almost without saying that the meaning and connotations of ‘righteousness’ are very different in present-day idiomatic English from those of ‘justice.’ ‘Righteousness’ names primarily if not exclusively a certain trait of personal character ... In everyday speech one seldom any more describes someone as righteous, if one does, the suggestion is that he is self-righteous. ‘Justice,’ by contrast, refers to an interpersonal situation; justice is present when persons are related to each other in a certain way (Wolterstorff, 2008:111).

He cites two examples in the fifth chapter of Matthew to show his point. The fourth beatitude reads, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,” while the eighth beatitude records, “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness.” He comments that the two uses of righteousness in different perspectives are odd: “Apparently, the translators were not struck by the oddity of

someone being persecuted because he is righteous. My own reading of human affairs is that righteous people are either admired or ignored, not persecuted; people who pursue justice are the ones who get in trouble” (Wolterstorff, 2008:111). On the other hand, other terms for *dikaiosyne* are also included in the New Testament. Our Lord Jesus Christ is a good example of one who was persecuted because of righteousness and was a victim of oppression and injustice. Burns (1998:158) finds that the contexts of *dikaiosyne* may call for different translations such as justice (Acts 24:25), justification (Gal. 2:21), righteous (1 John 2:29), or right (Eph. 5:9). In Wolterstorff’s argument, the explanation of using ‘righteousness’ in the eighth beatitude would also embrace the meaning of justice, because of the various meanings in the word group *dike* presented earlier as applicable and appropriate. Wolterstorff’s concern about the ambiguous expression of the use of *dikaiosyne* to refer to either the character trait of righteousness or the social condition of justice demonstrates that the meaning of *dikaiosyne* is not limited only to justice but that the one word encompasses two or more ideas, including both righteousness and justice.

Brown elaborates in detail that the noun *dikaiosyne* denotes, on the one hand, the quality of the righteous person (showing righteousness in the sense of impartiality according to the law or rightful obligations toward the gods and fellow humans), and, on the other hand, the standard which a judge is required to uphold, and which it must be the judge’s aim constantly to restore (Brown, 1978:353-354). Schoenfeld clarifies the Greek word *dike* in its biblical use: “In New Testament *dike*, the term which most often is taken as the Greek equivalent of *tsedek*, does not reflect the idea encompassed in *tsedek*. It refers, instead, to righteousness, which is the result of having faith. The individual is said to be *dikoi* when one has faith in Christ, a status unlike justice and which is not achieved but ascribed as a “free gift of grace” (Schoenfeld, 1989:237).

The doctrine of righteousness is central in the teaching of Jesus who was particularly concerned with sins and sinners rather than upright and the righteous. “For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mt. 9:33). Jesus calls for repentance and desire for God who may justify sinners to fulfil all righteousness (Mt. 3:15) so that they may enter His Kingdom through faith in Christ. The righteousness that is central in Jesus’ teaching and that Jesus searches for is not the active or stative kind of human justice, because humans are all sinful, but focuses on the human’s believing in justified righteousness. Justified righteousness can be described as an act of God whereby He

declares absolutely righteous all who confess and believe in the forgiveness of sins in Christ as their only hope for salvation. It changes the believing sinners' standing before God, declaring them acquitted and accepted by God, with the guilt and penalty of their sins put away forever. Jesus exhorts: "But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Mt. 6:33). The sovereign God is the source of righteousness. His Kingdom is righteousness and righteousness is His Kingdom. Jesus' call for humans to be righteous is in the nature of a free gift and has nothing to do with just rewards (Mt. 20:13-15). Unlike the rabbinic tradition, that by formally fulfilling the laws before the eyes of humans (Mt. 6:1), like whitewashed tombs, seeks rewards from humans and not from God, Jesus does not soften the demands of God's revealed will but intensifies the requirements of the Torah in our total dependence on the character and work of God. God sends rain upon the just and the unjust (Mt. 5:45) but He will separate the wicked and the righteous (Mt. 13:49) at the final judgment. Therefore, Jesus commands: "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mt. 5:20). In order to enter the Kingdom of God ahead of us, humanity must commit to 'the way of righteousness' in God's sight through faith and repentance as Jesus says to us:

I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him (Mt. 21:31-32, NIV).

The calling for repentance and faith in God is the call to receive His free grace as a justified righteousness and, on the other hand, to be saved from the judgment and penalty of sins. In other words, God's righteousness refers both to His ethical demands as well as His own saving deliverance (Ziesler, 1972:130, 135). God's righteousness is all about free deliverance for the righteous with punishment for the wicked. To be 'made righteous', or 'justification', as Ziesler (1972:130) describes, encompasses forgiveness (Acts 13:38) and saving righteousness in confession and faith (2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 1:9) as well as a forensic meaning in terms of judgment by God the judge (Acts 17:31; 1 Pet. 2:23; Rev. 15:3; 16:5, 7; 19:2). Paul's well-known text in Rom. 3:26, "He did it to demonstrate His justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus," expresses both an act and characteristic of God to generate salvation as a free gift within the larger framework of God's righteousness as a decided salvation concept (Nebe, 1992:144). This concept of salvation stems from

the background of the Old Testament in the sense of God's covenant faithfulness and binds together the giver, God Himself, and the receivers, His people, under a reconciled covenant relationship. This can occur from the human perspective only through justification or righteousness by faith. Paul also emphasizes that this human perspective is not our own righteousness by the works of the law but faith that replaces works in the structure of a forensic judgment (Rom. 3:20; 10:3; Phil. 3:9). The outcome of the righteousness of God is that believers are justified freely by His grace (Rom. 3:24). In addition, believers will become instruments in the service of God's righteousness: "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to Him as instruments of righteousness" (Rom. 3:13) and "Now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life" (Rom. 3:22). The instruments of God's righteousness will be made new persons in the attitude of God's mind and created like God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:23-24). Ziesler (1972:153) concludes that "this is then not just ordinary paraenesis, the believer being urged to lead a moral life, despite the fact that it comes in a paraenetic section ... Yet the notion of new creation by God indicates something more – for good works linked to new creation in Christ."

For humans, righteousness in the New Testament refers to obedience to God's will and law, to the double emphasis on activity (ethical and religious), and to one's relation to God. Many passages reference righteousness to human behaviour, such as Mt. 3:15; 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, 33; Acts 13:10; 24:25; Heb. 5:13; 11:7; 12:11; Jas. 1:20; 3:18; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:14; 2 Pet. 2:21; 3:13; 1 Jn. 2:29; 3:7, 10; Rev. 22:11. Ziesler (1972:133) finds that "'fulfil every righteous ordinance' is unlikely as quoted in Mt. 3:15, because the natural word for this would be *dikaioma*, and also because this is not the most natural meaning for *pleroun* either." *Dikaioma* is the fulfilment of God's required ordinances in righteous behaviour and acts of justice by Christ as an act of justification, whereas *pleroun* is the completion and full realization of a personal relationship, involving an ethical and moral 'fulfilment' of God's will. Therefore, Ziesler asserts that the 'fulfilment of every righteous ordinance' in Mt. 3:15 means 'righteousness of life in accordance with the divine will.'

a righteousness which fulfils in that it completes and finalizes that of righteous men of old, and is now revealed in the whole life and mission of Jesus. He is righteous in that he perfectly conforms to the will of God ... It may be argued that 'righteousness' really

means right conduct as performed by the disciples. It is because of this that it has been included here and not with the Messiah's righteousness (Ziesler 1972:133-134).

It is of considerable importance that God's demand on humans for perfect righteousness is the 'made righteousness' or 'justification' as a grace of salvation rather than human effort alone. The incapability of humans, because of sins, to attain perfect righteousness does not stop humans doing righteousness but demands more of the greater righteousness (Mt. 5:20) and total obedience and dependence on God by seeking His own Kingdom and righteousness (Mt. 6:33). Righteousness consequently means that which God approves and wants and which humans accept and practise in the present Kingdom as well as the future Kingdom (Ziesler, 1972:134-135).

Ziesler (1972:138) connects the meaning of *dikaioσύνη* in the New Testament to the attitude of pious, God-fearing, upright people in the Old Testament (Mt. 10:41; 13:17; 23:29, 35; Mk. 6:20; Lk. 1:6, 17; 2:25). This evokes the implications of the 'covenant' category in the Old Testament. The covenant people of God are described as abiding by God's commandments and ordinances as well as preparing for the incarnation of the Messiah. Ziesler (1972:139) confirms that the righteous are shown as awaiting God's salvation (Lk. 2:25) and the 'good and upright' people are looking for the Kingdom of God (Lk. 23:50-51). Salvation and entrance into the Kingdom of God is not determined by righteousness of life but by faithful adherence to God and to the mission of Jesus; the believing people of God are justified under the (new) covenant. So being righteous is primarily the consequence of the work of God towards His people.

James interprets righteousness as a complete saving and ethical term. He first points out that God is not only concerned with the saving righteousness but also with human righteousness. His reference to the kind of righteousness which God demands (Jas. 1:20) is more likely to refer to the ethical context than to God's own saving righteousness. Despite its ethical context, all human good works are placed under the heading of God's, not human, righteousness. James 1:21 explains: "Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you." Ziesler (1972:144) adds that "human righteousness is inadequate, and what is needed is not only a more thoroughgoing kind, but one which comes as God's to those who long for it." A life of human righteousness is nevertheless necessary to exhibit human obedience in faith to abide by the commandments and ordinances of God. James warns that "faith without deeds is dead" (Jas. 2:26). Seifrid

(2000:179) writes that faith without works: “is ‘faith’ in name only, a denatured entity which has neither the character nor the effect of the reality.” That becomes no object and end of the faith. Ziesler (1972:144) defends the position of James: “James is concerned not with how a man becomes accepted by God, but with the sincerity and genuineness of faith, which must be confirmed by a subsequent life of righteousness.” Justice is no less than faith in action in the world. Paul sums up the relation of faith to works in his epistle to the Ephesians: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph. 2:8-10). We were created and saved to do God’s good righteous works of grace on earth. After the restoration of the broken relationship and entrance into a reconciled new covenant between humanity and God through Christ, the subsequent life of righteousness is, as Burns (1998:158) puts it, to re-establish “a community into being and, by extension, the new covenant includes right relationship within this community.” This right relationship in the human community is not a form of righteousness to conform to a moral norm, but is more concerned with a covenant relationship with God.

Nebe spells out loudly how the demand for the righteousness of God is not limited to a demand to be righteous for our own good but a demand to be His instruments in the gospel proclamation:

That justification, and also especially the righteousness of God and righteousness by faith, are part of the content of Paul’s gospel is clear in Rom. 1:16-17. It is also clear that the Gospel points to the proclamation, to the verbal process (cf. also 1 Thess. 2:2, 9; Gal. 2:2), that the Gospel is a power or that the Gospel proclamation is made in power (cf. already the composite *euangelion*). Here the Gospel, according to Rom. 1:16-17, empowers man with righteousness, and especially does the righteousness of God empower man with righteousness by faith. Here it is seen that the Gospel at once means a revelation process and the realization of the righteousness of God, that it creates this and mediates it (Nebe, 1992:148-149).

In Paul’s own words:

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the Gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith’ (Rom. 1:16-17, NIV).

Paul declares that God’s saving righteousness is beyond a covenant relationship in the sense of the Old Testament, as Ziesler (1972:187) confirms: “God’s righteousness is His own covenant loyalty, now in Paul widened beyond a covenant with Israel and made

universal.” The texts of Rom. 1:16-17 and Gal. 2:15-16 include both Jew and Gentile, while Rom. 3:22 says, “This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to **all who believe.**” Whether Jews or Gentiles, humans are now drawn into God’s righteousness and can live by faith in a life of righteousness and a hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5:1; Gal. 5:5). Frey (1992:101) also confirms this universal view: “In a parable ascribed to Jesus this process of concrete universalization reaches its climax: a Samaritan, that is, a social and religious outcast, performs what love commands. Thus the tradition inaugurated by Jesus is a type of universalization which moves away from the centristic point of view.” The centralist perspective quoted by Frey here is the primary relevance of the Old Testament tradition of law and custom to the neighbour belonging to one’s own people; the next comes to the stranger, tolerated as a guest; and finally the members of some other nations (Frey, 1992:101). A permanent universalization was long before installed by God who called all nations to Jerusalem and regarded foreign peoples no longer from an unbridgeable distance but socially and locally through prophetic teaching in the Old Testament. The book of Isaiah is a good example. All nations and powers are under the one true God who in His power and love commands true righteousness towards one another. This well-known passage sums it up:

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16, NIV).

The word of God has consistently presented to humans the nature of God in terms of justice or righteousness throughout the entire Old and New Testaments. Throughout the Bible the meanings of justice or righteousness and their requirements are presented. God actively seeks to teach humankind the way of the Lord, to live a life of righteousness, and reveals both His saving as well as His ethical righteousness in relation to His people by the reward of deliverance and salvation or the punishment of judgment. God’s actions toward humans are the reflection and revelation of that nature toward humans. On the other hand, Oswalt (1986:88) asserts the impossibility of human capacity for just action independent of God when commenting on Isaiah 1:4: “Righteousness is found only in the Lord and in those related to him. It is not the independent possession of anyone. The first appearance of the Holy One of Israel is significant in this context.” Solely by God’s grace is a human forgiven, acquitted, restored to a right relationship through Christ and also made a ‘new creation’ whose life is righteous in Christ. The song of the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 42:1-4 prophesied the mission of Jesus Christ to bring forth justice on earth:

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope (Isaiah 42:1-4, NIV).

Haughey (1977:43-44) interprets this passage as meaning that the Kingdom of peace and justice has entered into history and is already at work to transform the broken world through faith in Jesus Christ. Believers act faithfully as instruments in a present participation in God's work of healing and as agents in His task of bringing forth justice to all nations.

4.3 DOING JUSTICE AS A DIVINE MANDATE: THE CONCEPT AND TEACHING THROUGH BIBLICAL NARRATIVES

This section seeks to understand the fundamental concept of God's justice and righteousness presented in historical stories and themes in the Bible and their teachings for contemporary believers to follow as divine mandates. One must, nevertheless, not expect a fixed blueprint for various forms of justice and righteousness from the Bible. The Old Testament constantly recalls different themes that are further developed into the New Testament. These themes are after all conditioned by the historical socio-political-economic limitations occurring in ancient times. On the other hand, Mallia rightly points out that the recourse we may make to these biblical themes is not through hunting for some sporadic biblical texts in support of our own issue, but through addressing ourselves to this issue within a biblical perspective (Mallia, 1983:34). Christians today may view these biblical themes not as past events recorded in the annals of history, but as a moment living within the consciousness of modern times and with the memory of each living individual. We may then find the likely model in certain historical paradigms from the past events that are reviewed in biblical tradition and try to establish ties with historical praxis that may be effective in the present with hope towards some promised future. Doing justice is grounded on the faith and true knowledge of God in order to act righteously and obediently in conformity to God's norms in compassion, command, and commission exhibited in biblical narratives.

4.3.1 Justice as Compassion: The God Who Loves

Reflection on Creation - Human Rights and Equality

The distinctiveness of human beings from other creatures is God's creation of human beings in His own image and His mandate to rule over all other creatures.

Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Gen. 1:27, NIV).

First of all, we must clarify what it means to constitute the image of God in humanity.

Wright asserts:

We should not so much think of the image of God as an independent 'thing' that we somehow possess. God did not give to human beings the image of God. Rather, it is a dimension of our very creation. The expression 'in our image' is adverbial (it describes the way God made us), not adjectival (as if it simply described a quality we possess). ... To be human is to be the image of God. It is not an extra added on to our species: it is definitive of what it means to be human (Wright, 2004:119).

This dimension of our creation in the image of God applies to all human beings with no exception due to ethnicity, sex difference or covenant status. Wright (2004:423) affirms the will of God for equality: "All other humans are created in the image of God, so this forms the basis of the radical equality of all human beings, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion or any form of social, economic, or political status." Everyone is equal before God because all human beings are conceived in the image and likeness of the One Creator.

Human rights are grounded in the God-human relationship, bearing the image and being given dominion. John Locke suggests in Chapter II, section 6, of his *Second Treatise of Government* that the grounding of human rights is about God sending human beings into the world to be about God's business in the state of nature:

[Reason] teaches all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions: for men being all the workmanship of one omnipotent, and infinitely wise maker; all the servants of one sovereign master; sent into the world by his order, and about his business, they are his property, whose workmanship they are, made to last during his, not one another's pleasure: and being furnished with like faculties, sharing all in one community of nature, there cannot be supposed any such subordination among us, that may authorize us to destroy one another, as if we were made for one another's uses, as the inferior ranks of creatures are for ours (Locke, 1980:21-22).

Wolterstorff (2008:323-341) shows that secular attempts to find a basis for human rights, and secular arguments for commanding respect and protection are fallacious because their determination of self-worth is grounded on rational agency alone. Most secular attempts and arguments are primarily dignity-based approaches which locate human dignity in certain capacities (Wolterstorff, 2008:340). Wolterstorff (2008:334) denies the capacity account that makes human beings as masterpieces based on the complex creative investment of the life and the wonders of internal personal creation and judgment by which persons will make and remake themselves. His argument is that the capacities approaches cannot really stand if a human being severely impaired mentally from birth or in a coma is unable to secure the freedom of right and perform freely any purposive action that is good (Wolterstorff, 2008:338).

Greidanus (1984:7) also finds that the foundation of the secular human rights is built on an extreme form of autonomous human will without God in the picture. Argument for secular human rights concentrates on a socially conferred right order that measures up to some socially transcendent standard set by the human state and human society. Citizens are obligated to obey the legislated statutes, laws, and rules, not only because of the state's authority which is ordained (Rom. 13:1), but also because these acts conform to the standard of justice. Wolterstorff (2008:36, 37) finds that we possess some intrinsic rights that are not conferred by the state or the society but are divinely grounded natural rights and inherent human rights. Therefore, it is unlikely that any secular attempt at grounding a full fledge of human rights will be successful (Wolterstorff, 2008:361). On the other hand, the *Genesis* narrative states that God is the One Creator who grants rights and responsibility. It speaks of likeness and image: God created human beings in His likeness in order that they might serve as His image within creation. This is the basic right conferred by God: to take on His character and to live responsibly as human beings. Stob describes human rights:

Human rights are rooted in the divine act of creation. The Christian says that the basic rights man has are not conferred upon him by impersonal nature, nor by society, but by God. God conferred them not by handing man a certified document detailing them; he conferred them simply by positing man in His creative act (Stob, 1978:131).

The creation in the image of God also means being created as God's agency on earth for a specific task. This is the capacity to serve in the mature and proper form of that nature assembled by God for exercising the cultural mandate and dominion. God wants human beings to live out His nature and character in harmony and orderliness with one another,

respecting each other as individuals made in the image and likeness of God, while worshipping God in order to maintain a vertical relationship directly and continuously with the Lord whose compassion and love bestow worth.

God's compassion for justice is the foundation of His character and He requires human beings to follow:

The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion (Psalms 116:5, NIV).

Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man (Psalms 112:4, NIV).

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8, NIV).

Wolterstorff (2008:360) concludes that "if God loves, in the mode of attachment, each and every human being equally and permanently, then natural human rights inhere in the worth bestowed on human beings by that love." Justice in human rights, therefore, has to do with how a loving creator God has made the world and how he wants humans to live the way of life on earth. For this reason, God demands from us the compassion to uphold the basic human rights of others in love. Rights will, through the act of the compassion of love, form the fabric of justice. Bruland and Mott (1983:35) express how justice is what Christian love does when it is confronted by two or more neighbours: "Because love affirms each person as being as valuable as each other person, love can proffer no reason for preferring the cause of one person over that of another." Justice aids love in the considerations of human rights by discerning among the conflicting demands and claims. God's love works for justice.

The greatest commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ is to 'love the Lord your God and your neighbour' (Mt. 22:37-40). This is the basis of Christian ethics: just action established in love. Love is described as the source and action of God and our necessary response: "We love because He (God) first loved us" (1 John 4:19) and "Let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God" (v. 7). For those have been born of God with love are righteous and do what is right: "If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him" (1 John 2:29). Mott (1982:51) observes that "The concept of human rights reflects the three aspects of love that we have just described; love as equality, in that rights are possessed by all; love as respect, in that rights help preserve

human dignity; love as perception of common needs, in that rights work to protect the minimal conditions for life together.” Love thus states the basic minimum of values of human rights to be respected in a horizontal relationship among human beings. Love motivates the doing of justice. Jesus’ command is to walk in love (2 John 6). This is more than simply a virtue of justice and love but a way of life doing good and right to our neighbour. Mott (1982:44) defines two attributes in relation to love, attitude and intention, with an emphasis on joining together “the status that we assign to the loved one and the behaviour that we intend toward the loved one in contributing to what is good for him or her” in a complete form of social relationship. In light of our Christian faith, an integral human fulfilment of love in righteousness is a realization in the Christian hope for the fulfilment of everything in Jesus.

Reflection on Exodus – Deliverance from Slavery and Oppression

God’s covenant with Israel as His own people is rooted in the Exodus from Egypt when God heard the groaning and crying of the Israelites who were oppressed as slaves.

The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and he remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them (Ex. 2:23-25, NIV).

Wright (2006:268-272) provides an account of the situation of the Israelites in political, economic, social, and spiritual aspects, a situation in which, as the Bible relates, the God of justice demonstrates His redemptive as well as judgment actions. The Israelites were aliens, an ethnic minority group, in Egypt. They had no political power or voice in the social and political structure. Their numerical growth was the main reason for the Egyptians to fear them and become hostile against them. Pharaoh, therefore, ordered a murderous campaign against Israelite male babies. Exodus 1:8-11 describes a gloomy picture of the Israelites’ vulnerability as the target of absurd fear, political oppression, and unjust discrimination. They were ruthlessly used as slaves for hard labour, and suffered poverty as all the benefits went to the Egyptians’ economic advantage. The spiritual nature of Israel’s bondage was the repeated rejection by the Egyptians of their request to make a journey into the wilderness to worship and offer sacrifices to their God YHWH, and the conflict between the true divine power of YHWH and the usurped divine claims of Pharaoh and all the gods of Egypt. The Exodus story “is not merely intent on liberating slaves but on reclaiming worshipers” (Wright, 2006:270) and bringing judgment on all the gods of Egypt. Birch (1991:117) states that these “gods

were identified with the powerful, the wealthy, and the elite. The Pharaoh is himself considered a god.” The judgment on Pharaoh and all the gods of Egypt was the self-revealing activity of God, the Deliverer, to manifest His divine power and declare he was the only God who was worthy of worship.

On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn – both men and animals – and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt (Ex. 12:12, NIV).

God’s decisive action against the oppression and for the freedom of the oppressed was not compelled or made necessary but was unrelated to any special merit on the Israelites’ part. This Exodus experience was totally an initiative of God’s compassion to proffer saving grace and justice; it was a divine action freely taken for the establishment of a covenant relationship with promises of freedom (social deliverance), a nation (political deliverance), and the possession of land (economic deliverance) to the Israelites:

Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord’ (Ex. 6:6-8, NIV).

This narrative of God’s intervention set the precedent for departure not only from the ancient slavery tradition to freeing the suffering oppressed from the oppressors, but also from the hierarchical structure of the religious and social systems to alleviate those at the bottom of the social ladder. McLaughlin, in his little book *Justice in the Balance: Learning from the Prophets*, elaborates the social condition of the historical setting:

All ancient religions included a number of gods organized in a hierarchical structure, with a chief deity (who was always male), lesser gods under him, and servant gods below them ... Most societies were organized in a similar way, with a king at the head, a bureaucracy around him, the general population who did his bidding, and slaves at the bottom of the social ladder ... that particular social structure to be a reflection of the divine realm ... any attempt to change the way society was organized amounted to challenging the gods themselves. This was even more the case in Egypt, where people thought that Pharaoh was the incarnation of Ra, the sun god (McLaughlin, 2008:16-17).

While oppression through poverty and suffering amongst those at the bottom of the social ladder continues to be a reality in the modern world, the Exodus story seems to have an intrinsic value—it is relevant to today’s context. The Israelites were not capable of freeing themselves from captivity primarily because of the unjust political, social, and economic structure, a result of social or structural sin as described in Chapter 2.

There is a social dimension that is more than the sum of total individual acts. The compassionate redemptive act, therefore, must cover more than an individual freedom but include a fully participative role for everyone in all aspects of the society as a whole. There was no external power other than the awesome power of Yahweh who could initiate His motivated divine action to lead the Israelites to the creation of a nation and a faith in the only God. The immediate goal of the Israelites was a journey out of Egypt, an uprooting move, as a permanent liberation from slavery and the hope of a promised land. Psalms 80:8-9: “You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land.” God was not only the Deliverer of the oppressed from bondage but also the Lord King of the nation and the Initiator of a covenant with the Israelites. “I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians” (Ex. 6:7). The Israelites became the people of God under the sovereignty of the God of justice and were reminded from time to time by God’s covenant formula about their historical enslavement in Egypt to enforce justice in their closely knitted community and to avoid injustice and social imbalance.

The result of the gracious deliverance of the Exodus is the faithful individual and national worship of the covenant God of Exodus: “Then we will not turn away from you; revive us, and we will call on your name. Restore us, O Lord God Almighty; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved” (Psalms 80:18-19). The promise of the Exodus deliverance is referred to by prophets in the Old Testament as a template for speaking of God’s redemptive actions, as Wright (2006:274) outlines: it “would be a deliverance that would encompass a reign of justice without oppression, the blessings of economic fruitfulness without exploitation, freedom from violence and fear, and perfect obedience to YHWH based on total forgiveness.” It is God’s complete compassionate act through His people and an integration of both material deliverance and spiritual salvation, not one of either/or but of both/and (Wright, 2006:286).

4.3.2 Justice as Command: The God Who Instructs

Reflection on Divine Laws – Liberation of the Poor and Oppressed

The biblical teaching, especially in the Hebrew Bible, presents the Torah, the topic of laws, for the particular tradition of Israel with the universal aspect of both the biblical

message and application for the ethics of justice. The laws given reveal the character of God and His requirements for His people. God wanted all of us to know that the quality of our relationships with others solely depends on the quality of our relationship to God. According to Gallardo (1983:14), the Ten Commandments are both orders of ritual character and ethical standards. Gallardo (1983:14) writes that the first part of the Ten Commandments “concerns God’s sovereignty over His people. He is the liberator, the only one that deserves obedience. He is a just God and full of mercy; a jealous God, a God of power, and a holy God.” The quality of our relationship to God is the foundation of our relationships with others. So the Commandments move from honouring God to honouring one’s father and mother. The rest of the Ten Commandments are given for the good of the people to safeguard the rights of the poor, the slaves, the aliens, the orphans, the widows, and rights to the possession of land. All these laws in the Ten Commandments are of a preventative character to avoid wrong and evil acts in and among His people.

Despite God’s reminder of His deliverance of the Israelites from the slavery bondage in Egypt when he, through Moses, announced the Ten Commandments, the Israelites did not recall the moral character of their covenant God nor their experience of oppression in Egypt. Not only did they not remove this discriminatory practice of slavery among them, but instead, they conformed to the ancient oppressive traditions and adopted them as their own. Sins set apart the Israelites from God and from each other. Personal self-interest, economic oppression, and structural injustice were the result throughout the history of this community recorded in the Old Testament. God is just and full of mercy. He protects the poor and knows that the poor will always be present. His concern for the poor runs through the whole Bible. There are three groups in particular mentioned frequently for special attention: the orphan, the widow and the ‘alien’ in the land. God recognizes that the Israelites and human beings are not always models of concern for others. In order to transform the social and structural sins in personal, social, and economic relationships into a life of righteousness, God institutes certain mechanisms and structures to counter the injustice and inequality and revert to a harmonious order in the community. This institution of the biblical laws for doing justice has as its primary aim the transformation of attitudes towards fellow human beings as well as the administration of justice. These biblical laws concern the Sabbath year and the year of Jubilee.

The Sabbath Year (Ex. 23:10-12; Lev. 25:1-7, 35-37, 39-40; Deut. 15:1-6, 9-10, 12-18)

The Israelites were ordered by the sacred laws to do certain things for the liberation of soil, slaves, and debtors every seven years, and were forbidden to do certain other things. The Israelites were meant to live as a family, a community of brothers and sisters. They were ordered not to exploit their neighbours and the land but to cancel and redistribute in accordance with the sacred laws. The Sabbath year matches the rhythm of work and rest that God modelled in His creation.

The land has rights, too (Gallardo, 1983:15). It works six years for the harvest of crops and must rest on the seventh year to preserve the fertility of the land. What is left in the seventh year on the land may be set aside as food for the poor. This is affirmed by the sovereignty of God.

Interest was forbidden on loans to their brothers because it can easily add up, making a debt grow too big and beyond the ability to be repaid. A further provision under the Sabbath law was the remission of debts. All debts are to be forgiven. God added an addendum to this provision to shut off loopholes: “It is sinful to refuse a loan to a poor man just because it is the sixth year and the money will be lost in twelve months” (Sider, 1990:68). Gallardo (1983:15) remarks that “the practice was intended to safeguard the rights of people into a rich and a poor class.” Not to widen the gap between the rich and poor was the purpose of the Sabbath provision. This provision is not simply a suggestion but a serious command as God warns: “‘The seventh year, the year for cancelling debts, is near,’ so that you do not show ill will toward your needy brother and give him nothing. He may then appeal to the Lord against you, and you will be found guilty of sin” (Deut. 15:9).

The Sabbath provision also provided for the liberation of slaves who had served for six years. The inequality under the slavery system, under God’s decree, is not to be permanent. Even during the year of slavery services, the slave was not to be treated as a slave, but as any other worker. Human beings are to be treated with dignity even when they are selling themselves as slaves for basic needs of their family. The slaves were not only set free but also supplied with material goods when they left. The freed slaves would be able to remake their life and earn their own way with the supplies of material goods from their former masters. This provision prescribes justice not just mere charity.

The Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:10-24)

The year of Jubilee was a unique year of grace in which liberty was proclaimed after fifty years throughout the land to all its inhabitants. In every fifty years, not only the Sabbath provisions took place to have debts cancelled and debt slaves released, but any land that was sold was to be returned to the original owners or their descendants. In the ancient agricultural society, land was an important capital and means to produce wealth. To be deprived of land was to be without life (Gallardo, 1983:17). To prevent the concentration of lands in a few hands, God ordered the distribution and maintenance of lands to avoid unjust inequalities; He reminded the Israelites that God Himself is Lord and permanent owner of the land (Lev. 25:23). God demanded economic justice among His people and did not allow any sale of land permanently but ordered the people to return to their family property and each to one's own clan in the fiftieth year. The end result of the Jubilee principle is, as Sider comments, after all to promote God's justice:

The Jubilee principle also provided for self-help and self-development. With his land returned, the poor person could again earn his own living. The biblical concept of jubilee underlines the importance of institutionalized mechanisms and structures that promote justice (Sider, 1990:67).

Both the Sabbath year and the year of Jubilee demonstrate God's concern for justice in socioeconomic structures. These laws ordered by the justice of God were meant to liberate those in the lowest social class from permanent poverty and provide them with what they needed to earn their own living. These practices were, however, not always observed within the Israelite community and the prophets, therefore, reminded and exhorted the Israelites repeatedly in the Old Testament. Applying these laws to our contemporary society will be a challenge and may require some creative thinking to operate yet these valid concepts are commanded by the justice of God today.

Reflection on Prophetic Indictment – The Voice for the Voiceless

God raised up prophets as His mouthpieces to address His purpose and will for humanity down through many centuries of the Old and New Testaments. A prophet is 'the called one' who is inspired by God's spirit to proclaim prophecies received from God to the people on contemporary issues such as faith, idolatry, social justice, judgment, and hope of salvation as messages of encouragement, edification, and foretelling (Mounce, 2006:545). The author of the book of Hebrews begins with a specific reference to the Old Testament prophets who spoke as messengers for God:

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe (Heb. 1:1-2, NIV).

While all of the prophets in the Old Testament urged people to conversion and repentance to God and to faithfulness and obedience to the Sinai covenant and the Torah, most of them had a particular theme focusing on justice, particularly social justice. They spoke about how the people lived unfaithfully to the righteous ways of God, departing from God's will for creation articulated in Torah. They denounced the Israelites' evil ways of life and warned them of the consequences of God's judgment in the future. The original plan of God in the Torah was to establish a sample nation of justice and righteousness in His gracious love for other nations and to make concern for vulnerable people central, and care for them a norm. Torah revealed God's will for all people universally and God holds all people accountable for how they should respond to His will. Torah was meant to minimize the gap between rich and powerful elites and a mass of poor, even slaves, landless, and peasants. Torah served as a means of just social order for the nation to fulfil the desire of God for people to live in communion with God and one another.

The Torah and the Old Testament prophetic traditions existed side by side in Israel's history and religious life. They both expressed the importance of a covenant relationship of knowing God and of responding to God's command accountably in communion with the creator God and with others in accordance with God's demand for justice and the establishment of social order. However, social transformation resulted from transgressions as Israel moved away from such covenant faithfulness. Their former experiences of enslavement in Egypt and God's deliverance were totally ignored. Increasing injustice among Israelites profoundly jeopardized and ruined their covenant relationship with God and others. Their wickedness and unfaithfulness led them to neglect the ways of their God and they did not measure up to the standards of the quality and character of the Lord in connection to the covenant relationship which required them to do what is right and just. The prophets uncompromisingly adopted a stance of indictment against those rich and powerful oppressors and a position of advocacy in favour of the poor, the weak, the oppressed, the dispossessed, and victimized, claiming to speak for the God of justice (Wright, 2004:268). In the absence of the moral qualities of justice and righteousness, religious piety and devotion are meaningless and even abhorrent to God, asserted Amos:

I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! (Amos 5:21-24, NIV).

In this respect, Birch (1991:260) writes that “the prophets must announce that the covenant is broken; relationship to God is sundered; the community suffers from this sin.” The prophetic representation of God not only speaks in line with the voice of the laws on how to treat aliens, the oppressed, widows and orphans (Exod. 22:22-24), with the worshipping voice of the Psalms to the Lord who loves the righteous to do good for the oppressed and hungry (Ps. 146:7-9), and with the voice of wisdom for not exploiting the poor (Prov. 22:22-23), but also actually vindicates the impartiality of God (Wright, 2004:268-269). Wright attempts to defend the idea that God’s active concern for the weak and the poor is not a case of biased partiality or a kind of favouritism on the part of God:

The poor as a particular group in society receive God’s special attention because they are the ones who are on the ‘wronged’ side of a situation of chronic injustice – a situation God abhors and wishes to have redressed. For God’s righteous will to be done requires the execution of justice on behalf of the poor. Therefore God takes up their cause, or case, against those who are doing the injustice. God, through His prophets, and ideally also through godly judges, puts himself on the side of ‘the righteous’ – meaning, not the morally sinless, but those who are ‘in the right’ in a situation of social conflict and abuse (Wright, 2004:268).

Before the judgment of Israel’s exile, the oppressors, including the leaders, the monarchy and rulers of Israel, contributed to the establishment of a new and evil social and economic system which was not harmonious with the conception of God’s justice and righteousness for a covenant community and the Torah standard. The Old Testament prophets strongly condemned the covenant people as well as other nations for their injustice in exploiting the poor by taking advantage of an exploitative structure to accumulate land and wealth.

Woe to those who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil on their beds! At morning’s light they carry it out because it is in their power to do it. They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellowman of his inheritance (Amos 2:1-2, NIV).

Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land (Isaiah 5:8, NIV).

As Birch (1991:262) writes:

In addition to loss of material support these Israelites lost identity and benefits. Land was the sign of God’s salvation, the basis of participation in assemblies, cultic festivals,

and mutual defence. It was the basis of freedom as members of God's people; those who lost their land were reduced to slaves, debtors, and wage earners. The law courts provided no protection and were often manipulated to benefit a growing wealthy class.

Poverty and inequality thus plagued these people constantly at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. The exploitative structure encouraged control of the land to be shifted to a few centralized owners who exploited the lower class for their own gain. Israel's God remembered the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt and did not want to see the continuity of the enslavement system upon His covenant people. Torah was established to minimize the sinful oppression and the existence of the unfair system.

In addition, this unfair system dictated corrupt business practices and aggressive exploitation against the poor and the needy.

Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land, saying, 'When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?' – skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat (Amos 8:4-6, NIV).

Shall I acquit a man with dishonest scales, with a bag of false weights? Her rich men are violent; her people are liars and their tongues speak deceitfully (Micah 6:11-12, NIV).

The corrupt rulers in administration and the judicial system were indicted by the prophets because they failed to protect the oppressed and to provide the place for redress of injustice. Instead, they committed outright bribery, serving themselves. Micah thus rebuked the rulers of the Israel for their evil acts against the weak and poor (Micah 3:1-3, 9-12).

Yahweh showed, through the prophets, that Israel's faith in knowing God is equated with the doing of justice (Donahue, 1977:75). Jeremiah was commanded to deliver a word of God's concern for justice and a rebuke against the kings for their unrighteousness (Jer. 22:3-5, 13, 15-16).

Yahweh revealed Himself as a God who is compassionate for the poor and oppressed. When Israel forgot and ignored the covenant and the Torah, it is the prophets who spoke, most explicitly, about the broken covenant relationship with God and His particular concern for the poor and oppressed on behalf of God as well as the voiceless (Donahue, 1977:74). The church, as the chosen people of God, has a special responsibility not only to conform to and practise the Torah but also to defend the

orderly creation of God universally. Paul repeatedly affirms God's appointment of prophets and others as the foundation of the body of Christ to work towards the whole measure of the fullness of Christ:

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:19-20, NIV).
Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues (1 Cor. 12:27-28, NIV).
It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:11-13, NIV).

God has chosen people from among His people and raised them up to be His voice to speak the words of command since the early history of Israel:

I will raise up for them a prophet like you (Moses) from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him (Deut. 18:18, NIV).

The descendents of Abraham and the prophets, as God's own chosen people, are a blessing to all nations to witness to God's justice and love. What the people of God present as justice is not the problem they see but a solution to do with life, particularly for restoration and healing. It is a redemptive concept rather than a punitive message. Even amidst the injustices and the exploitive social structure, the church which consists of the people of God must, as God's prophetic mouthpiece, voice out God's truthful message of justice for the healing of those oppressed and marginalized and, on the other hand, for the restoration of the created order by urging conversion and repentance of those oppressors.

4.3.3 Justice as Mission: The God Who Wills and Acts

Reflection on Covenant and the People of God (Exclusiveness to Inclusiveness)

Achtemeier (1962:80-82) defines righteousness as a covenant concept in both religious (vertical relationship to God) and social (horizontal relationship among people) relations. Israel stood in a covenant relationship with Yahweh who was its initiator, defender, and preserver for His people exclusively. This relationship to Yahweh was a religious concept and its institution was not based on the righteousness of the Israelites. It was prior to all laws and all demands. Achtemeier (1962:82) affirms what counts as

righteous: “It is righteous because it fulfils the demands of a social relationship ... Israel’s righteousness consisted in the fulfilment of the demands of her relationship with Yahweh, but, righteous or unrighteous, she still stood in relationship ... It is a relation based, not on law, but on grace, on Yahweh’s loving choice of a few oppressed Semitic tribes in Egypt to be His people, His peculiar treasure (Ex. 19:4-5).” Under this covenantal relationship, Israelites would place their life under Yahweh’s lordship in faith and follow God’s guidance to preserve the law, peace and wholeness for the demands of righteous communal living.

The language of covenant is first used to describe God’s promises to Abraham and his descendants. God’s gracious initiative to bind Himself in the covenant that he promised irrevocably is because Abraham believed (faith) the Lord and the Lord credited him as righteousness (Gen. 15:6). Regarding the everlasting blessing and historical deliverance from Egypt, Wright (2006:192) describes the status of the descendants of Abraham: “Belonging to Israel necessarily involves being circumcised and observing the Torah of Moses, particularly those laws that most visibly demonstrate the distinctiveness of Jews from the rest of the world – the laws governing clean and unclean areas of life (especially food), and observance of the Sabbath.” The masses of Israelites looked at themselves, Yahweh’s choice of people, as spiritually superior and morally righteous in comparison to other peoples. They believed that their spirituality and righteousness earned them the material blessings and abundant riches. They also believed that they were specially chosen by God and exclusively elected: “You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins” (Amos 3:2). There are many expressions in the Bible that distinguish foreign people from God’s people: His people (Isaiah 11:11, 16; 63:11), my people (Isaiah 52:4), your people (Isaiah 63:14), the God of Israel (Isaiah 21:10; 37:16), the Lord God of Israel (Isaiah 17:6; 21:17; 24:15; 37:21; 45:3), the redeemer and Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 49:7). The Bible also calls Israel a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:6) but this is not exactly an exclusivistic understanding of Israel’s election. Willis (1998:7) explains: “‘Priest’ and ‘holy’ both suggest separation and devotion unto Yahweh, but in a functional way, oriented to service. They were to represent and mediate God, history, glory and His goodness to others.”

Magesa (1984:206) provides the definition of the people of God who “are those who cooperate, and those who, since the beginning of creation, have cooperated with God’s

plan of creation – that is, we now know, with Jesus. These are those who have done justice and favoured life; those who have avoided injustice and infliction of death ... being born to justice, love and the struggle for love that gives one the privilege of belonging to God.” The scope of the people of God is a much wider reality than just the Israelites or the church. The will of God determines the dynamics of His salvation for the whole creation. Magesa (1984:207) clarifies that the people of God do not constitute a visible fellowship of the church, and that their call to wholeness, though just as real and urgent, is classifiable only in a moral sense, not in an institutional sense. What Magesa attempts to explain is the distinction between the covenant people and a wider non-covenantal people of God.

Many biblical writers recognize the distinction between the apparent, visible people of God and the genuine, faithful people of God in the covenantal sense. Amos exhorts the northern nation, Israel:

Seek the Lord and live...
Seek good, not evil, that you may live...
Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph (Amos 5:6, 14, 15, NIV).

Wright (2006:205) spells out explicitly that God calls His covenant people to walk and be blameless (Genesis 17) and to demonstrate righteousness and justice (Genesis 18). He even makes a note that there is an ‘implied conditionality’ in the foundational address in Genesis 12:1-3 (Wright, 2006:206). The speech is a double command with the promises upon Abraham’s leaving his native land to some unknown place. The emphasis of this address is God’s gracious initiative and Abraham’s faith and obedience together incorporated into the covenant. Wright clarifies:

This does not in any way mean that Abraham has merited God’s covenant promises ... not slipping into some caricature of works righteousness by making these observations on the biblical text itself ... Abraham’s response of faith and obedience not only moves God to count him as righteous but also enables God’s promise to move forward toward its universal horizon (Wright, 2006:206).

Obviously, only the faithful and obedient people within the covenant will be redeemed: “Zion (the faithful city) will be redeemed with justice, her penitent ones with righteousness” (Isaiah 1:27). This refers to a small group of people among the Israelites, the remnant, and the ‘narrowing down’ of God’s people to a relatively small group of penitent, faithful believers (Willis, 1998:9). In other words, only the genuine believers are righteous people and attend obediently to a life of righteousness according to the command of God.

Nevertheless, a life of righteousness does not stop at the 'stative' stage of being believers, but extends to the 'active' believers doing justice to others. The book of Isaiah illustrates a very distinct, inclusivistic concept of the people of God. It extols Yahweh as creator and sustainer of all nations and caller of all people in righteousness (Isaiah 40:22-26; 42:5-7; 45:18-21; 48:12-13). Willis (1998:9-10) displays three important aspects of this fundamental truth: (1) "Yahweh is in control of all nations and uses them to carry out His purposes"—for example, He uses Sennacherib to punish Jerusalem for rebelling against Him (Isaiah 10:5-19; 37:14-35). All nations are servants and instruments of God. (2) "Yahweh will use the nations to help the Jews financially, legally, and otherwise in their return to Jerusalem to begin restoring what they had lost in the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile" (Isaiah 49:22-23). God uses all nations to sustain the covenant people. (3) "Yahweh does mighty deeds in behalf of His people and sends His people to the rest of humankind to show the nations that He alone is God in order that they might turn away from idols for false gods to worship Him alone" (Isaiah 2:2-4). God's instruction and laws will be proclaimed from Zion and Jerusalem by His covenant people to all peoples in order that all nations might walk (live) in His righteous ways and paths.

The inclusivistic concept of the people of God can be traced back to God's blessing to Abraham in Genesis 12:

I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you (Genesis 12:2-3, NIV)

This is a dynamic narrative in the Bible about God's salvation plan for all nations through Abraham and is the universal mission of God to bless all nations through the seed of Abraham (Wright, 2006:193). This message is the heart of the gospel for all people of God as announced in the Bible through Paul:

Consider Abraham: 'He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.' So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith (Gal. 3:6-9, NIV).

Wright (2006:194) describes this encompassing promise as 'the gospel in advance': "Blessing for the nations is the bottom line, textually and theologically, of God's promise to Abraham ... And the story of how that blessing for all nations has come

about occupies the rest of the Bible, with Christ as the central focus.” God’s plan is to put the descendents of Abraham in a ‘centrifugal’ movement (Schnabel, 2002:41) from Israel (national and exclusive state) to the nations (universal and inclusive state). The role of the Israelites, the descendents of Abraham under the covenant, in the Old Testament was portrayed as the servant of the Lord who is the ‘light of the nations’ carrying the will of YHWH’s unfailing justice and righteousness to the nations (Isaiah 42:1. 6-7; 49:6; cf. 51:4-6) and the ‘survivors’ (Isaiah 66:18-21) who not only survived God’s judgment on His people but were sent on a commission to the nations, to the remote regions of the earth, in order to proclaim YHWH and the salvation that he has made possible (Schnabel, 2002:41-42). The membership of the people of God will no longer depend on biological descent or bodily mutilation but is to be determined by faithfulness in worshipping and loving the God of all people:

And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to serve him, to love the name of the Lord, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant – these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations (Isaiah 56:6-7, NIV).

As these foreigners keep the covenant, God will bring them to Zion, from a place exclusively for covenant people to ‘a house of prayer for all nations,’ and to Abraham’s family to take part in the feast as Jesus confirmed:

I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven (Mt. 8:11, NIV).

The identity of the people of God is radically dependent upon each individual’s acceptance of Jesus as the one whom the Father has sent, without regard to national, racial, gender or economic differences. Only those who know Jesus and will listen and obey His voice and commands will be members of that ‘one flock, one shepherd’ (John 10:14-18). This obedience is a key element in the confirmation of God’s covenant with him for the blessing of all nations. “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous” (Rom. 5:19). Those who respond to God through faith and obedience will be declared righteousness as God will bring forth justice to them, the foreigners of the nations (Isaiah 42:1), and also God’s salvation to them, to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 49:6). Abraham’s blessing clearly incorporates a universal dimension covering non-Israelites and conveys the fulfilment and promise of both an earthly justice as well as the high and lofty missionary purpose of the divine justice through the

obedience of Christ. Even if they do not know and acknowledge God as the source of the blessing, they still receive from the living God the general blessing and earth justice simply by living in God's blessed creation. God's love is all-encompassing and He wants all to be saved. Wright (2006:219) specifically affirms the redemptive will of God for all nations in Abraham's original blessing: "So the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham comes about not merely as nations are blessed in some general sense but only as they specifically come to know the whole biblical grand story, of which Abraham is a key pivot." The distinction between faithful Israelites and believing Gentiles has been abolished because the criterion for being part of God's family is conclusively on faith alone through the grace in Christ and is no longer based on nationality. When YHWH restores the earth, both repentant Jews and repentant Gentiles will constitute His covenant people (Schnabel, 2002:41).

The blessing for the nations becomes a reality in Abraham's blessing and thus underlines his unique position in a centrifugal movement to bring forth justice to the nations. God's address to Abraham in the blessing is an imperative in the nature of a mission laid on Abraham. Wright (2006:211) discloses: "Blessing here as a command, as a task, as a role, is something that goes beyond the sense of creational abundance that we have seen so far in Genesis. 'Be a blessing' thus entails a purpose and goal that stretches into the future. It is, in short, missional." The reference of Abraham's blessing can be interpreted, in Wright's 'go ... and be a blessing of all nations' formula (2008:208), as the original commission echoed by Jesus' Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 to His disciples – 'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations' (and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you). The church today is the new Israel on earth consisting of believing Jews and Gentiles in sonship or adoption and is the fulfilment and realization of God's promise to Abraham in Christ. The foundation of the new Israel entails not only obedient compliance with God's righteous mandate (as in the historical Israel of the Old Testament) but also the witness of all believers as servants of Christ to the reality and efficacy of the work of Jesus Christ who assembles His people from all nations into God's eternal Kingdom (Rev. 7:9-17). God commissions His church, as His vessels of mercy (Rom. 9:23), to invite the world to see foreshadowed the final destiny that God has prepared for all mankind. Through the work of God's mercy and justice, the new people of God are given their identity by their sharing in the promises of Israel. God graciously and faithfully calls, sustains, judges, and saves them.

“Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Peter 2:10, NIV).

Reflection on Jesus’ Redeemed Justice – The Way to Righteousness

A proper theologically-defined concept of justice must be christocentric with further explication of a robust ecclesiology and the service of discipleship. Bell remarks concerning the Pauline vision of Christ’s justice:

[It] displays justice as the divine redemptive solidarity that has as its end the restoration and renewal of the communion of all in God ... the justice of God that is Jesus Christ entails the endurance of offense and the offer of forgiveness for the sake of justifying the unjust so that through participation in the death and resurrection of Christ the unjust may be made just and so gathered back into communion. (Bell, 2006:95)

The purpose of God’s creation of humanity is for blessedness to bring the communion to fulfilment at the end. Therefore, Christ’s work is not a divine demand for retribution of what is due to human sin, nor a satisfaction for the demands of God’s justice as a victim, but the very embodiment of God’s justice for reconciliation in His obedience, fidelity, and communion (Rom. 5:19). Bell says it well in interpreting justice as participatory, liturgical, and ecclesial:

Justice is not extrinsic to Christian confessions and practices; it is not extrinsic to Jesus. Justice is not something that happens to Jesus or to which he submits. Jesus does not point to justice nor motivate us to go out and do some version of secular justice. Rather, Jesus in His person is the justice of God ... Christ is the Just One of God; accordingly, we are just only insofar as we participate in Jesus’ justice, only insofar as we have graciously been made just (justified) through His gift of Himself ... our being just, our doing justice, is possible only as we are united to Christ ... Jesus as the justice of God does not justify individuals who then go to do justice on their own; rather, Jesus justifies persons in communion ... Being made just and doing justice are a matter of being immersed in the life of the ecclesial community (the body of Christ); to do justice is to be a part of the community whose life is centred in and ordered by Jesus, God’s justice (Bell, 2006:97).

A life of ecclesial community is in communion with Christ, having His attitude in our heart as our worship, offering ourselves to the justice of God. Paul commands the church at Philippi:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled Himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Php. 2:5-11, NIV).

By incorporating ourselves into Christ, who renders and transforms the impossible into the possible, believers are asked to offer ourselves as sacrifices to join in Christ and to be justified. Paul urges all believers to offer ourselves as living sacrifices in spiritual act of worship to attain God's good, pleasing, and perfect will (Rom. 12:1-2). Believers are joined to Christ's justice by being united to His sacrifice. Jesus is the justice of God. Bell (2006:98) comments that doing justice is not only a matter of being joined to Jesus but, in view of the fact that Jesus is the justice of God, is part and parcel of offering Jesus in the dimension of evangelism. This is Christ's transformation of justice within the divine order of charity, the shared love and common good. Justice is then oriented toward redemption in mercy and forgiveness by reconnecting the communion of humanity in God whose faithful activity renews and restores the covenantal relation with humanity, even in the face of human rebellion. Bell elaborates the evangelical dimension of justice:

It is worth noting that just as redeemed justice reconnects the impulse for what is called social justice with [the] evangelical task of offering Jesus, by reconfiguring justice in accord with the scriptural plot of redemption as the renewal of communion, redeemed justice succeeds in reconnecting the concern for justification with social justice advocacy. Renewing and restoring human communion, in God, is intrinsic to the practice of justice. Thus, an evangelism that is not social, not a ministry of reconciliation, and a justification that is not immediately and integrally concerned with breaking down the walls of hostility between peoples (Eph. 2:11-12) is not the good news of Jesus who is the justice of God (Bell, 2006:100).

The 'Great Commission', the evangelical conclusion of Matthew's Gospel, is specifically a mandate to summon people:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Mt. 28:19-20, NIV).

Jesus is not interested merely in the solicitation and conversion of people; His gospel is to summon people to join as disciples in the believing community and to put His teaching into practice. The command for Jesus' disciples is to be a model community living in obedience to God: the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Mt. 5:13-16). Hays (1996:97) specifies the task of this model community: "The church is a demonstration plot in which God's will can be exhibited. For that reason, the righteousness of Jesus' disciples must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees; otherwise, the church will not be a compelling paradigm of the Kingdom that Jesus proclaimed."

Jesus' proclamation of the arrival of the Kingdom of God is no longer focused on the symbols of old Israelite identity such as the temple, the law, and the land, but on the message of the dawn of God's rule in the ministry and person of Jesus (Schnabel, 2002:42-43). Jesus makes it very clear that only those, no matter whether Jews or Gentiles, who believe Him can be set free and secure their permanent place (the Kingdom of God) and only those who hold to His teaching can really be His disciples (John 8:31-38). While the Kingdom preached by Jesus is purified by Him in an eschatological sense and transcends the socio-political realities of this world, Haughey (1977:268) assures us that "it was never meant to leave these or disdain them or prescind from them." We can be sure that Jesus who identifies Himself with the figure predicted by Isaiah (61:1-2; 58:6-7) sees Himself as the fulfilment of the Scripture (Luke 4:20) with a mission and vocation of social responsibility, the socio-political realities of this world. During the life of Jesus on earth, He ministered to those in need, recovered the sight of the blind, and set at liberty those who were oppressed. Haughey (1977:270) states firmly: "Jesus would have looked quite directly at the world of matter and power, and having seen His people surrounded by bondage, oppression and poverty, He would also see its alleviation as an intrinsic part of their salvation and, consequently, His mission." This alleviation was quite different from the usual operation of the social system: the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached was strangely beyond time and the systems of power within which human lives were lived (Haughey, 1977:271). Haughey (1977:271-272) clarifies the power of the Kingdom: "His Kingdom, in other words, is not going to be without power, but the purpose for which it is given, both to Jesus and His followers, is not to govern others or dominate them, but to serve them." It is the same Suffering Servant motif foretold in Isaiah by which Jesus and His disciples were to establish justice among the nations:

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope (Isaiah 42:1-4, NIV).

The way in which we should retain the power of transforming the social system is to serve and even offer our life as a ransom for the many:

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45, NIV).

The power of the Kingdom of God is given through serving for transforming the world, not escaping the world, and is linked to Jesus' mission or 'Great Commission' on earth. This mission is one of justice, both earthly and heavenly.

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount begins with the Beatitudes. These Beatitudes describe specifically the right and just order which God will establish imminently when His reign (the Kingdom of God) has its full effect, even though the human condition at present, when the reign is only partial, involves the disciples of Jesus in mourning, poverty, strife and persecution (Haughey, 1977:276). Jesus' abstract notion of righteousness in the Beatitudes will become reality because Jesus Himself is justice incarnated. Mallia (1983:40) reveals the simultaneous works of Jesus' salvation and social justice: "The salvation of humanity, all work for social justice, is not a matter of a succession of part-time messiahs, nor of faddist religious ideals, nor of elitist higher cultures." The eschatological dimension of salvation is a dynamic future in process now. Jesus is making God's own character and conduct the norm of His disciples: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5:48, NIV). To conform to our Father's perfection norm, disciples must seek communion with Jesus who is the embodiment of the justice of God. Seeking the power of Jesus Christ, we are exhorted not only to conform to the abstract perfect norms as a quality peculiar to God but to transcend and transform the norms of justice into a familiar pattern of behaviour. The teaching of Matthew 6:33, "But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well," implies that in seeking God's reign and His abstract norms our needs will be taken care of. This verse further suggests that both the reign of God in our communion with Christ and the embodiment of His righteousness are God's gifts and sources of right and just order flowing through the disciples to others. God wills His Kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven (Mt. 6:10) and the disciples of Jesus to make disciples and to establish the way of doing justice and being just in the everyday world of people and things. Doing justice is a continuing story of salvation in complying with the 'Great Commission' of offering Jesus, the justice of God, to the world.

Concluding Summary

Biblical justice throughout the Old and New Testaments involves making humans and their communities, and indeed the universe, whole, by upholding the divine perfection in goodness and righteousness. The word of God has consistently presented to humanity,

individually and corporately, the nature of God in justice and righteousness throughout the entire Bible and instructed humankind to live the way of the Lord, to live a life of righteousness, to reveal both His saving as well as His ethical righteousness in relation to His people inclusively by the reward of deliverance and salvation or punishment of judgment. Justice is the nature and character of the sovereign God. He is the ultimate source of both heavenly and earthly (active and stative) justice. He always seeks to make the object of His divine love whole. As we experience His wholeness through Jesus' sacrifice for our sins and injustice, our justice is grounded on the faith and true knowledge of God. The same problems as illustrated in the history of the Israelites above still arise today. Christian believers must not downplay social justice while highlighting private piety, but carry Jesus' justice forward in the world. Doing justice is not only a matter of being justified in Jesus, but is also part and parcel of offering Jesus in the dimension of evangelism. This is Christ's transformation of justice within the divine order of charity, the shared love and common good. Justice is then oriented toward redemption in mercy and forgiveness by reconnecting the communion of humanity in God whose faithful activity renews and restores the covenantal relation with humanity. The concerns of believers should not be limited to life within the Christian community; they must be salt and light by practicing justice outside the believing community. While the church is a visible manifestation of God's Kingdom, though not all of His Kingdom, God is more concerned that His reign should make every realm of His creation whole. Justice is the incarnation in time and space of God's relation to His created world, and justice is the creation-form of life in the divinely given structure of society without which humanity cannot exist (Rooy, 1982:264). The mission of incarnation is one of justice, both heavenly and earthly.

CHAPTER 5: THE CLASSICAL CONCEPTION OF VIRTUE ETHICS AND THE CHRISTIAN VIRTUE ETHICS

5.1 VIRTUE: ETHICS OF ‘BEING’

5.1.1 Introduction

In the last two centuries, most of the contemporary philosophical theories on ethics, whether they are consequentialist or deontological ethics, suffer from an overemphasis on impersonal accounts of ‘practical’ ethics as well as on the analysis of problematic actions with focus on rules, principles, and step-by-step decision-making procedures for resolving moral quandaries (Kotva, 1996:5). Utilitarians tend to formulate an institutional commitment to help maximize global utility while supporters of social contract theories command preferential treatments for the least advantaged. Defenders of deontological ethics insist on the austere motivated act of pure duty by setting apart personal lives from their ordinary impulses and desires. These distinct theories of our modern time seem to dictate depersonalizing results in the application of philosophical ethics without incorporating them into the ordinary daily living of personal characters for actual human beings. According to Kotva (1996:5), there is a radical shift and resurgence of interest in more agent-centred issues such as character traits, personal commitments, community traditions, and the conditions necessary for human excellence and flourishing. This renewed interest in agent-centred ethics, or virtue ethics, represents a different stream of ethical theory from deontology and teleology. Hursthouse (1999:1) exhibits their differences: “Virtue ethics is a term of art, initially introduced to distinguish an approach in normative ethics which emphasizes the virtues, or moral character, in contrast to an approach which emphasizes duties or rules (deontology) or one which emphasizes the consequences of action (utilitarianism).” The return to ‘virtue’ or ‘virtue ethics’ that has now occupied a significant place in the academic sphere is, as found by Kotva (1996:6-10), primarily the result of the widespread perception of a moral crisis in our society today and the failure of modern ethical theories to provide a complete picture of human moral experience. Wilson remarks that the change of emphasis from ‘doing’ to ‘being’ will connect the understanding of who we are, what life is meant to be and what kind of community we

aspire to be (Wilson, 1998:20). This virtue ethics does not mean to be an alternative to modern approaches and theories, such as our deliberations about duties, obligations or consequences, rather it re-conceives the whole understanding of ethics and morality (Wilson, 1998:20).

Despite popular modern approaches to morality that are typically based on either our duty in various situations or the consequences of different actions, virtue has always been a part of the philosophical ethics that originated from the ancient Greek tradition in the development of an appropriate ethic of being or virtue ethic. Virtue is a general term for the Greek word *arête*. It is also translated as excellence in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Sharing the similar idea of Plato's virtue of inner human soul for the harmony of the city (Plato, 1968:122, 443d), Aristotle approaches the good life for humans by examining an activity of human soul in accordance with excellence or the human qualities that make one virtuous and able to act well by choice in a variety of situations (Aristotle, 2002, *NE*, 1103a20). Aristotle defines the virtue of character as naturalistic but acquired through training as dispositions of habituation (Aristotle, 2002, *NE*, 1105b20). O'Brien describes this in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* as acquired virtues:

Virtues are not natural in the sense that they are innate ... Virtue in the natural order can exist only in consequence of deliberate, human activity. In the basic orientation of the mind toward truth and of the will toward the good, there is a certain inclination in the direction of virtue, but it is only through activity that virtue actually comes into being ... Habits are generated and developed, and these are either good or bad, virtues or vices, depending on the kind of action that brings them into being. The development of virtue, then, is not incidental to human activity, but one of two necessary alternatives (O'Brien, 2003:550).

Virtue ethics does not focus on isolated acts of individual human being according to the principles of duty or rule, and is not oriented toward results but on the agent's character motivated to promote virtue or vice. MacIntyre confirms the conception and definition of a virtue as acquired:

A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods (MacIntyre, 2007:191).

The idea of Aristotle's ethical theory is that virtues of character are not innate in us but are the results of the training of habit or through human activities. Van Hooft (2006:56-57) explains that human beings are born with certain character traits and talents but "these natural abilities are not deemed to be virtues, even though they are admirable and

may contribute to *eudaimonia*.” He continues to clarify further on Aristotle’s non-innate idea of virtues as acquired through habitual practice rather than born with:

Although we are not born with virtues, nature does give us the basic ability to be virtuous. But we need to practice virtue in order to acquire it. We need to get into the habit of acting virtuously and this habit will then become a disposition to act in that way (Van Hooft, 2006:57)

Aristotle begins with the training as the first step towards virtue but argues that this trained outward behaviour is not sufficient. He goes on to describe that there is an important dimension to virtue in which a person is only truly virtuous when this person has internalized the habit, along with the relevant attitudes and understandings to decide or make choices, of the virtue into which this person has been trained (Van Hooft, 2006:58). In Aristotle’s own language,

Again, neither do the case of the skills and that of the excellences resemble each other: the things that come about through the agency of skills contain in themselves the mark of their being done well, so that it is enough if they turn out in a certain way, whereas the things that come about in accordance with the excellences count as done justly or moderately not merely because they themselves are of a certain kind, but also because of facts about the agent doing them – first, if he does them knowingly, secondly if he decides to do them, and decides to do them for themselves, and thirdly if he does them from a firm and unchanging disposition (*NE*, 1105a28-34).

A virtue is a disposition to act for reasons that makes us good as human beings in that it builds us to make choices in order to fulfil the goals of our human natures. It is an intrinsic good of a human being to do consistently the good thing for the good reason without serious internal opposition and conflict but within a coherent and unified final end. This intrinsic good of a human being is what Aquinas refers to as the concept of conscience and *synderesis* or natural habit (please see Chapter 3 of this thesis). Conscience is a moral resource in human life formed with the naturally known principles of intellectual knowledge to will naturally and appropriately as a well-being to other objects (*ST*, I-II, A2, Q10). Christian ethicists generally express an acute concern with the functioning of conscience understood as the response of the self within the nexus of Christian fellowship to the humanizing action of God. It is understood that the natural law is ‘present’ to our conscience, as Paul says ‘written in their heart,’ that God has revealed to human beings the laws that work in their hearts (Stob, 1985:62-63). This revealed law in our hearts is the inner content shaping character or character traits and portraying virtues of who we are.

MacIntyre also states his understanding of virtues:

as those dispositions which will not only sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices, but which will also sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good, by enabling us to overcome the harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which we encounter, and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge and increasing knowledge of the good (MacIntyre, 2007:219).

The virtues are necessary for the seeking of the good life for human beings and will enable human beings to understand (self-knowledge) what more and what else the good life for human beings is.

The focus of this classical virtue ethics lies in who we are rather than what we do. It primarily turns the attention to concern about the character and virtue of the person. The action that emerges from an individual, whether it is virtuous or vicious, is an ethic premised on the notion of a true inward human will with a particular conviction about what constitutes the good life or end or *telos*. Virtue ethics thus prompts the focus on moral agents and their contexts and settings rather than the incomplete picture of moral experience in rules and acts. MacIntyre (2007:52) testifies to a teleological scheme along the analysis in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that “there is a fundamental contrast between man-as-he-happens-to-be and man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential-nature.” This is a central concept of virtue ethics rationale that explains an understanding of the transition from the former state, man-as-he-happens-to-be, to the latter, man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential-nature, and how to move from potentiality to act, how to realize the true nature of human beings and to reach the human end or *telos* (MacIntyre, 2007:52). The teleological scheme of a virtue ethics for a conception of human good is not an end external and independent of the virtue of the human. It is rather leading to and constituting the human *telos* in contrast to utilitarian understandings that virtues are merely means to an external end. Kotva summarizes this teleological virtue ethic in a tripartite structure:

- (1) Human-nature-as-it-exists;
- (2) Human-nature-as-it-could-be; and
- (3) Those habits, capacities, interests, inclinations, precepts, injunctions, and prohibitions that will move us from point one to point two (Kotva, 1996:17).

This tripartite structure echoes MacIntyre’s concept of teleological virtue ethics that:

within a teleological virtue ethic certain kinds of actions, habits, capacities and inclinations are discouraged because they direct us away from our true nature. Other kinds of actions, habits, capacities, and inclinations are encouraged because they lead us toward our true end. Virtue theory deals with the transition from who we are to who we

could be. A concern with this transition requires that we also try to discover or uncover our true nature or *telos* and ascertain our present state or nature (Kotva, 1996:17).

MacIntyre's concept of human virtue is "understood as having an essential nature and an essential purpose or function" to be the potentiality of a 'good human' as it exists or happens to be (MacIntyre, 2007:58). Through some accounts of the essence of human as a rational animal and also some accounts of the human *telos*, human beings are enabled to evaluate how they make the transition from the former state to the latter by enjoining the various virtues and prohibit the vices which are their counterparts instruct them how to move from potentiality to act, how to realize our true nature and to reach their true end (MacIntyre, 2007:52). Human beings act out of who they are on the premise of their orientation and character as well as their ability to determine and do the right thing according to their human *telos*. There is always a concern for what kind of people they might become. Kotva (1996:30) displays the relationship and transition between 'being' and 'doing' in the concept of virtue theory that "'being' precedes 'doing,' but 'doing' shapes 'being.' That is, who we have become, including our states of character, precedes and informs our choices and actions. But our choices and actions help shape who we are and thus our future choices and actions." The virtue ethics may place an outward act secondary to the intrinsic natural of virtue but the outward act or conduct is important both as an expression of character and as a means to the development of a holistic human life. Hauerwas (1975:78) also deems being and doing are to be inseparable: "For each virtue to be such, it must be acquired by my activity as a determinate agent – i.e., as a man of character" and quotes Aquinas (*ST*, I-II, 55, 1) to support his statement: "According to Aquinas human virtues are 'operative' habits that determine a power towards its end and its perfection."

5.1.2 Justice is a First and Personal virtue

Rawls begins the preface of his book, *A Theory of Justice*, saying that "Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. Laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust" (Rawls, 1971:3). Rawls says that 'what kind of society' we have is dependent upon whether laws and institutions are just or unjust for the application of distributive justice within the 'basic structure' of the society. Despite the fact that Rawls and Plato share the concept of justice in the social dimension of a harmonized city, Plato, on the contrary, sets forth an ethics of virtues as an ordered integration among the constituent

‘part’ of the human soul (*Republic*, 443d). Grenz summarizes the intrinsic nature of four distinct virtues that Plato extols in *The Republic* (431-441):

- Virtue is wisdom – the ability of human beings to exercise the power of reason to think clearly as well as to know truth and goodness.
- Virtue is courage – the ability of the power of human will to know what to do and what not to fear.
- Virtue is temperance – the ability of the power of human will to control one’s desires.
- Virtue is justice – the ability of human beings to entail the harmonious functioning of wisdom, courage and temperance as ordered and ruled by reason (Grenz, 1997:62).

These four distinct virtues are not separate traits of the society but personal traits of human beings. Grenz (1997:62) elaborates on these four personal traits (virtues): “Instead they are interrelated and inseparable. Together they comprise one integrated virtuous life.” Besides the virtue of wisdom that connects with reason to avoid evil actions and to control desires, Plato puts an emphasis on justice as the virtue of harmonious action to forge a link between the individual and the social dimensions of life (Grenz, 1997:63). More importantly, it is this virtue of justice in its condition and ability to integrate all parts of virtue in social harmony that emerges as all members of the society participate and offer their contributions to the whole. Justice is the virtue which is primarily concerned with others. With justice, we do not merely fulfil our own personal good, but we also ultimately enable the good of relationships with others. Because of its focus on others, it is a broader and more encompassing virtue than the virtues of temperance and fortitude, which concern primarily the self. Slote (2010) puts it succinctly in an article in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: “Plato in the *Republic* treats justice as an overarching virtue of individuals (and of societies), meaning that almost every issue he (or we) would regard as ethical comes in under the notion of justice (*dikaiosune*).” Henry (1957:103) remarks in a single sentence that “Justice is simply the proper concord of all these virtuous elements within the whole.”

Pakaluk (2005:189) describes justice as the “complete virtue as shown toward strangers.” This is Aristotle’s concept of justice, that justice is not a single state of character applying to oneself but rather a certain way to put all of the virtues to use toward others including strangers. That is why Pakaluk (2005:189) states that Aristotle’s concept of justice is ‘the best of all the virtues’ and ‘the high point’ or ‘extreme’ of virtue as the most and best when put to broad use. Aristotle holds such a high view of justice:

But justice gathers in excellence entire. And it is complete excellence to the highest degree because it is the activation of complete excellence; complete, too, because the person who possesses it has the capacity to put his excellence to use in relation to another person as well, and not just by himself; for many people are able to display their excellence in relation to what belongs to them, but incapable of doing so when it comes to dealing with another person (*NE*, 1129b30).

Aristotle concludes the virtue of justice: “This justice, then, is not a part of excellence but excellence as a whole” (*NE*, 1130a10).

Justice is considered to be a personal virtue because of “judging other people objectively and of acting accordingly, treating them as they deserve” (Smith, 1999:362). Smith (1999:381) admits in a note of her article in *Social Theory & Practice* that justice is social in nature insofar as it normally involves a person’s own and individual treatment of another, but we can simply evaluate the justice of a person’s behaviour without going through the lens of some group undertaking or broader social objective. She explicates her support of justice as a personal virtue:

Judging other people encompasses others’ characters, conduct, and products. Judging others objectively means honestly evaluating all available evidence to determine what they deserve ... Justice is a virtue because we can succumb to partiality, bias, or the temptation to allow irrelevant considerations to shape our assessments and treatment of others (Smith, 1999:362-363).

Virtue is a disposition of an individual to act in a certain way. Therefore, just people are not ones who occasionally act justly, or who regularly act justly out of some other motives such as in conformity primarily to rules and principles; rather they are people who reliably and consistently act that way because they place a positive, high intrinsic human will on rendering to others their due and they are really good at it. Despite the social nature of justice doing good to others, Slote (2010) argues against Rawls’s social application of justice: “The justice of individuals is not thought of as primarily involving conformity to just institutions and laws. Rather, the just individual is someone whose soul is guided by a vision of the good, someone in whom reason governs passion and ambition through such a vision.” Smith (1999:361) thus concludes the personal aspect of the virtue of justice, that “an individual may exhibit personal justice in private dealings with others; no reference to any formal social structures is necessary to make the justice of an individual’s actions intelligible.”

The idea of agency spells out the cause of what has happened. Hauerwas writes that this cause originating from a human agent is the source that exerts power to initiate changes and to bring something into existence apart from external event and process:

Men are beings who, because they can envisage, describe, and intend their action, initiate change in themselves and the world around them in such a way that they can claim to be the cause of the change. As an agent I am not any such event, process, or state that is proposed as the ‘real cause’ of my act, such as some intention, motive, or state of willing ... there is a sense in which I am an uncaused power since no other event is necessary to explain my act other than that I as an agent did it (Hauerwas, 1975:88).

The relationships among the self as an agent, a cause, and an act, as interpreted above, clarify the fact that humans can remain unaffected by an external event (laws, rules, and principles) as a cause when one internal event is the primary cause of the effect. The agent is the determination of an act, and the force of the distinction between what we do and what happens to us is dependent primarily on the avowal of the agent (Hauerwas, 1975:89). This agent is thus the primary cause, personally and ultimately accountable for the action which in itself is understood by reference to the purpose of the agent. This is why action is ultimately an agent-concept because the purpose of the act is not only publicly recognizable but the action is finally the agent who is the authority defining what one has done (Hauerwas, 1975:96).

O’Connor defends justice as a personal virtue by adopting Aristotle’s concept of justice in his article in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*. He first indicates that justice is hardly justified as part of the virtue ethics of today because “Justice seems more at home in debates about public policy and social institutions than in descriptions of the moral strengths and weakness of individuals” (O’Connor, 1988:417). Like Plato, Aristotle was certainly concerned with social institutions that embody justice in various kinds of political regime, but his analysis in the fifth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is primarily concerned with justice as a personal disposition or a psychic state of individuals (O’Connor, 1988:418; *NE*, 1130a14). This personal disposition or a psychic state of individuals is independent of and not caused by or sourced from just social or political institutions. The virtue of justice is comparable with friendship or love (*philia*) when Aristotle describes justice: “For like-mindedness seems to be similar, in a way, to friendship ... there is no need for rules of justice between people who are friends, whereas if they are just they still need friendship – and of what is just, the most just is thought to be what belongs to friendship” (*NE*, 1155a25). Friendship is “a kind of excellence” (*NE*, 1155a5), and, as such, it makes a point of the similarity or near-

identity to justice. O'Connor (1988:418) expresses that "We should then expect his [Aristotle's] account of justice to have exactly the sort of resources we need to rehabilitate justice as a personal virtue."

To further strengthen his argument, O'Connor analyzes the vice of the virtue ethics as 'a deficient of motivation' of an individual rather than an import of a special motive and emphasizes justice as a personal virtue in two aspects of the classical account of justice: the *corrective* aspect of justice is the virtue's negative side, telling us what it guards against (injustice), while the *expressive* aspect of justice tells us the positive side of what human capacities it brings into play and perfects in social interaction (O'Connor, 1988:418). On the corrective aspect of justice, there are two fundamental divisions of the personal justice in relation to the other virtues – the *interpersonal* virtues and the *intrapersonal* virtues:

Intrapersonal virtues like justice and benevolence make good our vicious tendency to be partial to our own desires and prerogatives to the detriment of other. On the other, there are intrapersonal virtues that moderate and channel various sorts of desires and emotions. For example, the virtue of temperance moderates and controls our desires for bodily pleasures, while courage controls the effect of fear on our actions (O'Connor, 1988:419).

Nevertheless, the Aristotelian view is that "the intrapersonal virtues are in opposing misorientation toward or overvaluing of the various sorts of inferior ends" but do "not primarily involve the control or correction of egoistic motives" so as the interpersonal virtues which have no role for egoism and control (O'Connor, 1988:419). Misorientation, not egoism, is the key threat to justice and is the root of injustice. It is characterized as the ambitious desire for the pleasure of gaining external goods due to the indifference and lack of concern with promoting justice. Injustice is thus the interpersonal result and outward manifestation of an intrapersonal misorientation (O'Connor, 1988:422). The corrective aspect of justice is not merely to remove the causes of personal or civic conflicts but the development of proper orientation in the hearts of individuals, as O'Connor (1988:422) summarizes: "His [Aristotle's] injustice is but the outward manifestation of a psychic misorientation, and the cure for the underlying moral disease of misorientation will also clear up the symptom of unjust treatment of others."

On the expressive aspect of justice, just action expresses the rational consistency of the agent's exercise of his or her capacity with freedom as well as the mutuality and

reciprocity of his or her particular moral interest in equality and fairness with others (O'Connor, 1988:423). This action is grounded in the personal psychic state and aims at a common pursuit of the good as ends. This is the positive side of human capacities that bring into play and complement the account of justice's corrective aspect. O'Connor (1988:424) reveals that Aristotle's justice does not directly express a human capacity for altruism or impartiality but primarily a capacity for partnership or collegiality. Because justice and friendship express the same excellence and correct the same vices, O'Connor (1988:426) adds that there is no distinction between the natural concern for others embodied in benevolence and the artificial concern for others embodied in justice, but love is the perfection of justice, not a modification of it. The linkage of justice to excellence in partnership or collegiality brings justice close to friendship in the pursuit of some good, whether pleasure or utility or virtuous activity (O'Connor, 1988:426). The human capacity for partnership in Aristotelian justice can thus cure the selfishness of the interpersonal life of misorientation and reorient the agent's pursuit of partnership as higher goods. O'Connor (1988:426-427) finalizes his argument of justice as a personal virtue by saying that "Aristotelian justice can characterize a human being in the way that being a good colleague can, because it focuses on our excellence (virtue) in pursuit of what we hold highest." In summary, the classical sense of the virtue of justice, unlike our contemporary understanding of justice as cold and strange public policies and social institutions, focuses on the moral agent's habitual disposition toward personal virtue with a concern for others in the pursuit of the *telos*.

Both classic and contemporary theories find that justice is more than simply a virtue: it is the foundation of civilized human life. The virtue of justice is well described by contemporary liberal theories as the primal articulation of the foundational moral experience of the value of human life and its community. Crossin raises his concern about the danger of putting attention solely on human work for justice:

This refers to the danger of seeing work for justice as a purely human effort rather than as a project undertaken only with the help of God. It is not a matter of ... trying to build the Kingdom of God on earth with our own good works, or of trying to make the poor rich. It is a matter of loving as Christ loved - and as God commands. Thus, ultimately one is not attempting a merely human project but a project founded on the love of God and aided, sustained and fulfilled in grace. Christian concern for the poor is rooted deeply in spiritual values (Crossin, 1985:34).

The liberation or salvation of the world is not merely a human project and does not depend on our virtue of justice, or any other personal virtue, in human efforts alone. The

work of justice must be centred on Jesus Christ who revealed the gracious quality of God's love that sets humans free to work under the Holy Spirit in the service of His Kingdom.

5.1.3 Objections to Virtue Ethics

The return to an ethic of virtue represents the recognition of the inadequacy of our modern ethical theories and of the breaking down of personal morality in our culture. This renewed emphasis on an account of virtue leads us to re-examine who we are as moral beings and to ask where and what we should be. The individual with his or her acts becomes the primary criterion for ethical analysis. While the foundational moral claim of virtue ethics rests on the agent, or on human character, the ethical task of each individual is to become a certain sort of person and to respond in a certain way of action, or to pursue the moral 'goodness' of an ideal human character as the human end. Solomon (1988:433) presents his analysis that this goodness is, however, tainted with contingency beyond the control of an agent's character because the agent's feeling of natural benevolence towards others is constrained dependent upon the occasion (condition) of action and is outside one's rational control. He elaborates:

Some persons, biologically or genetically, may be naturally disposed to care for others; others may have had inculcated in them by social training, either of an explicit or implicit sort, a tendency to have certain benevolent feelings toward others. In either case, the agent does not have it within his power upon the occasion of action to call up such feelings if they are not already there. If the presence of such feelings, or the disposition to have such feelings on certain occasions, is used as a determinate of moral goodness, then an agent's level of moral goodness will be, at least partly, a matter of luck (Solomon, 1988:433).

Solomon does not totally eliminate the concept of virtue ethics outright. The disposition of an individual, as he interprets it, may have been partly developed and trained by the particular setting of the culture and society around him or her. The social training may then produce different dispositions and various concepts of goodness among moral agents of different backgrounds. Secondly, the goodness of the human activity, at the time of the action, may be subject to the presence of the individual's feeling on certain occasions and a result of random efforts (luck). In other words, the moral agent may not be motivated totally from the inner psychic state but from something external to him or her. Virtue ethics can then turn into inconsistent grounds of motivation, within or outside rational control, towards disposition and human end. The ethics of virtue is vulnerable to the contingency argument, but both consequentialist and deontological

theories also cannot escape the same charge. If moral goodness is under the objective reading of consequentialist and deontological theories, it is still determined by the value of the actual consequences of the agent's motivation and action influenced by the inner psychic state and external matters. It is true that "the actual consequences of an action are influenced not only by the intention of the agent, but also by all of the natural contingencies of the world that intervene between the intention and the consequences" (Solomon, 1988:440). The amount of effort by the moral agent cannot insure that the final actual consequence is consistent and will match the original intention of the human goal.

The contingency constraint may also work closely with the action guidance problem to form similar objections. In the absence of principles or rules (action guides generally), the ethics of virtue lacks the capacity to yield suitably determinate guidance and is unhelpful to associate with reference to Aristotle's right objects (human *telos*), towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way (Solomon, 1988:432). On the other hand, normative ethics theories (consequentialist and deontological theories) provide guidance on actions and help deliver moral agents from moral conflict and perplexity. Solomon (1988:433) concludes that "it is the very nature of an ethics of virtue that it cannot provide the kind of determinate guidance for action that is required in an adequate normative ethics." The human capacity in disposition is questionable and the final actual consequence remains inconsistent.

Hence, the inconsistency in actions because of the contingency constraint and the action guidance problem explained above would generate the charge of relativism. Without the objective and universal action guidance, the moral agent may pick out actions as right or wrong only relative and contingent to a particular culture of his or her own. This runs into different virtue conflicts as well as the justification problems of how the moral agent constitutes or justifies his or her ethical belief that may be skeptical or pluralistic from others in cultural variation.

There is definitely a connection between the human end (goodness or flourishing) and all considerations about the way of life of an individual as a member of a certain social tradition. There is, therefore, a dilemma of different cultures embodying different virtues. MacIntyre (2007:276), a strong defender against the accusation of virtue relativism, writes that the rational grounding of moral issues is independent of the social

particularities of traditions, but admits that if there is no rational resolution of their disagreement “there is no moral rationality which is not internal to and relative to some particular tradition.” He accepts the consequences:

For it is sometimes at least possible that one such tradition may appeal for a verdict in its favour against its rival to types of consideration which are already accorded weight in both the competing traditions (MacIntyre, 2007:276).

Annas (2006:531-532) also warns that socially embedded virtue runs the risk of falling into relativism to existing traditions and societies: “The different virtues are developed within contexts which cannot be meaningfully compared and thus are removed from mutual discussion and criticism.” The socially embedded virtue is not only operative at the expense of reflection about the ethical tenability but there is also lesser emphasis on the role of practical reasoning within the virtues. Regarding the relative nature of virtue ethics, Cottingham concludes:

The ethic of the virtue theorist is an ethic for particular individuals, in a particular social setting, whose lives are informed from the outset by an autocratically determined network of preferential commitments (Cottingham, 1996:64).

Ethical relativism is a significant problem for forming a complete body of an accepted moral theory. Smith (2003:195) insists, “If ethics are relative, then there are no common, overarching moral truths to be known.” On the other hand, Smith (2003:206) defends the Christian way of life as the solution to the charge of relativism: “This is due precisely to the fact that Christians have a normative standard, the Bible, as God’s special revelation, and thus there is a clear basis to prevent anything, even atrocities, from being justified.”

Eudaimonia is the ultimate human goal and is the key concept of Aristotle’s human good or flourishing being the internal driving force for a quality of disposition and fulfilment for an individual life. The entire effort seems to be self-centred with a narrowed conception of the self to achieve an implausible independent flourishing. Annas (2006:530) defends the egoistic objection to virtue ethics on one hand but recognizes the consequence of this narrowed conception of flourishing as an easy target of objection: “Many critics see virtue ethics as this unattractive combination of high-mindedness and selfishness.” If one acts virtuously because it brings him or her closer to the ultimate goal of his or her own flourishing, then, it appears, one is acting from a selfish, if not egoistic, motivation. O’Connor (1988:419) admits this focus on self is a kind of selfishness for the sake of becoming one’s own good. Virtue theorists may argue

that one, in order to become good, must acquire virtues such as justice, benevolence, and charity, which take as the focus the well-being of others, or are other-regarding. Cottingham (1996:71) calls to mind Aristotle's dictum of *eudaimonia* as a goal solely for the complete life of a single individual or the autocentric perspective of virtue ethics. To support his argument, Cottingham (1996:71-73) adopts Descartes' theory of 'generosity,' a traditional category of cardinal virtue, as a general remedy for every disorder of the passions. Generosity, in the traditional genetic sense of 'nobility', is a virtue whose achievement depends on inner rectitude alone. This nobility or the virtue of noble-mindedness, as Cottingham (1996:72) explains, "implies a certain dignity and legitimate self-esteem" and "causes a person's self-esteem to be as great as it may legitimately be." The self-regarded objection takes the form of acting generously for self-interest as a motivation for one's action. O'Connor (1988:426) suggests that the human capacity with the disposition for partnership in Aristotelian justice can thus cure the selfishness of the interpersonal life of misorientation, and reorient the agent's pursuit of partnership as a higher good. O'Connor provides no further explanation of what higher goods are and how these goods are not accounted for self-regarded purposes. This defence for selfishness does not satisfactorily cover all grounds and remains unconvincing.

The call for discipleship in the Christian Bible involves becoming like Jesus in one's character. This is a God-centred initiative, rather than a self-centred or self-regarding disposition, to be in humility before God, dependent on God, and obedient to God (Smith, 2003:171). The New Testament focus on individual spiritual growth is not a selfish action in isolation from others but an emphasis that looks toward a mature Christian life growing together in a community. The book of Hebrews likewise shares the concern for togetherness: "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:24-25, NIV).

Aristotle recognizes that to complete the highest good in virtue and self-sufficiency is a gift of the gods:

Well, if anything is a gift of the gods to mankind, it is reasonable to suppose that happiness is god-given – more than any other human possession, by the same degree that it is best (Aristotle, 2002:103, *NE*,1099b10).

The fulfilment of excellence, as such, is something godlike and blessed. It is not totally under the sole control of mankind. This gift of happiness or flourishing is conferred by the gods, Aristotle says. The internal psychic alone is not sufficient to achieve the ultimate human good but the best results are in the contemplation of God to be the best standard of human life. Pakaluk (2005:320) interprets Aristotle's argument (*NE*, 1177b26) so that a person having human virtue, without talents in metaphysics or theology, can still attain some sort of happiness, but admittedly not the best sort. This is 'happiness in a secondary sense.' Pakaluk affirms that "a life centred on theoretical activity is better than a life centred on practical virtue, on the grounds that the former is godlike activity, whereas the latter is distinctively human, and gods are better than human beings." This is in line with Christian theology: that one must live in a god-centred way and have something godlike within him.

The resurgence of virtue ethics has drawn significant interest but the inadequacies as cited above prevent it from becoming an independent alternative to other forms of ethical theories. Kotva (1996:32) makes a fair statement on the adequacy or inadequacy of the virtue ethics: "Virtue ethics cannot offer a thoroughly systematic account of moral deliberation that would guide us in every detail. No theory can completely capture the elements of surprise, complexity, contextual variety, and situational specificity relevant to good moral deliberation." The ideal of human excellence and perfection in human *telos* can never be fully realized as a higher or highest good unless it is given by God. MacIntyre (2007:277-278) indicates at the end of the postscript to the second edition of *After Virtue* that there is still paradox adhering to Aristotelian virtue ethics, requiring a larger scale of supplements to his own work in progress; he stresses that the notable inadequacy "is the lack of anything like an adequate treatment of the relationship of the Aristotelian tradition of the virtues to the religion of the Bible and to its theology." My next section will attempt to put the focus on Christian virtue ethics, how the classical virtue ethics may enable more faithful Christian living as a community, and how a Christian virtuous life works in the acknowledgement of God and in the setting of human goals aiming at the Kingdom of God.

5.2 CHRISTIAN VIRTUE ETHICS

5.2.1 An Ontological Foundation of Christian Virtues

Christian ethicists like MacIntyre and Hauerwas recognize the importance of not only what we are now doing (action) but who we are now becoming (being). Jesus invites us to become certain people to act in a certain way as His disciples, children of God, and heirs of the Kingdom. In the gospels and Paul's epistles, Christian believers are summoned "to commit to a life-long journey of personal growth, love, and service in response to the merciful love of God in Jesus Christ" (Harrington and Keenan, 2002:24). A response in total obedience to God's grace in faith will lead believers as Christian new beings into a unique, particular, and individual realization of God's love and an enrichment of the attitudes and dispositions. These biblical virtues extolled in the Scripture are the revealed words and instructions of God for reinforcing the divine moral character that is manifest in the Lord Jesus Christ. Keenan finds that virtue ethics can offer many resources providing us:

[They provide us with] bridges between moral theology and a variety of other fields, such as spirituality, worship, church life, and Scripture. In this way, virtue ethics unites fields of theology that have long been isolated from one another ... In fact, the greatest bridge that virtue ethics provides is the direct connection between theologians and pastors and their communities as they try to respond to the call of Christ (Harrington and Keenan, 2002:25).

Every area of our life reflects something about the kind of people we are. There is no account of the virtues independent of our being and the lively application of theology. The virtue ethics does offer the hope that guides and connects some vision and conception of the good for humans. The account of the good life is not merely a disposition for action but also leads in the pursuit of the purpose, the goal, and the destiny of human life. This sounds an appeal to regain the moral good from the moral crisis in our society today. Aristotle admits the inadequacy of the virtue ethics in achieving the higher good without gods, and Wilson (1998:27) also acknowledges: "However, for a Christian none of these accounts goes far enough. The Gospel reveals that the good of humanity is not found in any human institution but is given in the Kingdom of God. The conviction relativizes all other accounts of the good and brings all human loyalties under the lordship of Jesus Christ." God Himself is the only source providing a sound foundation in reality for virtues.

Wilson does not defend the vitality of the virtue ethics for our Christian living. He instead provides a Christian account of virtue ethics that is transformed by the Gospel. First of all, the Christian virtues are built on the foundation of God's grace; humans must come before God with a contrite heart and recognize that only the work of the Spirit in our lives enables the Christian life (Wilson, 1998:35). He elaborates that "Christian virtue directs us toward the habitual patterns of the Christian life that witness to the Gospel ... practices directs the church toward the kind of community that embodies and forms these virtues" (Wilson, 1998:35). God's grace is His loving initiative alone that constitutes the believers' particular character. For the radical consequence of the Fall, human conditions are characterized under the curse of pride, guilt, and inauthenticity. Paul shows this human condition, saying, "For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing" (Rom. 7:19, NIV).

Farley (1995:162) thus says: "Without God's grace, without God's forgiveness of pride and loss of self-wholeness, acts of freedom and accountability would remain bound by a darkness of the self – a darkness whose levels even of goodness would be overshadowed by the constant presence of inauthenticity."

Faith is a paramount virtue in response to the mystery of God's grace. Farley (1995:163) writes, "What a person believes and values, what he or she dares to become and be, or what communities and relationships he or she wills to support and cherish, have tremendous impact on shaping character." Faith not only brings together fragmented elements into the formation of character and being but also enlarges a self to the wholeness or the fullness of being. A transformed virtue through faith then diminishes the selfish 'self-regarding' disposition to become "the person whose being is at the disposal of others and ultimately at the disposal of God ... because such a soul knows that it is not its own ... does not belong to itself" (Farley, 1995:163). Paul says this:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20, NIV).

Without a commitment in faith to the reconciliation between sinners in this broken world and God, humanity could not have the character of love, discernment and trust that is proper to the people of God within the church community who share already, by

God's grace through faith, in the divine life opened up to us in Christ Jesus. Dulles defends the faith associated with human virtues:

Faith ... lies at the basis of all authentic virtue. Where there is not love of God, there can be no true virtue, but an authentic, supernatural love of God must rest upon faith. Thus faith is at least a pre-condition for all true virtues, including that of justice (Dulles, 1971:16).

Wilson views a Christian ethic of virtue based on an understanding of reality very different from other virtue ethics. Christian virtue is not what humans achieve but what God enables and it is ontologically rooted in the grace of God through the atonement of Jesus Christ to envision the final ends and the good of creation (Wilson, 1998:36-37). The attainment of the goodness is solely the work of God, not humans, through the Holy Spirit. In the same context, Aquinas (1984:55) speaks of virtue in his own theological language as infused virtue: "The efficient cause of infused virtue, which is the virtue defined here, is God. The definition therefore says, 'which God works in us without us.'" He continues to explicate his definition of infused virtue:

Infused virtue is caused in us by God without action on our part, but not without our consent. The expression 'which God works in us without us' is to be understood in that way. As to actions done by us, God causes them in us but not without action on our part, for God works in every will and nature (Aquinas, 1984:56).

Despite the disagreement between Protestants and Catholics about the theological concept of infusion as a permanent endowment of grace at justification, all Christians must accept that God alone is the unquestioned focal point of the existence of Christian virtues. Only through His continuing work in believers can Christians attain the perfect goodness that God wants all believers to experience. To accept God in faith thus deepens the believer's sense of wholeness as a human being and a reconciled relationship with the self-revealing God who leads the Christian to become God's self-revelation in pursuit of God's highest good for the reality, presence, and needs of oneself as well as one's neighbour.

By accepting God in faith, the transformation of the self is effected and the Christian believer knows that he or she now belongs to God and not to the self any more. The life of the Christian will rest on God's purposes and begin the task of linking virtue ethics to sanctification under God's continuing guidance and gracious forgiveness. Kotva (1996:72) finds that sanctification is a process involving the continuing growth and transformation of oneself and one's character toward a partially determinate picture of the human good or end. He summarizes the theological points on sanctification from

varied traditions such as Hendrikus Berkhof (Dutch Reformed), Millard J. Erickson (Baptist General Conference), and John Macquarrie (Anglican) in a conclusion:

It should be readily apparent that our authors' descriptions of sanctification resemble virtue ethics at key points. Sanctification is a teleological process that involves the transformation of the self and the development of character traits or virtues. The end or goal of sanctification can be variously designated but is frequently discussed in terms of likeness or conformity to Christ. 'Conformity to Christ' thus provides a sense of sanctification's goal (Kotva, 1996:73-74).

Grenz also declares:

The task of fulfilling our purpose as the *imago Dei* involves our being transformed into conformity with Christ (2 Cor. 3:18), who is the embodiment of the divine image (Col. 1:15). This entails being imbued with Jesus' own character and being motivated with the ideals that he exemplified. Thereby we become the glorified saints that God has already declared us to be (Grenz, 1997:277).

Kotva (1996:73) repeats Macquarrie's tripartite division of faith, hope, and love as a sanctification process in relation to Christian virtues. He interprets:

Faith concerns obedience to God, in conformity with Christ's own obedience, and the freedom ('from the tyranny of things ... from the frustration and meaninglessness of a life impotent in the face of guilt') that comes with that obedience. Hope looks forward to God's continuing activity of creation and reconciliation. Love leads to community in which we help others reach their potential (Kotva, 1996:73).

Farley (1995:170-173) describes the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love as instrumental for attaining the higher calling and goals of God. He begins with faith, which is to accept God in the very name of the wonder and transcendence of all human experience. This faith is also instrumental to transcend the self and acknowledge the uniqueness of the self as witness to the truth and the world in order to deepen one's sense of wholeness as a human being for the divine calling that leads to profound healing and new meaning and order for self and neighbours (Farley, 1995:170-171). Hope supplies the sustaining power needed for perseverance and endurance to carry out a Christian moral agent's faithful commitment to moral values. Farley (1995:171) defines hope as an anticipation of the future: "What Christian hope, based on its faith in God, is willing to risk is that the future one faces is filled with the reality, kindness, and the power of God." The future is an anticipated ideal of human excellence and perfection. The Christian life on earth is a hope to move toward a fuller realization of the human good which is the Kingdom of God. Kotva (1996:76) adds that "Christians believe in an end beyond this life, but it only completes the renewal begun in this world. The goal after death is the consummation of a journey or process begun in repentance

and continued in sanctification.” Hope is the ultimate goal for humans in the glorification of our God and His Kingdom involving the perfecting of human earthly life in culmination of the process of salvation.

The last of the tripartite division is love. “God is love” (1 John 4:8, NIV). The love of God is the motivating spirit behind God’s acts and salvation. Christians bring and share love with neighbours and bear witness to the power of love as their highest moral value because they have been loved. Farley (1995:172) reveals that “Love both compels the Christian to take the ethical and the universal seriously and allows the believer to be human in a way that transcends the universal and can draw one’s neighbour beyond it toward the Eternal.” In the order of perfection, Aquinas (1984:123) puts charity (love) before faith and hope in that “both faith and hope are formed by charity and so acquire the perfection of virtue. Charity is thus the mother and root of all virtues insofar as it is the form of all virtues.” Paul’s word in the book of Timothy is the basis of Aquinas’s argument: “The goal of this command is love” (1 Tim. 1:5, NIV). Love is the motivation of all virtues, in that it commands the activities of all other virtues as the higher power to the lower power toward the goal of the higher good or perfection (*ST*, II-II, A8, Q23).

The secular understanding of classical virtue ethics gives the virtue of justice a high value, as it is said to be the link that harmonizes all other forms of virtues. On the other hand, Aquinas values love or charity as the mother and root of all other virtues, including the virtue of justice, because of the order of higher perfection. The theme of love is enjoined throughout the Bible: Jesus’ summary imperative to love God and one’s neighbour is the greatest commandment. This is the Christian tradition known as ‘the core and climax of the whole of moral doctrine’ (Grenz, 1997:278).

The Bible focuses on love as an acclaimed quality that Christians pursue in the theological and ethical meaning of the concept of the character of God. Love is central because it is the foundational principle and primary context for living as believers. Tillich describes love as the higher principle and actual unity of life in his book, *Morality and Beyond*:

I have given no definition of love. This is impossible because there is no higher principle by which it can be defined. It is life itself in its actual unity. The forms and structures in which love embodies itself are the forms and structures in which life is possible, in which life overcomes its self-destructive forces. And this is the meaning of

ethics: the expression of the ways in which love embodies itself, and life is maintained and saved (Tillich, 1963:94-95).

Tillich conducts another study on the virtue of love by adopting an ontological analysis in a little book, *Love, Power, and Justice*, to describe love in relation and unity with the virtues of power and justice. Ontology, to Tillich, is the foundation of metaphysics, but not metaphysics itself. It asks question of being and encounters the reality to reveal the universal structural elements participating in being as well as the qualities of being (Tillich, 1960:23). Kirkpatrick (2003:5) consents with this presupposition: “Without asserting some metaphysical theory that accounts for God’s ontological reality, theistic ethics cannot get off the ground”. He expounds further: “however, the grounding of this metaphysics need not entail the traditional or classical notions of God as non-temporal, impassable, unable to act in history, and ontologically transcendent of all that is finite and historical” (Kirkpatrick, 2003:5). The ontological character of love begins with life. Life, as Tillich reasons, is being in actuality while love is the moving power of life, but this being is not actuality without the love to unite everything to everything (Tillich, 1960:25). Love drives the unity of the estranged towards an ultimate belongingness in self-fulfilment.

Power is a potentiality that exists or is actualized only in a being’s encounter with the other as a form of self-affirmation dynamics in overcoming internal and external resistance or non-being (Tillich, 1960:35-41). This power of being, as Tillich calls it, is to shape the self in its self-centredness by a stabilized balance against disruptive tendencies and a union of all constitutive elements (love and justice included) without the exclusion of most of them (Tillich, 1960:52).

Justice is an adequate form in which the power of being actualizes itself under the principle of love to encounter all essential elements of personal existence such as adequacy, equality, human rather than thing, and liberty (Tillich, 1960:56-62). Tillich stresses that justice preserves what love reunites but love is the ultimate principle of justice:

Love does not do more than justice demands, but love is the ultimate principle of justice. Love reunites; justice preserves what is to be united. It is the form in which and through which love performs its work. Justice in its ultimate meaning is creative justice, and creative justice is the form of reuniting love (Tillich, 1960:71)

Tillich leads us to realize the unity of love, power, and justice as the ultimate reality in the divine ground for human existence. God is the subject of all symbolic statements in human concerns of love, power, and justice. The symbolic in relation to God is the only true way of speaking about God, with whom we have a person-to-person encounter, and whose life transcends our life infinitely in being and meaning (Tillich, 1960:109-110). Tillich (1960:111) concludes that “to see love, power, and justice as true symbols of the divine life, means to see their ultimate unity.” The importance of the unity and proper application of love, power, and justice is that it provides a system of checks and balances to ensure harmonious personal relations, group relations, and divine relations. Love, power, and justice are rooted in the divine life, the highest being, in something “which transcends our life infinitely in being and meaning and altogether are true symbols of the divine life as the ultimate unity” (Tillich, 1960:110-111). To preserve human life in unambiguous good, humankind must reunite in terms of love, power, and justice as one unity which humankind receive from God who transcends and affirms them:

Love, power, and justice are united in God and they are united in the new creation of God in the world (Tillich, 1960:115).

God is His own self-existent principle of virtue ethics. His being is unitary; He is not composed of a number of parts working harmoniously, but is simply one. His goodness flowing out of His love is not goodness if it is without justice and power. The same applies to justice without love and power or power without love and justice. Since the God of love is also just and powerful God, the virtues of love, power, and justice cannot stand juxtaposed. Love may go beyond justice with power, but it can never seek less than justice and become powerless. All these three virtues in love, power, and justice must serve each other in order to achieve the human ends. Therefore, Christian believers as new creations of God must reunite the virtues of love, power, and justice which Christians receive from God as new beings in Christ in the pursuit of the supreme goodness.

5.2.2 A Covenantal Model of Christian Virtue Ethics

The ontological conception of God as an infinite being, as a standard of righteousness, or as a source of virtues, seems to embrace an idea of transcendence in which the reality of God is hardly affirmed or denied. Tillich (1959:10) does not consider his ontological view of God as an approach of avoiding a stranger but an innermost unity with God in

an intimate relationship: “In the first way (‘overcoming estrangement’ or the ‘ontological’ view) man discovers himself when he discovers God; he discovers something that is identical with himself although it transcends him infinitely, something from which he is estranged, but from which he never has been and never can be separated.” Human souls are not strangers to God but have a continuing knowledge of God. To encounter Him is like not only meeting but recognizing a stranger (a genuine ‘otherness’) with an awareness of His presence that is always immanent. Humans form their knowledge of God *a posteriori* from the revelation He gives them of Himself in His activities rather than *a priori* (Horton, 2004:344). God communicates directly and primarily His goods, not simply His being, to creatures. Horton (2004:345), therefore, suggests that “The covenant is the place where a stranger meets us” as an ethical clearing to know not a preoccupation with ‘being’ or ‘essence’ but “what it was like for God to be.” Horton (2004:347) indicates that “one implication of a covenantal approach is that divine ‘presence’ and ‘absence’ are ethical and relational rather than ontological categories.” The importance of our Christian theology lies not simply in getting the right conception of God for our purpose but in calling on the actual presence of God who is there and has made Himself there for us. Where can we find God’s gracious presence? Horton (2004:354) answers: “The covenant of grace is the place and the Son is the mediator of this saving encounter.” The biblical faith affirms the form of life meeting a Stranger (at the covenantal place) in an ethical sense rather than a metaphysical problem.

Covenant is a central theme throughout the Bible from Abraham, Noah, Moses, David, the prophets, to Jesus’ fulfilment of the promises in the New Covenant. The concept of covenant is profoundly important in both Testaments, shedding considerable light on a biblical understanding of God’s will and action upon the existence of Christian moral life. Such a model of Christian moral life has to do with the question of how our moral life is related to God and fellow humans. This ethical position or relationship is rooted in the Christian confession that Jesus Christ is the Lord of faithful believers who belong to the same moral community in their own rights by participating and accepting their mutual entrusting and enduring responsibility to all the others (Allen, 1984:17).

Allen (1984:32) recognizes that the term covenant can refer to both the characteristics of a certain type of interpersonal relationship or simply the relationship itself, but he prefers to adopt the use of the latter sense. He defines a covenant as a relationship that:

- (1) comes about through interactions of entrusting and accepting entrustment among willing, personal beings;
- (2) as a result, the parties belong to the same moral community and have responsibility to and for one another as beings who matter; and
- (3) their responsibility in the relationship endures over time (Allen, 1984:32).

A relationship under a covenant comes into being not by biological or geographical designation but by an acceptance of one another's entrustment. It always involves from time to time some moral actions corresponding to their responsibility under the entrustment relationship. This definition of Allen's summarizes his own view of a relational covenantal model: that "A model of the moral life has to do with how moral selves are related, and not merely nor primarily how they ought to be related" (Allen, 1984:15). It is the character of responses in moral actions from selves to selves in their physical and social context.

No one can avoid this physical and social context in some kind of relationship (covenant or social contract) sharing a particular kind of life with others. Kirkpatrick (2003:154) reaffirms: "And that context, whether it be that of a purely self-interested contractual arrangement with other persons, a church, or a family, will necessarily create the conditions for and point persons toward a particular kind of life." The church, as a religious and covenantal community, is the necessary basis and special place for the development of the full person of virtue in responding in a faithful way to the will and action of God. The truth of particular Christian virtues developed through God's human community is proven in the practice of human life toward the flourishing of persons in relation to God and others. Kirkpatrick (2003:154) concludes that "the biblical theist's moral ontology holds that these virtues are essential parts of the full and true life and that they are part of God's intention for God's human community."

The Christian covenant is a relationship initiated and made by the God of grace. Unlike the social contract, the human-to-human covenant, which is itself a relationship only of bargaining in laying out the terms of rights and obligations, each covenant initiated by God in both Testaments is set by God and is not negotiable. This is God's own covenant. God, therefore, repeatedly stated 'my covenant' in the Old Testament. The terms of each covenant are the reflection of God's power and grace in the creation of a new thing or a covenant community that accepts and receives His gracious promises and benefits. God's will is thus made known in the covenant relationship with His people. To fulfil

the will of God in the covenant, the people of God must exercise their faithful obedience with the love of God:

But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear Him, and His righteousness with their children's children – with those who keep His covenant and remember to obey His precepts (Psalms 103:17-18, NIV).

The theme of forgiveness out of God's love followed by our obedience is central within the principle of the New Covenant. Forgiveness by God is to cover the whole life, both earthly and eternal, of believers, in all dimensions. It brings believers to a unified response of a very deep love and a full obedience to His covenant.

The focus of the biblical covenant is a person-in-relationship following the vision of the social Trinity, the Trinitarian persons in eternal fellowship (Grenz, 1997:277). In this social Trinity, the Father initiates the covenant, the Son mediates it, and the Spirit acts for it. The work of each person of God can be seen as a unity of the God of love and as an example to humankind of the character and nature of this love. The task of fulfilling Christian purpose in the covenant is to enter into the fellowship of Christ's community, the church, through transformation by the Holy Spirit. Hence, the people of God are designated to reflect the social Trinity and conform to God's loving character in Christians' relational ethical life toward others (Grenz, 1997:278).

In addition, the biblical covenant has an eschatological implication: it is to reflect God's eternal glory in Christians' good deeds in doing His will.

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for every and ever. Amen (Heb. 13:20-21, NIV).

For the covenant people of God, the final human goal in doing God's will is to become the very dwelling place of God, as promised:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away' (Rev. 21:1-4, NIV).

The people of the covenant thereby have this gracious promise and an enduring responsibility for their lives to God and one another throughout the life of the eternal covenant on earth as well as the dwelling place in the heavens.

Chapter 4 introduced the concepts of inclusiveness and exclusiveness of the people of God under covenant, reflecting the God who wills and acts in justice. The blessing for all nations is a reality in Abraham's blessing. The church today must comply obediently with God's righteous mandate and must witness as faithful servants of Christ to the reality and efficacy of the work of Jesus Christ, who assembles from all nations His eternal Kingdom. All human creatures are intended by God for the inclusive covenant, whether they consciously affirm it now or not. Jesus' double love commandment tells the meaning of *agape* (love) as the requirement for faithfulness to God and to all persons without any exclusive qualification. Faithfulness in love, or entrustment in Allen's terminology, is properly a requirement of every human relationship and situation on an inclusive basis. Allen (1984:45) discloses: "Although we can distinguish between the inclusive covenant and special (exclusive) covenants, we cannot separate them. We are always in both at once, and ordinarily in several types of special covenants at once." After all, God is the centre of the moral life of all humankind and, as such, will bring the people of God under the exclusive or special covenant to foster the true fulfilment of the common good of the community for the moral unity of all people under God.

In his book entitled *Losing Our Virtue*, Wells charges that there is no effective Christian presence in society, and especially in the evangelical church, which today has little appetite for speaking about the crisis of character in the face of the disintegrating moral culture in America (Wells, 1998:1-2). Despite the growth in number and size of the evangelical churches in recent years, Wells finds there is

a loss of the biblical Word in its authoritative function, and an erosion of character to the point that today, no discernible ethical differences are evident in behaviour when those claiming to have been reborn and secularists are compared ... now that they have become large in number they have been diminished in stature (Wells, 1998:3).

Wells (1998:7) cites ancient Rome as a case study of cultural collapse in general. Rome's collapse was not due to Christian morality but pagan immorality. But the question is what Christians did to relay the providence of the justice of God and extend the relation of Christ and culture besides renouncing the world and disengaging from

society. We must understand that God's Kingdom of peace and justice is not merely a remote ideal for which we long. Dulles discloses that

In Jesus Christ the Kingdom of God has entered into history. It is already at work, albeit only germinally transforming the world in which we live. Faith is the Christian's mode of participation in that Kingdom. Insofar as we have faith, the Kingdom takes hold of us and operates in us. This means that through faith we become instruments in the healing and reconciliation of the broken world. We become agents of justice and bearers of the power of the Kingdom (Dulles, 1971:43).

5.2.3 The Kingdom of God as the Highest Good of Human Goal

Aristotle begins his teleological virtue ethics with the end, goal, or *telos* as discussed earlier in this chapter. It is true that the goal always defines and shapes the agenda being pursued by human moral agents. Keenan agrees with this argument by saying that "the agenda from start to finish, is shaped by the end" (Harrington and Keenan, 2002:40). For Aristotle, happiness, goodness, or flourishing is the human end in cultivating the virtues and avoiding the vices at their extremes in order to aim for a life with the greatest possible end. However, Pannenberg (1975:106) criticizes the inadequacy of human happiness as the end: "*Eudaemonism* does not recognize that ethical action is performed for the sake of the good regardless of the consequences for the acting person." It is simply that happiness cannot prove the presence of the good, as evil persons can find happiness in their bad and evil acts.

Aquinas (*ST*, I-II, Q1, A1, 4, 6) agrees that human beings always act for an end, but argues that the true ultimate end of human beings happens solely in communion with God, which is, in effect, the Kingdom of God, where human beings find happiness. This communion with God is about His being and existence which cannot be conceived apart from His rule, the Kingdom of God (Pannenberg, 1975:55). God has the power to rule as the highest spiritual being and to identify Himself as the ultimate good of the ethical quest relating to human beings and their world. His rule, therefore, in an important sense, is coming into existence, into existing present reality. We may assert that God, as identical with the coming rule of His imminent Kingdom, is the concrete embodiment of the good (Pannenberg, 1975:111). The Kingdom of God is the central theme of Jesus' preaching and the theological context for His healing as well as the horizon of His ethical teaching in many parables in Mark 4, Matthew 13, 24, and 25 and Luke 8. The definition of what is good and what is right must include reference to the coupling of the Kingdom of God and *agape* (love) in the person of Jesus Christ. Braaten (1974:116)

affirms it is the highest good in ethics because God promises the coming of His Kingdom as the eschatological fulfilment of humanity in goodness. The Kingdom of God in its fullness and perfection is no product of human striving but is subject to the rule of God through a positive and faithful communion with God. In the eschatological ethics the emphasis lies on the theocentric futurity of the Kingdom with a present impact in the person of Jesus and the presence of the power of His Word to this world (Braaten, 1974:117). It is the ultimate fulfilment of a divine purpose and the manifestation in the end of days of the final and complete mystery of the divine will. The thrust of devotion is not from natural to supernatural or from human to divine, but in reaching out to welcome the future of God's promise (Pannenberg, 1975:40). The co-operation of human beings in devotion with the divine will and purpose, by the operation of the Spirit, is in the course of world history being worked out to the goal in the revelation of the new Jerusalem which is from above.

The dynamic of Christian devotion is the longing for what is to be and the future that is ahead of us in our communion according to the will and purpose of God. This devotion in piety is not an amorphous longing, but is in communion with that specific event which is clearly the future coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. In communion with Jesus, a communion that is in cooperation with His continuing ministry to the world, we have a foretaste of the final fulfilment (Pannenberg, 1975:40). Thus the Kingdom of God does not simply provide a motivation for an eschatological hope but also gives shape to the contents of Christian ethics with a defining end (Harrington and Keenan, 2002:43).

The goal of a Christian life is the ideal of the Divine Kingdom, and the end of all human existence should also be the Kingdom. Grisez suggests an encompassing interpretation, rather than a narrow sense of personal or individual goal, of the ideal of the Divine Kingdom for human or Christian end:

That end is integral communal fulfilment in God's Kingdom, which will be a marvellous communion of divine Persons, human persons, and other created persons. Every human member of the Kingdom will be richly fulfilled not only in attaining God by the beatific vision but in respect to all the fundamental human goods (Grisez, 2008:58-59).

For those who take the Kingdom of God as their ultimate end, the goal is not only to attain the ultimate proper good in their unique ways, but to participate in the 'integral communal fulfilment', a term coined by Grisez (2008:57), to realize the ultimate end in

the Kingdom for all created persons as a whole. It is God's plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Christ, God Himself:

And He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ (Eph. 1:9-10, NIV).

For He 'has put everything under his feet.' Now when it says that 'everything' has been put under Him, it is clear that this does not include God Himself, who put everything under Christ. When He has done this, then the Son Himself will be made subject to Him who put everything under Him, so that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:27-28, NIV)

The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His Kingdom rules over all (Psalm 103:19, NIV).

Pannenberg (1975:73) writes that the foundation of the doctrine of the church is that the "Kingdom must be the central concern of the church if the church is to remain faithful to the message of Jesus." Since the Kingdom of God is the integral communal fulfilment to realize the ultimate end of the world, the church must presuppose some other larger community beyond the Christian community and is justified in terms of its relation and responsibility to the world. The church, nevertheless, is not the Kingdom of God or the present reality of God's Kingdom. The church must follow faithfully Jesus' pointing toward the Kingdom of God and fulfil its vocation to be the transforming agent of the world while submitting to God's manifestation and rule. Pannenberg (1975:74) reiterates the church's Kingdom-oriented vocation, in that "the church is true to its vocation only as it anticipates and represents the destiny of all mankind, the goal of history." The Kingdom of God is the ultimate end and goal for all humanity through the witness of the church in the world.

In addition, the Kingdom of God would bring ultimate justice in fulfilment of an orderly human social destiny in a unified form of social life among mankind willed by God. The church has a vital role in bringing the universal idea of justice and love and care for one another in the world. This is an eschatological ethic of love, power, and justice brought under the conditions of a sinful world that has not yet been apocalyptically transformed into the new world of God's future (Braaten, 1974:117). The concept of this eschatological ethics not only translates the dynamics of love, power, and justice operative in this given world, but also injects God's norms of the future into the contexts of the present. Braaten (1974:122) concludes, "This determines the goal of ethics – the Kingdom of God as the highest good."

On the other hand, Pannenberg (1975:75) finds that Protestantism, including the evangelical churches, is primarily concerned with itself and with the piety and salvation of only its members and has been very weak in relating to the world. This Protestant concern is far too narrow as a basic description of the essence and destiny of the church and sets apart from Jesus' central concern and proclamation of the imminent and coming Kingdom (Pannenberg, 1975:75). The church must avoid this privatized notion of religious communion and return to the insight that the understanding of the church must start with the Kingdom of God and the final destination of human history (Pannenberg, 1975:76).

Pannenberg (1975:51) points out not only that there are striking differences between the preaching of Jesus and the place of the Kingdom of God in contemporary (Protestant) theology, but also that the theological understanding of the Kingdom of God has been eroded: "But the dogmatics of recent decades is marked by a steady erosion of the notion of the Kingdom of God. This erosion is usually explained by the conventional understanding of the Kingdom of God having been deprived of its exegetical foundations."

Concluding Summary

The study of virtue ethics facilitates an understanding of who we are as moral agents in terms of character traits, personal commitments, community traditions, and the conditions necessary for human excellence and flourishing. However, if we take account of the above arguments, virtue ethics cannot offer a thoroughly systematic account of moral deliberation that would guide human life in detail and cannot also be an independent alternative replacing other forms of ethical theories. The ideal of human excellence can never be realized as a true ultimate highest good or end according to virtues, unless it is given freely by God and attained in communion with God, that is, in relation to the Kingdom of God. A model of Christian virtue ethics has to do with the question of how our moral life is related to God and His will and purpose in dealing with fellow humans. God's promise of the coming of His Kingdom is the eschatological fulfilment of humanity in goodness. In the midst of the confusion surrounding the theological understanding of the Kingdom of God, the evangelical church is in doubt about the imminence of the Kingdom and its concrete embodiment of good in human history. Because of this, the following chapters will contribute to further study of a

relevant doctrinal interpretation of the Kingdom of God in conjunction with an investigation into the church's mission for social justice.

CHAPTER 6: KINGDOM, CHURCH, AND COMMUNITY

6.1 THE ETHICS OF THE KINGDOM

6.1.1 An Ideal for Humanity

The Kingdom of God is the highest good for human life. This highest good is an ideal human existence which is a gift of God's blessing bestowed on those who serve God willingly and find in God the source and the security of liberty and happiness. James assures: "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows" (Jas. 1:17, NIV). The Kingdom itself is the designation of this ultimate end (*telos*) for all humanity. Bavinck explains well why the Kingdom of God is the highest good encompassing all goods:

The Kingdom of God as the highest good for humanity is indeed a Kingdom that in its essence surpasses everything temporal and earthly. This in no way means, however, that the Kingdom of God therefore exists in enmity against everything temporal and earthly, but much rather needs them as its instrument and is prepared to be an instrument for their sakes (Bavinck, 2011:140)

The Kingdom's highest goodness, as such, encompasses both temporal and eternal essence, nature, and principle in perfect harmony for human life and, therefore, cannot be interpreted plainly in any human discipline of ethics. Without the revealed truth of God, human theories of ethics in interpreting what kind of person we must be and what duties or laws we must pursue are inadequate and insufficient in their philosophical ideas to offer a thoroughly systematic account of moral deliberation that would guide human to seek the Kingdom and attain the true ultimate highest good (MacIntyre, 1988:1). Bavinck concludes assertively:

Simply knowing what kind of person we must be is inadequate, however, for realizing the moral good – the description of which is supplied by the doctrine of the virtues. Nor is it sufficient to know the duties or laws according to which we must pursue that moral good (Bavinck, 2011:133-134)

This highest good is an ideal fulfilment of the will of God in one's moral life as a revelation of the divine supremacy as well as a declaration of human righteous as a prerogative of the divine Kingship (Vos, 1951:59). It is clearly the locus of Jesus' instruction on the Kingdom of God and human ethics in Luke 17:20-21 in which the teaching of the Kingdom of God is about God's rule in the human soul. Marshall (1946:31) comments on the idea of Jesus' ethical teaching of the Kingdom of God: "All the ethical teaching of Jesus is simply an exposition of the ethics of the Kingdom of

God, of the way in which men inevitably behave when they actually come under the rule of God.” The Kingdom of God is, however, not equated with merely human ethical conduct. Instead, the ethics of Jesus Christ demands the actual working out of the will of God by His disciples who hope to enter the Kingdom when it comes. Jesus says: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in Heaven” (Mt. 7:21, NIV) This ethical teaching is not simply translated into human terms for temporal earthly application but rather in absolute terms and grounded in fundamental, timeless, religious principles, for the Kingdom of God is the coming of the eternal into the temporal (Dodd, 1936:109). This coming of the eternal into the temporal means that the norm of righteousness, both divine and human, is to be found only in God who is the supreme end of all moral existence. This also implies that the aim of righteousness, the final cause of obedience of humans who seek from the pure desire of satisfying God, lies in God (Vos, 1951:60).

The prerequisite for entering the Kingdom, as Jesus commands in Matthew 5:20, is the possession of a righteousness exceeding that of the Scribes and Pharisees. Admission into the future Kingdom appears to be a reward for those who connect the Kingdom with righteousness practised in this life and seems to violate the basic theology of justification and the character of God’s Kingdom as a gift. In this context, we should not get into the fundamental error of Judaism in which everything in religion and salvation revolves around the ideas of merit and reward, contrary to Paul’s theology in his Epistle to the Romans. Ladd (1964:290) defends the charge: “While the righteousness of the Kingdom is primarily of the heart and not a legalism more comprehensive than that of the rabbis, it does not follow that this righteousness is satisfied with mere good intentions that are never put into practice.” A righteous person must manifest righteous conduct from his or her heart. It is the righteousness of the heart that truly and fully attains to the coming of the eschatological Kingdom. This righteous heart is one who hears and accepts the word of Jesus with an obedient response to the Gospel of the Kingdom and manifests that faith in outward conduct. Vos (1951:67-68) writes that “the reward ... is not something morally or spiritual indifferent but the highest enjoyment of what here already constitutes the natural blessedness pertaining to the internal Kingdom”; he concludes: “we see, therefore, that Jesus, though giving a large place to the idea of reward in His teaching, keeps this idea in strict subordination to the two higher principles of the divine sovereignty and the divine grace, in other words to the divine Kingship and the divine Fatherhood.”

6.1.2 An Ideal for Community

Despite its heavenly origin, the Kingdom of God is also concerned with the establishment and harmony of a community or society of righteousness or justice in humanity. It is the power of God realizing the Kingdom of God in human life through mankind as instrument organized according to the will of God in the Christian transformation of the perfect social justice order. The Kingdom of God is the highest good for all spheres of human life but it is not inimical toward temporal earthly goods for both individuals and community. It is independent but above all goods and all human disciplines of ethics. The Kingdom itself is the prerequisite for all petitions of goods in reality, both individually and corporately. The demand, as Jesus Christ directs, is to seek first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness and all the rest, including earthly goods, will be added to those who petition. The community we are in today is full of injustices. God requires us to pray that His Kingdom may come and that His will may be done on earth, in our community. Those who seek and possess the righteousness of the Kingdom of God will certainly inherit the Kingdom of God. The righteousness which is conferred by God is spiritual in nature and constitutes the bond and unity to preserve the perfection and fullness of all goods, both earthly and heavenly. As a member of the Kingdom of God, a person will remain in the essence of God's righteousness and spirituality and will preserve the fullness and perfection of his or her earthly and heavenly life. Bavinck (2011:142) assures them 'that a person may be fully a person, such that everything within a person may be subject to the person's spiritual, eternal essence.' The Kingdom's highest good embodying both future heavenly and imminent earthly realms is not a contemporary idea but an understanding that already appeared over 140 years ago in *Christian Ethics*, a book by the Danish theologian Martensen (1871). Our modern interpretation is merely an echo of Martensen's well-documented words:

The Kingdom of God as the highest good is not merely the sacred realm of liberty and love, but, moreover, the blessed realm in which man finds his last and final satisfaction, or His peace, within the fullness of all perfection ... It is not only the perfect and completed good, the final good, in the sense of future heavenly glory, but a condition in creation in which faith and hope are at an end, because faith has passed into sign, and hope into fulfilment, and where love remains behind within its earthly condition, as a representation of the future final condition of the Kingdom of God (Martensen, 1871:147-148).

6.1.3 An Ideal for Church

The Kingdom of God is the highest good in terms of both the eschatological hope of the future coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and the continuing fulfilment of righteousness to the world through the dynamic cooperative devotion of Christian believers in faith, hope, and love. Through this witness of the church as a representation of the Lord in the world, the Kingdom of God will bring ultimate justice – the fulfilment of a unified, orderly human social life willed by God. The definition of what is good and what is just must include reference to the coupling of the Kingdom of God and *agape* (love). Braaten (1974:116) affirms the Kingdom of God is the highest good in ethics because God promises the coming of His Kingdom as the eschatological fulfilment of humanity in goodness. The Kingdom of God as the highest good is entirely the work of God and a radical gift from Him. God wills that His Kingdom will fully come and His will is to be done on earth today as the righteousness, peace and joy in heaven (Mt. 6:10; Rom. 14:17).

The Kingdom of God is the main theme of Christian theology and forms the heart of Jesus Christ's teaching in the New Testament, reflecting His ministry on earth. Jesus Christ began His earthly ministry proclaiming: "The time has come. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the Good News!" (Mk. 1:15, NIV). In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus Christ exhorts His disciples: "But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Mt. 6:33, NIV). Jesus' teaching on prayer includes the words, "Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt. 6:10). The Kingdom of God is likened by Jesus Christ to a hidden treasure (Mt. 13:44) and a fine pearl of great value (Mt. 13:45). Jesus Christ taught the apostles for 40 days about the convincing proofs of the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3) before His ascension. The Kingdom of God is therefore not just one of many themes and not just a locally restricted topic in Jesus Christ's teaching, but the central focus of a message about the will and purpose of the living God.

The Kingdom of God as the highest good is an ethical ideal for humanity, community and the church. The Christian concept of the Kingdom of God must closely associate with how the believers relate to the current society where they are members. The Kingdom of God is to manifest its powers in history through the witnesses of the church. The disciples of Jesus must make an impact upon the world. Ladd (1964:299) directs

Christians to engage in social justice: “When Jesus said that they (disciples) were to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Mt. 5:13-14), He meant that the world was to feel the influence of God’s Kingdom.” There is, however, tension inherent in the relationship between evangelism and social justice action, exhibited in a confused variety of interpretations of the Kingdom of God. The eschatological hope of the Kingdom of God is one element of Christian faith in which we expect the dawn of a new day in which the great promise of a future society of peace, justice, and righteousness will be fulfilled. Fulfilment will be assured because, according to Revelation 19:15, Christ will return and rule the world with perfect righteousness and justice.

The common consensus among Christian theologians in regard to the question of why the Christian church has a social responsibility is given in terms of the doctrine of Creation. The biblical emphasis is that, by creation, humanity is God’s own legitimate image, and, as His image, has a divinely delegated dominion over the earth. This is clearly an aspect of the Genesis teaching (Henry, 1979:139). The theme of creation has been emphasized more and more in discussion of the *imago* in current literature; the writings of Wright and Wolterstorff have been cited in Chapter 4 of this thesis. Under the Creator God, humans are given dominion over the earth, a dominion which centres in the intelligible, ethical, and spiritual direction of the world’s affairs. People are made for life in three families: fellowship with God, marital love in the home, and justice in the social order (Henry, 1964:47). Humans, on these accounts, must not escape from the providential responsibilities and remove themselves from the world. Humans are given the unique and distinct abilities that are in the likeness of the Lord of the universe and that distinguish them from all other creatures, as evidenced in the capacity for language, logic, economics, social relationships, aesthetics, and religion.

After the fall, Adam’s corruption does not change his metaphysical essence or transform him ontologically into a wicked angel in the fallen angel’s image. The consequence of the fall is the loss of human created integrity, the inheritance of the guilt of sin and the corruption of the sinful nature, and the death warrant that interrupts human spiritual fellowship with the Creator and defines the hopelessly degenerate state (Henry, 1979:32). Despite the fallen nature of humanity, the gracious Creator God does not reverse His redemptive plan:

Instead of forsaking the sin-deceived universe God chose and willed to be its Saviour and Lord, to establish His divine rule within as well as over it, and to achieve through it His divine intention and goal—the Kingdom of God in the Kingdom of Heaven in which God’s creation will either share or to which it will be subordinated in justice (Henry, 1979:32).

God was revealed in Jesus Christ specifically for humanity’s sake and continues to offer fallen humanity a possibility for forgiveness and fellowship through this redemptive reconciliation. God has not forsaken the fallen nature of humanity and the world and Christians therefore have no right to withdraw from the world either. Christians must work on God’s intention and goal to fulfil the redemptive plan in evangelism in order to convert humanity to faith in God and also to establish the Kingdom rule in justice in order to cure the social illness of the world to order. A Christian’s neglect of the moral discourse and the perfect will of Jesus Christ to love his or her neighbours is a sin of omission as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.3.1.

House (1992:4) points out that the tendency in modern theology is contrary to the biblical approach “to see the creation as inferior and material and the new creation, the redemptive creation, as superior and immaterial, to see creation as being squarely set over against the new order that has come in Christ, finally to be realized in the complete establishment of the new creation.” This is an error refuted by early church fathers who believed in a blending of the order of creation and the order of redemption, which demonstrates the unity of the purposes of God (House, 1992:4). The completed creation (Genesis 1 and 2) is the will of God over His creatures, particularly for humans, in the natural and moral order in relation to social relationship, dominion on the earth, and interaction with other created beings on earth. The new creation justified by the redemptive work of Christ is to fully restore and redeem the natural world from evil and decay through participation in the Kingdom of God in a new existence and new world order in Christ. House (1992:12) reveals that an individualizing faith may be developed through undue attention to individual self-consciousness and a preoccupation with a pietistic experience if creation is viewed as excluded from or subsumed under redemption. Disengagement from social justice by the evangelical churches effectively perpetuates the *status quo* of society, leaving it to supernatural intervention alone. Stark and Glock (1968:75) describe how evangelical churches attempt to justify themselves: “Evangelical Protestantism tends to take a miraculous view of social justice ... Thus they concentrate their energies on conversion and evangelism and largely ignore social issues except for occasional efforts to make unlawful what they judge to be personal

vices.” This overemphasis on one theological perspective with a concentration on merely the individualizing faith but exclusion of others obscures the relationship of humanity and creation. House (1992:12-13) recognizes that “the orders of creation and redemption are held together and function together within the purpose of God” and concludes that “it is the same God and the same Lord who stands over creation and redemption, the providential Kingdom and the redemptive Kingdom.” The Old Testament prophets constantly picture the Kingdom of God in terms of a redeemed world (Isa. 11:6-9; Joel 3:17-20) and the New Testament also shares the same understanding. Paul poses a similar view of the unity of old and new creation in Christ:

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:19-21, NIV).

Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live (1 Cor. 8:6, NIV).

Despite an emergence of the participation by evangelicals in charity initiatives and an active political involvement on a limited basis in the last few decades in North America, the kind of social involvements such as charity initiatives are merely remedial works and are insufficient to improve the poverty structure and the gaps in society, while the aggressive political movements of the ‘Moral Majority’ and the ‘Religious Right’ in the U.S. have failed to exert any major influence; their influence in the political sphere dissolved in a short while primarily because of their reactionary attitude toward moral causes. The failure of the attempts of the evangelical church is a result of their narrow understanding of the Kingdom of God in placing social involvement in a very minor position low in the list of their mission priority, according to their privatized notion of religious communion. Their exclusion of the world almost totally from individualizing faith and the redemptive work of Jesus Christ is contrary to biblical understanding. Injustices of poverty, oppression, and exploitation are not products of God’s creation. The frustration in the world is, however, subjected in hope that it will be liberated from its bondage. The definition of justice or social justice given in Chapter 4 of this thesis is God’s moral character expressed both as an act and characteristic of God that generates salvation as a free gift within the larger framework of the divine righteousness. This is a

decided salvation concept (Nebe, 1992:144). The Exodus story gives a picture of the social dimension of justice as God's compassionate redemptive act to deliver the Israelites from oppressive poverty and suffering in slavery. God's Kingdom is righteousness and righteousness is His Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is thus a Kingdom of love, joy, and peace where "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev. 21:4, NIV).

Holding the doctrine of creation as an idea independent of the doctrine of redemption is not a reason to encourage non-participation in social justice and political issues for the evangelical church. When creation is viewed as excluded from or subsumed under redemption, it results in individualizing faith and privatized piety, but the doctrine of creation holds together with the redemptive plan of Christ, functioning within the purpose of God for both this world and the world to come. The view of the Kingdom of God that keeps the evangelical church from social involvement in the society is a pessimistic one. On the other hand, involvement in social justice is not a substitute for evangelism but action that blends creation and redemption together. The purpose of this chapter is to study the reasons why and how the eschatological view of premillennialism developed into a narrow and one-sided interpretation of the Kingdom of God and permeated the history that drives the modern evangelical church to a neglect of social justice. The subject of the Kingdom of God is not only the most important doctrine but also a complex concept that has been given a variety of interpretations. It is a many-sided concept dependent on the emphasis, whether it is ethical, spiritual, or theological. This thesis does not make any attempt to present a complete doctrine of eschatology or millennialism and does not seek to contribute directly to any scholarly debates of the three eschatological views that have been named premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism. In view of the concentration of premillennialism among churches of conservative evangelicals, this study is limited to the development of premillennialism and its impact on social involvement. A brief survey of the historical context and the development of premillennialism (chiliasm or millenarianism) is thus conducted to describe the root causes of these churches' omission or inaction in regard to social justice.

6.2 THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT OF ESCHATOLOGICAL PREMILLENNIALISM

Eschatology is a vital doctrine directing people of faith to hope for the *chronos* (the time-end) and *telos* (the goal) of life. The church, as a community of faith or the people of God, can be viewed as the eschatological community closely connecting to the Kingdom or reign of God. The church's view of the Kingdom of God affects not only the interpretation of its eschatology and ecclesiology but also its pastoral implications, certainly having influence on believers' behaviour, based on their conception of the highest good to self and others in the society. Attempting to define eschatology is, however, difficult, and entails the risk of misunderstanding and confusion. Consequently there are some tensions in relating eschatology to the Kingdom of God, such as "now and not yet", continuity and discontinuity, soul and society, optimism and pessimism (Kuzmic, 1985:135). The aim of this study is to investigate the biblical concept of the Kingdom of God, and to discover what it has to say to the church about a world plagued with poverty, injustice, oppression, corruption and self destruction.

Evangelical Christians, over the last century, have bickered, and the church has been splintered, over the mystery of the eschatological hope of the Kingdom of God. Debates continue around the matters of chronology, in terms of time reference and duration, as well as about the basic nature and character of the Kingdom itself. Conservative evangelicals are generally accustomed to the premillennial persuasion, interpreting the destiny of human society on the basis of certain pessimistic statements in the apocalyptic and prophetic books. This view leads evangelical churches to foster social isolation and an unconcerned attitude toward society. Pierard (1972:84) opens his article, "Needed: An Evangelical Social Ethic," in *The Evangelical Quarterly* with such a remark: "One of the most profoundly disturbing things about evangelical Christianity is its failure to manifest an adequate social ethic." There has not been much change in this attitude of unconcern since the second half of the twentieth century. This grave deficiency in social involvement that is particularly evident in the theology of the Kingdom of God cannot be denied by conservative evangelicals. According to their narrow view, the eschatological hope will only be actualized in the future when Jesus returns but not in the everyday lives on earth. Pierard (1972:87) explains why evangelicals have fallen into such a pitiful situation: "To some extent it is a result of the concentration on premillennialism."

6.2.1 The Millenarian Movement in Early Christianity

The general view of premillennialism, as North (1990:18) summarizes, is that Jesus Christ will return to earth in history to set up a visible Kingdom that will last one thousand years followed by the final judgment as a literal interpretation of the prophecy in Revelation 20:

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended (Rev. 20:1-3, NIV).

Premillennialism traces its history from a radical millenarian movement in early Christianity. It has been called chiliasm (or millenarianism) from the Greek word for a period of thousand years. Pezzoli-Olgiati defines the term in *Religion Past & Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion*:

Millenarianism (chiliasm) refers to the notion of a 1,000-year period immediately preceding the Last Judgment and the end of the world. This conception of world history derives from Jewish apocalypticism and became widespread over time, being interpreted in various ways ... The duration of 1,000 years was interpreted both literally and symbolically and integrated into strict chronological conceptions of time or into other eschatological concepts (Pezzoli-Olgiati, 2010:358).

The prevailing view of the Kingdom of God during early Christianity was eschatological. It apparently taught the imminent return of Christ and left no room for a gradually developing Kingdom, as several New Testament passages point to the sudden appearance of Christ in the future. This view has its roots in the connection with Jewish apocalyptic literature in the Old Testament portraying the coming Messiah to establish the rule of God in all the earth and restore the fortunes of Judah from suffering by subduing other world power nations (Isaiah 2:2-5, 9:6-7; Zechariah 14:4, 9, 12, 16). Passages here all speak of the coming ideal King, the Anointed One of Yahweh known as the Messiah, and a future hope for the poor. Prophets depict the future advent of a new administration in the Davidic government under which justice and righteousness will be fulfilled and realized. For example, the prophet Joel expresses this apocalyptic concept of eschatology in the word of Yahweh:

In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel, for they scattered my people among the nations (Joel 3:1-2, NIV)

The early Christians who in the first two centuries were persecuted in the dark and trying times of the Roman Empire shared the apocalyptic vision of eschatology. They were called upon to seal their confession with blood; their hearts were filled with an intense longing for the future Kingdom that would bring deliverance from sin and suffering and death (Berkhof, 1951:22). While the earliest New Testament sources presented a relatively unified picture of a coming Kingdom in the near future, a complex and ambiguous attitude toward the second coming (*parousia*) of the Son of Man and the imminent end of the world was developed (St. Clair, 1992:51-52). These believers of the early church took their point of departure from their suffering on the earth, in expectation of a 1,000-year reign that was often characterized by quite concrete hopes for a realization of the biblical promises of a reign of the righteous in the New Jerusalem. It became natural for Christians who constantly faced persecution to long for a future, tangible Kingdom upon this earth. In anticipating the imminent coming of the Lord, some later millenarian groups seemed to have ceased working and were living on the generosity of others (2 Thess. 3:6-12). They, as members of the elect group, also tended to divide the world into good (us) and evil (them) and become especially antinomian, countering and rejecting traditional rules and customs of the established society in an ascetic way (St. Clair, 1992:56-57). North (1990:23) finds that premillennialists manifest a desire to escape personal and corporate responsibility in an increasingly complex and threatening world.

Because of the nature of a realized Kingdom of God in chiliasm, the thinking of a tangible kingdom on earth was popular among suffering ordinary Christians as well as some notable and important representatives, namely, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian (Palmer, 1988:13-14). St. Clair (1992:78) summarizes the eschatological ideas of these church fathers': the scene of the millennium would be a rebuilt, embellished, and enlarged earthly Jerusalem (Martyr); the millennium would be a recapitulation of Paradise, with miracles and natural blessing, peace and fruitfulness (Irenaeus); and Christ would come to this physical earth during the contemporary time (Tertullian).

During the second and third centuries a hermitical movement grew in Egypt and the wilderness areas of Palestine and Syria. These hermits, who followed their forerunners (the Jewish Essenes), cultivated a spirituality based primarily on Scripture and only remotely on millenarian expectation, a spirituality that advocated living in the world as

though they were not of the world at all (St. Clair, 1992:89). In Asia Minor and North Africa, an important millenarian movement called Montanism tended to develop a strong ascetical life with emphasis on an authentic religious experience in the presence of the Holy Spirit especially when those devoted followers endured persecution and martyrdom (St. Clair, 1992:79-88).

Chiliasm or millenarianism lost its popularity when a great diversity of understanding of the Kingdom of God began to surface at the end of the third century and the political situation became favourable and optimistic toward Christianity during the Constantinian age in the fourth century. Origen, Eusebius, and Augustine were the key figures that discredited various apocalyptic understandings of the future Kingdom, expressing instead a belief in the present spiritual reality of the Kingdom of God as the gradual change in the lives of believers (Palmer, 1988:16-17). They introduced an optimistic viewpoint, seeing the events surrounding Constantine as a form of the victorious Kingdom of God on earth (Palmer, 1988:17-18). Augustine implicitly identified the reign of Christ with the already present concept in the city of God (*civitas Dei*) or the church (Pezzoli-Olgiati, 2010:359). He rejected the chiliastic interpretation of Revelation 20 and expressed his understanding of the thousand years as those in which the church began to spread the Gospel from Judea to other regions of the world and the saints at present also reign with Christ to set things as in heaven until shortly before the final judgment. This signifies an ideal form of the city of God in heaven as well as the pilgrim form of the city of God upon earth to strive for its heavenly ideal in perfection (Palmer, 1988:26). The presence of the city of God on earth is interpreted spiritually and allegorically in regard to the eternal glory which the church would receive. In the *City of God* (Book 20, Chapter 9) Augustine says:

But while the devil is bound for a thousand years, the saints reign with Christ, also for a thousand years; which are without doubt to be understood in the same way: that is, as the period beginning with Christ's first coming. This thousand-year reign is quite different from that kingdom with respect to which he will say at the end, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' (Mt. 25:34). For the saints of Christ are reigning with Him even now, albeit in a far different and far inferior way: those saints to whom He says, 'Lo, I am with you always, even to the consummation of the world' (Mt. 28:20) (Augustine, 1998:987).

Augustine's view is what modern Christian thinkers have called amillennialism. Given the far reaching influence of Augustine's rejection of chiliasm, chiliasm made little progress in the Christian church throughout the Middle Ages. Amillennialism interprets the prophesied one thousand years of Revelation 20 as merely symbolic or spiritual.

North writes about the spiritual nature of the millennial Kingdom and its impact in history:

The millennial Kingdom of God is spiritual, yet not entirely spiritual, for it includes Christian families and orthodox churches. It will never attain dominance in cultural or political matters, however. The city of man and the city of God are always distinct. There will be no meaningful progress in history, except for ecclesiastical progress (North, 1990:19).

Amillennialists believe that there will be no millennial era of earthly blessings; the second coming of Christ will happen at the final judgment. In the midst of the prevailing tradition that was against the literal view of the thousand-year reign of Christ and other apocalyptic themes, there were still some minor groups outside the mainstream of orthodoxy believing a strong future eschatological hope of Christ's second coming on earth. Joachim of Fiore, a twelfth century biblical scholar, brought an apocalyptic interpretation of the gap between the two great divine interventions, the first and second comings of Christ, into time as a period of expectancy of progression (St. Clair, 1992:99). This view provided legitimate support for the millenarian hopes of earlier centuries. Through personal spiritual experiences and reflection, Joachim sought to validate the historical order in the mystery of the Trinity in three successive stages: the Age of the Father, the Age of Son, and the Age of the Holy Spirit (St. Clair, 1992:100). St. Clair (1992:100) explains that Joachim saw his own age as being in crisis, with signs of the Antichrist and the last days, and stressed the domination of the spiritual and charismatic over the institutional, rational, and Scholastic logic. Joachim's apocalyptic view of millenarianism had its influence primarily on the Franciscans but remained insignificant among those of the amillennialist tradition. Amillennialism continued to become the dominant millennial viewpoint in Western Christendom ever since Augustine.

6.2.2 Reformers and Millenarian Anabaptists

The Reformers generally inherited amillennialism as their eschatological view of the Kingdom of God. They discussed the idea of the Kingdom of God merely in an incidental and fragmentary way, rather than in a systematic manner. Their view of eschatology was basically shaped by Augustine; the Kingdom of God was a spiritual and not a worldly one. Luther's 95 theses and the doctrine of *sola fide* focused on the restoration of the scriptural teaching on personal salvation and justification by faith rather than the daily life of Christian living in the world. The concentration of the

Reformation was on soteriology rather than eschatology. Luther's theology of salvation rejected the medieval notion that good works bring pardon for sins and maintained that spiritual conversion precedes good works. The Reformation was thus not to seek transformation of the society in preparation of the millennium. Instead the Reformers challenged the increasing identification of the church with the Kingdom and the consequent claim of its authority in both spiritual and worldly affairs. The most striking example is the famous bull *Unam Sanctam* issued by Pope Boniface VIII to declare that both the 'spiritual sword' and the 'temporal sword' were alike committed to the church (Runia, 1992:40). The 'temporal sword' was delegated to the secular authorities but it remained subject to the greater and higher 'spiritual power' retained with the church. The Reformers rejected the identification of the church with the Kingdom. Luther was highly critical of the institutional church and its many abuses and therefore responded with his two kingdoms doctrine. Calvin also followed with his twofold reign of God. I will briefly discuss the debate regarding the two kingdoms and the relationship between the church and community later in this chapter.

During the time of the Reformation, chiliasm was revived through a radical movement led by the Anabaptists and Thomas Müntzer. These millenarian Anabaptists believed a drastic eschatology: the Kingdom of God would take a physical form on earth forcibly in the near future and there would be a radical change in society that would clear the religious abuses and harshness with which they were treated (St. Clair, 1992:155-156). They suffered harsh attacks during the Peasants' War, and these increased their fanaticism and sense of being special and produced intense emotional and ecstatic states (St. Clair, 1992:156). Luther opposed the eschatological view of the Anabaptists and ascribed the radical movement in Zwickau and Allstedt to Satan's work:

Since he (Satan) now comes at us with false spirits and sects, we must take stock of our situation so as not to be led astray ... Accordingly after Satan has been driven out and for several years has wandered around in waterless places, seeking rest but finding none (Mt. 12:43), he has settled down in your Grace's principality and made himself a nest at Allstedt, thinking he can fight against us while enjoying our peace, protection, and security (Luther, 1958:50).

Calvin also rejected this millenarianism and regarded the view of the chiliasts as falsifications designed by Satan to confuse the vulgar. In the *Institutes* 3.25 Calvin writes:

But not only did Satan stupefy the senses of mankind, so that with their bodies they buried the remembrance of the resurrection; but he also managed by various fictions so to corrupt this branch of doctrine that it at length was lost. Not to mention that even in

the days of Paul he began to assail it (1 Cor. 15), shortly after the chiliasts arose, who limited the reign of Christ to a thousand years. This fiction is too puerile to need or to deserve refutation (Calvin, 2008:657).

The Lutheran church not only refuted the Anabaptists' chiliastic view but also adopted the Augsburg Confession (Article 17) 1530 to officially condemn them:

We condemn the Anabaptists who think that the punishment of the demons and those whom God condemns will not last forever. We also condemn all other who are now spreading the Jewish idea that before the dead are raised, the godly will rule this world and the ungodly will be overcome (Thompson, 1984:9).

This explicit rejection of chiliasm is the confession of all mainline forms of the Protestant Reformation. This harsh criticism from the leaders of the Reformation against the radical millenarian movement made it difficult for chiliasm to gain any standing during the Reformation period.

6.2.3 The Revival of Premillennialism in Post-Reformation and the Modern Debate

As the reformers embraced the eschatological view of amillennialism from the Roman Catholic Church without much support of their own works on the Kingdom, this not only afforded the opportunity for the re-emergence of premillennialism, but also left room for the development of a new millennial view known as postmillennialism.

Joseph Mede was the first post-Reformation Cambridge scholar to renew the view of premillennialism. In the seventeenth century he wrote *Clavis Apocalyptica* (Key of the Revelation) to interpret the Apocalypse by constructing a principle that synchronized the prophecies. According to the *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology* (Couch, 1996:250), Mede is considered the 'father of English premillennialism'; he firmly believed in the literal return of Christ and the reign of the bride of Christ on earth during a thousand-year millennial Kingdom. In his interpretation of the apocalypse he rearranged the visions of John and advocated premillennialism in a consistent application of the working of Providence to particular historical events. Mede found the confirmation of his interpretation of worldly history in the Bible, but he was careful to leave the future as a matter of faith. Van Bemmelen (1997:153) identifies Mede's work as a revival of a more balanced premillennialism and concurs that "the thousand year reign of the saints would begin at Christ's second coming with the first resurrection, the bodily resurrection of all who had died in Christ, and would conclude with the second resurrection, the resurrection of the wicked, and the last judgment." Orchard (1998:134)

summarizes Mede's work: "In all his work his concern is not to predict an end to the world, but to demonstrate how the working of Providence has brought about the peculiar historical situation in which he finds himself, and how there remain promises of God's perfect state of affairs, yet to be fulfilled." Mede's synchronizing principle continued to influence eschatological interpretation and he was cited as an authority especially by the evangelical circle well into the twentieth century.

A separate development began a new optimistic eschatological concept of postmillennialism created and popularized in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. It is generally considered to have begun with Daniel Whitby, another English biblical scholar, who believed that, as Riddlebarger describes in his internet article,

the world would be converted by the Gospel, the Jew restored to the Holy Land, and the papacy and the Muslims defeated ... the millennial age did not commence with the coming of the Messiah and the binding of Satan at our Lord's first advent, but ... the binding of Satan and the beginning of the millennial age still lies yet ahead in the future (Riddlebarger, 1996:1).

Proponents of this concept held an optimistic view of the last period of world history that would be marked by the coming of the Kingdom of God (Gundry, 1977:47). They maintained that the propagation of the Gospel would bring about a golden age on earth to be culminated at the personal appearance of the Lord at the end of the age. The goal was the preparation for and the bringing in of the latter-day glory. This postmillennial thinking was widely accepted in England and was further developed when the Puritans, like Jonathan Edwards, brought the doctrine to North America.

Edwards gave a special place to the doctrine of postmillennialism and conjectured that the Great Awakening in America might prove the dawn of the glorious day (Gundry, 1977:48). Notable American advocates of the postmillennialist view included Charles Finney, Charles Hodge, and Augustus Strong. A postmillennial understanding promoted the involvement of believers in social reform to a large extent. Through Edwards and the Puritan influence, postmillennialism became the dominant eschatology in America throughout the eighteenth century until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The breakout of the Civil War in 1861 in America and the influx of immigrants from Europe brought disillusionment to many and shattered the dreams of a Christianized America. The evils and inequalities of industrialization and urbanization resulting in poverty and slums were also a savage blow to postmillennial thinking that assumed ever-advancing progress. With social unrest, labour strife, unemployment, and financial panic, the war

caused socio-economic turmoil. The disillusionment of such a pessimistic situation led believers to long for the Kingdom of God on earth and promoted a return to the premillennialism. Gundry (1977:52) observes that “there seemed to be more causes for pessimism than optimism on the American scene ... most people would have found it difficult to disagree with the premillennialists’ assessment of the direction of history.”

On the other side of the Atlantic, John Nelson Darby of the Plymouth Brethren movement in England developed a new variety of futurist premillennialism, namely ‘dispensationalism,’ after he divided the biblical and subsequent history into eras, or dispensations (Weber, 1983:17). Darby’s dispensational doctrine was embraced by American followers like C.I. Scofield, R.A. Torrey, James M. Gray, I.M. Haldeman, and Stephen H. Tyng, Jr. and gained a wide acceptance among evangelicals in America. Scofield even provided American premillennialists with a *Reference Bible* containing his views of dispensationalism in the notes. The doctrine of dispensationalism is more than eschatology because it is also something about a theology of history. There are various opinions on the scheme of dispensations as well as different opinions on the issue of pretribulationism and rapture theory. Dispensationalism shares the pessimistic view of the world, as Wilt (1970:7) notes in his summary of the criteria of dispensationalism: “(1) a system of dispensations, (2) a sharp distinction between Israel and the church, and (3) an intensely pessimistic view of the world’s future combined with a hope in God’s imminent intervention in the life of the believer.” Since this study is concerned with premillennialism in general and not in specific dispensationalism, no further analysis of dispensationalism is provided.

While more evangelicals accepted dispensational premillennialism during the American Civil War, one form of postmillennialism polarized with the rise of biblical higher criticism by the end of the nineteenth century. They reinterpreted religion and Christianity according to naturalistic presuppositions of humanism, rationalism, and evolutionism and tried to bring the tradition more in line with the modern thought and methods of the modern science. Their radical theological assumptions caused many Protestant believers to doubt the traditional views of biblical inspiration and authority and the finality of the Christian faith. This so-called theological liberalism or modernism captured mainline Protestantism and denominational seminaries at the beginning of the twentieth century (Ro, 1985:31). Industrialization caused massive immigration and many problems in urbanization such as depressions and social tensions

in Europe and North America. All these factors aroused the consciences of many Christians to various social issues. By the end of the nineteenth century, the social gospel movement was developed in America as part of the liberal postmillennialism camp. Ro (1985:31) finds that the exponents of the social gospel tried to search out a theological basis for making social changes and shifted the traditional eschatological understanding of the Kingdom of God, viewing it as an earthly kingdom attainable here and now through purely secular means. The language of the Kingdom of God was used to effect a quiet transfer from the Gospel about Jesus to a programme based on the ideology of progressive capitalism in America. The period between the turn of the century and World War I is usually referred to as 'the era of the social gospel' in American Protestantism.

The theological liberals did not deny the existence of the personal God, but tended to discount the supernatural characteristics of the traditional religion. They expected the millennium before Christ's second coming and believed that there was ample evidence that things were headed in an optimistic direction. Weber (1983:89) discloses that "most theological liberals and social gossellers rejected explicit millennialism but nevertheless argued that the world was gradually turning into the Kingdom of God". The liberals "awaited no apocalyptic intervention of God to usher in a new age. Their Kingdom of God would come through the ordinary agencies of human life, not on the clouds of heaven." The result of their promulgation of naturalistic-humanistic social value, replacing the traditional metaphysic and supernaturalism, is a vague belief in the Christian God (Henry, 1946:280). The leading advocate of the social gospel in America was Walter Rauschenbusch, who not only rejected the traditional definition of sin as rebellion against God on the ground of His political autocratic character, but advocated a new democratic concept of God. He said, "We must democratize the conception of God" (Rauschenbusch, 1912:48). Lasch (1990:11) comments that "this democratization of divine authority not only diluted the concept of sin but weakened the concept on which Rauschenbusch based his entire theory of the social gospel, the Kingdom of God." Rauschenbusch (1912:131, 138) claimed that the social gospel gave "new vitality and importance" to the concept of the Kingdom of God. In fact, he replaced the Kingdom of God with the social gospel: "This doctrine is itself, the social gospel." The Kingdom of God is merely human effort to Christianize society. Lasch comments:

Without an absolute ruler, however, Rauschenbusch's kingdom became a community united only by ethical aspiration. The element of a divine judgment on human history

receded into the background, and the Kingdom of God came to stand merely for the consummation of human hopes (Lasch, 1990:11).

Rauschenbusch (1907:202-203) undermined premillennialism's "historical pessimism" and described it as a "dead weight against any effort to mobilize the moral forces of Christianity to share in the modern social movement." He was optimistic about the establishment of a community of righteousness in mankind in his concept of the Kingdom of God. It is humanly organized according to the will of God and the Christian transfiguration of the social order. His idea of the Kingdom of God was a social concept based on individuals' social impulses:

So Christ's conception of the Kingdom of God came to me as a new revelation ... When the Kingdom of God dominated our landscape, the perspective of the life shifted into a new alignment. I felt a new security in my social impulses ... The saving of the lost, the teaching of the young, the pastoral care of the poor and frail, the quickening of starved intellects, the study of the Bible, Church union, political reform, the reorganization of the industrial system, international peace, it was all covered by the one aim of the reign of God on earth (Rauschenbusch, 1912:93).

This attempt to exercise social change under primarily human efforts without God's intervention in history leads Lasch (1990:7) to note that "exponents of the social gospel have never addressed themselves very clearly or systematically to the question of why such movements need religion at all." The social gospel movement to christianize the society does not seem to stand on a religious ground; rather, it became synonymous with social concern.

The suffering during the trying time of the two World Wars was a blow to liberal postmillennialism, and there was a marked decline in the number of its followers because the postmillennial vision of the perfect society had not materialized. Nevertheless, another form of liberalism called the ecumenical movement was established after the Wars. The basis of the ecumenical movement, as Stott (1970:186) describes it, is that "God's chief concern is not with the church but with the world. And His action in the world, we are told, is the establishing of *shalom*, 'peace' ... According to this kind of ecumenical thinking, *shalom* is almost equivalent to the Kingdom of God and the new humanity." The goal of the ecumenical church is to join Christ in His power struggle against the structures of social injustice on the basis of the agenda of the world rather than the will and reign of God according to the word of God. Stott (1970:187) continues to say that this is what is meant by the phrase "let the world provide the agenda for the church." The quest of the church is no longer for individual conversions but for better social structures instead. At the American Methodist Council

of Evangelicalism in November 1965, E. Edmund Perry, a supporter of the ecumenical movement, told the audience: “I abhor the notion of individual salvation; Christianity is a societal term” (Henry, 1967:74).

In defending Jesus’ Gospel, premillennialists largely avoid the expression of ‘Gospel of the Kingdom’ for fear of association with the social gospel tradition of Rauschenbusch and the secularized liberal theology (Buzzard, 1992:110). The controversy between the liberals and conservative evangelicals over Scripture and Christian theology has since greatly affected the attitude of evangelical believers toward the relationship between evangelism and social concern. Premillennialism appeals merely to believers’ personal and religious sentiments and explains the possibility of the imminent rapture and the cherished meeting at Christ’s return as a hedge against the fear of death (Weber, 1983:229). Premillennial evangelicals, believing that society is hopeless, give up hope of ever achieving a righteous social order apart from their millennial future. Evangelicals gradually narrowed the scope of social concern to attacks on personal sins such as Sabbath-breaking, Freemasonry, strong drink, tobacco, card-playing, dancing, the theatre and other worldly amusements, and the teaching of evolution (Henry, 2003:7). Evangelicals tended to ignore or tolerate corruption and injustice in society but expect and even welcome them as signs of Christ’s return. Their concept of the Kingdom of God is pessimistic about the world and unable to harmonize any evidence of progress with our space on the timeline of history. The ‘Great Reversal’ was a defensive movement of the Christian faith in early twentieth century America; it arose among conservative evangelicals or fundamentalists who were closely tied in with the ascendance of premillennialism. Marsden (1980:86) reveals the sentiment of these conservative evangelicals during this period: “... all progressive social concern, whether political or private, became suspect among revivalist evangelicals and was relegated to a very minor role.” The social gospel and theological liberalism certainly contributed to this negative effect. Therefore, evangelicals have tried vigorously to defend their concepts of biblical authority, the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, and evangelism, and also have increasingly reacted against the liberal views of the social gospel and secularized postmillennialism.

Since 1945, the evangelical movement has continued to grow numerically in membership as well as in their influence on the eschatological view of premillennialism. The fundamental belief in premillennialism has ever resulted in the shift of emphasis

away from social involvement. The premillennial view of eschatology still has a significant influence on social attitude among contemporary evangelical Christians, as Truesdale (1994:116) states that “the eschatology that currently dominates evangelicalism is known as premillennialism ... Premillennialism is fundamentally pessimistic regarding the creation and human history.” Their pessimism concerns the deteriorating morality and the unchangeable fallen nature of the world. They certainly wish things could get better, but know that they cannot. Ro (1985:33) writes that it “does not mean that evangelicals totally lost their genuine concern for the poor and for social justice ... most evangelicals interpreted social concern as a fruit of spiritual conversion and used it as a means of evangelism.” On the other hand, the apparent lack of social passion eventually became a defining characteristic of the conservative evangelicals. While liberalism is rebuked for its biblical apostasy, evangelical premillennialism is not without its own moment of guilt for offering only a truncated gospel with no concern for social evil. Brown is right in his criticism of liberals and evangelicals:

Evangelicals sharply criticize liberals and modernists for abandoning the church’s God-appointed task, to save men, in order to try to reshape society. This criticism is serious and legitimate. But we evangelicals are stained by the sin of our relative indifference to society’s problems (Brown, 1969:277).

This criticism remains valid even today on evangelicals’ inaction for social illness. The failure of evangelicals in their engagement with social justice is no different from the “modern priest and Levite bypassing suffering humanity” (Henry, 1947:2). Weeks (1998:93) summarizes the call for a ‘rebirth of apostolic passion’ and a ‘vigorous assault against social evil’ in an effort to ‘recapture the evangelical spirit,’ to reverse the ‘abandonment of social concern,’ and to restore ‘social vision,’ ‘social sensitivity,’ and ‘social outreach’ among evangelicals. Evangelicals must operate with a biblical context following Jesus’ insistence that “all these things shall be added” only after humanity has sought first “the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” and also following His instruction to pray that “Thy Kingdom come” and “Thy will be done on earth.”

Today it is a fact that many evangelicals remain in the tradition of an eschatological view of premillennialism, not only longing for the second coming of Christ the Lord but also demonstrating a defensive attitude and fear of association with the social gospel movement. The combined result of the premillennial concept of the Kingdom of God and the over-reaction against the social gospel and liberalism limits the genuine interest of the evangelical church in social concern, except for some remedial charitable works.

They are separating themselves and the church from active social involvement in many facets of society. The development of this peculiar concept of the Kingdom of God has modified the presentation of biblical teaching about the mission of the church in and to the world. Before we look into the analysis of a biblical understanding of the Kingdom of God in the next chapter, the following section will discuss the theological understanding of the Reformation fathers, Martin Luther and John Calvin, and the neo-orthodox theologian, Karl Barth, about the relationship between the heavenly Kingdom and the worldly kingdom as well as the designated role and mission of the church in this relationship.

6.3 THE DOCTRINE OF TWO KINGDOMS

A theological interpretation of the relationship between the heavenly Kingdom and the worldly kingdom is founded upon the understanding of the dynamic rule of God in the present world where He rules not only in the church and through the lives of the believing community but where He rules also providentially in history and creation to call a people for His name and will from out of the world. God's intention, in His reign in heaven and earth, is to fulfil everything with the impression of His very being through Christ in a radical process of sustaining all things according to His glorious might for all saints in the Kingdom community (the church) to share in the inheritance in the Kingdom of light (Col. 1:11-13). God, in His power and Spirit, is at work in the world or society as a whole and, in particular, within the hearts of Christian believers who are asked to be the light and salt of this world. From this perspective the task of the church, the believing community, is to witness as the divine instrument of the Kingdom and to bring light to society and the world (Eph. 3:20-21).

6.3.1 Martin Luther and John Calvin: Twofold View of Kingdoms

The twofold vision of the Christian life in the world is not a new doctrine created during the Reformation era but is derived from Augustine's *City of God*, a work which marks the framework of a particular theological tradition with special reference to the relationship of spiritual and earthly life. Augustine's two cities doctrine identifies the City of God and the city of man. The City of God is ultimately an eschatological city comprising all true believers who are pilgrims in the earthly city (*City of God*, 1: preface)

and who will receive the eternal felicity of the City of God when the saints see God in the world to come (*City of God*, 22:30). In Augustine's own words in the *City of God*:

Most glorious is the City of God: whether in this passing age, where she dwells by faith as a pilgrim among the ungodly, or in the security of that eternal home which she now patiently awaits until 'righteousness shall return unto judgment', but which she will then possess perfectly, in final victory and perfect peace (Augustine, 1998:3).

How great that felicity will be, where there will be no evil, where no good thing will be lacking, and where we shall be free to give ourselves up to the praise of God, Who will be all in all! (Augustine, 1998:1,178).

VanDrunen (2010:27) describes that the tone set by Augustine in his two cities doctrine is a fundamental hostility and antithesis between Christians and unbelievers living in two very different kinds of life style, the one 'after the flesh' and the other 'after the spirit'. VanDrunen writes,

The City of God and the city of man lie in basic, eschatological tension with each other. Christians belong to the former and unbelievers to the latter, and there is no overlapping or dual membership. The citizens of the City of God look to the true God as its founder while the 'citizens of the earthly city prefer their own gods, not knowing that He is the God of gods (VanDrunen, 2010:27).

There is no middle ground between the two but a total opposition to each other in terms of present life style and future hope. Each person must belong to either one of these two cities with no exception.

Augustine (1998:49) recognizes a broad sphere of Christian life marked by commonality with the world, as he says in the *City of God*, Book 1, Chapter 35: "In this world, the two cities are indeed entangled and mingled with one another; and they will remain so until the last judgement shall separate them." There is fundamental hostility between these two distinct sets of people, Christians and the rest (VanDrunen, 2010:24). The two cities commingled in this present world do not necessarily mix together. There are certain associations between the City of God and the visible church but the visible church is not identified with the City of God as Augustine (1998:946) says, "it has not been possible for the Heavenly City to have laws of religion in common with the earthly city." VanDrunen (2010:30) finds that this dual emphasis on the commingled cities and their opposition and commonality leaves some room for Christians both to make radical critiques of the world and to develop a theologically-informed social ethics designed for common life in a religiously plural world. Augustine also acknowledges that the believers' life in the present world is for the purpose of evangelism as well as social earthly peace:

Therefore, for as long as this Heavenly City is a pilgrim on earth, she summons citizens of all nations and every tongue, and brings together a society of pilgrims in which no attention is paid to any differences in the customs, laws, and institutions by which earthly peace is achieved or maintained (Augustine, 1998:946).

Martin Luther

Following the pre-Reformation thought of Augustine's *City of God*, Luther established his doctrine of the two kingdoms, based on his understanding of the distinct spiritual and worldly kingdoms. This was not an ethical dualism between the realm of Satan and the realm of God, but a twofold means by which God's sovereignty is effected within history, with spiritual and temporal authority (Pasiciel, 2000:39). There are two kingdoms: the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world. Luther differentiates the two kingdoms in his commentary on Psalms:

This Psalm [117] also reveals a peculiarly great mystery, one little known at the time of the Apostles and almost faded away under the papacy, namely, that the Kingdom of Christ is not a temporal, transitory, earthly kingdom, ruled with laws and regulations; but a spiritual, heavenly and eternal Kingdom that must be ruled without and above all laws, regulations, and outward means (Luther, *Works* 14:14).

God has ordained two governments: the spiritual, by which the Holy Spirit produces Christians and righteous people under Christ; and the temporal which restrains the unchristian and wicked so that – no thanks to them – they are obliged to keep still and to maintain an outward peace (Luther, *Works* 45:91).

The Kingdom of God is the spiritual realm in which God has revealed Himself in Christ. It is an eternal and heavenly Kingdom above all rules and laws and is the realm of truth, peace, joy, righteousness, security, equality and salvation of humanity. It gives an eschatological hope with an ultimate gift of God's grace in soteriological and redemptive terms. Soteriology is the central theme of Luther's theological system; salvation is the free gift of God's grace and not by any deserved recompense for human merit. In his theology, Luther constantly illustrates the distinction between God's demand and God's gift or between the so-called Law and Gospel. His commentary on *Galatians* includes the following:

The way to distinguish the one from the other is to locate the Gospel in heaven and the Law on earth, to call the righteousness of the Gospel heavenly and divine and the righteousness of the Law earthly and human, and to distinguish as sharply between the righteousness of the Gospel and that of the Law as God distinguishes between heaven and earth or between light and darkness or between day and night. Let the one be like the light and the day, and the other like the darkness and the night ... Therefore if the issue is faith, heavenly righteousness, or conscience, let us leave the Law out of consideration altogether and let it remain on the earth (Luther, *Works* 26:115-116).

By describing a personal relationship to God in Christ as Gospel and an earthly life of social order as the Law, Luther insists that Law, whether Mosaic or otherwise, can only tell us what God expects of us and, because of our inability to do what He demands, can only drive us sinners to despair and to the sweet relief of the Gospel. He thus distinguishes the antithetic characteristic of the divinely conferred Law and Gospel as they apply in and between the spiritual and the temporal realms to serve God's purpose. These two realms, whether they are referred to as kingdoms or government, are distinct ways of motivating people or maintaining order within each of the two kingdoms (Wright, 2010:135-136). Wright explains further:

Christ, the Word, and the Holy Spirit represented the government of the Kingdom of Christ. Laws and the sword represented the government of the kingdom of the world. The great Reformer undertook to explain why the very unique kind of government pertaining to either kingdom must not be applied in the other kingdom (Wright, 2010:136).

Though the Kingdom of God is extended to the Christian life in the world, it does not belong to this world, for it is before the world and eternal. The governing of this divine Kingdom is maintained by the Word, faith, and the Holy Spirit, whereas the kingdom of the world is governed by external force and the physical sword. In the Kingdom of God, faith is the key in entering into a redemptive relationship with God. In the kingdom of the world, reason or natural law is a major part of promoting physical well-being, providing justice, and restraining evils within creation and the worldly government.

In Luther's conception of the law of creation or natural law, he combined the use and conformation of the ancient moral philosophy and legal concept of 'ought to be' and 'right and just' and some kind of an eternal moral order (Luther, *Works* 13:163). The law of nature in reason is an essential gift to the worldly kingdom, but the more important gift of the divine law in the Holy Spirit is given to believers in the Kingdom of Christ. Within the kingdom of the world, Luther maintained that God had created three divinely ordered institutions to do God's will in the world: "first, daily life including marriage, household, or domestic affairs and livelihood; second, the worldly government or state; and third, the priesthood or church" (Wright, 2010:132). It is necessary to keep these three God-ordained orders in place to sustain justice and natural orders in the world. The first two orders concern the daily needs of the temporal life in the corporeal kingdom of this world, namely the family through marriage and raising children and the government or state through the operative of economy and social life under rules and laws. The third order belongs to the spiritual sphere of the church or

ecclesiastical court. Wright (2010:134) interprets Luther's thought to mean that while the church should be limited to matters of faith and morals, it should leave worldly matters of money, property, physical life, and honour to the temporal courts. In the same way, the temporal authority is not permitted to interfere with the spiritual matters of the church. The two authorities have their specific tasks and forms of membership. Christian believers belong to the Kingdom of God and unbelievers to the kingdom of the world. The distinct virtue of Christians is that "Christians have in their heart the Holy Spirit, who both teaches and makes them to do injustice to no one, to love everyone, and to suffer injustice and even death willingly and cheerfully at the hands of anyone" (Luther, *Works* 45:88-89).

This "two kingdoms" model in Luther's thought argues that the church and the state are two separate and independent realms. But the universal kingship of Christ the Lord governs both kingdoms. Jesus Christ is the Lord of both kingdoms. These two kingdoms are supposed to serve one another because neither of the two governments or authorities "is sufficient in the world without the other" (Luther, *Works* 45:92). These two kingdoms are virtually working side by side in the world. Prill explains how the two kingdoms are distinctive but not autonomous:

By maintaining order in society the temporal authority and the kingdom of the world support the work of the gospel. On the other hand it is the task of the spiritual kingdom to radiate into the kingdom of the world. It does so first and foremost by preaching the Gospel of salvation to all people but also by warning and admonishing the secular authorities. While all people must respect their secular rulers, Christian preachers have the right and the duty to rebuke rulers who do not fulfil their task (Prill, 2005:18-19).

In Luther's dualistic understanding the two kingdoms and the two governments are totally separate and antithetic. Some critics have even described Luther's thought toward society as 'defeatist' and 'quietist', encouraging the Christian to tolerate (or at least fail to oppose) unjust social structure (McGrath, 1999:226). One of these critics is Reinhold Niebuhr, who finds Luther guilty of a complete severance between eternal grace and liberty and justice of the world:

In Luther's doctrine of the Two Realms, justice is consigned completely to the realm of the law. There 'nothing is known of Christ' even as in the realm of the Kingdom of Heaven 'nothing is known of law, conscience, or sword.' The law, in such a rigorous dualism, does not even contain within it the desire to do justice. It is no more than a coercive arrangement which prevents mutual harm (Niebuhr, 1953:162).

This sounds no different from the criticism against contemporary evangelicals with regard to their failure in social involvement. Nevertheless, Luther was vigorously clear

on his theology even though he was no political thinker. He understood that both kingdoms are under the reign of God. The state has been divinely ordained to achieve worldly purposes through laws, reason, and natural law while God rules the church through the Gospel. The Sermon on the Mount applies to the life of Christians both morally and spiritually. He also suggested that the two kingdoms or two governments are working mutually and concurrently. The criticism of defeatism does not stand.

We must not misinterpret Luther's two kingdoms doctrine as if there are two completely different groups of people and separate spheres of life. Christians are citizens of both kingdoms and they are "two different persons in one" (Luther, *Works* 21:23). Christians exist not only before God on solely spiritual matters because they are physically alive in this world. Therefore, Christians must honour and obey their duties and responsibilities towards both kingdoms, spiritual and social. Luther (*Works* 45:94) writes that, ideally, every Christian "submits most willingly to the rule of the sword, pays his taxes, honours those in authority, serves, helps, and does all he can to assist the governing authority, that it may continue to function and be held in honour and fear." Christians must do what promotes righteousness and only cease their obedience to the secular authority and obligation to the society if the ruler of this temporal world interferes in spiritual matters and compels them to act against the will of God. The goal of civil services and good works for the society is to preserve the fallen creation and put people right with God through faith in Jesus Christ. The good work itself does not justify one before God or earn salvation but it is the consequence of faith. Luther states:

Nevertheless the works themselves do not justify him before God, but he does the works out of spontaneous love in obedience to God and considers nothing except the approval of God, whom he would most scrupulously obey in all things (Luther, *Works* 31:359).

Luther treats good works and civic services in society as part of the Christian life. Faith is never unethical or divorced from God's creation. Faith will sanctify believers to do good works for other creatures and love their neighbours. Luther therefore encourages Christians to engage in social and civic duties:

If his house is on fire, love compels me to run to help him extinguish the flames ... If he falls into the water or into a pit I dare not turn away but must hurry to help him as best I can ... If I see that he is hungry or thirsty, I cannot ignore him but must offer food and drink, not considering whether I would risk impoverishing myself by doing so (Luther, *Works* 43:125-126).

Instead of being indifferent, as a priest or Levite bypassing suffering humanity, a Christian must act like a Samaritan, full of social compassion. A faithful Christian must then maintain an inseparable twofold relationship, the vertical relationship to God and the horizontal relationship to the neighbour (Steinmetz, 2002:124). This twofold relationship must work side by side and cannot miss out either one of the two. Without social passion, evangelical Christians may be charged with following a truncated Gospel and with failure in social involvement. Without faith expressed in social action, they are no different from supporters of the “social gospel” or liberalism. Steinmetz (2002:124) describes Luther's reaction to social action without faith: “Luther has no patience with a social gospel which lacks religious depth and which substitutes ethical analysis and moral obligation for inner liberation and joy.”

John Calvin

Calvin introduced a similar doctrine of two kingdoms that resembled Luther’s theology. This doctrine became the Reformed Church’s early orthodox teaching in dealing with church-state relations, social ethics, and related fields. Luther and Calvin agreed theologically with each other on substantively identical ideas of the two kingdoms doctrine, namely, that the church and the world, faith and politics, should be separated from one another. Calvin’s two kingdoms doctrine makes the spiritual and civil kingdoms distinct entities, as highlighted by VanDrunen in his summary:

First, he considers the spiritual Kingdom to be redemptive in character while he considers the civil kingdom a realm of God’s providential care, but not of his redemptive grace. Second, he sees the spiritual kingdom as spiritual and heavenly while he sees the civil kingdom as external and earthly. Finally, Calvin teaches that the spiritual kingdom finds expression in the present age exclusively in the church while he teaches that the civil kingdom finds expression especially in the civil government, along with other cultural matters such as scientific and artistic endeavours (VanDrunen, 2007:747).

Calvin believes that God is the Creator and Redeemer (*Institutes* 1.2.1) who has ordained two kingdoms with distinct purposes. He distinguishes clearly in the *Institutes* 3.19.15 the twofold governments: God’s spiritual government that trains the conscience to piety and divine worship and God’s temporal government that instructs our duties as human beings and as citizens.

In man government is twofold: the one spiritual, by which the conscience is trained to piety and divine worship; the other civil, by which the individual is instructed in those duties which, as men and citizens, we are bold to perform. To these two forms are commonly given the not inappropriate names of spiritual and temporal jurisdiction, intimating that the former species has reference to the life of the soul, while the latter relates to matters of the present life, not only to food and clothing, but to the enacting of

laws which require a man to live among his fellows purely, honourably, and modestly (Calvin, 2008:556-557; *Institutes* 3.19.15).

Calvin affirms that a fundamental antithesis divides Christians and non-Christians, both in regard to eternal destiny and to knowledge and conduct in the present world:

Paul affirms that all the gentiles were ‘without God,’ and deprived of the hope of life. Now, since John teaches that there was life in Christ from the beginning, and the whole world had lost it (John 1:4), it is necessary to return to that fountain; and accordingly, Christ declares that inasmuch as he is a propitiator, he is life. And, indeed, the inheritance of heaven belongs to none but the sons of God (John 15:6) (Calvin, 2008:213; *Institutes* 2.6.1).

The distinct characteristics of these two kingdoms, according to the *Institutes* 4.20.1, can be described as one earthly or civil kingdom which concerns temporal matters and is governed by the civil magistrate and the other spiritual kingdom or the church which is concerned with heavenly and eternal matters pertaining to salvation and is ruled by ecclesiastical government. VanDrunen identifies three important attributes of each kingdom that display the contrast of one with the other:

The three attributes of the Kingdom of Christ are its redemptive character, its spiritual or heavenly identity, and its present institutional expression in the church. The three attributes of the civil kingdom are its non-redemptive character, its external or earthly identity, and its present (though not exclusive) expression in civil government (VanDrunen, 2010:73).

The special focus of God’s reign is the spiritual Kingdom through the church, which He rules in love by His Word and Holy Spirit; but since God is the Creator of the world, His rule also extends over the wicked, forcibly compelling them to obey Him. God’s broader rule is associated with and through His providence, while the more particular rule is through Jesus Christ, the Redeemer and Mediator by His Word and Spirit. Calvin reveals that the Gospel concerns the spiritual liberty of Christians and does not apply to civil order with its external government (*Institutes* 3.19.15). However, he maintains a more balanced view than that of Luther in relation to the Law and the Gospel. He realizes the threats of God’s wrath in Law but also the positive effect of the threats to turn sinners to repent and to seek the grace of God. Although the redemptive character (Gospel) of the spiritual Kingdom does not rule over civil affairs (Law), it does not at all diminish Christians’ obligation to obey magistrates under the civil government when they are in the present world (*Institutes* 3.19.15).

The distinct differences between the two kingdoms should not preclude the two governments from working together. VanDrunen (2010:74-75) explains that Calvin

does not imply that Christ has nothing at all to do with the civil kingdom and does not insert an unwarranted “dualism” or “dichotomy” or “bifurcation” in his theology. Calvin advocates not only mutual submission according to their rightful jurisdiction, but also service in order to strengthen each other. He admonishes the church’s spiritual government to do much to “aid and promote” the civil government (*Institutes* 4.11.1) and the civil government to assist the church in preventing “blasphemy against the name of God” and “other offenses to religion, break out and be disseminated among the people” (*Institutes* 4.20.3).

Calvin does provide us with a holistic theological and even christological account of the incarnate Mediator for the world and its history (*Institutes* 1.13.7; 2.12.6). Bolt (1983:30) is helpful in explaining Christ’s role as Mediator; the divine *Logos* sustains creation on one hand and reconciles creation in the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension on the other.

In Bolt’s discussion of Calvin’s Christology in relation to Christian living, Bolt espouses the twofold mediatorship of Christ as the crucial foundation for the two kingdoms doctrine for the church, as the body of Christ, to serve both the spiritual and civil kingdoms. He continues:

Calvin’s Christology suggests that truly ‘Christian’ activity in the world, that is to say activity which explicitly acknowledges the lordship of Jesus Christ, occurs apart from the activity of the institutional church community ... ‘Christian’ activity in the world is not transferred ‘churchly’ activity but activity which comports with the Wisdom of God which governs creation (Bolt, 1983:31).

The task of Jesus Christ, as the incarnate Mediator in the world, was to fulfil the Law and the Gospel as Mediator of creation and as Mediator of redemption. Bolt (1983:31) validates the implication of a genuinely Calvinist Christology from the distinction of the twofold mediatorship to an ecclesiological distinction between the church as institute and the church as organism, where the latter refers to Christians in their organization and action in social, political, economic, and educational spheres outside the worship and discipleship activities of the visible church. It is the obligation of the church as Christ’s body in the world to fulfil the ministry of calling the world to be the creation according to the will of God. In addition to the proclamation of the Gospel for the eternal redemptive purpose, Bolt is also concerned to liberate ‘Christian’ activity in the world from the direction of the institutional church to call the world to God’s creation order. He then concludes:

While the proclamation of the Gospel of justification/reconciliation (which is the proper limited calling of the institutional church) has a certain priority in a sinful, unreconciled world, this proclamation is not the only Christian obligation in the world ... The church ministers to the world not by attempting to embrace all of human existence and making it church but by its faithful ministry of the Word which calls the world truly to be the creation which God fashioned through his Wisdom and destined for his Sabbath glory (Bolt, 1983:31).

Both Luther and Calvin discuss the contrasting attributes of the two kingdoms in their doctrines. The image that they present of the Christian life as a pilgrimage portrays the present earthly life of Christians as one of suffering and hardship with a hope of a better life in the heavenly Kingdom. Despite their distinct and antithetic analysis, they should not be seen to imply a total separation between these two kingdoms. While the two kingdoms remain independent of each other, they are both under the reign of God. There is a balance between Law and Gospel in Jesus Christ, as the true perspective on the Law is in the Gospel, namely, that sin is atoned for and that guilt is removed. Calvin (*Institutes* 4.14.26) writes, “Both (Law and Gospel) testify that the paternal kindness of God, and the graces of the Spirit, are offered us in Christ.” Christ is both the lawgiver and the true Mediator of the Gospel. Calvin calls the church to witness the divine righteousness that is related to earthly justice in defending the poor and exploited and even presents such duties to the magistrates of the state (*Institutes* 4.20.9). The purpose of Luther’s teaching on the two kingdoms is to demonstrate God’s twofold rule of the whole world by Law and Gospel and not to separate them into two divorced realms of the sacred and the secular (Lazareth, 2001:14). Luther and Calvin together exhibit two separate but not stand-alone kingdoms or governments. The church, the body of Christ, as the spiritual Kingdom, is called to promote and assist the civil government. Our God is both Creator and Redeemer and His realm encompasses both the heavenly Kingdom and the worldly kingdom. It is the church’s obligation not only to promote proper human justice and the equity of God’s creation, but also to bring the eschatological hope of the heavenly kingdom to the world.

6.3.2 Karl Barth: Gospel and Law

Barth often critiqued the two kingdoms idea and challenged both Luther and Calvin for failing to address what people need to know. He suggests that “we need to know not only that the two are not in conflict, but, first and foremost, to what extent they are connected” (Barth, 1968:102). The Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world both

rest upon one central power in Jesus Christ. He espouses his thesis on the basis of Christocentrism:

The Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, apart from which there is no other kingdom and no other power about which Christians need concern themselves ... These two realms are indeed to be distinguished, but are nonetheless one, in so far as Jesus Christ is Lord not only of the church but also of the world (Barth, 1979:93, 220-221).

He warns that the focus merely on making a sharp and clear distinction between the order of creation and the order of redemption, representing God “on the right hand” and the world “on the left,” might well lead to the unfortunate doctrine of two kingdoms (Barth, 1961:151-152; *CD*, IV/3/1). VanDrunen (2010:341) explains well that Barth founds his conclusion upon the conviction that the spheres of creation and reconciliation, despite their distinction, are all christologically grounded and derived from the same God.

Barth (1968:102-104) finds that both Luther and Calvin did not articulate adequately the divine sovereignty over the two kingdoms and left the question of what Christ has to do with the civil government unanswered. VanDrunen elaborates this by saying:

Barth distinguished God’s work of creation from His work of redemption, but he did so only while insisting that they are both christological in a way such that they can never be separated. The orders of creation and redemption are united in Christ and to know God as creator is also to know Him as redeemer (VanDrunen, 2010:344).

Barth denies the dual mediatorship of Christ on the basis that creation is christological and cannot be accorded its existence independent of redemption, and so the law of the civil authority cannot come apart from the Gospel (VanDrunen, 2010:344). There is no distinction between the Son of the eternal God and the Son of the incarnate redeemer. God deals with all people all the time as both creator and redeemer. VanDrunen (2010:345) summarizes Barth’s concept thus: “the church and the secular world, or the church and the state, could be distinguished, but they possessed a higher unity in that both were part of the Kingdom of God (though neither itself constituted it) and that both were christologically grounded.” The Kingdom of God, in Barth’s definition, encompasses both the spiritual authority and the civil authority.

Barth uses the relationship of Gospel and Law to develop an understanding of the relationship between the church (the spiritual realm) and the state (the civil realm). Both realms are established in Christ, in whom the Gospel is their law because the law is in the Gospel, from the Gospel, and pointing to the Gospel (Barth, 1968:72). Barth

(1968:71) redefines the structure of the traditional order from 'Law and Gospel' to 'Gospel and Law' to reflect the promise to Abraham 430 years before the demand of law to Moses, and he cites Paul in Galatians 3:17, "What I mean is this: the law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise." Whether we speak of Gospel or Law, we mean God's Word of truth (Barth, 1968:72). What the Word of God demonstrates is always grace. The law or the state is not simply the order of God's wrath; it is "nothing else than the necessary form of the Gospel, whose content is grace" (Barth, 1968:80). The Word of God includes both Gospel and Law in the content of grace. "This grace is called, and is, Jesus Christ" (Barth, 1968:73). Therefore Barth (1968:120) speaks of grace in both the state and the church, which are fundamentally in the same unique christological sphere.

Couenhoven (2002:192) explicates further the meaning of the two realms in the christological sphere: by no means does Barth collapse the two communities into one or merge the secular state into the heavenly city where Christians are true citizens, but rather, as Barth (1968:122-123, 126) states, Christians are to wait for God to unify them. There is, however, certain precedence of the Gospel over the law and, in the same sense, the church before the state, because the former knows the Gospel. The Gospel is the source of all laws, just as the origin of the church is from its concrete encounter with Christ. The church, with its spiritual centre of Christ who is the centre of the being and constitution of the state, is "guided by the *Logos* as unconquered, enslaved by no arbitrary power, and even identical with the will of God on earth as in heaven" and "it could administer justice and protect the law in accordance with its substance, dignity, function, and purpose, and in so doing remaining true to itself instead of losing itself" (Barth, 1968:126, 119). The church must show respect for the independence of the divinely ordained commission revealed and operative especially in the existence of the state. The church belongs to one eternal God who became human and proved Himself a neighbour to humans in the world, the political sphere and, as such, will always and in all circumstances be involved in humanity and not simply in some abstract cause or other but in the concrete progress in human dignity and human life for this present age and future generations (Barth, 1968:171). The close connection of the state to the church reflects on the church's knowledge of the kingship of Christ and understanding of its primary calling in preaching the saving Word of God as well as its responsibility in encouragement and admonition out of the witness to Jesus Christ as the 'inner circle'

within the 'wider circle' (Barth, 1968:155). The Christian community built by God does not simply have faith, hope, and love but is of ultimate and supremely political significance in bringing the external, relative, and provisional order of law to the original and final pattern of the order of the eternal Kingdom of God and the eternal righteousness of His grace (Barth, 1968:154).

Barth's message on social thought is radically christocentric, based on God's divine transcendence and immanence self-disclosed in the Word of God in Jesus Christ. His move to a christological synthesis of the spiritual and civil spheres of life is built on the inclusive banner of the universal 'lordship of Christ' and the order of redemptive grace in both Gospel and Law. The important point is not how the spiritual and civil spheres are separate but how they are connected. God is the centre of the church as the inner circle as well as the wider circle of the civil state in the human sphere. The church within the wider circle of the civil state does know about the Kingdom of God and brings it to the attention of humanity and reminds them of the Lord and centre, Jesus Christ, who came and is to come again (Barth, 1968:167-168). The church cannot simply take the Kingdom of God to the worldly political arena but can proclaim God's Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is ruled by God in the redeemed world without problems and contradictions. Barth (1968:168) affirms that both the state and the church are in the world not yet redeemed. The church is not the Kingdom of God and not even an image of the Kingdom of God. What the church has is the knowledge of the Kingdom of God, the hopes for it, and the faith in it, and what it does is to pray in the name of Jesus Christ and preach His name as the Name above all others (Barth, 1968:170). On this basis, Lazareth concludes:

Barth believes that the church can manifest Christ's lordship over the whole of creation, thereby leaving none of it to God's law in secular autonomy from God's will. Barth can go so far in this work as to assert that his Christocentric ethic will help in the moulding of the state into the likeness of the Kingdom of God (Lazareth, 2001:12).

The church, as the body of Christ, is somehow further on the way toward the Kingdom of God than the state and must be the model and prototype of the order of divine Law and Gospel for the state to provide equal protection for all. It is the witness to the fact that the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. This leads the church to enact their particular concern for the poor, the socially and economically weak and threatened and insist on the state's special responsibility for these weaker members of society (Barth, 1968:173). Barth (1968:173) makes a plain but strong statement: "The church

must stand for social justice in the political sphere”. He also poses a serious challenge to the real church: it must set an example for the real state:

The church’s preaching of the Gospel would be in vain if its own existence, constitution, order, government, and administration were not a practical demonstration of the thinking and acting from the Gospel which takes place in this inner circle. How can the world believe the Gospel of the King and His Kingdom if by its own actions and attitudes the church shows that it has no intention of basing its own internal policy on the Gospel? (Barth, 1968:186).

The evangelical church today must also ask itself this very same question. If it does not have an impact or example on the political sphere, aiming to maintain justice for the poor and oppressed, its concentration only in evangelism and the preaching of the Gospel will certainly be in vain. As Barth says, the church must stand for social justice in society.

Concluding Summary

The highest good of human life on earth may be less important than eternal good, but unless the church shows the world or society that God loves it by interesting itself in humanity’s temporary good, it will hardly persuade them to believe in the greater good of God’s Gospel and His offer of love. There is no assurance that we will bring about a happier, a wiser, and a more just world before the end of history. Our assured hope must rest on the glorified state of the divine community in heaven, but a millennial state of an earthly kingdom – a state in which humans predominantly do God’s sovereign will and love their neighbours as themselves – is a possibility (Bevan, 1938:71).

The failure of the evangelical church in active social involvement poses many questions and difficulties in regard to the advance of God’s sovereign will and love to other members of the society. The conservative churches have inherited the profoundly pessimistic view of premillennialism from Christian history and have translated this pessimism into their life in this present world. Their withdrawal from social concern can be partly interpreted as a one-sided millennial view of eschatology and a narrow literal exegesis of Scripture, while reaction or over-reaction to socio-political situations in history and the social gospel movement is another explanation. While countering the liberal view on social reform in order to preserve the priority of evangelism and the purity of the Gospel, they have overtly downgraded social involvement (Tinker, 1999:275).

The distinctive differences between the two kingdoms are obvious as described but they are not completely separate. The church, as the believing community, must not forget that the orders of creation and redemption, the spiritual and civil realms, as well as the Law and the Gospel, are held together and function together within the purpose and will of God. Both kingdoms are one under the reign of God in Christ and His redemptive plan. The church cannot escape its responsibility to be the model and prototype of equality, liberty, and justice, and to exhibit the divine order of Law and Gospel or, as Barth says, Gospel and Law, to the world and bring them close to the likeness of the Kingdom of God.

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this chapter was to study the background and development of the eschatological view of premillennialism and the interpretation of the 'two kingdoms'. The next chapter will attempt to clarify the confusion and diversity of various doctrines as they have been taught in the churches and to search the vital and pertinent ideas attached to the theological and ethical understanding of the Kingdom of God and the will of God for the participation in social justice.

CHAPTER 7: ‘THY KINGDOM COME’: THE MANIFESTATION OF THE REIGN OF GOD

7.1 A SYNTHESIS OF THE DUALISTIC STRUCTURE OF THE MYSTERIOUS KINGDOM

7.1.1 Introduction

The heart of our Lord’s distinctive teaching in His earthly ministry is ‘the Gospel of the Kingdom’ (Mt. 4:23, 24:14; Luke 4:43). This is the theme of His teaching and cannot be divorced from the context of His mission and life on earth. He began His public ministry with an announcement of the Kingdom (Mt. 4:17; Mark 1:15) and kept revealing the mystery of the Kingdom exclusively to His disciples during His work upon the earth (Mark 4; Mt. 13). The mystery of the Kingdom is the truth about its coming and manifestation as illustrated by several parables in the Gospels. Jesus’ particular revelation of the mystery of the Kingdom to the disciples who had eyes to see and ears to hear and understand was to emphasize the importance of understanding as a gracious gift from God (Nel, 2009:271). Nel (2009:275) points out that the understanding of the mystery of the Kingdom of God is not a natural human endowment but rather a favour of God and a privileged instruction to Jesus’ disciples. The disciples thought they understood the teaching of Jesus (Mt. 13:51) but they themselves, at times, remained struggling (Mt. 15:16; 16:9, 11; 16:23) and repeatedly asked for an explanation (Mt. 13:36; 15:15). Snyder (1997:11) is right: “They understood only in part.”

The disciples did not fully understand the meaning of the Kingdom of God even up to the time of Jesus’ ascension, as evidently shown in their question: “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6, NIV). They wanted to know whether or not the Kingdom that they understood was finally to be set up. Jesus responded, “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:7-8, NIV). Snyder expresses what he feels about the mystery of the Kingdom of God:

This is no attempt to outguess God or pre-empt the sovereign mystery of the Kingdom. The Kingdom still and always remains in God's hands (Snyder, 1997:11).

One of the significant developments in the Christian theology of the last century was its search for the insight on eschatology, relating to the *telos* and *chronos* of the Kingdom of God and the *parousia* of Jesus Christ. In spite of the vast and intensive studies and polemics conducted throughout the twentieth century, the Kingdom of God remains a diversified concept, and its understanding on timing and manner continues to be highly debated subjects within Christian circles and especially among scholars. Since the dawn of Christianity, no particular eschatological position, specifically involving the millennium, has ever been accepted as a consensual and orthodox. Grudem voices this situation:

Nevertheless, Christians differ over specific details leading up to and immediately following Christ's return. Specifically, they differ over the nature of the millennium and the relationship of Christ's return to the millennium, the sequence of Christ's return and the great tribulation period that will come to the earth, and the question of the salvation of the Jewish people (and the relationship between Jews who are saved and the church) (Grudem, 1994:1095).

While there is a growing agreement that the *chronos* of the Kingdom of God is in some sense both present and future, the above comment made by Grudem is similar to that of an earlier biblical scholar, Ladd (1974:3), who finds "the question of the role of apocalyptic concepts in our Lord's teaching, and the relationship between the present and future aspects of the Kingdom, continue to be vigorously debated." The disputes among proponents of particular views of eschatology (premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism) are enormous. Each view of eschatology has its unique characteristic insights, convictions, conjectures and hopes and each has direct impact on Christian hope with respect to the timing and nature of the Kingdom of God. Grudem (1994:1095) speaks of the genuine biblical understanding that Christians who holds various positions, whether in premillennialism, postmillennialism, or amillennialism, must agree that Scripture is inerrant and the differences concerning the interpretation of various passages relating to the positions should be seen as matters of secondary importance. He may imply that different positions in premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism are biblically tenable, but not necessarily be comprehensive and sufficient.

Any single stream of expression of the eschatological view seems not able to satisfactorily explain the total concept of the Kingdom of God because of the mystery of

its complex characteristics. Insisting on a single interpretation of an eschatological view does not resolve all the tensions and difficulties, and thus presents challenges for the ethical life of believers. Kuzmic (1985:148) observes that evangelicals have unfortunately taken a limited approach to the important and complex biblical subject of the Kingdom of God and focus one-sidedly on the different interpretation of Revelation 20. Despite the greater seriousness in recent theological studies and some progress made in recognizing the tension between present and future aspects of the Kingdom, there remain a number of areas where further precision is desirable: Jesus' understanding of His proclamation, the extent and dimension of His messages, the explicit and implicit contents of the theological concepts. Kuzmic (1985:148) writes that the absence of a consistent interpretation of an eschatological view "has hardly filtered down from the biblical theological investigations to the pulpits and has yet to produce a desired change in evangelical behaviour." Aalen (1962:215) writes that the selection of only one meaning of the Kingdom of God to interpret all other sayings in terms of one central emphasis will lose the unity of the concept and result in the unfortunate decomposition of it. Bishop Mortimer Arias offers a multidimensional and all-encompassing understanding in his insightful study of the grace, hope, and challenge of the Kingdom of God:

The Kingdom of God, announced by Jesus, is multidimensional and all encompassing. It is both a present and a future reality. It has to do with each individual creature and with the whole of society. It was addressed initially to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' but was destined for 'the whole world' and to 'the end of the earth.' It embraces all dimensions of human life: physical, spiritual, personal and interpersonal, communal and societal, historical and eternal. And it encompasses all human relationships – with the neighbour, with nature, and with God. It implies a total offer and a total demand (Arias, 1984:xv).

The theme of the Kingdom of God is a holistic and inclusive concept amongst others such as the covenant in the biblical teaching. The multidimensional characteristics of the Kingdom of God do not allow any refuge in favour of dichotomies that plague polemics with the 'already' and 'not yet,' the 'spiritual and material,' the 'individual and social,' the 'historical and eternal,' and so on. Okorie writes that there is a 'betweenness' of the First Coming and the Second Advent of Jesus but the multi-dimensions of the eschatological view are on both basis rather than an either or basis.

The Kingdom of God and the *parousia* of Jesus dialectically connote both an encouragement and a challenge, both a gift and a demand, both a confession and a denial by men, both an acknowledgement and a refutation by the Chief Advocate, both a vindication and a visitation, both the suffering and the glorification of the Son of Man, both a hidden Kingdom and a theophany, both an element of unknowability and an element of inevitability of the event, both an apocalyptic vision of the prophets and an

eschatological hope of the evangelists, both a throne of salvation and a footstool of judgement, both a presence and a future (Okorie, 1995:38).

Ladd (1974:24, 38) finds that the group of scholars who stood on two extremes started to recognize the necessity of both the present and the future, the ‘spiritual’ and the ‘eschatological’ aspects of the Kingdom, and suggests a synthesis of present and future in the understanding of the Kingdom of God and other related subjects. He encourages modern scholars to engage in an extensive study of this synthesis in order to come to a consensus:

However, between these two extremes (apocalyptic and noneschatological) stands a group of scholars who recognize the necessity of both the present and the future, the ‘spiritual’ and the ‘eschatological’ aspect of the Kingdom of God ... So extensively is this synthesis to be found that we must recognize it as an emerging consensus (Ladd, 1975:24, 38).

On another positive note, Beasley-Murray (1987:142), a notable New Testament scholar with a particular interest in the subject of the Kingdom of God, cites an encouraging remark: “a consensus is at least on the way after three generations of argument about it by New Testament scholars”. It may be difficult to foresee a unified conception of the Kingdom of God in the not too distant future, but it is not surprising to see the development of a more encompassing or a mutual understanding amidst the breadth of diversified meanings.

This chapter is not to outguess God and His sovereign mystery of the Kingdom. However, the mystery of the Kingdom has been disclosed to humans even though it is understood only by those who profess and respond in faith. Paul assures us that the mystery will finally be disclosed by revelation and be made known according to the prophetic writings and our obedience through the wise God in Christ:

Now to Him who is able to establish you by my Gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey Him – to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen (Romans 16:25-27, NIV).

My study will focus primarily on our Lord Jesus’ teaching in order to interpret three sets of dualistic expressions or the ‘betweenness’ of the Kingdom of God in an attempt to locate a synthetic understanding of the Kingdom concept for the church’s mission in social justice in God’s created world.

7.1.2 The Coming of the Kingdom is ‘Already’ and ‘Not Yet’

The underlying cause of confusion over the meaning of the Kingdom of God is the distinct views held by so many commentators on the role of apocalyptic concepts in our Lord’s teaching in relation to the future and present aspects of the Kingdom. This chapter attempts a brief survey of the discussion of the two contrasting views and their arguments as well as the claim of their biblical positions for the last century. The remaining two sets of the dualist structure of the Kingdom interpretation are basically derived from and related to the opposing views of the future and present aspects of the Kingdom and, as such, arguments may be duplicated repeatedly in various parts of this chapter.

A premillennial interpretation is compelled to deny the present existence of the Kingdom of God in conjunction with the First Advent of Christ and to insist on its realization solely in connection with the Second Advent. The argument of this view is that the Kingdom will not come until Christ turns it over to the Father after all enemies are defeated under His feet at the end of the millennium (1 Cor. 15:24-25). Ladd (1952:63) agrees that the Kingdom of God will not come in the fullest sense of the word until the *parousia* of Christ and the establishment of His millennial reign. On the other hand, he finds there is no logic in the millennial interpretation which excludes a present aspect of the Kingdom (Ladd, 1952:64). An opposing view that refutes the exclusive term of a futuristic eschatology adopts the view that the Kingdom is a totally present dynamic organization that comes when the Gospel is spread, hearts are changed, sin and error overcome, righteousness cultivated, and a living communion with God established (Vos, 1951:27). This present view of the Kingdom is criticized by scholars of the futuristic eschatological view as unhistorical, unfaithful to the prophetic teaching and a misinterpretation of Jesus’ teaching. Jesus’ life and work was merely the preparation for the Kingdom’s coming.

The exclusive futuristic eschatological view of the Kingdom was formally set forth in the early twentieth century in the works of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer who rejected the present nature of the Kingdom, the ethical ideal, and the individualistic experience of the rule of God in one’s heart (Buzzard, 1992:100). ‘Consistent Eschatology’ is the name known for this position, espoused and popularized by them that interprets Jesus’ eschatology as an expectation of an imminent end. Their

interpretation of New Testament eschatology was at first a reactionary attack against the prevalent liberalism in the 19th century, led by Ritschl, whose theology was ethically based on “the assumption that authentic lives of Jesus could be written which would portray Him as a moral teacher urging men to build the Kingdom of God by their labours” (Harkness, 1974:33; Moore, 1966:35). Schweitzer (1964:1) on the first page of his famous book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, protests against the confusion created by the critical study of the liberals to ignore the truth of the historical knowledge resulting in half-way history and half-way thought.

Weiss studied primarily on the teaching of Jesus, whereas Schweitzer extended the presentation to include the entire life, work, and teaching of Jesus for a thorough-going or consistent understanding of an eschatological expectation in terms of Jewish apocalyptic assumptions and writings (Schweitzer, 1964:223). Consistent Eschatology argues that the emphasis of Jesus’ apocalyptic teaching was merely the framework of His thought of a futuristic Kingdom view. Weiss discounts the natural meaning of Jesus’ sayings which seem to represent the Kingdom as already present (Ladd, 1952:29) and Schweitzer holds that the Kingdom of God is wholly future (Schweitzer, 1964:239). Schweitzer’s thesis is based on the apocalyptic character of Jesus’ idea of the Kingdom of God in the thought of the Messianic designate or ‘Son of Man’, the lively awareness of the nearness of the Kingdom of God and of His own glorification, the mission of the Twelve to bring about the Kingdom, and the expected advent delayed to draw the catastrophic irruption of the Kingdom (Schweitzer, 1964:223-241; Moore, 1966:35). Schweitzer (1964:239) believes that Jesus claimed subtly His Messianic designate but exercised no Messianic function. Jesus did not ‘establish’ the Kingdom but only ‘proclaimed’ its coming and the need to wait for God who will bring about the coming of the Kingdom by supernatural means.

Schweitzer (1964:225) rejects the spiritual conception of the Kingdom, which, for him, is impossible to combine with the thought of a glorious second coming, and thus insists on the apocalyptic catastrophe of an organic development or a physical happening. He finds that the only concern for humanity is to prepare for the end and thus the normative ethical teaching for human conduct in ordinary course is inadequate for the impending entrance into the Kingdom (Ladd, 1952:29-30; Schweitzer, 1964:241). This so-called ‘interim ethic’ is a temporary expedient designed to be used only for the brief interval before the world should end (Ladd, 1952:30). The Kingdom is still to come, as implied

by the petition in the Lord's Prayer, 'Thy Kingdom come.' Schweitzer (1964:239) explains: "It is at present purely supra-mundane. It is presently only as a cloud may be said to be present which throws its shadow upon the earth; its nearness, that is to say, is recognized by the paralysis of the Kingdom of Satan." Jesus' proclamation of the nearness of the Kingdom while fulfilling His mission on earth is "rather the preparatory stage of His Messianic work" and "the setting up of the Kingdom was to be preceded by the Day of Judgment" (Schweitzer, 1964:237, 240). Jesus' repeated expression of the expectation of His second coming towards the close of His earthly life was to paint the colour of His eschatology as the last effort for bringing about the Kingdom through the mission of the Twelve (Schweitzer, 1964:232). Together with the mission to preach to the Gentiles and heathen, the delay of the *parousia* was a consequence and the Jewish-Christian eschatology of the present age was transferred to the future (Schweitzer, 1964:233).

The criticisms of Consistent Eschatology are mostly on its methodology and interpretation. Moore (1966:38-39) finds that Schweitzer's uses of literary and historical presuppositions are inconsistent, for instances, in accepting the literary method without turning the forms of the Sermon on the Mount and the sending of the Twelve (Mt. 10) into an historical criterion and, in other instances, in suspending the literary criterion in favour of an unjustified historical presuppositions regarding Mark 6. Schweitzer is also criticized for omitting the considerable variety of expectation contained within apocalyptic writings in his interpretation with regard to Messiah's secret life of humiliation prior to exaltation and neglecting prominent aspects of first century Judaism in interpreting Jesus' thought connected with older prophetic ethics (Moore, 1966:40). Moore (1966:43-44) concludes: "The terms of apocalyptic in Consistent Eschatology are also seen to be insufficient, and the future tense not comprehensive enough, to express Jesus' consciousness of His own person and work."

The introduction or rediscovery of the apocalyptic-eschatological Jesus, as Buzzard (1992:101) points out, prompted C. H. Dodd to investigate the troublesome issue of how Jesus' message could still be affirmed as central and authoritative in relation to its eschatology orientation. Dodd (1961:34) charges that Consistent Eschatology was proposing a compromise of the future coming of the Kingdom and the 'already present' as coming very soon and presented no solution to the issue. He declares a new concept of eschatology in the name of 'Realized Eschatology' such that "the *eschaton* has

moved from the future to the present, from the sphere of expectation into that realized experience.” Dodd (1961:29) proposes that the Kingdom declared by Jesus is a matter of present experience and is something that has already happened. This is not in the sense of the apocalyptic eschatology that Jewish usage recognizes as a future expectation and does not refer to the eschatological order at the end of history. Ladd (1974:17) recites Dodd’s emphasis, that is, the coming of the Kingdom of God is the entrance of the eternally present realm of God into time, the infinite into the finite, and the intrusion of the transcendental into the natural. Supporting his thesis, Dodd uses the formula found in Mark 1:15 to sum up the preaching of Jesus in Galilee: “The time has come, he said. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the Good News!” Dodd (1961:30) first exegetes the coming of the Kingdom of God as an act of God’s grace to reveal His Kingdom to an unrepentant generation that they may be provoked to repentance. This act, however, is not dependant on whether people repent or not but is a historical happening associated with Jesus. Dodd (1961:31) makes it very clear that “Jesus intended to proclaim the Kingdom of God not as something to come in the near future, but as a matter of present experience.” Dodd (1961:29) adopts the use of LXX ἐγγίζω (a perfect past tense) to translate ‘the Kingdom of God is near’ in the sense of ‘to reach,’ and ‘to arrive.’ In Dodd’s translation, the arrival of the Kingdom is “The Kingdom of God has come” (Dodd, 1961:29). He cites additional support from Luke 11:20: “But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the Kingdom of God has come to you.” Dodd (1961:30) affirms that the exorcisms performed by Jesus are treated as a sign that the Kingdom of Satan has been overcome by the coming of the Kingdom of God. By proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom, the Kingdom of God in some way has come with Jesus Himself (Dodd, 1961:30).

Dodd attempts to prove that Jesus saw the Kingdom present in His own life, death, resurrection, ascension, and *parousia* as the series of historical events unfolded in Jesus Himself (Dodd, 1961:35; Ladd, 1974:18). This represents the ministry of Jesus as ‘Realized Eschatology.’ According to Dodd (1961:35), the works of healing are ‘signs’ of the ‘eternal life’ which is the ultimate issue of the coming of the Kingdom of God. Jesus anticipated sufferings for Himself and His disciples as well as His own death, with both direct and allusive references at the Last Super (Dodd, 1961:40-55). Dodd sees these sufferings as partly for immediate occurrence in the sending of the Twelve (Mt. 10:17-22) and partly for the persecution of the church as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and elsewhere. Dodd (1961:55) argues that Jesus’ death is not required to

bring in the Kingdom; it is not the 'price' of its coming, and not about the repentance without which it could not come. Although Paul says that through the death of Jesus God triumphed over principalities and powers (Col. 2:15), Jesus' victory over the kingdom of the enemy in exorcism is already a sign of the coming of the Kingdom in the Synoptic Gospels. Dodd (1961:58) adds to his defence regarding Paul's repeated emphasis on Jesus' death over the powers of evil as the manifestation of the righteousness of God and judgment upon sin and essential elements in the idea of the Kingdom of God. In this sense, the death of Jesus was not a prerequisite for the coming of the Kingdom and the judgment in general, but Jesus' sacrificial death is only a function of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is already present.

Buzzard (1992:102) rightly points out that Dodd's theory ran into difficulty with those texts which plainly envisaged the second coming of Jesus in anticipation of the coming of the Kingdom. Dodd (1961:38, 39) admits some doubt regarding eating and drinking at the heavenly feast (Mt. 8:11) but argues that "the saying does not answer the question whether or not Jesus expected any further 'coming' of the Kingdom of God beyond that which was already taking place in His own ministry ... It would however be susceptible of the meaning that at some date in the future the present earthly manifestation of the Kingdom of God will yield to a purely transcendent order in which it will be absolute." On the other hand, the petition of the Lord's Prayer in Mt. 6:10 and Luke 11:2 clearly indicates that Jesus expected the coming of the Kingdom of God as a decisive happening confronting His contemporaries. However, he insists that the Kingdom of God is eternally present, has already happened according to the teaching of Jesus, and only the new thing shall be revealed on earth (Dodd, 1961:38).

Another proponent of the view of the Kingdom as an entirely present reality is Bultmann (1958:40-41) who suggests that the real significance of the Kingdom of God in the message of Jesus' teaching is the sense of a transcendent event rather than the dramatic events attending its coming. It is solely supernatural, absolute, and the wholly other that has entered into time and space. This message of Jesus' is an eschatological Gospel, - "the proclamation that now the fulfilment of the promise is at hand, that now the Kingdom of God begins" (Bultmann, 1958:27). The promise of the prophets is fulfilled through the miraculous works of Jesus to heal: "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the Good News is preached to the poor" (Mt. 11:5, NIV). Bultmann (1958:29-30) is certain

that when Jesus told His disciples to celebrate the next Passover in the Kingdom of God (Luke 22:15-18) it is a message of certainty that “the Kingdom of God is beginning, is beginning now!” Bultmann acknowledges the futuristic apocalyptic element of the proclaimed Kingdom by saying, “Rather the Kingdom of God is a power which, although it is entirely future, wholly determines the present” (Bultmann, 1958:51).

Despite this, Bultmann stands on his argument:

The future Kingdom of God, then, is not something which is to come in the course of time, so that to advance its coming one can do something in particular, perhaps through penitential prayers and good works, which become superfluous in the moment of its coming ... It determines the present because it now compels man to decision; he is determined thereby either in this direction or in that, as chosen or as rejected, in his entire present existence (Bultmann, 1958:51).

Buzzard (1992:102) charges that Bultmann’s theology reflects disastrous results for Jesus’ central message because he “circumvented it (the future element) by claiming to extract from the Jewish ‘husk,’ by a process of ‘demythologizing,’ the essential, permanent element, namely the challenge of the crisis of decision.” The claim of Bultmann (1958:52) on the human proclamation of this hour as the last hour is, after all, a human experience or decision essentially to replace the historical Jesus as the message addressing future generation (Buzzard, 1992:102).

A mediating position between the two exclusive views, that is, future and present, was formulated by Kummel and Ladd. What drove them, particularly in Ladd’s case, to pursue intensive study on the Kingdom of God was the confusing diversity of modern interpretations and the fact that there was “no available interpretation of the Kingdom of God to square with the biblical data” (Ladd, 1968:47). Buzzard (1992:103) is of the opinion that both Kummel and Ladd seem in agreement with Bultmann’s statement quoted earlier in this chapter that “although the Kingdom is entirely future it wholly determines the present.” The primary aspect is the future Kingdom while the present aspect is derived from it. They propose a balanced position, that the Kingdom is both already (this age and present) and not yet (the age to come and future), the concept of “Inaugurated Eschatology”.

Ladd enlarges on the ‘two ages’ scheme, this age and the age to come, in order to establish exegetically the basis of Jesus’ teaching in the Gospels:

The Kingdom of God in a real sense was present in fulfilment of the prophetic hope, while the age of consummation remained future. The presence of the Kingdom of God

was seen as God's dynamic reign invading the present age without transforming it into the age to come (Ladd, 1974:149).

Ladd (1974:45) attempts to relate Jesus' proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the Old Testament promise and hope between the prophetic and the apocalyptic messages. God's kingship is the main idea that provides an outline of the entire Old Testament concept. God rules all the earth as King but is in a special covenantal relationship with Israel that was realized in its history and the human experience of His people. This is only a partial and imperfect realization of the Kingdom, as Ladd (1974:46) recognizes, and, therefore, the prophets look forward in hope to the Day of the Lord when God's rule will be fully experienced with particular vindication and glory of His people at the end of the worldly history. Ladd defines the Old Testament messages of promise and hope as prophetic eschatology and apocalyptic eschatology: "The so-called prophetic eschatology is 'within history' while the apocalyptic eschatology is 'beyond history,' not simply because the Kingdom itself will be beyond history but because it can be achieved only by a catastrophic inbreaking of God, not by historical events" (Ladd, 1974:55). Ladd understands that the primary concern of the prophetic eschatology is the people of Israel with God's ultimate will in the present, here and now, with a single hope which encompasses both the immediate historical and the ultimate eschatological future and which the immediate future in terms of the ultimate future, while the centre of interest of the apocalyptic eschatology is solely in the future because of Israel's pessimistic view of the present corrupt and evil historical situation without the dynamic concept of God's redemptive activity in history (Ladd, 1974:45-101). But both prophetic and apocalyptic eschatology can conceive of the establishment of the Kingdom only through the catastrophic inbreaking of God in order to establish a new and transformed order (Ladd, 1974:101).

Ladd (1974:110) notes that the Old Testament promise has been fulfilled in Jesus through the proclamation, by John the Baptist and Jesus Himself, of an imminent eschatological event, as well as the immediate fulfilment of the apocalyptic hope of the visitation of God to inaugurate the Kingdom of God in the age to come. Jesus' fulfilment is distinct from Judaism's apocalyptic hope of the Kingdom; rather, it is an actual divine visitation in words and deeds. Luke introduces the theme of fulfilment in the beginning of Jesus' ministry by recording His reading of Isaiah 61:1-2 with a concluding remark: "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21, NIV). This fulfilment was indeed the Messianic salvation of the Old Testament hope

proclaimed to those who desired to see and hear (Mt. 11:4-5, 13:16-17; Luke 7:22, 10:23-24). Ladd (1974:113-114) finds that Jesus' proclamation of the Messianic fulfilment is taking place without mentioning the eschatological consummation. Kummel (1957:140) argues further that "Jesus saw the Kingdom of God to be present before the *Parousia*, which he thought to be imminent, only in His own person and His works; he knew no other realization of the eschatological consummation." Ladd (1974:114) finds "Kummel goes too far in speaking of the presence of the Messianic consummation" and argues that "the Gospels do not confuse fulfilment and consummation."

Before a synthesis of his two ages scheme, Ladd begins with an interpretation of the distinguishing characteristics of 'this age' and 'the age to come'. Ladd (1974:143) argues that the meaning of ἔφθασεν in Matthew 12:28 indicates a present reality of actual arrival and real presence with a premature and unexpected nature. The translation of this passage is "The Kingdom of God has come upon you." The Kingdom is itself not simply a sign of power but the real and present blessings and fulfilment of the messianic age. In this present age, God has taken the initiative to manifest His Kingdom unexpectedly in the person of Jesus and to work among humans within history. The demons and evils are at present being cursed under the power and reign of God's Kingdom. Ladd states his thesis: "The presence of the Kingdom of God was seen as God's dynamic reign invading the present age without transforming it into the age to come" (Ladd, 1974:149). Jesus was able to exercise divine deliverance in releasing authority over the actual presence and influence of Satan.

Ladd (1968:41) describes the natural pleasures of life as gifts of God for human enjoyment; the feast or banquet is a metaphor frequently used by Jesus to denote the eschatological consummation of the Kingdom of God. The consummated Kingdom of God is the age to come, which is beyond time, in timeless eternity (Ladd, 1968:43-44). Jesus describes the final theophany, the end coming as a future event: the appearance of the Son of Man on the clouds, with power and great glory, accompanied by His angels (Mt. 16:27, 24:30), like lightning across the east and west sky (Mt. 24:27; Luke 17:24), a cosmic disturbance disrupting the existing natural order (Mark 13:24), to gather the people of God as a fulfilment of the ultimate purpose of the apocalyptic consummation (Mark 13:27), and to bring the redeemed into the eternal life of the eschatological Kingdom (Mt. 25:34, 46; Mark 10:30). Ladd (1952:63-64) agrees that "in the fullest

sense of the word, the Kingdom will not come until the *parousia* of Christ and the establishment of His millennial reign; or, more accurately, it will not come until at the end of the millennium Christ turns over the Kingdom to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-25)". In spite of the account of its present characteristics described above, Ladd turns to the future nature of the Kingdom of God in the New Testament teachings:

It is something future into which those who have done the will of God will one day enter (Mt. 7:21). It anticipates a day in the future, apparently a day of judgment which will decide whether men shall enter the Kingdom or not (Mt. 7:22-23). The twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew has to do with the Kingdom of Heaven which will be inherited only when the Son of Man comes in His glory to sit on His glorious throne of judgment (Mt. 25:31. 34) (Ladd, 1952:65).

Ladd (1952:64-65) recognizes the validity of the two meanings of the Kingdom of God and finds no logic eliminating one of them. The Kingdom of God indeed has both present and future elements in the Gospel data. Nevertheless, Ladd (1952:67) places the future Kingdom as primary and basic with ultimate blessing realized only at the end of the age: "The Gospel data require us to recognize the future eschatological aspect of the Kingdom as the primary temporal orientation and not as merely incidental to the present aspect." While there is already a sense of the present Kingdom in Jesus' teaching running its course religiously, ethically, and socially, Jesus continually looked forward to the fully manifested Kingdom before 'Thy Kingdom comes' in the future. Ladd (1952:67) notes that six of the Beatitudes are cast in the futuristic settings that represent the fulfilment of the ultimate pleasure beyond this age when grief, aggressiveness, acquisitiveness, sin, and violence no longer dominate human society. The thoroughgoing removal of all injustice of the world can only be fulfilled through the establishment of the all-inclusive rule of God over the world in the final world order. The Kingdom comes one day through the returning Son of Man to vindicate the saints and render God's justice and His promises true.

Ladd (1952:68) analyzes the parables in terms of the Kingdom view as something present but it is not present in its fullness and perfection. In the parable of the weeds (Mt. 13:16-43), the field of this present world contains both the good seed and weeds or the sons of the Kingdom and sons of the evil one. The parable of the net (Mt. 13:47-52) gives a similar picture of good and bad fishes in the net, the presence of the Kingdom. Jesus will not sort out the good and bad ones until the end of the age. That means the Kingdom of God will not be perfectly realized until the division between the good and the evil at the consummation of the present age (Ladd, 1952:68). In the context of this

parable, Ladd (1952:69) agrees with Consistent Eschatology, that the Kingdom in its fullness is considered to be in the future. Buzzard (1992:105) concludes that the future Kingdom is primary for Jesus and the present Kingdom is derived from it.

The Kingdom of God that manifests itself in dualistic terms is illustrated in the 'two ages' structure as two periods of time divided by the *parousia* (Ladd, 1968:43). Buzzard (1992:103, 109) is in agreement with Ladd that the 'two ages' insight holds the present (this age) and the future (the age to come) in tension without losing sight of the time-rooted future; he further confirms that these two different points of time are not totally distinct and unrelated but in an evolutionary process.

The presence of the Kingdom may be experienced as a foretaste of what it will be in the future. But in the future it is to come with a cataclysmic divine intervention, the Day of the Lord of the prophets which becomes the *Parousia* of the New Testament. That event will issue in a world-wide extension of the Kingdom under Messiah's rule, as all the prophets announced ... The Kingdom of God is bound then to consist in some way of an evolutionary process which we must work for, rather than the new era lying the other side of the Day of the Lord, as all the prophets and the New Testament see it (Luke 21:31) (Buzzard, 1992:109).

The mystery of the Kingdom is the coming of the Kingdom into world history in advance of its apocalyptic manifestation at the end. Jesus' parables of the Kingdom, that is, the mustard seed and the leaven in particular, in Matthew 13:31-33 testify to what Buzzard suggests about the evolutionary or growing process of the Kingdom. These two parables picture the beginning of the Kingdom as small and insignificant. The presence of the Kingdom is organically connected to the apocalyptic power and authority that makes things happen. The preached word (Mark 4:14) must be received by people that it may take root and grow and produce fruit (Ladd, 1974:168). The Kingdom of God is, however, growing and working in a hidden form secretly within and among humanity until it reaches the future glory.

The dualistic structure of the eschatological conception incorporates tension between imminence and delay in the expectation of the consummated end. Ladd (1952:78) finds that many premillennarian writers who operate on the one-sided assumption of the ultimate consummation have a misconception that the millennial Kingdom cannot already come and still not have come. It is also wrong to understand that the Kingdom of God has come in its fullness and that there will therefore be no future coming of the Kingdom (Ladd, 1952:91). Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God in the Gospels involves a fulfilment of prophecy such that a new era has come. This new era brings the

blessings of the future eschatological Kingdom to humans in the experience of forgiveness of sins and release from the power of Satan in the Messianic salvation, while the fullness of this salvation is not yet received and the Kingdom in its perfected form is yet to be entered in the future (Ladd, 1952:93-94). Ladd (1974:322) looks at the two redemptive acts – the historical fulfilment and the eschatological hope – one redemptive event in two parts. This synthetic structure is the realization of the essential unity of Jesus' mission in one Event through various acts in the past and future. Cranfield affirms that the unity of the present and future Kingdom is more than simply a calendric statement.

The clue to the meaning of the nearness of the End is the realization of the essential unity of God's Saving Acts in Christ – the realization that the Events of the Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, and *Parousia* are in a real sense one Event. The foreshortening, by which the Old Testament sees as one divine intervention in the future that which from the viewpoint of the New Testament writers is both past and future, is not only a visual illusion; for the distance actually brings out an essential unity, which is not so apparent from a position in between the Ascension and the *Parousia* (Cranfield, 1954:288).

God, who is now acting in historical events to bring about a fulfilment of the Messianic salvation, will act at the end of history to bring His Kingdom to its consummation (Ladd, 1974:322). This Kingdom of God as a whole is everlasting and God's dominion endures through all generations (Psalms 145:13).

According to Buzzard (1992:111), the views of 'consistent' and 'realized' eschatology are still having their effect on today's church. Their respective narrow emphasis, however, cannot satisfactorily relay the Gospel of the Kingdom of God as Jesus taught it. Confusion over interpretation of the Kingdom of God still exists. We must admit, as Buzzard (1992:103) points out, that "we are indebted to Ladd for his emphasis on the 'two ages' scheme which certainly underlies Jesus' thinking, and his conclusion that the dynamic reign of God invades the present age 'without transforming it into the age to come.'" The evangelical church should not avoid the subject of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God but treat it as a mission, more than just a preaching, to the faith community and the public as well. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God is both present and future. The evangelical church should not solely share the future apocalyptic hope of the Kingdom and neglect the manifestation of God's dynamic power in our history because "the eschatological consummation of the Kingdom is inseparable from and dependent upon what God is doing in the historical person and mission of Jesus ... (and its manifestation in power and glory" (Ladd, 1974:324). Arias clarifies the meaning of

evangelization and urges the church to take up this mission of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God:

Jesus came announcing ‘the Good News of the Kingdom of God. That is my mission,’ he said (Luke 4:43b, Phillips). That was Jesus’ evangelization. But we have instead been preaching ‘the plan of salvation’ or some other evangelistic formula, and we have called that ‘evangelism’ (Arias, 1984:1).

The church is a community which lives ‘between the times’ – between the present evil age and the age to come. It has experienced Jesus’ victory over the kingdom of evil in history and is and continues to be a symbol of God’s hope to work and build in this world for future generations and eschatological consummation. The church should not shrink the Kingdom into the domain of just the church but partake as an instrument in the significance and dynamic power of the Kingdom in the world. Moore even combines Christian faith and ethics as an entire ministry to the world between the times of full accomplishment and incomplete revelation:

This entire ministry to the world is a part of the church’s witness to the world being a confession of its allegiance to Jesus Christ. The tension between eschatology and grace, between already accomplished and not yet revealed, between longing for the End and thankfulness for its delay, is nowhere more apparent than in this sphere of Christian faith and witness. For ethics, Christian ethics, are at the same time an aspect of faith, an aspect of the purpose for which this grace-time is given us, and also an aspect of the End, a participation already in the blessing of the End. Christian ethics are at once a testimony to the world of the world’s failure and condemnation and at the same time an assertion that God has reconciled the world to Himself and that men can enter into the service of God (Moore, 1966:211-212).

7.1.3 The Presence of the Kingdom is an Inner Spiritual Hope and Outward Life Reality

The Gospels of Luke and John depict Jesus’ view of the Kingdom in terms of a new inner and spiritual character (Luke 17:21; John 3:3, 5). The literal interpretation of these two verses in the Gospels about the Kingdom of God is merely a matter of the inward change of individual lives. When Jesus said, “My Kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36, NIV), this also gives the idea that the hope of the Kingdom of God is an entirely other-worldly expectation, which cannot in any real sense to be fulfilled upon this earth. It appears that it is either a Kingdom which will only come in its final and perfected form at the end when Jesus returns, an eschatological Kingdom, or a purely spiritual sphere established exclusively in the depths of human hearts without any outward organization. The Kingdom of God in its perfection is attained beyond time, and in that sense is eschatological and truly spiritual and demands inward obedience and loyalty. Our analysis in the last section concludes that the Kingdom of God is both present and

future in the 'two ages' scheme. Under this 'two ages' scheme, the future Kingdom is primary while the present Kingdom is derived from it. A one-sided interpretation of the future eschatological Kingdom is thus untenable but what remains for further discussion is the question of the nature of a realized present Kingdom and its spiritual character.

Bultmann (1958:36-37) is a strong proponent of a supernatural Kingdom and thinks that the Kingdom of God is the absolute miracle against all the here-and-now interpretations. It is 'wholly other,' heavenly. Those who seek and accept the Kingdom of God must cut themselves off from this world, otherwise they would belong to those who are not fit or who put their hand to the plough and look back. Bultmann (1958:37) expounds 'entering into' the Kingdom of God as a mere metaphor that does not imply any possibility of conceiving the Kingdom as something which either is or can be realized by any organization of world fellowship. Bultmann (1958:38) writes that the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven were not intended to denote the 'natural' growth of the Kingdom "but were meant to show how inescapable will be its coming, however easily ignored or misinterpreted may be the signs of its coming which are conspicuous in the activity of Jesus."

By virtue of Jesus' reinterpretation of the prophetic hope of the Kingdom, it is a spiritual happening illustrated by the exorcism of demons and the destruction of the Devil and his evil angels in eternal fire (Mt. 12:22-28, 25:41). The prerequisite of a life under the reign of God is deliverance from the power of satanic evil. Ladd (1974:155) admits that "it is indeed impossible to interpret the New Testament teaching about the Kingdom of God except against the background of a great spiritual struggle." Nevertheless, the exorcism is not only a supernatural power within one's heart but an outward visible aspect of an inner spiritual reality (Ladd, 1974:152). The Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus is God's present power and activity both in word and also in deed - more than an abstract conception. Ladd (1974:183) concludes that the Kingdom of God "means not only the restoration of individuals to a right spiritual relationship with God, but will ultimately include the redemption of the entire man, even his physical being and his very environment." We are taught to pray that 'Thy Kingdom come' in the context of the fulfilment of God's will on earth 'as it is in heaven' (Mt. 6:10). The Kingdom that we seek now is naturally for God's will in this world by providing us with daily bread and helping us to forgive our debtors. This Kingdom is not wholly a reference to the future life. Although it is distinct from the perfection of the future

Kingdom, it is still a Kingdom which is progressing towards perfection. Thus the Kingdom of God is not limited to a spiritual relation to God but is extended to the whole of human existence. It is surely a spiritual, inward reality in this world, but it is more than this, for it possesses an external organization, the whole activity of divine providence now directing humanity to the eternal end.

Jesus proclaimed that the fulfilment of the Messianic promise and hope is a present salvation in this age. The Kingdom is a present happening event on earth, a gracious will and action of God. Ladd (1974:111) affirms that the promise was fulfilled in the actions of Jesus, “in His proclamation of Good News to the poor, release to captives, restoring sight to the blind, freeing those who were oppressed.” There was no new theology or new promise but a new event in human history fulfilled in the Messianic expectation that the hungry and poor hear the Good News, blind pilgrims see the light, prisoners and oppressed have freedom in life. The fulfilment of this promise and hope is grounded in faith in God who brings the Kingdom within history by historical events to a consummation on the earth. We must first acknowledge that it is an inescapable element in the biblical concept of redemption that humans must be saved from spiritual powers which are beyond humanity’s ability to conquer in the spiritual realm. This victory of God’s Kingdom over the spiritual realm is not removed from the level of earthly human history and existence.

The created earth is a divinely ordained scene of human existence. It is a temporal sphere influenced by the fundamentally spiritual reality of the future Kingdom. Heaven and earth are one integrated whole created by the same God (Samuel and Sugden, 1985:205). In regard to Messianic fulfilment for the people of God, the Old Testament “nowhere holds forth the hope of a bodiless, nonmaterial, purely ‘spiritual’ redemption as did Greek thought” (Ladd, 1974:59). The rule of God is not merely an abstract concept but a dynamic one working now toward its eschatological context when God will cause His rule to appear visibly in all the earth (Ladd, 1974:133-134). The incident of the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:16-26 indicates that the experience of eternal life, a synonym of the Kingdom of God in the Gospels, is not merely an eschatological boon, and not so much a process of inward discrimination conditioned by spiritual requirements as an outward obedience of our earthly life to fulfil the demand of God.

The Kingdom of God is a religious, spiritual dimension and stands for a personal conversion of an inner stance in the spirit of Jesus' redemption. Our acceptance of this redemptive grace means an entry into a Kingdom already present; but is not merely a spiritual 'reign' of God, because our holistic life is outwardly visible; nor merely a Kingdom of the future, because it is already in the reality of this present earthly life. The Kingdom of God is to establish God's reign, not only in human hearts and the church which are spiritual realms, but over all created beings in the earth. Of course, Heaven beyond must remain the first and foremost hope of Christians. But there is no likelihood that the establishment of the present Kingdom on earth will lessen humanity's realization of part of the fullness and perfection that something greater and more permanent awaits them beyond. On the contrary, when we seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, all our needs are to be satisfied here and now (Luke 12:31). God is always *de jure* King of the universe because of His act as the Creator and gracious Redeemer, remitting human sins and judging according to repentance and obedience. God demands both an inward spiritual loyalty and, at the same time, an outward living realized in a visible organized society, not either/or. Ladd (1974:212) asserts a bond between physical salvation (healing) and its spiritual aspect in that faith accomplished both (Luke 17:14, 19). The church must expect the Kingdom of God to be both an inner work of God in individuals and, at the same time, an entire transformation of the order of human society in consequence of that inner working.

In an article criticizing specifically the North American evangelicals, Yoder (1985:29-30) charges that evangelicals are redefining their 'evangelical identity' by reaction (e.g., matters relating to millenarianism, inerrancy and other issues against liberalism) rather than in their own terms. He also claims that the priority of individualized pietism is overwhelmingly assumed as an experience dependent upon an especially subjectivist notion of the human spirit, neglecting the more communal components of the earlier tradition and the society at large. Such evangelicals claim that once one has trusted Christ for salvation, all questions of personal and social ethics will take care of themselves. Yoder (1985:30) finds this view naïve and ineffectual.

From the introduction of the two kingdoms theory of Luther and Calvin and Barth's Gospel and Law in the last chapter it is abundantly clear that the universal reign of God governs both the spiritual and earthly realms. Christians are citizens of both kingdoms through one person. Christ the Lord, as the incarnate Mediator in the world, was to fulfil

the Law and the Gospel as Mediator of creation and as Mediator of redemption. The church, as the body of Christ, is the prototype of the order of the divine law and Gospel and must further the way towards the Kingdom of God. The church must then understand that solving the spiritual problem of individual faith in the spiritual realm should not set aside but structure an explicit approach on theological grounding, to social justice in God's earthly realm too. 'Thy Kingdom come' is not only for the present, and not only for as the future, but the need in reference to the whole of Christian living (Harkness, 1974:155). Therefore, we do need to review the social and institutional quality of earthly human experience as a theological problem in its own right rather than as only a derivative of conversion or sanctification seen as individually isolated phenomena (Yoder, 1985:31).

7.1.4 The Reign and Realms of the Kingdom are manifested in the People of God 'Particularly' and 'Universally'

The Kingdom of God bears four different kinds of sayings. Ladd (1974:123) indicates that firstly it carries clearly the abstract meaning of reign or rule as recognized by the translation of the Greek word *basileia* as kingly power or kingship (Luke 19:12; John 18:36); secondly it refers to a future apocalyptic order into which the righteous will enter at the end of the age; thirdly it is something among humans; and fourthly it represents the present realm or sphere which is 'within or among men' (Luke 17:21) and into which humans are 'entering' (Luke 16:16; Mt. 21:31). The second and third meanings have been discussed in an earlier section and no further study of the same will be analysed. Ladd (1952:80) defines the New Testament concept of *basileia* as "the sovereign rule of God, manifested in the person and work of Christ, creating a people over whom He reigns, and issuing in a realm or realms in which the power of His reign is realized." This abstract concept is also to be found in the Old Testament (1 Sam. 20:31; 1 Kings 2:12; 1 Chron. 12:23; 2 Chron. 7:18) and in Jewish literature, with the Hebrew word *malkuth* which always means the kingly rule of God, but never the kingdom, as if it were meant to suggest the territory governed by Him (Ladd, 1952:79). Both words share the abstract but dynamic meaning of God's kingly rule in establishing His rule in the world which brings into being the order of the realm in which His rule is enjoyed (Ladd, 1962:236). Ladd (1962:236) summarizes the eschatological meaning of the Kingdom of God: "the eschatological act of God and the eschatological order created by God's act." The manifestation of God's kingly rule had already come into the

world in advance in the person and mission of Jesus in order to bring humanity into the blessings of His rule and the salvation of eternal life.

The subject of the people of God has been discussed in Chapter 4 to illustrate the relationships with God under the exclusive concept of a divine covenant and the inclusive concept of God's universal blessings. The God of Abraham is also God of all people. He is the King of all the people of the earth (Dan 4:34-35). He is in control of all nations where His reign and realms are manifested. He cares about the relationship of the people to Himself and their attitude in obeying His will. He offers the needy the grace of forgiveness and integration into the community of God's people as well as physical healing and many other things. His universal mission is to bless and save all nations through the seed of Abraham (Wright, 2006:193). God will bring many people to Zion - from a place exclusively for covenant people to 'a house of prayer for all nations' - they will come from the east and the west to be part of Abraham's family and to take part in the feast of the Kingdom as Jesus already promised (Mt. 8:11). The identity of the people of God, in narrow definition, is, however, radically dependent upon each individual's acceptance of Jesus. Only those who know Jesus and will listen and obey His voice and command will be members of that 'one flock with one shepherd' (John 10:14-18).

Many of the biblical references to the Kingdom in the New Testament undoubtedly place the focus on the age to come beyond human history. It is said to be a final destination at the end of the age for those people who are 'poor in spirit' and the persecuted (Mt. 5:3, 10; Luke 6:20), the humble and forgiving servants (Mt. 18:16-17), the child-like (Mt. 19:14; Mark 10:14-15; Luke 18:16-17), the ones practising God's command and will in fullness surpassing that of the Pharisees (Mt. 5:19-20; 7:21), the little flock who give generously to the poor (Luke 12:32-33), and most importantly the regenerated who accept Christ and are born of water and the Spirit (John 3:3-5). The New Testament uniformly portrays a world-view in which a restoration of God's gracious reign is necessary within and among the hearts of humanity. By virtue of the Fall, mankind has turned aside from the will and dominion of God and the world has become estranged from God and has fallen into the power of the Evil One (1John 5:19). The alienation of humanity from the reign of God needs in the drama of redemption, messianic salvation, and reconciliation. When Jesus inaugurated the Kingdom on earth during His earthly ministry, He brought to humanity not only the defeat of Satan but

also the fulfilment of the blessings of the messianic promise. Ladd (1952:83) concedes that the coming of “the Kingdom of God is therefore primarily a soteriological concept. It is God acting in power and exercising His sovereignty for the defeat of Satan and the restoration of human society to its rightful place of willing subservience to the will of God.” It is God’s ultimate purpose to reign as the eternal King of the whole realm of creation and of those who confess Jesus as Christ, the Son of God to enter into the heavenly Kingdom. Ladd (1952:84) affirms the ultimate designation of the people of God, “Christ’s Kingdom will be an eternal Kingdom into which God’s people shall enter” (2 Peter 1:11).

There is no doubt that the preferred recipients of the fullness of the Kingdom of God are those who have faith and accept the Good News of Jesus and His Kingdom. On the other hand, Beasley-Murray (1987:142) seems not totally in agreement with this narrow definition of the Kingdom of God and says that “in the teaching of Jesus, the Kingdom of God is primarily a synonym for salvation, but in the broadest sense, not in the restricted sense that the term often has in Christian preaching.” Beasley-Murray’s concept of the basic meaning of the Kingdom of God in Jesus’ teaching is a universal one identical to the Jewish eschatological view which includes Gentiles who were not Jews and not under the covenant with God:

In the Jewish eschatological hope ‘Kingdom of God’ came to denote God’s exercise of His royal power in establishing justice and salvation in the earth, whereby His people would be delivered, peace and righteousness would everywhere prevail, and (in the more developed writings) life eternal would replace death. In the belief of at least some Jewish writers, the blessings of the divine Kingdom were anticipated to be universal, not for Israel alone (Beasley-Murray, 1987:141).

Beasley-Murray’s universal view of the Kingdom of God including Gentiles as recipients, not the covenant people alone, is based on the centrality of the Kingdom of God in the life and teaching of Jesus (Beasley-Murray, 1987:145). The emphasis is placed on the fact that “the Son of Man is Jesus in His total ministry for the Kingdom of God” encompassing Jesus’ earthly ministry and His *parousia* at the end of the age (Beasley-Murray, 1987:146). Jesus, the Son of Man, came to rule the Kingdom that replaces all other kingdoms or authorities. In His messianic service for the Kingdom of God, Jesus was commissioned to provide in humble service of God for all needs of humanity, in suffering unto death, in rising to life, and in His *parousia* in glory as Mediator and Representative between God and humanity. Jesus’ healing ministry particularly was the saving and redemptive sovereignty of God at work on earth. His

Kingdom redemptive blessings are not exclusively for the spiritual and religious needs of believers or the destiny of Israel as the people of God. The coming of the Kingdom in Jesus through His earthly ministry is the open, visible, universal extension of God's rule and authority issuing in this present age. The Kingdom of God is concerned not only with believers and their souls but with the salvation of those nonbelievers and of the whole person. This includes both spiritual deliverances as well as physical deliverances (Ladd, 1974:212). The thing to be sought after is the Kingdom of God, which is the satisfaction of all needs, material and non-material (Mt. 6:33).

Ladd (1974:212) demonstrates the bond between physical salvation and its spiritual aspect in the healing of the ten lepers. All ten lepers were 'healed' and 'cleansed' but only one, a Samaritan (non-Jew), came to faith in Christ (Luke 17:14-19). The words for 'heal' and 'cleanse' do not primarily denote physical healing, but a holistic effect of spiritual, mental, emotional and physical healing with an implied divine intervention (Porter, 2003:220). Porter (2003:221) finds evidence in the text that the use of the language of salvation and healing seems to be inclusively addressed and associated with the group of ten, including those who were disenfranchised on account of disease and possibly ethnic/religious distinctions. We can see that greater Kingdom blessing was bestowed on the Samaritan than on the other nine as he was assured of 'salvation' or wholeness more than physical healing. In this episode, there was apparently a successful healing of the ten, but only one of them returned to give thanks. The other nine, despite their unbelief and whether they were Jews or Gentiles, were really healed physically.

The Kingdom of God is radically and scandalously inclusive and universal. The coming Kingdom is a gift initiated from God and not restricted because of race, class, sex, or even faith in God. Righteousness, justice, peace, and joy are characteristics of the Kingdom. No other limits can be placed on its realization of these characteristics in human history and existence. Buzzard (1992:114) clarifies the meaning of Jesus' teaching on two essential points regarding the spiritual and earthly kingdoms and the children of Abraham and the children of the world: "While we speak mostly of souls departing the earth, Jesus announces resurrection-life for the saved on the earth (Mt. 5:5). To inherit the Kingdom offered by the Gospel is to come into possession of the world as children of Abraham (Romans 4:13) ... [Jesus'] Gospel is rooted in Daniel and in Isaiah (for example, 52:7) where both nationalism and universalism combine, and spiritual is not divorced from real political structures operating in a renewed earth."

Ladd's interpretation of the bond between physical salvation and spiritual salvation concerns the common purpose of the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of grace (Acts 20:24-25) for people of all kinds (Ladd, 1974:212). Marshall (1990:222) says it well: "The bliss that is associated with the age to come is already being experienced, and this bliss is not just for the people who think they are entitled to it by virtue of their religious orthodoxy and adherence to the Jewish law." The Kingdom of God is not identical to the church but is much wider. This believing community comes to faith, humility and the childlike spirit, as Jesus taught, in their readiness for entering the Kingdom. Lyman admonishes the church to extend the blessedness and to service the weak and needy even before their faith in God:

This is an elect community, whose election, however, is not to privilege, but to service. This service must be guided and inspired by Jesus' compassion for the weak, His welcome to the disinherited, His indignation against injustice combined with His summons to humility and to being servants of all, and supremely by His sense of the sovereignty of God's moral will, by His message of the forgiveness which renders the repentant heart forgiving, and by His conviction of the boundless possibilities which open before faith in God (Lyman, 1938:97).

The mission of God's universal reign is to bless all the nations of the earth through Abraham and his descendants in faith (Gen. 12:2-3) and all mankind will thus see God's salvation (Luke 3:4-6). Wright sums up God's blessing in an eschatological sense:

It will be the reign of God Himself that will bring about the full restoration of all that God intends for humanity within creation. And of that reign, the Davidic king in Zion becomes the model and messianic prototype. The universal blessing of the nations (as promised to Abraham) will come about through the universal reign of God and His anointed (as promised to David, cf. Ps. 2), whom the New Testament identifies as Jesus of Nazareth (Wright, 2006:233).

The church, as the inclusive body of Christ, is a believing community consisting of His disciples who are commanded to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom of God in restoring, healing, and embracing life as He had done for all human beings. The service must be all-encompassing and should not be limited to certain types of people or for a narrow and single purpose ministry only. The ministry of healing for the society at large, including the raising of the quality of human life, the improvement of social structure, the defence of human rights, and the deliverance of the poor and oppressed, should not be a secondary social service motivated by humanitarian feeling but an obedient commitment to announce, to share, to make a real life of wholeness revealed in Jesus Christ with our neighbours regardless of their race, class, and sex (Arias, 1984:75). At the heart of the twofold conception of double salvations, physical and spiritual, as Ladd

(1974:212) states, is the genuine concern for the universal purpose of the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of grace for all humankind.

7.2 A TOTAL KINGDOM

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work (2 Cor. 9:8, NIV)

All things are owed to God's grace which flows abundantly toward humanity with life-giving power and never-ceasing mercy. God's gracious blessing of fullness not only provides and acts within Christians to motivate them to do good works toward neighbours, but it also brings Christians the Kingdom with all its resources and the ability to do the work according to His will on earth. Jesus is Lord of all and brings the Kingdom to earth through His life and ministry. He holds together all things in heaven and on earth. Jesus is at the centre of all things in heaven and on earth, visible things and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers that have been created through Him and for Him. He reveals the heaven and earth, the Kingdom, in His person. Jesus is the Kingdom. It is God's own pleasure to reconcile and embrace earthly things and heavenly things alike so that the totality of divine fullness should take up its abode in Him. Jesus' appearance through incarnation on earth is decisive for the beginning of the fullness of time as the fulfilment of all historical preparation for the end of history.

Wendland clarifies the meaning of the entrance of God's Kingdom into history and its theological implication:

God's Kingdom breaks into history (and in so doing itself becomes history) in the man Jesus of Nazareth, sent in the fullness of time as the mediator of God's sovereignty. In opposition to all theological definitions which would isolate one aspect or another of His work, we must emphasize the totality of this mission of His, by which God's Kingdom is brought into the world (Wendland, 1938:147).

Jesus is the risen Lord and the victor who sets up the Kingdom in history. Wendland (1938:147) sums up well that "He is the Lord of all times and all dimensions of historical reality in the past, the present, and the future."

Jones (1972:14) reminds us that the nature of the Kingdom of God is God's very own character of love, justice, and power. On the basis of the character of God's reign over all, Jones (1972:14-15) coins the term 'a total Kingdom' because "God is not a half-god ruling over a half-realm, ruling over the personal but not over the social, or ruling over the social and not over the personal ... And His Kingdom must be totally present and totally relevant or totally nothing and hence totally irrelevant ... And His Kingdom must be a total Kingdom or no kingdom." The Kingdom of God is divine work, not human, that reveals its nature and implications in understandable and relevant forms in all human relationships. This revelation of the nature and character of God's Kingdom is to be fulfilled through the believing community that has the foretaste of the perfection of the future Kingdom and of a life of highest good, total unity and coherence and meaning and goal. As shown in the earlier analysis, the inclusive nature of the Kingdom leaves no room for dualism.

The Kingdom of God is God's total order, encompassing both present and future, both spiritual hope and life reality, and both for the particular and the universal people of God. Jones (1972:75) says that the Kingdom is "expressed as realm and reign, in the individual and in society; and which is to replace the present unworkable world order with God's order in the individual and in society." This Kingdom would transcend the orders of social structural conflicts that deeply divide the world and revolve around the problems of race (Greek and Jew), of religious distinction (circumcised and uncircumcised), of cultural difference (barbarian and Scythian), and of class strata (slave or free) as described in Colossians 3:11 and male and female (sex distinction) in Galatians 3:28. Christ is all, and is in all (Col. 3:11, NIV). Christ is the total order. This total order of the Kingdom in Christ demands a total obedience from humanity to do His will and also brings total ultimate freedom for those who accept the reign of God at the end.

Nevertheless, as Jones (1972:16) writes, many evangelicals took the Kingdom "in a modified form, as a personal spiritual refuge into which they could run and be safe now or as a place of reward in heaven; they didn't reject it – they reduced it." Thus, for them, it is not God's total answer to human needs here and now, nor God's total plan and program for human life on earth now, but simply a reward thrown in at the future end. It seems Christians are not offering all aspects of a multidimensional Kingdom to the world but a narrow or one-sided Kingdom. Jones (1972:18) concludes with a simple but

tragic comment: “The church has lost it. The church has lost the Kingdom of God.” Jones does not necessarily mean that the church has totally lost the concept of the Kingdom of God. The fact is that the church does not proclaim the Kingdom’s multidimensional and all-encompassing nature but only a marginal concept. I would like to repeat a quote from Arias earlier in this chapter to give a comprehensive definition of the total nature of the Kingdom:

It embraces all dimensions of human life: physical, spiritual, personal and interpersonal, communal and societal, historical and eternal. And it encompasses all human relationships – with the neighbour, with nature, and with God. It implies a total offer and a total demand (Arias, 1984:xv).

For believers, the consequence of this is expressed in Jesus’ words: “Therefore I tell you that the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit” (Mt. 21:43). To others or the society at large, this loss of the Kingdom leads to a plague of our own racial, class, and economic conflicts with little to offer the world.

To be relevant to the Kingdom of God, instead of marginalizing it, Jones provides a straight forward answer to the church:

Discover the Kingdom, surrender to the Kingdom, make the Kingdom your life loyalty and your life programs; then in everything and everywhere you will be relevant. For the Kingdom of God is relevancy – ultimate and final relevancy and when you have it, and it has you, then you are relevancy itself (Jones, 1972:19).

Christ is all. His Kingdom must be a total Kingdom or no kingdom. In terms of total Kingdom, it is the whole activity of divine providence guiding humans to their eternal end; it is the whole activity of Jesus Christ the Redeemer; it is the entire epic of salvation. The church’s demand to be involved in the total Kingdom is not an attempt at amelioration of the world’s ill (Jones, 1972:22) but the total obedience to the reign and will of God in the total salvation (twofold conception) program of our Lord Jesus.

Concluding Summary

The discussion of the Kingdom of God in Chapters 6 and 7 has shown unmistakably how strong the element of proclamation is in the teaching and life of Jesus. Perrin (1976:194) recognizes that all Kingdom sayings challenge Jesus’ hearers (disciples and the church) to understand the Kingdom of God as a reality, to understand that the ancient myth of the activity of God as King can now be realized in their experience in various ways, and to understand that the fate of the believers and followers of Jesus is a

manifestation of the holistic reality of God acting as King on earth. 'Thy Kingdom come' is a petition as well as a proclamation of the 'coming' of the Kingdom as we, hearers of the mystery of the Kingdom, are jolted into an effort to make a continuous holistic reality of the everyday human existence of ourselves and others.

The mission of the church is to pray and proclaim the coming of the Kingdom of God. This is surely a primary obligation but not the whole story. For the church has seen that God acted in Jesus to establish His rule and that the concepts of the Messiah/Son of Man and the Kingdom of God are indivisibly joined together to reveal an exercise of God's dynamic power in blessing and forgiveness for this age and the age to come. As a symbol of God's hope, the church must follow Jesus' command, given to the Twelve and the Seventy, to work and to build in the present time in this world for future generations and eschatological consummation and to labour for the totality of the coming of the Kingdom. To proclaim the Kingship of God is not only to preach the Kingdom of God as an inner spiritual future hope for the particular people of God under the covenant but also to extend God's act of His 'total Kingdom' as the outward life reality for the universal people of God in the entire world order now, for it opens up to people the possibility of responding to the message by acknowledging God as their King and receiving the hope of entering the fullness of consummation at the end of human history.

The next chapter will focus on the mission of the church to proclaim God's redemptive activity in history and beyond, through the introduction of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, for its coming is the effective reign of a righteous and universal will on earth and the final entrance into the perfect consummation at the end.

CHAPTER 8: DOING JUSTICE AND PROCLAIMING GRACE AS EVANGELISM: THE PROPHETIC MISSION OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH

8.1 THE BODY OF CHRIST IN ACTION

8.1.1 The Total Message of the Kingdom

Following the important lead of Ladd's concept of inaugurated eschatology in the latter part of last century, evangelical theology has moved toward a virtual consensus of the Kingdom as both 'already' and 'not yet' but remains inconsistent as to how to relate the Kingdom to the present day church. The inconsistency is on the nature of the Kingdom especially on the church's balance of ministry between evangelism and social justice. Following the analysis of the concept of the Kingdom of God in the preceding chapters, there is no doubt that the presence of the Kingdom of God is the overarching truth of the manifestation of God in His very nature and character, which is to reign and rule for love, justice, and holiness in all those who serve Him willingly and obediently as well as in all other creatures universally. This chapter will focus on how the church should relay the concept of the Kingdom of God as the total message unifying the themes of the Bible.

Jones' 'total Kingdom' shows us that God is the Lord of heaven and earth, of all times, as well as of all dimensions of human history. He addresses the Kingdom theme as the central motif unifying the biblical revelation of God's plan, purpose, and will in Jesus' message: "[it] was the centre and circumference of all He taught and did ... The Kingdom of God is the master-conception, the master-plan, the master-purpose, the master-will that gathers everything up into itself and gives it redemption, coherence, purpose, goal" (Jones, 1940:53). Bright (1981:7) comments on the Kingdom as a key theme in relation to salvation, though not the only theme, of the whole Bible: "The concept of the Kingdom of God involves, in a real sense, the total messages of the Bible ... To grasp what is meant by the Kingdom of God is to come very close to the heart of the Bible's Gospel of salvation." This total message of the Bible means a key thread tying the Gospel of salvation to human reality and running through the whole Bible. The

importance of the Kingdom theme makes it the totality of God's saving plan in human reality in all dimensions. It should be preached from time to time in the pulpit and filtered down to all believers in the community. It must not be neglected or de-emphasized from the pulpit for any reason. The purpose of the church is to make the reign of the living God relevant among believers and others in the fallen world through the preaching of His Word and the work of the Spirit. If the church today 'cannot get the message out,' the cause may be confusion among believers themselves concerning the character of the Kingdom of God and the entailments of claiming allegiance to the Kingdom of God (Johnson, 2011:89). The church must increase in clarity and consistency in its emphasis on the Kingdom because in the Bible Jesus' concern is much more with a Kingdom than with a church and His imperative is to seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness. Jesus' assurance to His disciples, after seeking first His Kingdom and His righteousness, is to give them all these things and the promise of His Kingdom: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the Kingdom" (Luke 12:32, NIV).

8.1.2 Rediscovering the Meaning of the Gospel of the Kingdom

Commenting on evangelical ecclesiology, Benson, Berry, and Heltzel (2012:6) point out that "for too long the evangelical church has sought to insulate itself from the world" and they urge evangelicals to see the church as God's prophetic agent for holistic transformation. This vision involves transformation "from being an abstract discourse to being a concrete wisdom," "from its individualism to a deeper understanding of theology's social and cosmic context," and "becoming a theology in and for the world, a theology that makes a difference" (Benson *et al.*, 2012:3). Jesus' teaching of the Kingdom of God must be a wake-up call to the evangelical church in all these respects. Now it is time to wake up, live out, and proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom of God by mobilizing the discipleship community to serve God's 'total Kingdom' for His love and justice.

Conservative evangelicals have a valid concern about the danger of repeating the same mistake of the 'social gospel' movement in the 1920s and 30s but their over-reaction and overcompensation by downgrading social or worldly involvement in order to preserve the sole priority of evangelism and the purity of the Gospel are based on a narrow interpretation of the biblical message of the Kingdom of God and "over-

spiritualizing the concept of God's dominion" (Witherington, 2009:14). The evangelical church must recover the meaning of evangelism as more than simply a spiritual conversion of individuals and must adopt it as a prophetic embodiment of the holistic Christian faith. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God is the concentrated power and energy passing through the full spectrum of biblical themes that represent the total messages of the Scripture; it gives the perfect definition of the prophetic vision of biblical peace and *shalom* for everyone in the world. The reign of God on earth is a cipher of God's divine saving plan and activity for all humanity, inaugurated through the life and ministry of Jesus two millennia ago and continued through the ministry and witness of His disciples, the church as a whole. This divine saving plan takes effect as a direct dominion in the lives of those who accept Christ's ruling in their hearts. It comes as a gift, not as something that humanity can earn, and its effects of personal holiness are likewise also a gift. Despite the very personal and private nature of the Kingdom in the inner lives and hearts of individual human beings, Witherington (2009:17) affirms that "God does not implement the divine plan in the abstract or on a purely spiritual plane." God's dominion comes not only in the changes of human hearts and lives but through persons into the midst of other lives in the community. That is not all, as Witherington (2009:13) adds: "Changed lives lead to redemptive actions, which in turn change other lives and even to a real degree can on occasion change the very fabric and structure of a society." Witherington's conception represents the general (mis)understanding of the evangelical church about the renewing and life-changing experience of pietistic personal devotion through the indwelling Spirit; in this sense, moral and social structural renewals are the automatic consequences of personal conversion. However, Stott (1970:145) charges that "this point of view is a false deduction from a true doctrine." This thinking is virtually a reduction of the Christian faith to a mere abstract belief without active work on the part of believers who believe everything is done by the indwelling Spirit alone. Sider (1999:174) also laments that it is naïve nonsense to suggest that Christians and new converts would automatically start correcting social evils and have positive impact on society without any concrete action to Christians and non-Christians alike. Stott continues:

Vital, indeed indispensable, as the new birth is for entry into God's Kingdom and for Christ-likeness, it is not the be-all and end-all of Christian life and responsibility. We have other duties to both the renewed and the unrenewed, that is, to both Christians and non-Christians (Stott, 1970:145).

Stott (1970:144-145) asks Christians, especially evangelicals, not to take the holiness or sanctification of the regenerate for granted or as an automatic consequence, but to ‘work’ for it through detailed instructions, exhortations, examples, and prayers. Paul constantly refers to himself as a fellow worker with God making efforts jointly with God in his mission. Faith without works or deeds is dead (Jas. 2:26); what is needed is not simply and only the work of the Spirit. In addition, knowing the good but not doing it is a sin of omission (Jas. 4:17). I reiterate my quote in Chapter 2 about what Dennis Ford describes as the sin of omission in theological terms: such a person “believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and remains alive because there is nothing for which it will die” (Ford, 1990:33). Faith without works means that nothing happens and there are no changes to injustice, oppression or social structure. Stott (1970:189) sounds a rebuke by quoting the Uppsala Report of the World Council of Churches 1968: “It must become clear that church members who deny in fact their responsibility for the needy in any part of the world are just as much guilty of heresy as those who deny this or that article of the faith.”

Christians have a responsibility to teach righteousness to the unrenewed and to be concerned about the structures of society as its citizens. Evangelicals have no liberty to argue that the sole responsibility of Christians is to preach the Gospel of salvation and concentrate exclusively on personal conversion. A narrow evangelical belief in the Gospel of the Kingdom leads to a belief that moral and social righteousness will follow naturally after personal pietism and devotion and, consequently, a conscious withdraw from social and even moral responsibility will result. The second section of this chapter will discuss in detail the evangelical responsibility for both Gospel and justice.

Jesus’ inauguration of the Kingdom through His life and ministry is intimately tied to God’s once and for all redemption in dealing with human sin, as well as healing world illness and corruption. For Benson, Berry and Heltzel (2012:24), a church without a concrete approach for engaging the world beyond its human soul-saving and other internal liturgical activities sees the church and the world as two totally separate realities. A complete character of virtue cannot be sustained without outward action, as Hauerwas’ virtue ethics deems being and doing to be inseparable (Hauerwas, 1975:78). Benson, Berry and Heltzel (2012:24) find that Hauerwas often challenges the absence of Christianity’s prophetic edge for being unresponsive to the suffering and injustices

experienced by the disinherited because of the theological legitimation of a *status quo* politics. Faith, hope, and love are not merely private virtues. They are as much about the restoration of God's Kingdom in the whole community as they are about a Christian's personal salvation. As was mentioned in Chapter 5 of this thesis, Wells (1998:1-2) charges that Christianity has lost both its passion for virtue and the authority of the biblical Word; it has no effective presence in society, especially in the evangelical church, because it has little appetite for speaking about the crisis of character in the face of the disintegrating moral culture in America. The shape of the biblical theology is always teleological towards the highest good. The goal of this highest good of creation is the Kingdom of God. The character of the Kingdom of God is spelt out in terms of obedience in a redemptive relationship that constitutes a new creature in Christ. The Kingdom of God is thus the highest good in virtue ethics, as believers long for the redemptive nature of the perfect eschatological fulfilment. Nevertheless, the dynamic of this devotional longing is not only a private piety, providing a motivation for an eschatological hope individually, but a prophetic vision giving shape to the world in communion with Jesus' continuing ministry and healing as well as a foretaste of the final consummation. After all, Jesus who commanded, 'Go and make disciples of all nations' is the same kingly Lord who also commanded, 'fill the earth and subdue it'; he is the one Lord of creation and redemption.

Franke (2012:140) finds that the evangelical church has generally not been faithful to the message of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and has failed to practise biblical interpretation contextually. His belief is that the evangelical church is a monocultural community disconnected from the mission of God and the world:

The fact that evangelical Christianity is still a largely monocultural community in the midst of a multicultural and multiethnic society ought to signal a serious disconnect with the intentions of the gospel and mission of God (Franke, 2012:140)

Any narrow emphasis on the eschatological nature of Christianity would greatly distort the scriptural witness and fundamentally sever the connection between the Gospel and social ethics. Winn (2012:89) admonishes that believers must recover the central theme of the scriptural witness, which is the Kingdom of God, and must understand the christocentric eschatology in light of the life of Jesus Christ to reconnect the Gospel with a concern for social justice. Winn hopes for the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God as a beginning of the new world order:

Kingdom language has proven especially powerful in the history of Christianity. As an eschatological metaphor, the image points to the transformation of the cosmos and history. It announces that the current world order has been overthrown, subverted, or sublated ... and in its place a new world order has arrived (Winn, 2012:90).

Through the Spirit of Jesus, the prophetic and apocalyptic aspects of the Kingdom of God are mediated to the community as gifts that call for faithful human action as well as divine action in the creation of the new world. The evangelical church is not called to build the Kingdom but to live lives as a prophetic community - a premature sample of the consummated Kingdom - and, on the other hand, to proclaim the hope of the coming Kingdom. It is called to put its hands to the plough, hear the cries for justice, the need for mercy, and the longing for a new world order, and not to look back.

8.1.3 The Prophetic Mission of the Church

The prophetic church must cry for human suffering in its totality, otherwise it is not a vital Christian evangelicalism, as Henry (2003:83) writes: “The cries of suffering humanity today are many. No evangelicalism which ignores the totality of man’s condition dares to respond in the name of Christianity.” Prophecy is not merely a matter of pronouncing and predicting words, but a way of life of the speaker being in the world: “it brings God’s will into human history through the words, yes, but also the deeds and character of the prophet” (Johnson, 2011:41). It is all because God hears the cries of the poor (Jas. 5:4). The Kingdom today is experienced as a divine activity, calling out a people from the world in order for the world to envision an optimistic new humanity within the world and await a future consummation. The church today is the ‘calling out’ people commissioned by Jesus to witness for Him and His Kingdom to the world in words and deeds in accordance with God’s plan and direction.

The Old Testament tells how God raised up prophets to proclaim the justice of God. They challenged Israel to care for widows, orphans, and aliens and advocated for social justice for the poor and oppressed. Jesus, in His life and teaching on earth, embodied the righteousness and justice of God as the prototype of the character of the Kingdom. Jesus said explicitly that He had come to preach the Good News of the Kingdom to the poor (Luke 4:18) and demonstrated decisively the true liberation and justice for the poor. The faith community of Jesus’ followers today has inherited the dynamic nature of His Spirit and His prophetic imperative. The church must, therefore, embrace the reign of God in

commitment and embodiment of our lives in restoration and wholeness through the wounds of Christ while constantly interacting with His created good yet hurting world. The Kingdom of God is at present not only manifested as an inner rule within believers but as an embodying ethics of love and justice that will fulfil the prophetic evangelical vision of the just and peaceable will of God, well beings through prophetic engagement in and for the world. To live the Gospel of the Kingdom of God publicly is the prophetic evangelical call to follow the prophetic tradition of serving as God's voice and witness with His dynamic power in grappling with personal sin and social sin. This is a public witness that the evangelical church must make, standing courageously to show the just and peaceable Kingdom through culture making, public service, faith-rooted organizing, and community activism (Benson *et al.*, 2012:29). The church exists for the sake of others and must therefore participate actively and maturely in a missional engagement in the public square:

Instead of a politics of protest, we are moving toward a politics of public engagement. Instead of communities of virtuous retreat, we are embodying missional communities of engagement. Instead of iconoclasm and kitsch, we are seeking to create culture. These new forms of prophetic engagement herald a jazzlike prophetic, intercultural future. Now is the time for prophetic Christian to improvise for love and justice (Benson *et al.*, 2012:30).

Instead of thinking about the church in political or social engagement, we need to keep in mind the church as mission, a prophetic mission. The word 'mission,' according to Stott (1975:35), is "embracing everything which God sends His people into the world to do. It therefore includes evangelism and social responsibility, since both are authentic expressions of the love which longs to serve man in his need." The will of God's mission is to restore and renew now the good creation through Christ's work of redemption and the hope of our common eschatological destination in the future. Thus the church must continue Christ's redemptive plan as well as His Gospel of the Kingdom as an embodied sign and must witness to His work through its manifold ministries, whether spiritual, physical, or social, on earth. Benson, Berry and Heltzel (2012:27-28) call for a reaching-out mission by following in the footsteps of Jesus: "Prophetic evangelicals are called to manifest peace and justice not just within the church, but outside of the gates, bringing *shalom* to the whole world."

Jesus' setting the Gospel of the Kingdom of God in action by meeting the needs of all people and healing the sick and hungry was an advocacy and care for the least advantaged as well as a critique of the ruling authorities' (the Roman government and

Jewish temple system) inability to provide a just structure for society and the basic needs of its people. Prophetic Christians, who are created in Christ for community and good works by God's advanced plan (Eph. 2:10), should commit to mobilize the whole community on a collective basis to dismantle injustice and meet basic human needs of the world. This call is a demand for a robust life of Christians together working toward the common good of the world. Christian virtue ethics is primarily about the character of people - who they are and the behaviour that flows out from their religious convictions. These religious convictions, in the context of the ritual disciplines and habitual practices of Christian faith in the community, would create the moral environment, which, marked with Christian scriptural tradition, is an important factor in the collective moral formation of interdependence among individuals. Benson, Berry and Heltzel (2012:23) support a theologically developed vision of 'interdependence' within the Christian community with the purpose of proclaiming and embodying God's Good News and justice together: "Interdependence is central to Christian ethics because individuals are always dependent on each other. Communities that seek to live out a radical discipleship through intentional community are integral to prophetic Christian witness." Christian togetherness is a corporate witness. This means that Christians have to come to terms with commitment, formation, embodiment, and enactment of God's will on earth even with various differences, whether theological, biblical, cultural, or social, because they are called to worship together, study the Bible together, pray together, serve together, and advocate together as a body of Christ.

The church is the reality of the Kingdom witnessing in unity both its overarching theological framework and Christian faith tradition through the communal life and practices of its various dimensions in the world. All dimensions of reality are in fact part of one total Kingdom. The witness of the church is to hold the reality of all dimensions under the sovereign reign of Christ. The central truth of the Kingdom is in 'interrelatedness', as Snyder (1997:83) describes: "The interrelatedness of all aspects of creation under God's sovereignty is in fact one of the central truths of the Kingdom." Lebacqz (1986:83) sums up the concept of Christian realism: "In Christianity, Jesus is the perfect fruit of prophetic religion: He is both in history and points beyond history. Jesus represents seriousness about history (incarnation) and yet a normative realm beyond history (the Kingdom)." The real witness to the Kingdom by the church is in proclaiming Jesus Christ as Saviour and Liberator of all people in history, including the poor and oppressed, and in fulfilling the goals of all genuine ministries that bring an

eschatological focus and a vision of the present and the future (in dimensions that are inward and outward, personal and social, spiritual and secular) to the world in Jesus' name.

James advises that the church is the first fruit of God's creation (Jas. 1:18). As the first fruit in the person of Jesus Christ, the church is in its new identity in order to lead lives in a specific way. Christians become people whose faith is undivided as one body of Christ and who conform to God's will and plan as God intended. The Great Commandment calls for two dimensions of Christian perfection: it is needful not only to live holy for personal perfection or wholeness but also to love the neighbour by embracing a life of authentic human existence where faith and action go together with respect to personal integrity, communal solidarity, and religious commitment to God and the community (Hartin, 2012:23). It reminds the people of God that they are members of the community. The task of the people of God is to sustain the true value of their faith in a perfect relationship with God and rediscover a life of integrity in perfect harmony and union with their community for equality and concern for the poor. James writes: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (Jas. 1:27, NIV). A genuine Christian faith is not at fault when it liberates the poor and oppressed from the structural evil of the world.

Jesus loves the church and gave Himself for it that He might redeem the church, not the Kingdom. He never gave Himself for the Kingdom or redeemed the Kingdom because the Kingdom itself is redemption. The Kingdom offers redemption; it does not receive it. Jesus is the way to the Kingdom. While the church is the body of Christ, it is an agent not only for the coming of the Kingdom on earth in the present order but also for the coming of its redemption in the future. Snyder (1997:81) affirms that the church is an authentic sign of the Kingdom because it is "the primary entry of the new order of the Kingdom into present history. It is salt and light, a city on a hill. It is not the Kingdom, and at times may actually betray the Kingdom, but is nevertheless in a fundamental way the sacrament and sign of the Kingdom in today's world."

Nevertheless, Jesus commands the church to seek first His Kingdom and His justice. The pursuit of the Kingdom and righteousness is not primarily to the pursuit of personal piety, but of a lifestyle that makes the agenda of God's reign the supreme concern of

one's life in and for the world. It is the justice of God's Kingdom that the church (all believers) is longing for, a distinctive identity and lifestyle on earth as it is in heaven. Stott (1979:171) argues that the concept of righteousness (justice) in Matthew 6:33 is primarily a social righteousness; it is a broader concept than the typical two-realm Kingdom. What this social righteousness is concerned with is "seeking man's liberation from oppression, together with the promotion of civil rights, justice in the law courts, integrity in business dealings and honour in home and family affairs" (Stott, 1979:45). This ambiguity does not mean that God's righteousness is limited to merely social or human righteousness but that a social or human righteousness is included as part of the divine righteousness. Righteousness or justice is found only in the Lord who is the sole sovereign over all perfect righteousness, both human and divine, as a gracious gift for His people (see Chapter 4 of this thesis). On one hand, the church is a social institution called to proclaim saving grace and is clearly distinguished from the state, marriage and the family (Stott, 1979:120).

On the other hand, Stott (1979:153) emphasizes that the church is also called to implement Christ's regime in every other structure as God is equally concerned with all areas of life - private and public, religious and secular. Stott (1979:113) makes a concluding remark on Christ's rule and Kingdom: "For Jesus Christ has universal authority, and no sphere may be excluded from His rule." Christ's Kingdom is presented as universal, unrestricted to any sphere, and shattering all conceptions of two kingdoms or realms. Stott's final remark is in line with my concluding statement in Chapter 6 that the church must not forget that the orders of creation and redemption, the spiritual and civil realms, as well as the Law and the Gospel, are held together and function together with the purpose and will of God in this age and the age to come. The longing for God's Kingdom and God's justice is the eschatological hope, both present and future, which calls humankind to move beyond themselves and their communities to a vision of total redemption that encompasses both the worldly creation (common grace/human justice) and eternal redemption (saving grace/divine justice). If Christianity is to remain true to its prophetic mission, the church must participate as a vital sign in God's mission of restoring the good creation in justice through Christ's work of redemption in and for the world. Benson, Berry and Heltzel (2012:7) tell us that the church must fulfil its prophetic vocation in its own unique form of prophetic witness and action within an eschatological horizon of hope and must move, through God's

Spirit, to holistically transform lives and communities in anticipation of the second coming of the Lord and the entrance into the fullness of the Kingdom.

8.2 EVANGELISM FOR GOOD NEWS AND JUSTICE, NOT JUST GOOD NEWS OR JUSTICE

8.2.1 Evangelism: The Proclamation of the Gospel in Word and Deed

Converting non-believers to God, making them disciples, and saving souls are the essential dimensions of the traditional concept of evangelism among Christians in the evangelical circle. Evangelism is a biblical concept expressed in the Greek verb *euangelizo* and the noun *euangelion*. *Euangelion* is normally translated ‘gospel’ denoting the Good News of the victory of God’s salvation. *Euangelizo* is a verb of action describing the proclamation or telling of that news. Hence, ‘to evangelize’ means to proclaim the Good News of the gospel. Evangelism announces the invitation of God as a saving answer to sin and as a call to accept the Good News about Jesus (Acts 8:35) by professing Him as the Saviour who forgives all forms of sin of the individual and as the Lord who reigns over all things on earth. Evangelism is opening the door for converts to begin a pilgrimage to Christ and an eschatological journey into the eternal house of the Kingdom of God.

Conn (1982:41) indicates that there is more to the meaning of evangelism. Personal conversion is a born-again experience that involves not only change of heart and mind, as far as a reconciled relationship with God is concerned, but also a commitment to be part of the body of Christ and to fulfil God’s purpose for oneself and the created world. Evangelism is studded with Greek words – *kerygma*, *koinonia*, *leiturgia*, *diakonia*, and *dikaioma* (proclamation, fellowship, worship, service, and justice). *Kerygma* is the proclamation of the Kingdom with the focus on the name of Jesus (Conn, 1982:36). *Koinonia* is the fellowship of the church in which the contagion of the Christian hope is communicated (Conn, 1982:36-37). *Leiturgia* is the worship that witnesses before the nations to the true and living God and to the coming of King Jesus (Conn, 1982:38). *Diakonia* is the service of a servant of the new Kingdom who does good to all humans (Conn, 1982:37). Finally, *dikaioma* insists that evangelism must become Gospel show-and-tell through spiritual transformation, showing mercy and preaching grace in a

commitment to love one's neighbour and to do justice to neighbours in every aspect of their lives - the moral, the social, and the economic (Conn, 1982:33-34, 42). These five Greek words refer not to isolated bits and pieces of the Kingdom but to the fruits of evangelism in a total offering of the church to the Gentiles (Rom. 15:16). Evangelism is the mission for a total Kingdom.

The emphasis of evangelism is understood to be the proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom of God. Ron Sider, Philip Olson and Heidi Unruh offer their definition of evangelism in a broader sense covering both announcing and embodying in the reign of God:

[Evangelism is] sharing Jesus' gospel by word and deed with non-Christians with the intention and hope that they will embrace the message and repent, accept and follow Christ, and join a Christian church community for ongoing discipleship (Sider *et al.*, 2002:64).

Snyder and Scandrett provide a similar but more inclusive definition:

It addresses itself particularly to personal faith; to the decision of the heart in response to God's call to follow Jesus Christ, to be born again, and be His disciples. It is concerned with justification and regeneration as well as discipleship and sanctification. Think again of the circumference of evangelism as all that is included in the Good News of God's Kingdom, but the centre as the appeal to 'turn' and be healed and forgiven (Snyder and Scandrett, 2011:141).

The above definitions clearly indicate that evangelism is more than private piety and not just confined to a single task based only on words. It needs both words and deeds, not words or deeds, to model all dimensions of the Gospel of the Kingdom through the speaker's private piety and the decision of the listener to acknowledge and accept the whole conversion process with justification, regeneration, discipleship, and sanctification. Winning converts to Jesus in faith is thus not the final purpose of the program of evangelism. Evangelism covers more than this, because it concerns the total message of the Kingdom of God. It is all about the Kingdom of God. Jesus' Great Commission to the church is about proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mt. 24:14). This is more than just a program of personal salvation, it is about making not just believers but disciples (Mt. 28:19), and about witnessing not just within the believing community but throughout the whole world, including both humans and the structures they encounter (Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

In this regard, Snyder and Scandrett (2011:142-144) introduce four dimensions of evangelism, namely, conversion evangelism, disciplining evangelism, justice

evangelism, and culture evangelism. **Conversion evangelism** is proclaiming and demonstrating by the lives of believers that Jesus Christ is Saviour and Lord – the one who came into the world to save sinners who would repent and believe in Him and receive the abundant life and healing He offers (Snyder and Scandrett, 2011:142). **Disciplining evangelism** refers to the church making disciples, not just converts or church members, but faithful followers who will visibly demonstrate the character of Jesus and His Kingdom in reconciliation between rich and poor, men and women, and people of different racial and ethnic identities (Snyder and Scandrett, 2011:143). **Justice evangelism** means living out the righteousness and justice of God’s reign within the church’s social context locally and globally and engaging key issues of justice in the world – entrenched poverty, environmental exploitation, ethnic and religious violence, oppression of women and children, sex trafficking, abortion, and the culture of warfare and militarism (Snyder and Scandrett, 2011:143). **Culture evangelism** means shaping the world’s societies and cultures through the truth and virtues of God’s reign and engaging in all sectors of society to give transforming witness to the truth of the Gospel (Snyder and Scandrett, 2011:143-144). These four dimensions of evangelism must work closely together through the church in order not only to present a unified picture of God’s reign in the believing community but also to fulfil the holistic mission of the Kingdom of God, embodying the healing and salvation of the creation.

Jesus’ inauguration of the Kingdom through His life and sacrifice, fulfilling God’s once for all redemptive plan for human sin, is accompanied by the healing of illness and corruption in the world. Evangelism does not end when someone accepts Christ. It is an invitation to join Jesus’ new community as His disciples, not just converts, and to make the Kingdom visible to the world by caring for those who are poor and oppressed, restoring communities and creation, and loving the whole person like Jesus did during His earthly ministry. The story of Zacchaeus illustrates how this faithful disciple of Jesus lived out Jesus’ salvation with a commitment to pursue righteous relationship with others; this demonstrated a radical healing of business practices and life style (Sider *et al.*, 2002:53). Biblical evangelism calls for repentance from involvements in all personal and social forms of sin. Jesus was satisfied with what Zacchaeus did to confess his personal sin against God and his previous oppressive business practices against others; He then declared: “Today salvation has come to this house” (Luke 19:9, NIV). A restored and reconciled personal right relationship with God through evangelism is inseparable from social right relationships with our neighbours.

Evangelism is an essential part of the church's mission. It arose naturally from Jesus' Great Commission to be witnesses to the Gospel of the Kingdom (Mt. 24:14) and to make disciples of all nations (Mt. 28:19). Jesus' instruction is specifically for His followers (the church) to baptize those converts who accept Christ as Saviour and to teach them to observe and obey all that He, as the Lord, had commanded. Besides repentance, His teaching includes commands to feed the hungry, release the captives and liberate the oppressed. Sider (1975:266) writes that "failure to teach prospective believers and new converts that coming to Jesus necessarily involves a costly discipleship that will confront social, economic and political injustice constitutes a heretical neglect of the Great Commission." In its evangelism the church must not emphasize only the Great Commission's imperative for personal conversion and de-emphasize the Greatest Commandment by categorizing the latter as merely an expression of social or even secular nature of neighbourly love. Saving grace and socio-political liberation are equally important. Sider (1975:266) supports this view and elaborates the nature of the Greatest Commandment: "The Great Command obligates the Christian to proclaim the Gospel to the neighbour just as surely as it compels him to improve the neighbour's societal environment." In practice, the Great Commission and the Greatest Commandment are intricately interrelated in both evangelism and social justice and must work together. Faithful followers of Christ and His commandments have a responsibility to seek eagerly ways that can present Jesus Christ in word and deed to their neighbour as the Saviour of their individual souls, and also to seek eagerly ways to bring liberty to those oppressed and suffering neighbours (Luke 4:18).

The church is a primary expression of the reign of God. The main task of the church is to witness and make all dimensions of the Kingdom of God visible and all its messages heard. The church, in its life and preaching, should proclaim and announce God's reign on earth. God's reign, that is, the Kingdom of God, was inaugurated by the life of Jesus and offers the living Gospel and redemption. The life of Jesus Christ is the Kingdom of God encompassing all things. It means that Jesus, the Saviour and the Lord, gives life, new birth life, abundant life, and life in fullness, for all creation (John 10:10). The church's mission of evangelism has to be prophetic in its witness to Christ, who is the source and perfection of God's Kingdom, and has to strive to establish God's reign in the life of non-believers, in both spiritual and physical spheres. It is clear that

evangelism must then attend to the arrival of the Kingdom of God as absolutely constitutive of the Gospel.

Jesus came preaching the evangelical message of repentance in Mark 1:15: “‘The time has come,’ He said. ‘The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the Good News!’” He pointed to the Kingdom of God, as an end as well as a new beginning. This powerful eschatological metaphor portrays the total transformation of the human condition. Jesus’ Gospel is the Good News of the Kingdom, not only for forgiveness of sins, but also for a combination of word and deed. Therefore, the Gospel of the Kingdom of God is not purely about the religious conversion experience, or related private piety, or ecclesial liturgies. It is constituted by extraordinary events in and through Jesus Christ through which God acted in history by the Holy Spirit to establish His rule in the world. When Jesus sent out the Twelve on their initial independent preaching mission, the message he taught was to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal (Luke 9:2). The church must enrich its concept of evangelism to the point where it moves beyond the mere proclamation of personal conversion to encompass within it the human grounding and life reality of all believers and non-believers for the sake of the Kingdom of God. The life and mission of the church must foster the proclamation and practice of the total message of the total Kingdom. This includes the proclamation of the divine scheme of salvation in the spiritual sphere as well as the practice of God’s deep concern and involvement in social justice, which is the physical salvation in the temporary physical sphere. The living God of the heavenly Kingdom is not only the Saviour, Redeemer, and Father of His covenant people; He is also the Lord, Creator, and King of all mankind. This is the kind of God the church needs to proclaim; a God who is personal and who cares about the universal welfare of humanity and creation as a whole. The church has the obligation to enable humanity to experience the totality of God. It is not an option to adopt only part of the character of God and His Kingdom and reduce its full dimensions to a narrow abstract conception. The mission of the church must include both Good News and justice in order to make the church relevant. The mission of the church in evangelism is to reconcile the world to God through Jesus Christ; its primary commitment is not to the particular Christian community, but rather to the interaction and relationship between the Gospel and the particular cultural context in which we are situated (Franke, 2012:145).

On the other hand, it is a profound reductionism if evangelism is reduced to forms of social justice or action without attending to the proclamation of the redemptive message of the Gospel of the Kingdom. This dilutes the Lordship of Christ and His forgiveness of sin in personal conversion in placing the emphasis on human efforts and structures, as did the liberal social gospel movement in the last century. Sider (1993:9) rebukes Rauschenbush, the proponent of the social gospel movement, for his neglect of the vicarious atonement of Christ, and his meagre interest in the metaphysical question of the Trinity and the deity of Christ. The emphasis of the liberals brings to mind the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31-46, which stresses eternal judgment for failing to care for people's earthly needs (Mt. 25:41). For Christianity, a good deed alone is not a one-way ticket to heaven. The reign of God and His revealed truth makes a vital difference from secular and philosophical theories of justice based purely on human terms. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis, not only are there conflicting concepts among these secular theories but they are also defective in contemplating the ultimate end of human beings. As MacIntyre (1988:1) reveals, there is no common yardstick or an absolute or universal norm without the knowledge of God's Law. Therefore, I reiterate my earlier statement in Chapter 3 that the Christian church must not simply focus on changing institutions and structures, like the secular social thinkers do, at the expense of emphasizing the simultaneous need for regeneration and acceptance of saving grace. All good works are to be done on God's terms, not on human terms, because He is Lord to redeemed believers. The true Gospel of the Kingdom is a free gift received by faith; the recipients accept the divine forgiveness of Christ who has ushered in the Messianic Kingdom (the reign of God) in a renewed right relationship with both God and neighbour. Jesus already taught and demonstrated that His dawning Kingdom was beginning to transform vertical soul-saving relationships as well as horizontal socioeconomic relationships wherever people accepted Him. God wills all humans to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4).

The next section will discuss the debate within the church on the dichotomies between evangelism and social justice and examine the essential biblical basis for a fuller or holistic vision of the Gospel.

8.2.2 From False Dichotomies to Gospel Faithfulness

The evangelical church has been regarded in the twentieth century as the community that offers and boldly administers individual salvation, with a primary focus on the vertical relationship with God but little regard for the horizontal dimensions of the Gospel. For too long the evangelical church, under this narrow emphasis, has ignored the role of religion in solving social injustice and other social maladies that have become systemic problems and threats to society and have resulted in brokenness and poverty, not only in the third world countries but in virtually all great cities of the first world. The evangelical church offered no solution or effective effort to counter inequality and oppressive structures within society in general. This reduced understanding of the Gospel is a failure to obey Jesus' call: 'You shall be my witnesses.'

The enigma of the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility in today's church was originally not an issue in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There were distinctions between two sets of mandates, the spiritual and the social, but the evangelicals were equally committed to both evangelism and social reform. This commitment coincided with the Great Awakening. Chaney (1976:217) records his understanding of Jonathan Edwards' concept of God's work of redemption in two facets. One consists of the conversion, sanctification, and glory of individuals and the other pertains to God's grand design in creation, history, and providence. Still these two mandates were inseparable. However, there were gradual shifts toward the primacy of the evangelism mandate and diminished action toward social responsibility. These shifts were due to the rise of premillennialism among evangelical Christians and their growing protest against the worldliness of the christianization of the social gospel toward the end of the nineteenth century. All previous progressive social concern became suspect and disappeared dramatically (Marsden, 1980:86-90). Bosch (1991:404) concludes that "the broad sweep of the involvement and interest of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Awakenings had shrivelled to narrow and intolerant sectarianism."

Decades of infighting and scepticism about social justice has sadly tarnished the reputation and witness of the evangelical church in the twentieth century. Sider (2012:43) writes that "the church is often perceived as self-serving, hypocritical, and irrelevant. Cynicism and alienation can be just as much a barrier to evangelism as

hunger and homelessness.” Entering the twentieth-first century, evangelical leaders of various denominations widely accept that biblical churches must combine word and deed, doing both evangelism and social justice (Sider *et al.*, 2002:13). To get involved in social and political activities personally and institutionally within the church is a forgone conclusion after decades of controversy and tension over the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility in the second half of the twentieth century. They finally realize that the church as a whole needs to catch the vision of loving the whole person the way Jesus did. The question remains, similar to the inconsistent application of the meaning of the Kingdom of God as both ‘already’ and ‘not yet,’ as to how this involvement should be expressed and upon what theological basis it should precede. Many thousands of congregations are in need of help to put into practice the faithful vision of evangelism and social justice they want to embrace. While the need for involvement of both evangelism and social justice brings near unanimity, debate among evangelicals still exists on how that involvement should take shape and what the Christian motivations are.

The historical development of a paradigm shift in evangelical thinking on evangelism and social justice toward the second half of the twentieth century shows many ambiguities in relation to some key doctrinal concepts to the Kingdom of God and the nature and extent of the life and work of Christ. Billy Graham and John Stott, two of the most influential Christians in the twentieth century, illustrate how the shifts in evangelical approaches to social justice were developed through a period from the Berlin Congress of 1966 to the Lausanne International Congress on World Evangelization in 1974. In the opening address to the Berlin Congress in 1966, Graham (1966:4-5) first confessed the confusion throughout the church about the very meaning of the word ‘evangelism’ and gave his brief interpretation that “evangelism is the spiritual, social, and moral needs of men.” This expands the biblical statement that ‘Jesus had compassion on them’. The Gospel is concerned for the souls separated from God by sin, the sick bodies that need a healing touch, the empty stomachs that need feeding, and persons whose social misunderstanding needs His word. Graham (1966:5) admitted that “evangelism has a social responsibility” but insisted that “some of the greatest social investments of history have come about as the result of men being converted to Christ, for example, the conversion of Wilberforce led to the freeing of slaves.” Stott, as one of the speakers, made these comments on the Great Commission at the Berlin Congress:

The commission of the church, therefore, is not to reform society, but to preach the Gospel. Certainly Christ's disciples who have embraced the Gospel and who themselves are being transformed by the Gospel, are intended to be the salt of the earth and light of the world ... Again, the commission of the church is not to heal the sick, but to preach the Gospel ... According to this commission, which is still addressed to us today, our primary duty is to be neither reformers of society nor healers of the sick, but rather preacher of the Gospel (Stott, 1967:50).

Graham and Stott set the tone and general theological flavour of the Berlin conference. They recognized that social responsibility was a duty of Christians, but no way near the traditional meaning of the mission of the church. Graham also avoided the debates within evangelicalism concerning the Kingdom and instead directed attention toward the fundamental issue of eternal punishment (Johnston, 1978:168). This social responsibility was said to be only the 'result' of evangelism which, in their interpretation, had priority. The primary thrust of evangelism is winning people to a personal relationship to Jesus Christ. The Berlin Congress's motto *One Race, One Gospel, One Task* focussed on mankind's common need of redemption, the gospel of the death of Jesus Christ for sinners, and the proclamation of the Good News of salvation (Johnston, 1978:165). Despite the recognition of the duty of social responsibility, the dichotomy or the separatistic concept of the relationship of social responsibility (socio-economic work) to evangelism (spiritual ministry) was retained by a majority of evangelicals as two distinct duties, or different Christian motivations and theological concepts, or independent parts of a broader church tasks. The theological position of the Berlin Congress was a confirmation of the biblical understanding of evangelism and a reaction against the errors and heresies of liberal ecumenism and humanism (Johnston, 1978:168-169, 176, 179). Stott also writes in the preface of his book, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, that

One of the most notable features of the worldwide evangelical movement during the last ten to fifteen years has been the recovery of our temporarily mislaid social conscience. For approximately fifty years (c. 1920-70) evangelical Christians were preoccupied with the task of defending the historic biblical faith against the attacks of theological liberalism, and reacting against its social gospel (Stott, 1990:xi).

Participants in the Berlin Congress were under tremendous pressure to interpret the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility; they struggled to distance themselves from the continuing threat of the civic religion of the social gospel movement related to the Kingdom of God in the present, in contrast to the future Kingdom at the second coming of Christ. This took the challenge of social responsibility nowhere.

The call for social responsibility at the Berlin Congress was weak in gaining theological support and aroused little response in actual services or vital contributions by the evangelical church to meet physical, social, and structural needs in society. Some evangelical scholars began to reflect anew on the issues and to take the challenge to move out of the century-old self-imposed isolation from society. In 1973, a group of about 40 evangelical theologians in the United States organised a weekend workshop on evangelical social concern in Chicago. They signed together a 'Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern' to confess their failure to confront injustice, racism, and discrimination against women and marginalized, and pledge to do better. This Declaration spelled out evangelical Christians' 'confession' to the Lord Jesus Christ of their lack of fulfilment of the complete claim of God on their lives, 'acknowledgement' of God's love, justice, mercy and commitment to equality of wealth and gender, and 'proclamation' of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the biblical hope of Christ's second coming to consummate the Kingdom (Sider, 1974:1-2). It was a historic moment that delivered a powerful message to all Christians at large. Yet, Henry (1986:384) admitted in his autobiography that the Declaration had only limited success in offsetting evangelical independency as evangelicals were caught in between the liberals who were more interested in social protest than in personal evangelism, and the fundamentalists, who were reluctant to cooperate in tackling social evil.

While the evangelical church continued to face considerable hurdles in the affirmation of an inclusive term of social mission, its voice on social responsibility became conspicuously weak in the pulpit and in society. The tremendous difficulties that the evangelical faced hindered the receptive understanding of the whole counsel of God in proclaiming publicly the divinely intended role in evangelism and social responsibility even after the Berlin congress in 1966. The Chicago Declaration 1973 drew some evangelical scholars with a renewed interest in the issues of social responsibility. They found that sensitivity to social conscience was an essential ingredient of integral mission as well as a milestone in the awakening of the evangelical social conscience. Together with those evangelicals who had long advocated for the poor and oppressed from the Two Thirds World, they began to make an advance when the International Congress on World Evangelization met in Lausanne in 1974 with the theme '*Let the earth hear his voice*'. Stott was one of those involved in this latest movement in transcending the traditional dichotomy between evangelism and social responsibility but he and other

proponents were branded by conservative evangelicals, like Arthur Johnston in his book, *The Battle for World Evangelism*, as radical evangelicals who acknowledge a socio-political commitment and strive to unite evangelistic witness and social action with the negative connotation of placing an over-emphasis on social responsibility and being too inclusive. Stott was under fire for defining social action as a partner of evangelism; his critic, Johnston, asserted that Stott's emphasis on social responsibility is un-biblical:

Stott has dethroned evangelism as the only historical aim of mission ... Socio-political actions have become as essential to mission as proclamation evangelism ... To say that mission is a comprehensive word 'embracing everything that God sends His people into the world to do' may be too great a concession to ecumenical theology and without biblical foundations (Johnston, 1978:302-303).

Stott candidly offered his penitence at the Lausanne Congress 1974 about changing his understanding and interpretation of the Great Commission from an exclusive view of evangelism at the Berlin Congress to a more encompassing meaning:

I now see more clearly that not only the consequence of the commission but the actual commission itself must be understood to include social as well as evangelistic responsibility, unless we are to be guilty of distorting the words of Jesus (Stott, 1975:23).

The spelling out of his renewed understanding of the Great Commission had nothing to do with Stott's association with the ecumenical movement or his attendance at the World Council of Churches at Uppsala in 1968. Stott (1975:10, 12) stressed his evangelical identity by saying: "I am a Christian of 'evangelical' conviction" and distanced himself from the ecumenical churches by disapproving of their mistaken view on the authority of the Scripture; he wrote that "many ecumenical Christians do not seem to have begun to learn to live under the authority of Scripture." On the other hand, Stott (1975:12) was not hesitant to point out that "some of our traditional evangelical formulations are mistaken also" because of selective submission to the understanding of Scripture and tradition. He found that many evangelicals reduced the Great Commission exclusively to a preaching, converting and teaching mission. The crucial form in which the Great Commission has been handed down to the disciples of Christ, as Stott (1975:23-24) interprets, is in Jesus' prayer in the upper room when he said to the Father: "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18, NIV) and His command after His death and resurrection in the same upper room: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). Jesus deliberately and precisely made His preaching and healing mission the model of His believers on earth. Of course, the most

important purpose of Jesus' first coming was to seek and save the lost as the Saviour of the world. This is something which Christians cannot copy. But Christians are asked to serve their Lord and Saviour in word and deed for others according to their total needs as an expression of the Good News of the Kingdom of God and to teach about the nature of this coming Kingdom (Stott, 1975:24). Obviously, the Good News of the Kingdom of God is the centre and end of the mission of the church whereas both evangelism and social responsibility are means and duties to this end.

Stott (1975:27) believed that "social action is a partner of evangelism." These two are inseparable partners standing alongside each other. One is not a means to the other, or a manifestation of the other. This does not mean that these two, evangelism and social action, must work side by side all the time. The word and the work may vary in their mix depending on the most urgent considerations where ministry and service are required and depending on the types of Christian vocations gifts available. For instances, spiritual needs at times may dictate a priority for the preaching of the Gospel, while material needs may sometimes be so pressing that they may prevent the person hearing. It is therefore clear that proclamations of the Christian message in words and service through deeds of love are equal partners in the mission of the church.

There were opposing voices against Stott's partnership of evangelism at the Lausanne Congress in 1974. One of them was McGavran, who insisted that personal and social improvements are to be seen as fruits or consequences of salvation, issuing from sound conversion (Johnston, 1978:310). McGavran debated the primacy of evangelism rather than the partnership of both evangelism and social action, as quoted by Johnston:

Evangelism is proclaiming Jesus Christ as God and only Saviour and persuading men to become His disciples and responsible members of His church. That is the first and basic task. Calling people to repent and to become disciples of the Son of Righteousness is the most important political act that anyone can perform. Until politicized Christians realize that, our politics will be terribly inadequate (Johnston, 1978:311).

Johnston cites another debate from Lindsell with the historical evangelical view of mission:

The mission of the church, first and foremost, is proclamation for the salvation of men, some of whom will respond and others of whom will not. Secondary to this primary goal is service, a means to bring about the salvation of men and an expression of an embraced and a committed faith (Johnston, 1978:312-313).

The official Covenant of the Lausanne Congress in 1974, as a result, did not shift its historical position and continued to advocate evangelism and social responsibility as two separate and mutually exclusive mandates and upheld the primacy of evangelism. Part of the Covenant recorded by Stott in his book, *Making Jesus Known*, is as follows:

In the church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary. World evangelization requires the whole church to take the whole Gospel to the whole world. The church is at the very centre of God's cosmic purpose and is His appointed means of spreading the Gospel ... The church is the community of God's people rather than an institution, and must not be identified with any particular culture, social or political system, or human ideology (Stott, 1996:28).

Bosch (1991:405) also summarizes the Lausanne Congress's explicit support of the primacy of evangelism: "In the church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary ... reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation." Bosch thus regards evangelism and social action as two separate components with the priority of evangelism as the key. In his analysis the Lausanne Congress of 1974 made evangelism and social responsibility two totally independent components with one being primary and the other optional:

One is then by implication saying that it is possible to have evangelism without a social dimension and Christian social involvement without an evangelistic dimension. What is more, if one suggests that one component is primary and the other secondary, one implies that the one is essential, the other optional (Bosch, 1991:405).

In spite of the pressure of a dominance of evangelism over social responsibility, the same concern for an integral or balanced mission continued to be reflected in statements emerging from various conferences held subsequently in this period. Two particular statements worthy of discussion are the Thailand Consultation on World Evangelization in 1980 and the Grand Rapids Report on Evangelism and Social Responsibility in 1982. At the Thailand Consultation, one of the emphases was the ashamed confession of the lack of vision and failure to live out the Gospel in full to the people of the world:

Our study has led us to confess that other people's resistance to the Gospel has sometimes been our fault. Imperialism, slavery, religious persecution in the name of Christ, racial pride and prejudice (whether anti-black or anti-white, anti-Jewish or anti-Arab, or any other kind), sexual oppression, cultural insensitivity, and indifference to the plight of the needy and the powerless – these are some of the evils which have marred the church's testimony and put stumbling blocks in other people's road to faith. We resolve in future to spread the Gospel with greater humility (Stott, 1996:160).

The Thailand statement reaffirmed 'the primacy of evangelism' but acknowledged the integral relationship between evangelism and social responsibility:

In the church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary. This is not to deny that evangelism and social action are integrally related, but rather to acknowledge that

of the tragic needs of human beings none is greater than their alienation from their Creator and the terrible reality of eternal death for those who refuse to repent and believe (Stott, 1996:159).

The goal of the Grand Rapids Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility, as stated in its introduction, was “to complete Lausanne’s unfinished business and to define more clearly what is included in ‘social responsibility’, whose responsibility it is, and how it relates to evangelism” (Stott, 1996:171). The report admitted it was wrong to disengage evangelism and social responsibility as in ‘dualism’ but clarified that it did not mean that neither could ever exist in independence of the other in particular circumstances. The example cited in the report was the story of the Good Samaritan, who showed Christian love by tending the wounds of the victim but failed to preach the Good News (Stott, 1996:180). The report then defined the relationship between evangelism and social action in three ways (Stott, 1996:181-182). First, Christian social action is a consequence of evangelism, since those involved are fulfilling their social responsibility as ‘faith works through love’ (Gal. 5:6). Second, social action is a bridge to evangelism, since it can break down prejudice and suspicion, open closed doors and gain a hearing for the Gospel. Third, social action is a partner of evangelism, since they are like the two blades of a pair of scissors or the two wings of a bird. This partnership was clearly illustrated in the public ministry of Jesus, who not only preached the Gospel but fed the hungry and healed the sick. Stott summarized the integral relationship of the two:

Evangelism, even when it does not have a primarily social intention, nevertheless has a social dimension, while social responsibility, even when it does not have a primarily evangelistic intention, nevertheless has an evangelistic dimension (Stott, 1996:182).

The Grand Rapids documents affirmed the certain priority of evangelism in a limited and not absolute sense. But the priority of evangelism was a logical one since “the very fact of Christian social responsibility presupposes socially responsible Christians, and it can only be by evangelism and disciplining that they have become such” (Stott, 1996:183). The priority is also theological, since “evangelism relates to people’s eternal destiny, and in bringing them Good News of salvation, Christians are doing what nobody else can do” (Stott, 1996:183). Evangelism and social responsibility are inseparable partners and are related to one another, as both are the fruits of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God which is the root. This partnership, in reality, is a marriage (Stott, 1996:182). This improved position puts evangelism and social responsibility on, more or less, an equal footing. However, they remain as separate duties, not an integral

mission, for Stott (1996:182) reports that “evangelism is not social responsibility, nor is social responsibility evangelism. Yet, each involves the other.” Nevertheless, this improved position, which accommodates both evangelism and social responsibility in a partnership in the Grand Rapids statement, did not attain consensus among all fifty participants as some of them “felt uncomfortable” (Bosch,1991:406); agreement was “not total” and there was “no attempt to conceal our differences” (Stott, 1996:171). Gustafson (1991:115) criticizes the consultation’s report because it treats social action as an adjunct to the task of evangelism. Avoidance of a dualism between evangelism and social involvement was not really achieved, so the business remained unfinished.

In 1983, another significant development was taken at a consultation of the World Evangelical Fellowship in Wheaton devoted to ‘Transformation: The Church in Response to Human Need.’ The Wheaton 83 statement highlighted the struggle on the part of evangelicals to move from a separatistic understanding of the relationship of evangelism and social action to a more holistic or integrated understanding of the relationship between the two with a consensus that “we do not emphasize evangelism as a separate theme, because we see it as an integral part of our total Christian response to human need (Gustafson, 1991:115). The final section of Wheaton 83 is a strong affirmation of the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’ of the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ as the basis for integrated mission: “we affirm that the Kingdom of God is both present and future, both societal and individual, both physical and spiritual ... It grows like a mustard seed, both judging and transforming the present age” (Samuel and Sugden, 1987:265). The church, as the community of the end time anticipating the end, must prepare for the ultimate by getting involved in the penultimate, and this means that the church must evangelize, respond to immediate human needs and press for social transformation (Samuel and Sugden, 1987:265). Jesus’ Kingdom is the total Kingdom that we have discussed in Chapter 7. It is at the centre of all things in heaven and earth, things visible and invisible, bringing the totality of divine fullness and God’s gracious blessing to Christians and motivating them to do good works toward neighbours and to work toward the transformation of society.

Seven years after the overall consensus of the Wheaton ’83 statement on a holistic mission of evangelism and social responsibility, Gustafson (1991:115) was disappointed to see no policy changes or action within the larger evangelical community; he wondered why it was not being more widely practiced by the church in the world. It

seems that the mind-set of the evangelical church has not been enhanced after achieving a reasonable consensus of several years' debate on the issue of a holistic mission. The evangelical church remains hesitant to embrace a broader involvement in social action. There are still obstacles to the integration of evangelism and social action, namely, the continuing dichotomy of the two, the secular concept of social action, and a cultural insensitivity on the part of the evangelical church. A review of the Christian motivation in term of an explicit theological framework that would form the foundation for a wider and more active engagement of the evangelical church in both evangelism and social justice seems inevitable. Near the heart of my purpose in this chapter is to suggest that not only should Christians read and understood correctly the biblical concept that speaks about heavenly and worldly concerns, but also they should be set free to realize this concept in all its dimensions, with a view to a new transformed world in which they would discover not only new life, but also new vocation and duty. Christianity is more than a religion (a way of being spiritual, so that its believers have assurance of salvation, going to heaven and leaving this old world behind once and for all). Christian believers must not reduce the political overtones of new creation and new society to the status of an ineffective dogma or even metaphor (Wright, 2012:163-165). I will discuss below the theological concepts on sin, salvation, and the Gospel of the Kingdom in support of a fuller concept of the Good News that integrates the call to evangelism and social justice. I do not attempt to resolve the debate about the primacy of evangelism over social action, but expect to awaken the uneasy social conscience of the evangelical church to commit faithfully to making a long overdue impact on the larger society rather than insisting on an indifference toward a secondary or optional duty of social action.

Sin

The biblical view of sin is a question of relationship, not a topic of abstract speculation. These relationships are always both vertical and horizontal, an alienation and rebellion against both God and neighbour, a violation of the reign of God and His law. Sider (1999:142) rightly points out that “our corrupt minds produce brilliant rationalizations for our self-interest – whether racism, sexism, or economic exploitation.” This personal human sin has permeated our social structure and institutions because we are persons in the community. There is no doubt that the individual is ultimately culpable for all sins including the corruptions of social structures and institutions, through externalization, objectivation, and internalization, which are built up over time by evil human decision, action, and cooperation (refer to Chapter 2 of this thesis). Sins are also both personal

and social as destructive forces that deform the totality of human life and society at large. The personal sins of self-interest, pride, concupiscence, and prejudice are in the very heart of every human who knowingly participates in the internalized social sins as his or her own, resulting in classism, racism, sexism, and economically unjust law and structures. The unjust structures are results of deliberately aggressive actions that ruin and manipulate all relationships in injustice against others who are the weak, the poor and the least advantaged. Costas (1982:26) is right: “Just as personal sin affects the community, social sin also affects the individual.” It is the culmination of human corruption that brings collective guilt as a reality of universal human experience (Costas, 1982:22-23). The basic argument of Paul in Romans 3:23 is that sin is a reality in the life of every human being: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Sins, whether they are offenses of vertical or horizontal relationships, are against the will of God. The consequence of human sins is the ‘wrath of God’ (Rom. 1:18), God’s holy condemnation. The essence of God’s condemnation of sinners is to judge their own free but sinful choice and action against the only source of justice, goodness, and love. This condemnation will lead to the eternal separation in death from the only source of justice, goodness, and love.

God is in the battle defeating the powers and authorities under the evil control of Satan. Jesus’ cross has already disarmed Satan’s principalities and powers (Col. 2:15) but the victory is yet to come at the consummation of this age. Paul, therefore, asks Christians to join in and continue the battle, not against flesh and blood (Eph. 6:12), but to correct all the evil works of Satan in the world. Mott (1982:18) explains this: Christians serve a different order, the reign of God, which He sets up in contrast to the prevailing way of life in the social order as supported by the fallen powers, and affirms that by faith those who live in Christ’s victory must continue to struggle. Christians should know full well that they will never solve the problems by merely changing individuals, since the structural evil and social sin will continue to be internalized into the minds and hearts of individuals, and the sinned-against (the oppressed) will continue to suffer. Similarly, if the problems of continuing rebellion against God are not sorted out, modification of the legal and social structure as the secular theories suggested will not create a new person in wholeness and perfection. Therefore, both a one-sided focus on social sin and a one-sided preoccupation with personal sin are only partially right and incomplete (Sider *et al.*, 2002:51). A holistic view of sin in persons in community deals with individual

responsibility and social justice together – it is not a choice of either-or. Sider, Olson and Unruh argue for such a holistic view because:

God holds individuals responsible for their own sinful choices, even when the social context for those choices is oppressive and unfair. God also holds each member of society accountable to help create just, wholesome communities, regardless of whether people are personally responsible for the injustice (Sider, Olson, and Unruh, 2002:51).

According to the Bible, the sovereign God is the only source of transformation and saving grace. Humans alone will never attain the utopian dream of a perfect person and a just society because sins will persist until Christ's second coming. While living in between Christ's two comings, humanity needs to hear the glorious Good News of forgiveness of sins and to convert in order to experience the Spirit's transformative grace that will reconcile them with God and neighbour. Christians need not only the inner divine healing of brokenness in order to enter the perfection and fullness of the Kingdom of God but also the correction of unjust societies. Otherwise the sinfully institutionalized customs and laws in communities will trap people into sins systematically and unconsciously. Therefore, simply converting individuals from personal sin without correcting the unjust structure of social sin is inadequate. Although Christians may struggle and fail to erect signs of wholeness before the second coming of Christ, Sider, Olson and Unruh (2002:51) are confident that while Christians are still in the world, "only the biblical combination of evangelism and social action can redeem the devastation of sin in our communities."

Salvation

While sin is a creation disorder in both vertical and horizontal relationships that frustrate the plan and work of God, Costas (1982:27) finds that "salvation is the re-creation that overcomes sin and regains control of God's great plan." Sin is a universal problem for humanity and its wage is God's judgment of eternal death (Rom. 6:23, NIV). The only source of transformation and saving grace is the sovereignty of God. Paul explains the cause-benefit effect of the sin-salvation relationship in the words, "you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life" (Rom. 6:22, NIV). Salvation is eternal life in Christ Jesus the Lord as a gift of God. It is a gift of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ who died for the sins of humanity and set them free from sins. Jesus Christ is the only Lawgiver and Judge (Jas. 4:12) who will save whoever turns from the error of the way of death and will cover a multitude of sins (Jas. 5:20).

Salvation in the Old Testament concept is the work of God who alone can save the flock as the Creator and Redeemer (Ezekiel 34:22; Isaiah 43:1, 14-15). Moreover, in the Old Testament it is social, corporate, and communal, and relates to all aspects of human life (Sider, 1999:85). God is titled “our Saviour” (Psalms 68:19) for the work of salvation to those who are humble with trusting faith in Him. The Exodus story in Israel’s history is a typical example of salvation; it is the liberation of Israel from oppression, suffering, and injustice in the hands of Egyptians. This deliverance from the bondage of slavery in Egypt sets up the future understanding of God’s important acts of salvation in the liberation of the whole nation of Israel. The title of God as Saviour is about His work of righteousness and justice: “I will betroth you to me forever, I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion (mercy)” (Hos. 2:19; Ezekiel 34:16; Psalms 25:9; Isaiah 1:27; Jeremiah 9:24). “And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Saviour; there is none but me” (Isaiah 45:21, NIV). My earlier quote from Wright (2006:108-109) signifies specifically the word righteousness (*tsedeqah*) as an expression of salvation (יְשׁוּעָה) in the context of the Isaiah passage in Chapter 4 of this thesis. The set pair of *mishpat* and *tsedeqah* was used in the Old Testament in parallel; they are, in a sense, synonymous and express a general sense of social justice and equity. Justice and salvation are thus closely linked together. The idea of salvation as vindication of the afflicted among the poor and the oppressed runs throughout the passages in the Old Testament dealing with Israel’s justice, legal, and political systems.

Salvation in the New Testament concept is grounded in the Gospel. It is about the Good News of God’s merciful action for the world (Costas, 1982:27). Paul says the Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes (Rom. 1:16). This is a redeeming act of Christ to justify people by faith rather than human works bringing forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God. The key words used by Paul in the Scripture to describe this redeeming act are *soteria* (salvation), *apolutrosis* (redemption), and *katallage* (reconciliation). These are used with verbs in the past tense because salvation, justification, freedom from the wrath of God and judgment, forgiveness of sins, and reconciliation with God have been fulfilled through the expiation wrought by the blood of Christ at the cross (Sider, 1999:89-90). This redeeming act in the past tense is a ‘made righteousness’ by confession and faith, aimed

at meeting the human need for conversion in order to experience the Spirit's transformative grace and reconciliation with God. For Paul, as Sider (1999:90-91) interprets, salvation is primarily expressed in the word *dikaiosyne* (righteousness or justice) to refer to 'forensic justification' (Rom. 4:5-8), genuine sanctification and the corporate dimension of the transformed social relations through vertical and horizontal reconciliation (Eph. 2:11-3:7). The redeeming act at the cross had already reconciled both Jews and Gentiles to God and, as a result, had also made possible horizontal reconciliation among social groups. James shares the same understanding of God's salvation plan; God is not only concerned with saving righteousness but also desires the ethical context of righteousness in a righteous life that humbly accepts the Word planted in one's heart (Jas. 1:20-21). Righteousness or justice is no less than faith in action in the world.

The meaning of salvation in the New Testament often describes the physical healings by Jesus. In other words, the word for 'healing' does not primarily denote physical healing, but a holistic effect of spiritual, mental, emotional and physical healing with an implied divine intervention (Porter, 2003:220). Thus Jesus' redemptive blessings are not exclusively for the spiritual and religious needs of believers. God is concerned not only with the souls of believers but with the salvation of the whole person (body and soul) of believers and non-believers alike. Jesus repeatedly used the language of salvation and healing together with faith in His healing ministry. He told the bleeding woman and the blind man after they had been healed, "Your faith has healed (saved) you" (Mt. 9:22; Mark 5:34, 10:52; Luke 8:48, 18:42). He used similar language to the only returning Samaritan out of the ten lepers who were healed and cleansed, "Your faith has made you well" (Luke 17:19). Salvation, in Jesus' concept, demonstrates the bond between spiritual and physical aspects in all human realities. The thing to be sought after is first faith in the Kingdom of God and His righteousness that will be followed by the satisfaction of not just spiritual needs but of all human needs, material and non-material (Mt. 6:33). In the sense of Jesus' healing ministry, salvation includes the transformation of broken, physical bodies when the messianic Kingdom breaks into history in the person of Jesus (Sider, 1999:88). Conversion through faith in Christ saves inward souls and also redeems physical bodies (Rom. 8:23).

Salvation thus involves the whole person, both body and soul. Sider (1999:198) maintains that an evangelical body-soul dualism and the rejection of a broader use of

salvation language is unbiblical. It is this God, the Creator and Redeemer, who created humans as body-soul unities made for community and then resolved to redeem them from the evil that personal and social sin brought into His good work and plan (Sider *et al.*, 2002:51-52). A narrow definition of salvation to service solely the personal transformation without the conviction of social dimensions is inadequate and commits the sin of omission. That is the reason why Sider (1999:198) says that Christians who tolerate the tragedy of those dying of hunger but rejoice in the Lord and the confidence of eternal life are guilty of damnable sin.

Salvation is also both vertical and horizontal. The salvation that every Christian enjoys personally, in their reconciliation to God and the Kingdom of God that Christ inaugurated to extend the reign of God in the world, has a 'spill-over' effect when Christians change their hearts as well as the larger society in the name of Christ as obedient witnesses to His Kingdom values (Sider, 1999:199). God has certainly channelled His blessing through Christians to correct social evils that dehumanize the poor and oppressed and to recover their dignity and sense of self-worth. The story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19 is a typical illustration in the Bible. Zacchaeus, the oppressive tax collector, turned in personal repentance and genuine sorrow for sins against God and his neighbour, to correct his social sin and forsake his unjust oppression. Sider concludes,

If we understand and practice genuinely biblical repentance, then we establish an important, inseparable link between conversion and Christian social responsibility. Biblical repentance includes turning from all sin including [personal and] social sins (Sider, 1999:104).

Paul's use of the future tense with salvation signifies, after a down payment of the redemption of our soul as well as our body (Rom. 8:23), the completion of human history and the whole creation at Christ's return (Sider, 1999:91). The redemption is far more than just the whole person. It includes the whole creation that will be liberated from bondage to decay and brought into glorious freedom (Rom. 8:21). The scope of salvation reaches beyond persons to 'all things in earth and heaven' (Col. 1:16; Eph. 1:10). The claim of Paul in these verses is that all visible and invisible things including the evil social structures on earth will be restored and all fallen spiritual forces behind them will be brought under the supremacy of Christ when He returns. In Paul's theology salvation is a personal experience but it also has cosmic implications. Although a nation or society cannot accept Christ as its Saviour and experience new birth, Paul tells us that

God is concerned for His whole creation and will restore and transform both individuals and social structures on earth to the ultimate destiny of wholeness under Christ.

Sider, Olson and Unruh (2002:52) assure us that “God has ‘a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth’ (Eph. 1:10). We anticipate Christ’s final, complete redemption by taking care of the ‘things on earth’ that are under His reign.” Paul’s theology of salvation is by no means universalistic. He certainly did not believe or presuppose that everyone was already reconciled to God because of Christ’s work done on the cross. He referred to “God our Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4) but Jesus is the only hope to the Father (Eph. 2:12-13). Only those who come to the knowledge of the truth and accept Jesus as their Saviour will be delivered to the Father in entirety and eternity. Therefore, poverty, oppression, and earthly powerlessness do not make these persons paradigmatic citizens of God; rather, their unencumbered reception of God’s forgiveness and grace sets them apart from the bondage of sins as God’s people in His Kingdom. Poor and oppressed persons also sinfully disobey God in the same ways that all sinners do and they therefore need to enter into a living personal relationship with Jesus Christ in order to receive saving grace. By the same token, Matthew 25:31-46 reveals the conclusion that those who do not feed the hungry and thirsty and clothe the naked “will go away to eternal punishment.” These texts should not be read as a negative teaching of works-righteousness. Sider, Olson and Unruh expound well about the relationship between good deeds in social action and the Gospel values of the Kingdom of God:

No amount of good deeds in noble social action can earn divine forgiveness. The only way to enter Jesus’ Kingdom is by accepting it as a gift (Luke 12:32). But Kingdom people embrace Kingdom values ... we must ‘work out’ our salvation through lifelong discipleship that pursues purity and justice (Phil. 2:12). The God who made us for community insists that a right relationship with God is inseparable from right relationships with our neighbours (Sider *et al.*, 2002:54).

It is, therefore, prudent and biblical to find salvation language in three dimensions (personal, social, and cosmic) and to attribute this to the grace of Christ, the universal Lord, for the experience of reconciliation with God and neighbours and all its divine consequences.

The Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God is a richly suggestive concept as we have discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis. It is ultimately about God's total rule, power, and presence reasserted in the totality of human conditions in a fallen world. It manifests the Good News of God's victory over sin through Jesus' death on the cross on behalf of a needy humanity. Jesus brought the Kingdom with Him when He announced 'the Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the Good News' (Mark 1:15). The Kingdom of God is central to all Jesus' messages of the Gospel. To spread the Gospel of the Kingdom of God is more than simply to preach grace in words in order to convert and reconcile people to God and bring them under His rule in obedience. It is also to do the deeds of service for total healing in spiritual, physical, and relational aspects, and for individuals, families, and societies. The presence of the Kingdom of God is the means of renewing the entire world and all the dimensions of life and relationships (Arias, 1984:xv). Stott (1996:186) affirms that God's rule takes the form of both total Kingdom blessings (salvation) and total Kingdom demands (obedience and service).

The church is the community in which God's kingly rule is manifested, which also witnesses His total Kingdom blessings and demands as the first fruits of the redeemed humanity (Jas. 1:18). What God has formed in the church and what He will do in the ultimate expression of the Kingdom shows the transforming power that comes through Christ in the believers' body and soul as well as the structures in the society. The church has a significant, leading role as witnesses of His way and presence in the world as a prototype of the Kingdom. Being the first fruits of the salvation of the Kingdom means a total transformation of values, actions, and relationships. This is the significance of the church, the community of believers, for the world, as it brings into effect the spiritual, ethical, and social implications of the Kingdom.

Why is social action indeed an integral part of the overall mission of the church? Faithfulness to the Gospel entails a total acceptance of all dimensions of the Kingdom of God now and in the future. For an individual, this clearly means that he or she has the chance to confess, to repent, to be renewed, to be born again, to be baptised, to be initiated into the church, and to practise obediently the overall mission of the church. Entering into the Kingdom has its own inimitable grammar and content for the individual who is humble like a little child and is born again. However, the coming of the Kingdom also has its own unique blessings and challenges for society as a whole.

Anyone who takes the Kingdom of God obediently and faithfully must also grapple with what it means for the social and political issues of the day. The dynamic of the Kingdom will not only drive the church to get ahead with such actions as proclamation and initial catechesis, it will also drive all believers to welcome God's merciful justice to roll across all of creation, society, and human history.

If we are sure that the Kingdom of God is indeed here and now, there must be the effort to increase the participation and effectiveness of the evangelical Church's response to social justice in the world today. For significant and lasting change, the solution must address the root problems of our social and systemic structures, it must have a long term working plan and goal, it must always be a face that demonstrates Kingdom values in front of the fallen nature of humanity, not just work towards church growth or simply lip service.

The priority of evangelism must be pervasively shaped by the Kingdom goals and values of the Gospel that are at the centre of what Christians mean by justice. Lebacqz explicates what Niebuhr meant by justice:

Justice is for Niebuhr a multifaceted term having something of the character of paradox. He speaks of the 'spirit of justice,' of 'rules' and 'structures' of justice, of calculating rights, and, most often, of balancing forces or competing interests. He declares that 'justice that is only justice is less than justice' (Lebacqz, 1986:85)

The goal of the church is to seek first His Kingdom and justice. But it would be difficult to envision that happening if the church has only a narrow understanding of social justice which is defined without its essential reference to our evangelistic mandates and services for the Kingdom. Separating social justice from evangelism definitely perpetuates a profound reductionism of what the church means by such justice.

The eschatological dimension of our Christian faith is the fact that the Kingdom of God has already broken into human world history through Jesus' saving work and will continue to battle with evil until Christ returns to complete the victory over sin in the total cosmic order. In the meantime, God's action in the world is sustaining order rather than correcting oppression and injustice, until the second coming of Christ. The church, if relevant to the Kingdom of God, cannot neglect its responsibility to become allies of God in the whole activity of divine providence, guiding humans to their eternal end and demanding the vanguard of social advocacy and transformation in a total Kingdom of

God. This near future of the church is always a foretaste of the distant future of the fullness of the Kingdom of God.

The message of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God is no longer something abstract, as though the distant future were seen through a telescope, but the message of the reality of the character of God's reign over all, personal and social, directly and now through the witness of the church. This message witnesses to the universal sovereignty of God's will over all creation. The church must be more than just an evangelistic machine to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom but an instrument of the total package to exemplify it.

For many evangelicals today there remains a dichotomy between evangelism and social justice even years after the Lausanne Covenant. Conn and Bosch cite respectively a statement made by Lindsell:

Nothing could be more disastrous for the church and its witness in the world than for it to give the impression that it is primarily concerned with the needs of the body – economic, social, and political ... The mission of the church is pre-eminently spiritual – that is, its major concern revolves around the nonmaterial aspects of life (Conn, 1982:62; Bosch, 2008:10).

Bosch (2008:10) challenges this statement, declaring that it “is a Gnostic interpretation of the Christian faith ... it denies the corporateness of salvation as well as the incarnational character of the Gospel.” This type of abstraction is still impacting many evangelicals who embrace the one-sided soul-centred evangelism thinking and neglect the secondary earthly dimension of social action. Conn (1982:63) writes that the “soul-centred spirituality has reduced the evangelistic mandate to something less than Matthew 28:18-20, to a spiritual, nonmaterial mission that cannot be ‘primarily concerned with the needs of the body’” and then clarifies evangelism and social action as “not basically two mandates but two stages of God's covenant relationship with man.” Bosch summarizes his theory on evangelism:

Evangelism may be defined as that dimension and activity of the church's mission which seeks to offer every person, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged by the Gospel of explicit faith in Jesus Christ with a view to embracing Him as Saviour, becoming a living member of His community, and being enlisted in His service of reconciliation, peace, and justice on earth (Bosch, 2008:17).

Evangelism should be the answer in the centre of the Kingdom of God to embody the community of salvation, the church, in proclaiming the authentic Good News for the saving of souls as well as for the healing transformation of physically sick human

beings and social structures. Jesus Himself is the meaning and content of the Kingdom. The Kingdom, as such, cannot be reduced to an ethical ideal, and its moral norms cannot be known apart from the life and death of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, evangelism is not a narrow concept of the Gospel; it is not concerned for only certain types of persons or things. It is a call to confess the saving lordship of Christ and to embrace the whole Gospel package. The truth of a faithful Gospel is the acting out by word and deed of all dimensions of the Kingdom, manifesting also God's own faithfulness to Himself, to people, and to all things on earth. Conn says it well:

It is no more two mandates than it is two ways of salvation. It is simply a call to grace, God's response to man's sin that man may fulfil God's call to culture building. God-centred spirituality calls people neither to be hermits nor political lobbyists, but messengers of the Lord's Word both in the church and in the world (Conn, 1982:65).

Jesus Christ on the cross has already united evangelism with His work of renewing and restoring human society. He inaugurated the coming of the Kingdom of God to bring His messianic work of Kingdom healing and evangelism on earth. Evangelism is no longer a two-mandate mission but a two-phase process of salvation through preaching grace and doing justice. Sider (1975:265; 1999:175) summarizes the relationship of evangelism and social action: "I have argued both that evangelism and social action are distinct and also that they are inseparable and interrelated in life" and "Evangelism both results in and aims at social action." Both of these share the one goal of the Gospel in a holistic mission. Therefore, the church should not merely reduce the holistic mission to the preaching of the Gospel for the saving of souls and leave the body suffering and the evil society intact until the consummation. It is the duty of the church to commence its word and deed of the holistic Gospel now. In other words, the beginning of the end has arrived. The church should look to the Kingdom of God for more than an abstract ideal only happening in the future, but for a concrete and realistic portrayal of the just society here and now. Stanczak (2006:174) adds that "while there is a synergy between spirituality and social action, it must be enacted through practice, through others, through institutions, through social structures, and through direct action to produce change." This does not suggest that the Kingdom is to be established by human efforts but by a service of duty rendered under the reign of God alone. Conn (1982:67) addresses what the church today should be in relation to the hope of the coming Kingdom: "the church is the preview of coming attractions when God will finally and perfectly restore all things to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness or justice" (2 Peter 3:13). The next section will discuss God's promise of the

eschatological fulfilment for the coming Kingdom in its fullness when Jesus Christ returns.

8.3 THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROPHETIC HOPE FOR THE FULLNESS OF THE KINGDOM

8.3.1 A Mission of Incarnation: The Witness of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment

The church is confronted with two foundational pillars of the Christian mission: the Great Commission (Mt. 28:16-20) and the Great(est) Commandment(s) (Mt. 22:37-40). Jesus Christ gave Himself to enter our fallen race, became a sacrifice to pay for our sins, rose in conquering power for the liberation of sinful human beings so that they could live once again as full and restored human beings in reconciled relationships with God and among themselves. The purpose of His earthly ministry was to produce disciples who would give themselves to do the same and follow suit as He did. The incarnate Christ twice reminded His disciples that they were sent into and sanctified for the world: “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified” (John 17:18-19, NIV) and “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20-21, NIV). The church, founded by Jesus Christ, is the missional organism designed by God and indwelt by His Spirit to glorify Him and His Gospel of salvation and showcase His redemptive goodness for human beings. For as Jesus Christ incarnated God’s nature, character, plan, and mission as a model for the church on earth (John 1:18), the church must incarnate Jesus Christ’s life and ministry in all its breadth and depth in its commitment to and fulfilment of both the Great Commandment and the Great Commission directed toward a practical missional ecclesiology until the end of the world.

Jesus’ earthly ministry was a model of an encompassing mission for the church, showing how to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and heal both the vertical and horizontal relationships between God and among humanity. Sider (1975:266) finds that some churches use the words the ‘Great Commission’ to connote evangelism and the ‘Great Commandment’ to connote social concern. These churches appear to adopt a reductionist approach in obeying the Great Commission. I discussed earlier in this

chapter a view that reduces the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to a message that focuses primarily on personal salvation. Those who hold this view see Jesus' call as directed solely to vertical spiritual transformation and they neglect the horizontal social transformation. Individual conversion alone does not automatically translate into empowering the person as part of a community of faith to influence transformation, bringing about just societies and building communities of faith, love, and service for the poor and marginalized. When vital consideration of loving relationships in a just society is dispensed with for the expediency of numerical growth, the church will not become a faithful community of faith, love, and service as God intended it to be. Such a church is not capable of making a difference in the society as an embodied and empowered instrument to influence the transformation of society into a Kingdom of righteousness, mercy, and justice.

The Great Commission and the Great Commandment are Jesus' calls for His disciples to advance God's purposes through God-centred and people-centred living in the church and the world. Of course, God's major purpose for Christ's coming into the world was unique and cannot be in any sense comparable with the mission of the church. Christ is the Saviour of the world to atone for human sin and to bring eternal life (1 John 4:9, 10, 14; Luke 19:10). Christ's earthly ministry was more than the sacrifice of His life for many for a vertical relationship. He also served in word, to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom and its character, as well as in deed, to feed hungry mouths and heal the sick and restore the dead for a horizontal or social relationship. He demonstrated a total package, a perfect visible model of service to His disciples, and now sends His church into the world to be a servant of His redemptive goodness for human beings. The church is thus not asked to be the saviour but a humble servant that offers service in a wide variety of forms according to the spiritual and physical needs of the lost (Stott, 1975:23-24). The world desperately needs to experience the reality of an embodied Christianity - of words made flesh - an embodiment of the Kingdom of God that acts in faith, love and service. The benchmark of the church is to be Christ's humble servant sent into the world to fulfil God's purpose in making disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them to live as His redeemed disciples (the Great Commission) and also showcasing God's loving-kindness and building a Kingdom full of compassion toward neighbours (the Great Commandment).

The heart of the Great Commandment is the God-centred instruction on love. God is love. His mission is grounded in love, developed in love, carried out in love, and fulfilled in love. It is in this mission of God's love that He created the heavens and the earth, including human beings, and Jesus carried out His earthly ministry of God's reign and finally died on the cross for the purpose of redemption and victory over evil. This great and foremost command specifies the human response to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind" (Luke 10:27) not only as a sum total of the Law but in all genuine spirituality and relationship with God. It is a demand for love of God and for submission to His Lordship in every capacity and faculty of our whole person. This is the foundation and essence of what Christ's followers must do to have a life of worship, submission to God's will, and Kingdom living in the world below. A life of worship, submission, and faith in God explains the theocentric, vertical relationship with the God of heaven. On this basis, Christians must embrace God's will and advance His Kingdom on earth as it is done in heaven. This aspect of the Lord's Prayer extends the forgiveness that Christians receive from God to those who have sinned against them; this is an example of treating others as we would like to be treated (Mt. 7:12). The second part of the Great Commandment - loving others - is formed on the basis of a life of worship, submission, and faith in God and is, therefore, inseparable from the first. This second part of the Great Commandment is virtually the same love as commanded in the Great Commission toward nonbelievers.

The Great Commission reflects the horizontal mandate to love those who do not know Christ by helping them begin and thrive in a relationship with God. However, Stott (1975:29) thinks that if we consider the Great Commission to love nonbelievers as identical to the Great Commandment in merely an evangelistic sense it is not the complete responsibility that Jesus instructed. He further explicates that if we truly love our neighbour, "we shall without doubt share with him the Good News of Jesus," but "we shall not stop with evangelism," "we must inevitably be concerned for his total welfare, the good of his soul, his body and his community" (Stott, 1975:29-30). The command to 'make disciples' is not only to 'baptize' converts but to 'go' to the world, all the nations, the ends of the earth, deep into the cultures of humanity as an incarnational mission, and to 'teach' by helping the new converts to understand and commit themselves into the full context of Kingdom living. A theocentric and vertical relationship with the God of the heavenly Kingdom should result in a horizontal

commitment to love others as ourselves on earth. While loving God is our first and foremost calling, our responsibility to love others is not just a 'spill over' but a ratification of the compliance of the first. Those who have accepted their place under the reign of God and experienced His loving kindness should now restrain their proclivity for self-centred loving in exchange for a God-like love toward others. Concerning the needs of our neighbours in God's love, Jesus enlarges the scope of nationality provided in the law with His parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:27-37). To love your neighbour in the Great Commandment shares the same dimension of the Great Commission to evangelize others including your neighbour and nonbelievers.

Jesus calls His disciples to follow Him in the incarnational ministry by devoting their lives to helping others know and follow Him as well as by demonstrating what Jesus commands without any reduction. The church, like its Head and Saviour, must dive into human culture, loving, sacrificing and risking whatever is necessary to bridge relational, cultural, and logistical barriers to become Christ in the world, while not becoming of the world. Jesus is the perfect model of the profound balance of the spiritual and physical spheres, the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. God's mission in the world covers everything He does in bringing salvation, sanctification, providence and common grace, and the future promise as well as judgment at the end. The uniqueness of the Gospel lies in the church as a community of faith that models God's total love in spiritual and physical salvation in the world. Therefore, the church needs to be very clear about its core vision of the Great Commission in individual conversion and also of its basis of making disciples of all nations grounded and subject to the Great Commandment to love God and one another. A genuine biblical approach in witnessing Jesus' double 'great' instructions will empower a community of faith which exemplifies His total message of the Kingdom of God in charity and acceptance. This is Jesus' community that reaches out to others, regardless of creeds, colour, status, or class, mends the brokenness of human life on earth, and reconciles the estranged relationships with God and among humanity. Ultimately, the church is called to glorify and manifest God's love in word and deed through living out the model of Jesus' life and earthly ministry as a faithful community. This is a community that is meant to share God's love through transforming individual lives from their sinful and corrupt nature as well as through changing the culture of greed, corruption, economic classism and racism historically, proactively, and incarnationally. Acceptance of the broad concept of

mission in the Great Commission and the Great Commandment is of vital importance for Christian services as instructed and modelled by our Lord Jesus. Stott summarizes:

If we can accept this broader concept of mission as Christian service in the world comprising both evangelism and social action – a concept which is laid upon us by the model of our Saviour’s mission in the world – then Christians could under God make a far greater impact on society, an impact commensurate with our numerical strength and with the radical demands of the commission of Christ (Stott, 1975:34).

8.3.2 Engaging God’s Righteousness for a Just Future in Anticipation of the Consummation

As Moltmann (1967:16) announces, “Christianity is eschatological, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present.” The God in whom Christians believe is a God of hope. Christians believe, as Hebblethwaite (2010:199) interprets, that “God’s power and love are already revealed and effective in the creation of the world and in the redemption of humanity, so that it is present experience of both creatureliness and salvation that forms the existential basis on which a Christian eschatology may be constructed.” The Christian hope, about what we expect of life for ourselves and others, fuses with God’s promises for a new creation of all things at the end. It is God’s plan in Christ that His people should live in hope, affirming that the future has power over every historical time. The essence of Christian faith in hope is the conviction that God’s creation is moving towards an eternal consummation wrought by the omnipotent Creator and loving Redeemer. This is to speak of God’s creation as the Spirit-led formation of the condition in which personal beings can evolve and emerge into the sphere of rationality, spirit, and love to a further stage in a state destined for eternity and for the consummation of a communion of persons in relation to God and indwelt by God beyond all death, mortal perishing, loss, and suffering of injustice and oppression (Hebblethwaite, 2010:202).

In his research, Hebblethwaite attempts to answer questions on the facts of evil and suffering due to injustice and oppression in the world in the midst of God’s promise of a perfect consummation of an eternal destiny for humanity and cosmic creation (Hebblethwaite, 2010:199, 203). Hebblethwaite (2010:199) answers these questions simply with the consideration of theodicy. The term theodicy involves attempts to show why, given the world’s evil and suffering, God may still be seen as good, just, loving and asserting His providence to justify the ways of Himself to humans. Creation’s veil of materiality and finitude and the evil entering the world as a result of humanity’s

fallenness have set creatures at a distance from the Creator. The vulnerability of human beings can then be “drawn into relation with their Maker and perhaps immortalized” (Hebblethwaite, 1976:78). The providence provided is God’s action in this world here and now – “drawing the threads of human history and individual life into providential pattern” (Hebblethwaite, 1976:98). Hebblethwaite (2010:199) goes on to assert the Christian hope that “if we can see the point of a creative process that entails so much suffering on the way we can remain convinced of God’s power and love, and thus go on to accept the argument from divine love to immortality.” Moltmann (1967:22-23) writes that humans become hopeless because of the sin of unbelief and the seeds of sweet decay of pride in spite of the prospect of a life that is wide and free in new creation and in righteousness and peace given by God. To ignore the promise of a living hope is a great sin which, in disobedience to the promise in times of oppressions and in the titanic desire to be as God, threatens the ability even of the hopeful to become what God requires of the people of God. Therefore, Moltmann (1976:23) admonishes believers not to omit what is required of them: “God honours [man] with His promises, but man does not believe himself capable of what is required of him. That is the sin [of omission] which most profoundly threatens the believer. It is not the evil he does, but the good he does not do, not his misdeeds but his omissions, that accuse him.” The root cause of evil and suffering is sin that manifests in unbelief, pride, and refusal to take God’s promises seriously.

While faith, to believers, recognizes in the Christ event the dawning of the future of openness and redemptive freedom, hope thereby kindled looks to the ultimate future, towards a perfect, just, and loving consummation of the history of the world in the end, but a future which is also open to the poor and the unloved, and so begins the healing and transforming work of making a more just and humane world in the present (Hebblethwaite, 2010:199-202). Hebblethwaite differentiates eschatology into two futures – historical future and ultimate future. Ross (2007:82) suggests that Christian eschatological hope in the future should motivate efforts towards a just future in the world. The eschatological framework should infuse the required motivation to deal with and defeat poverty, for example. If believers only commit to evangelism for the ultimate future and leave the communities desperately poor, the new converts may gain only hope for the ultimate future, but no hope for today, the historical future. Eschatology is a Christian hope that motivates believers to encounter the reality of life issues and conditions here and now, not only in the ultimate future of consummation. The promises

of the universal future, both historical and ultimate, for all humanity and creation, are grounded in the passionate suffering and passionate longing kindled by the Creator and the Redeemer. Moltmann (1967:16) explicates a broader sense of eschatology, that “eschatology cannot really be only a part of Christian doctrine. Rather, the eschatological outlook is characteristic of all Christian proclamation, of every Christian existence and of the whole church.” Eschatology is the hope of a future given by God to the whole world and should not be its end, but the beginning of the future.

The promised hope does not result from experience of the existing reality which is at present encountered in this fallen and sinful world. Eschatological hope is in contradiction to the existing experience; it constitutes the condition for the future of a completely transformed new experience that is coming to reality. This condition is hardly human effort to develop the future prospect of guaranteed ineffable blessings of righteousness and abundance of life as opposed to sin, suffering, and death, but a divine revelation of the resurrection hope founded on Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection and illumined by the power of the Word and the Spirit of God. Since the Word became flesh in a perishable mode of existence in a perishable physical world to die for the death of all humanity, but rose into an imperishable mode of existence in an imperishable nonmaterial environment as the beginning of the new creation, the raised body of Christ therefore acts as an embodied promise for the perishable world now into the future imperishable consummation.

Although God is ‘yet’ to come in full glory, He has ‘already’ come both in the economy of the incarnate Son and the Spirit poured out upon the church at Pentecost (Hart, 1999:64-65). Christian experience of the Spirit of the resurrection is a paradigmatic anticipation of the future coming Kingdom of God in this world now and its power over every historical time. There is a sense in which the realm of the Kingdom of God is in the present, an operative but invisible realm working in the community that Jesus forms, as the power and presence of God among those who respond to Jesus as Lord. The invisible presence of God’s reign in the reformed community then pulls the future into the present, enabling the community to follow the model of the preaching and healing ministry set by the incarnate Jesus Christ. The church as the eschatological community is justified by the nature of Jesus’ ministry and of the post-resurrection experience of salvation; also its self-understanding can be enriched by a renewed sense of its eschatological reality (Mostert, 2011:26). It is, therefore, not limited to hoping for the

power of the future Kingdom, but is actually able to experience its power in the present life of individuals; not in its fullness, to be sure, but genuinely none the less (Hart, 1999:64-65). The church, in its relation to the reign of God and the eschatological self-understanding, can be seen as, at least, a partial fulfilment of the destiny of humankind as a whole in the Kingdom of God. Thus, the church is not only a community that thinks about eschatology and anticipates the coming of the Kingdom, but already is itself an eschatological community, though not itself the Kingdom.

Pannenberg (1975:78) writes that “the doctrine of the church begins not with the church but with the Kingdom of God.” The church is not the Kingdom, but the Kingdom’s preliminary and anticipatory sign of the eschatological future, of the coming consummation, and of salvation for all humanity. As the eschatological community, the church, as Mostert spells out, must extend the future hope beyond its four walls into the public square of the world:

A church that knows itself as the eschatological community will avoid being ecclesiocentric. It will understand that the reign of God is the world’s future, not only the church’s. It will therefore find ways to contribute to public life and debate. It will remember the promised peace, justice and reconciliation of the Kingdom of God and find there its constant points of reference (Mostert, 2011:37).

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God is the eschatological Gospel, which imputes, as Paul understood in Romans 1:17, the divine righteousness that must be hoped for (Gal. 5:5) as now already present and as savingly at work in the wrath of God that is now being revealed (Moltmann, 1967:205). In anticipating the coming Kingdom and the divine righteousness that Christians hope for, the church and all believers have to be open, because of the conferred universal priesthood, to the world and neighbours in the service of God, in the work of His Kingdom and the freedom of faith (Kim, 2005:348). This divine righteousness, grounded in the dying and living of Jesus Christ, already happens here through the works of believers led by the power of God to liberate the poor and oppressed and to provide remedies for the unjust and un-reconciled. Moltmann (1967:206) emphasizes that “the divine righteousness which is here revealed finds its measure not in the sin it forgives, but in that new life in the glory of the risen and exalted Christ which it promises and to which it points.” The divine righteousness is not merely a manifested gift but a power of God at work in the life of believers as a means to serve faithfully the promise of the consummation in all things now before the *parousia* of Christ. Kim (2005:132) asserts that “anticipation is a public act; it is not waiting in the secret of one’s person.” When the church as a whole is committed to the

coming Kingdom that it is hoping for in anticipation, the church must be ready to represent openly something universal: God's Kingdom and righteousness, as a provisional reality in serving the coming Kingdom of God in the world. The church is not to replace the Kingdom of God on earth, but, on the contrary, is superseded by the Kingdom. The mission of the church is thus to find fulfilment in the Kingdom in the tasks of divine righteousness by spreading the Gospel of salvation and the liberation of humanity into justice, peace, and freedom.

The coming Kingdom of God cannot be idly hoped for; the church must not wait in passivity until the final end in the ultimate future. The manifested gift of the reign of God and His power is already at work now in the world. This hope of the coming Kingdom and the divine righteousness, therefore, has set its stamp on life's reality, in experience and action, as well as in earthly suffering in the history of the world.

Moltmann thus elaborates what the mission of the church should include:

Hence mission means not merely propagation of faith and hope, but also historic transformation of life. The life of the body, including also social and public life, is expected as a sacrifice in day-to-day obedience (Rom. 12:1). Not to be conformed to this world does not mean merely to be transformed in oneself, but to transform in opposition and creative expectation the face of the world in the midst of which one believes, hopes and loves. The hope of the Gospel has a polemic and liberating relation not only to the religions and ideologies of men, but still more to the factual, practical life of men and to the relationships in which this life is lived (Moltmann, 1967:330).

The church's life is motivated and determined by hope, anticipation, self-giving, and representation. Hope or anticipation is not merely an abstract idea but leads to concrete experiences as the foretaste of the coming Kingdom. Christianity in faith, hope and love is not a private religion, but a public affair of self-giving. Kim (2005:351) advises that 'the church and Christians need to criticize the world and its political systems and get involved in promoting a better world with a view to the Kingdom.' Christian theology of hope, through the church in its practical mission, brings the eschatological future to bear on the immediate temporal future of society and turns the world towards the divine righteousness and the coming Kingdom.

The church must have a vision of hope for this world and must share it with contemporaries in word and deed. The church does not have the right to speak for all humans, Christians and non-Christians. However, Moltmann (1989:5) remarks: "But all men and women in this society have the right to hear what Christians have to say as Christians, i.e. on the basis of their particular belief and their all-embracing hope." This

hope must be translated into the work of the action of God who creates justice and makes peace through the church with a commitment to better justice and peace in the society which is full of conflicts and corrupt structures. With regards to the reality of our world, there is no better time than now for the church to stand up immediately to advocate for the poor and marginalized and to serve all humankind during the prevailing economic meltdown and financial crisis. The global economic crisis since 2008 is deepening and there is no hope of recovery anytime soon. The social impact of this crisis has dragged more people out of employment and into poverty and the situation has further deteriorated for people already in despair. Even before the crisis of 2008, the global economic structure was distorted with a concentration of wealth on the rich and widespread hunger and poverty. Such inequalities of the world economic system are endangering the stability and social peace of our society. With these outstanding issues of inequality plus the collapse of the current crisis, the full impact has not yet been seen, but the long-term structural, cultural and spiritual effects for groups at risk and the fragmentation in our societies could be exacerbated. The crisis is not only a consequence of wrong decisions and the flaws within the economic and social systems, but also about the moral legitimacy of the unfair systemic structures and their embedded values, or the so-called social sin.

The God of justice cares about those victims who became poor and marginalized because of the unjust systems of society. They are facing multiple forms of discrimination, that is, racism, sexism, and classism, with limited opportunities and options in getting jobs, education, housing, and health services, and they remain in chronic poverty with no hope for tomorrow and the future. The struggle for justice to end extreme poverty must be approached with both urgency and resilience. Efforts based on secular theorists' campaigns are vulnerable to disillusionment and insufficient to sustain an eventual recovery of the current systemic crisis and a promised new future of the just structure in the society. Christian eschatology in faith, hope, and love can bring inspired vision guided by the Holy Spirit and motivate solidarity in the church by following faithfully the commands and reign of the Lord Jesus to combat the ravages of poverty and the root problem of the economic and social systems.

The church in the era of the Holy Spirit today continues to be the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ sent into the world to serve the Kingdom of God. Christians presently live under the sovereignty of the risen Lord and in hope of His second coming to bring

righteousness and the Kingdom of God into the present world. Jesus commands the church and Christians to seek redemption not only for themselves but also for the whole world. Jesus' purpose of redemption for humanity and the world is in two parts – the historical future for physical salvation and the ultimate future for spiritual or eternal salvation. The church is living between times, this time (historical future) and eternity (ultimate future). The mission of the church is to show mercy in this temporal scene and to live the ultimate future eternal life of the Kingdom of God in the present. The total message of the Kingdom of God is, as Ross (2007:93) points to the Christian understanding, the ultimate and the penultimate bearing closely upon one another. Ross continues:

We cannot meaningfully engage with the ultimate realities without interpreting the meaning of Christian discipleship in terms of the particular challenges which face our generation ... In this way, Christians can bring a passionate urgency to the great moral challenge presented by extreme poverty while also having the staying power generated by the large eschatology which frames their faith (Ross, 2007:93-94).

The ultimate future of eschatological hope is the perfect consummation of the age and the final entry into the Kingdom of God. The prelude to that perfect Kingdom is in this world, an imperfect historical future but a real dominion of God who continues over long ages before the final separation of good and evil is achieved. Ladd (1974:149) summarizes the relation of the present and future Kingdom: "The presence of the Kingdom of God was seen as God's dynamic reign invading the present age without transforming it into the age to come." The Kingdom of God is truly spiritual and demands inward loyalty, but it is also realized imperfectly, in this world; it is realized as a visible organized society that includes both just and unjust. However, the reign of God in this world is a real kingdom which is separated from the eternal Kingdom by 'the end' or 'the consummation' of the world. The thoroughgoing removal of all injustice and imperfection of the world can only be fulfilled through the returning Son of Man in the final world order. On the other hand, the imperfection of this world is not the reason that prevents the church from doing justice to correct evil and from preaching grace to justify souls; instead, it should be the motivation for the church to take the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven seriously by organically growing and producing fruits within and among humanity toward the future glory of the Kingdom. Doing justice and preaching grace are inseparable missions for the transformation of the unjust and corrupt structures of the fallen world, on one hand, and the conversion of regenerated souls in preparation for the entry into the glory of the New Earth and New Heaven on the other. I reiterate that there is no assurance that a happier, a wiser, and a more just

world will be brought to this world before the consummation of history. The church is not at liberty to opt out of either evangelism or social involvement, but it must follow the teaching and command of the Lord to do both loyally as long as it is able to liberate the poor and marginalized from injustice and oppression in this world and secure redemptive grace for eternal salvation. The duration of the earthly kingdom is not precisely indicated, so the church must pick up its pace to preach the total message of the Gospel of the Kingdom to all nations and wait for the consummation. Once again, the assured hope of humanity must rest on the glorified state of the divine community in heaven, but a millennial state of an earthly kingdom – a state in which humans predominantly do God’s sovereign will and love their neighbours as themselves – is a possibility (Bevan, 1938:71).

Concluding Summary

The concept of the Kingdom of God is coherently the total message of the Bible manifesting the totality of God’s saving plan in human reality in all dimensions. The evangelical church should not reduce the Christian faith to a mere abstract belief but rediscover and serve God’s ‘total Kingdom’ as the prophetic agent of His love and justice in proclaiming this total message as well as in making an impact in society in words and deeds. Faith without deeds is dead. It does not end at new birth, which is the entry into the Kingdom, and it is not the be-all and end-all of Christian life and responsibility (Stott, 1970:145). Christian belief is a way of life that aims to bring God’s will into human history through words and deeds. The church must model the character of the Kingdom of God on earth. As the living God of the heavenly Kingdom is not only the Saviour, Redeemer, and Father of His people, but is also the Lord, Creator, and King of all mankind, the will of God is to have His church proclaiming and witnessing the divine scheme of salvation for the universal welfare and betterment of humanity and creation as a whole. The church must also demonstrate that His dawning Kingdom is to transform vertical soul-saving relationships as well as horizontal socioeconomic relationships wherever people accept Him. The nature of the relationship between evangelism and social justice was subject to considerable debate amongst evangelical churches throughout the second half of the last century. While there remains a dichotomy between evangelism and social justice even after years of extensive discussions held at various Lausanne Congress meetings, an acknowledgement was finally made that evangelism has the primacy but is a partner of and no longer separate from or mutually exclusive mandate of social justice. The mission is no more two

mandates than it is two ways of salvation (Conn, 1982:65). The balanced goal of a holistic transformation of humanity means that it is the responsibility of the church to encompass and integrate both evangelism and social justice mandates. The church, as the embodiment of the Kingdom of God that acts in faith and love, is therefore called to witness to the reality of the justice of God in Christ and to work to bring about the ultimate future of eschatological hope, the perfect consummation of the age.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

The mission of the church on earth finds its source in the love of God who calls the church to be His blessing to all nations to witness His justice and mercy (Gen. 12:3; Mt. 28:18-20). The blessing is to be received by all nations, particularly including unbelievers, as a result of the divine favour through the activity of believers in the church. Such blessing can be explained by the working of special saving grace (as a means of redemption, having sins forgiven and assurance of an eternal future) as well as by the deliverance of common grace (as a demonstration of God's justice and compassion in all dimensions of the Kingdom God in the lives and history of humanity on earth, with an eschatological hope of the consummation). This blessing is the Good News of the Kingdom of God for all nations and is the bottom line, textually and theologically, of God's promise to Abraham in the Old Testament and his descendants in the church today, subject to God's demand of obedience in faith and response in action from the church, in order to bring all dimensions of the promise to reality (Wright, 2006:194, 206, 212). The blessing of common grace can be described in terms of the provision of an area for the operation of special saving grace. It is not to be seen as the preparation for regeneration, but as the provision of a domain within which the church of regenerate believers can work out in their earthly activity the proclamation of the all-encompassing redemption which they have already anticipated by faith in Christ. Therefore, any operation of the blessing that is the working of the church must be rooted in saving grace, which is the fullness of meaning of the entirety of creation in relation to Christ Jesus, in Whom all things hold together (Col. 1:17).

The goal of Christ's redemption is the renewal of the entire cosmos, not only redeeming humans from sins, but the totality of creation (Rom. 8:19-23). Paul tells us that Christ's redemption is liberation, deliverance, and salvation for the whole creation that is groaning in pain, as well as for the human body and soul. The pains are marked in human lives by the ongoing conflict and struggle between the Kingdom of God and the powers of the darkness of this earthly world, the forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph. 6:12). The powers of darkness and the forces of evil are evidenced in the realities of injustice and oppression happening virtually in every corner of our world today. These evil powers cannot be reduced to a 'structure, individual or party'; they are rather a collective exhibition of both personal and social sins that manifest more in a society

that is devoid of care and compassion, full of sins of omission, indifference and inaction, and in the negation of divine desired 'being' than in the individually culpable sins of pride, concupiscence, and prejudice. Individuals are all inescapably products of our societies, just as our societies are products of ourselves. Humans are ultimately culpable for the structural or social sins that are destructive to society; fallen and corrupt institutions, structures, and systems, likewise, lead to the ruin of human lives in despair and injustice. The three moments of externalization, objectivation, and internalization introduced by O'Keefe (1990:43-44) are the defined processes that explicate the interwoven relationship between personal and social sins. Both dimensions of sin have distinctive natures but cannot be separated in the study, analysis, and practice of social justice.

Philosophers and thinkers of both ancient and modern times have developed various theories of justice in attempts to define, determine, and defend the ultimate good principles of human life that make for justice and equality in the society. Most of these theories of justice that we have analysed in Chapter 3 (*The Republic*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Utilitarianism, Social Contract Theory, and Entitlement Theory) are built upon human ideas, philosophical hypotheses or presuppositions in search of the ultimate end of happiness and the inherent human rights of personal liberty and freedom in order to construct a justice in terms of equality, fairness, and impartiality in the society. The central focus of these theories is the individual human 'self' or 'ego' working toward a personal and ultimate end in relation to outward behaviour with one another. In these ego-centred theories human reason becomes the defining power for determining what the highest good and the greatest human happiness are. However, autonomous human selves are vulnerable to the vice of self-desires and are thus not absolute but finite particulars without a fixed moral order. Human rights and liberties founded upon non-absolute and equivocal human selves become merely relative conditions. Even Aquinas (*ST*, I-II, Q1, A1, 4,6), the defender of a natural law ethics, finds human reason to be a product of an infinitely wise designer, partaking in the work of common good, but he confirms that nothing, not even human reason, but only God, can lead us to the supreme good. This supreme or highest good must receive from God and correspond to God as the foundation of the human end in this world because the sovereign God is the source of justice which is His character and nature in dealing with humanity. In other words, the true ultimate end of human beings happens solely in communion with God, and this is, in effect, the Kingdom of God, where human beings find happiness. Aristotle

expands his thought to confirm that the contemplation of God in human happiness and excellence (virtue) is the only necessary and universal truth of this earthly world (Aristotle, 2002:251, *NE* 1177b25). Therefore, philosophical theories of justice in search of ultimate human happiness or highest good are also not adequate, without the revealed truth of God, to provide an all-encompassing idea of justice that would regulate all personal and social relations on earth.

The truth of God's righteousness or justice is a decisive salvation concept, a free gift of grace to humanity through justification by faith; in turn, believers will become instruments in the service of God's righteousness (Rom. 3:13) through their obedience to God's will in fulfilment of not only the covenant relationship but the double emphasis on activity (ethical and religious). It is important to note that God's demand on humans as His instruments of the perfect righteousness is a grace of salvation rather than human effort alone. The incapability of humans, because of sins, prevents them from attaining the perfect righteousness by doing righteous acts, but demands a total obedience and dependence on God by seeking and practising His Kingdom and righteousness as present as well as future (Mt. 6:33).

Nevertheless, God's concern is for more than the righteousness of eternal spiritual salvation; it is also for righteousness in human ethical contexts. The human righteousness that God accepts as pure and faultless is to look after orphans and widows in their distress (Jas. 1:27). James is concerned with a faith in action in the world in which the sincerity and genuineness of faith must be confirmed by a subsequent life of doing justice. Believers are created and saved to do God's good works of grace on earth as a community and, by extension, to maintain right relationships in the human community as instruments of a covenant relationship with God. Faith is the Christian's mode of present participation in the Kingdom of peace and justice in its proclamation, healing, and reconciliation in order to bring forth justice to the broken world in the name of God. Therefore, doing justice is grounded on the faith and true knowledge of God in order to act righteously and obediently in conformity to God's norm, which is exhibited in biblical teaching as compassion, command, and commission, a way of life doing good and right to our neighbour.

Abraham's blessing to all nations (Gen. 12:3) clearly incorporates a universal dimension covering non-Israelites or non-believers and conveys the fulfilment and promise of both

an earthly justice as well as divine justice (the evangelistic purpose of salvation) through the obedience of Christ. Even if they do not know and acknowledge God as the source of the blessing, they still receive from the living God the common grace and earthly justice simply by living in God's blessed creation. Abraham's blessing can be interpreted as the original commission of God, to be further specified as the Great Commission of Jesus to His disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). God commissions His church to invite the world to see foreshadowed in the Kingdom of God the final destiny of all mankind. Through the work of God's mercy and justice, the church is given its identity as the prototype of the Kingdom of God to display Christ's justice as the divine redemptive plan that will culminate in the restoration and renewal of the communion of all humanity in God. Doing justice is thus not only a matter of channelling God's universal blessing to all nations but also, in complying with the Great Commission to the world, offering Jesus (as part and parcel of the justice of God) in the dimension of evangelism as the continuing agent of salvation.

The conceptions of justice in contemporary philosophical theories are primarily engaged in assaults on individualistic views and in solving issues of human rights and freedom, but have failed to provide a complete picture of the root causes of human moral actions and their impacts. These theories are concerned with impersonal accounts of 'practical' ethics or deconstruction brought about by social, economic, and political systems and the resultant conditions of society. They also analyse problematic actions by focusing on rules, principles, and step-by-step decision-making procedures for resolving moral quandaries. These purely philosophical theories of justice, based upon humanistic ideas, produce divisive and conflicting principles. Without incorporating character traits or the disposition of actual human beings as agents into ethical studies, this depersonalization results in the application of philosophical ethics that are not adequate to reflect ordinary daily living in a variety of situations. The resurgence of the study of virtue ethics toward the end of the last century has drawn significant interest in more agent-centred issues such as character traits, personal commitments, community traditions, and conditions necessary for human excellence and flourishing, as opposed to the procedural theories of justice that focus on the application of rules, principles, and step-by-step procedures. A return to the focus of virtue ethics is necessary to provide a more in-depth appreciation of who we are (being) rather than what we do (doing).

The determination of 'being', or what kind of just person one might become, normally precedes 'doing', but we have to recognize that 'doing' also shapes 'being' as a total person. Virtue ethics may view an outward act as secondary to the intrinsic nature of virtue, but the outward act is important both as an expression of character and as a means to the development of a holistic human life. Human virtues are 'operative' habits that powerfully determine the end and the perfection of a life (Aquinas, *ST*, I-II, 55, 1). This perfection or highest good is an ideal of the moral world of virtue ethics, which seeks to bring about happiness as a human end. Nevertheless, the internal psyche alone is not sufficient to achieve or act out this perfect and ultimate human good because, of all human possessions, happiness is god-given (Aristotle, 2002:103, *NE*, 1099b10). In Christian virtue ethics, the God-centred initiative takes the form of Jesus' invitation to humans to become His disciples, children of God, and heirs of His Kingdom. It is solely God's grace that directs Christians toward the habitual patterns of the Christian life. Without God's grace, human acts of freedom and accountability would remain bound by the darkness of the self. Therefore, Christian virtue is not what humans achieve but what God enables. It is ontologically rooted in the grace of God through the atonement of Jesus Christ, envisioning the final human end of the highest good. Faith is thus a paramount virtue in response to the mystery of God's grace.

The life of the Christian rests on God's purposes and begins the task of linking the virtue ethics of faith, hope, and love as instruments for attaining wholeness as a human being, a fuller realization of human excellence in the Kingdom of God, and the motivating spirit behind God's acts of salvation in order to draw one's neighbour toward the Eternal. Tillich (1960:115) realizes that God is His own self-existent principle of virtue ethics (love, justice, and power) which Christians receive from God as new beings in Christ in the pursuit of supreme goodness. Christians must not only recognize God's being, the ontological existence of virtue ethics, as 'otherness' but must also encounter Him with an awareness of His presence that is always immanent under a covenant relationship that requires responsibility and faithfulness to the will and action of God. This covenant relationship is initiated by God as absolute in both Testaments and is unlike the social contracts of philosophical theories, which are human-to-human covenants subject to bargaining and laying out the terms of rights and obligations. The church is this religious and covenantal community working towards the development of the full person of virtue and pursuing the final human goal according to God's supreme power and rule relating to the ultimate good for humanity. God Himself

is this ultimate good or end, which is the Kingdom of God. The final human goal in doing God's will, His ultimate good, is to become the promised dwelling place of God (Rev. 21:1-4). Human happiness, goodness, or flourishing is the greatest possible human end in cultivating the virtues and avoiding the vices. Pannenberg (1975:106) argues the inadequacy of human happiness as the end simply because this happiness does not prove the presence of the good when evil persons can also find happiness in their evil acts. Only the Kingdom of God, the presence of the power and rule of God and His Word, can bring the fullness and perfection of happiness; it is no product of human striving but a faithful devotion to the will of God. The goal of a Christian life on earth, and of all human existence, is the ideal of the Divine Kingdom. This is not merely an eschatological hope for the future; it is also that which gives shape to the Christian life and Christian ethics in the present.

The foundation of the Christian church's social responsibility is generally accepted in terms of the doctrine of Creation. The tendency of modern theology is, however, (contrary to the biblical approach) "to see the creation as inferior and material and the new creation, the redemptive creation, as superior and immaterial, to see creation as being squarely set over against the new order that has come in Christ, finally to be realized in the complete establishment of the new creation" (House, 1992:4). When creation (the worldly society) is excluded from or subsumed under redemption, an individualizing faith in the new creation may then be developed through undue attention to individual self-consciousness and preoccupation with a pietistic experience, especially among evangelical Christians. The concentration on conversion and evangelism and overemphasis on individualizing faith have resulted in withdrawal from social involvement, and has obscured the relationship between humanity and creation. The result of this disengagement from the worldly creation is effectively to maintain the *status quo* of the society, leaving it to be dealt with only by supernatural or miraculous intervention at the end of history. Nevertheless, the orders of both creation and redemption are held together and function together within the purpose of God, who is the same Lord who stands over creation and redemption, the providential kingdom and the redemptive kingdom (House 1992:12-13). The exclusion of the world from individualizing faith and the redemptive work of Jesus Christ is contrary to biblical understanding and betrays a narrow interpretation of the Kingdom of God. The frustration of the world in injustice, oppression, and exploitation is subjected in hope

that it will be liberated from its bondage in God's righteousness, the righteousness of His Kingdom.

The highest good of human life on earth may be seen as less important than eternal good, but unless the church shows the world that God loves it by interesting itself in humanity's temporary good, it will hardly persuade them to believe in the greatest good of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God as the highest good is both a religious and ethical ideal for all humanity. It is not just one of many theological themes or a locally restricted topic in Jesus Christ's teaching, but the central focus of a biblical message about the living God's will and purpose to be done on earth today, as it is done in heaven with righteousness, peace, and joy. The concept of the Kingdom of God must, therefore, be closely associated with how believers relate God's will and purpose to the current society in which they are members. The Kingdom of God is to manifest its power in history through the witnesses of the church. The witness of the church as a representation of God in the world is to bring to the world the influence of God's Kingdom and His ultimate justice, testifying to a unified, orderly social life willed by God Himself.

The Kingdom of God is a diversified concept; each view of eschatology, whether premillennialism, postmillennialism, or amillennialism, has its unique characteristics, insights, convictions, conjectures and hopes in their respective interpretations of prophecy. Premillennialism traces its history from a radical millenarian movement during the dark and trying times in early Christianity. It maintains a pessimistic view about the deteriorating sinful nature of the world with an intense longing for the future Kingdom that will bring deliverance from sin and suffering when Jesus Christ returns to earth in history. Amillennialism introduces an optimistic view of the spiritual nature of the millennial Kingdom, which began when believers started to spread the Gospel from Judea to other regions of the world; they reign with Christ to set things right as in heaven until shortly before the final judgment. Postmillennialism was first introduced in the seventeenth century. It holds that the propagation of the Gospel will bring about a golden age on earth culminating in the personal appearance of the Lord at the end of the age. Different positions are considered to be biblically tenable, with each explicating certain parts of the mystery of the eschatological hope of the Kingdom of God, but not necessarily being comprehensive and sufficient (Grudem, 1994:1095). As a result, debates among Christians continue around the matters of chronology, in terms of time

reference and duration, as well as about the basic nature and character of the Kingdom itself.

A new form of postmillennialism was introduced with the rise of higher criticism of the Bible at the end of the nineteenth century. It reinterpreted religion and Christianity according to the naturalistic presuppositions of humanism, rationalism, and evolutionism and tried to bring the tradition more into line with the thoughts and methods of modern science. Subsequently, the social gospel movement under the so-called theological liberalism was developed in America as part of the postmillennialism camp. The liberals did not deny the existence of the personal God, but tended to discount the supernatural characteristics of the traditional Christian religion and the inspiration and authority of the Bible. They believed in the millennium before Christ's second coming, and that things on earth were heading in an optimistic direction. For them, the Kingdom of God would come through the ordinary agencies of human life and social change under primarily human efforts without God's intervention in history. This social gospel movement, with its agenda to Christianize the society, does not seem to stand on a religious ground but rather is synonymous with social concern.

In defending Jesus' Gospel, premillennial evangelicals tend to avoid the expression 'Gospel of the Kingdom' for fear of association with the social gospel tradition and the secularized liberal theology. They also tend to give up hope of ever achieving a righteous social order apart from their millennial future. Evangelicals started gradually to narrow the scope of social concern and ignore or tolerate corruption and injustice in society while expecting Christ's second coming.

Conservative evangelical Christians have inherited the profoundly pessimistic view of premillennialism as their dominant stream of expression of eschatology and have translated this pessimism into the church's life in this present world. The tradition of a premillennial eschatological view that longs for the second coming of Christ the Lord limits the genuine interest of these conservative evangelical Christians to commit themselves to a fully biblical interpretation of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and their concern for social involvement. These conservative evangelical Christians' withdrawal from social involvement can thus be interpreted partly as a one-sided millennial view of eschatology and a narrow literal exegesis of Scripture, and partly as a reaction or over-reaction to socio-political situations in history and the social gospel

movement. Consequently, some of these evangelical churches have overtly downgraded social involvement in their countering of the liberal view on social reform in order to preserve the priority of evangelism and the purity of the Gospel. This failure in social involvement poses many difficulties, and jeopardizes the advancement of God's will and sovereign love to other members of society.

My analysis of the doctrine of the two kingdoms shows that God is both Creator and Redeemer and His realm encompasses both the heavenly kingdom and the earthly kingdom. Neither Luther nor Calvin taught a total separation between these two kingdoms. While the two kingdoms remain independent of each other, they are both under the reign of God. Barth further tightened the connection between the two kingdoms. He finds no distinction between these two because both realms are established in Christ, the Son of the eternal God and the Son of the incarnate redeemer, in whom "the Gospel is their law as the law is in the Gospel, from the Gospel, and pointing to the Gospel" (Barth, 1968:72). The Kingdom of God is a unity of both the spiritual authority and the civil authority. The Christian church, as the model and prototype of the order of the Kingdom of God, must not simply have faith, hope, and love, but is of ultimate and supremely political significance in bringing the external, relative, and provisional order of law to the original and final pattern of the order of the Gospel of the eternal Kingdom of God and the eternal righteousness of His grace. The church, as such, cannot escape its responsibility to be the model and prototype of equality, liberty, and justice, and to exhibit the divine order of Gospel and Law to the world and bring them close to the likeness of the Kingdom of God.

The mystery of the Kingdom of God is a diversified concept with complex characteristics. The adoption of any one single interpretation of the eschatological Kingdom of God cannot simply resolve all tensions and difficulties and will result in the loss of a unified concept of Jesus' teaching, the extent and dimension of His messages, and the explicit and implicit content of their theological understanding. A further synthesis of the dualistic structure of the Kingdom is needed—considering its 'two ages', its spiritual hope and the realities of life, and its reign and realm in the people of God both particularly and universally. A premillennial view that denies the present existence of the Kingdom of God in conjunction with the first advent of Christ, and insists on its realization solely in connection with the second advent, is found to be without logic, because it excludes present dynamic transformations that change hearts,

overcome sin and error, and cultivate righteousness and living communion with God when the Gospel is spread. However, a particular view that emphasises the present existence of the Kingdom of God, based on the preaching and healing of the life of Jesus on earth, runs into difficulty with those texts which plainly envisage the second coming of Jesus in anticipation of the coming of the Kingdom. Neither ‘consistent eschatology’ nor ‘realized eschatology’ alone is found to be sufficient and comprehensive enough to express Jesus’ consciousness of His complete work and person. Ladd and Kümmel introduced a mediating position between the two exclusive views, that is, future and present, in order to square with the biblical data. Although the Kingdom is entirely future, it wholly determines the present. The Kingdom is viewed as something present but it is not in its fullness and perfection until the *parousia* of Christ in fulfilment of the ultimate purpose of the consummated Kingdom. The Kingdom of God that manifests itself in dualistic terms is illustrated in the ‘two ages’ structure, this age and the age to come, as two periods of time divided by the *parousia*. Ladd (1974:322) looks at the two redemptive acts – the historical fulfilment and the eschatological hope – as one redemptive event in two parts.

The eschatological hope of the Kingdom is a spiritual happening illustrated by the exorcism of demons and the destruction of the devil as well as by the experience of salvation in the present age on earth in fulfilment of the Messianic promise and hope. It is not merely a spiritual reign of God, because our holistic life, body and soul, is outwardly visible and already in the reality of this present world. God demands both an inward spiritual loyalty and an outward living realized in a visible organized society, not either/or. There is a bond between physical salvation (healing) and its spiritual aspect in that faith accomplishes both.

The universal mission of God is to bless and save all nations through the seed of Abraham, bringing justice and salvation to the earth. This concept is identical to the Jewish eschatological view whereby both Israelites and Gentiles would be delivered, peace and righteousness would everywhere prevail, and life eternal would replace death (Beasley-Murray, 1987:141). This deliverance includes satisfaction of all needs, material and non-material, of the bodies and souls of believers and non-believers. The church must extend the blessedness of the Kingdom and serve the weak and needy even before they exhibit faith in God in order that all mankind will see God’s salvation. This

social involvement is not a replacement for evangelism as some may falsely allege. It is the other side of the ministry of salvation seen as one holistic mission.

It is God's own pleasure to embrace earthly things and heavenly things alike and reconcile them so that they may take up their abode in His divine fullness. His Kingdom has already entered into history in the fullness of time through the man Jesus Christ as the mediator of God's sovereignty and the totality of His mission in the world. He is the Lord, who holds together all things in heaven and on earth, of all times and all dimensions of historical reality in the past, the present, and the future. The Kingdom of God is God's total order, encompassing both present life reality and spiritual hope for the future, for both the particular and the universal people of God. This is a total Kingdom. The church must extend God's total answer to human needs here and now and God's total plan and program for human life on earth now. The church must not reduce this total Kingdom to a marginal concept or view it simply as a reward thrown in at the future end. No limit can be placed on the realization of the Kingdom characteristics in human history and existence. Jones admonishes the church:

Discover the Kingdom, surrender to the Kingdom, make the Kingdom your life loyalty and your life programs; then in everything and everywhere you will be relevant (Jones, 1972:19).

The true Gospel of the Kingdom is a free gift received by faith in accepting the divine forgiveness of Christ who will usher in the Messianic Kingdom or the reign of God in a renewed right relationship with both God and neighbour. Conservative evangelical Christians are in a believing community that offers and administers individual salvation boldly, with a primary focus on the vertical relationship with God, but that, nevertheless, remains inactive or hesitant to extend the broader horizontal dimension of the Gospel in addressing social injustice and other scandals of our broken and corrupt society. Despite the recognition of their social responsibility, the dichotomy of two distinct duties—evangelism and social involvement—is retained by some evangelicals. These evangelicals treat evangelism as the primary responsibility of the church's mission and social involvement as secondary, optional, or adjunct. Their practice of a faithful vision of evangelism and social justice is inconsistent. The evangelical church thus continues to face enormous debates among themselves regarding the affirmation of an inclusive concept of social mission. Without a general consensus concerning its participation in society, the voice of the evangelical church on social responsibility becomes conspicuously weak in the pulpit and in society.

Evangelism is not an abstract concept of Christian faith. The one-sided soul-centred evangelism thinking reduces the Great Commission exclusively to a word-based preaching, converting and teaching mission without a deed-based response to immediate human needs for social transformation. People need not only the inner divine healing of brokenness in order to enter the fullness and perfection of the Kingdom of God but also the correction and transformation of social sins of unjust societies on earth. Only the biblical combination of evangelism and social action can redeem the devastation of sin in our communities (Sider, Olson, and Unruh, 2002:51). Jesus' salvation is for the whole person (body and soul) of believers and non-believers alike and is a bond between spiritual and physical aspects in all human realities. The reign of God is about His total rule and order, and takes the form of both total Kingdom blessings (salvation) and total Kingdom demands (obedience and service) in all dimensions of life and relationship. Evangelism that has a social responsibility, as Graham (1966:5) admitted, should be the answer in the centre of the Kingdom of God. It will involve the obedient community of salvation (the church) in channelling the authentic Good News for the saving of souls as well as for the healing transformation of physically sick human beings and social structures. Conn (1982:65) says that "it is no more two mandates than it is two ways of salvation". This echoes Ladd's (1974:322) "one redemptive event in two parts."

The encompassing mission of the church has been given by the Lord Jesus: to proclaim and witness to the total package of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment in the same way as His incarnation in faith, love, and service, by giving their lives to helping humanity in the totality of the whole person, spiritual and physical, in the world and the heart of the culture. A genuine biblical approach to the mission of Jesus' double 'great' instructions will empower a community of faith which exemplifies the total message of the Kingdom of God to share God's love in transforming individual lives from the sinful and corrupt nature, to change the culture of greed, corruption, economic classism and racism proactively and incarnationally, as well as to promote the eschatological hope of a perfect consummation of this age and entrance into the Kingdom of God.

Since the Lausanne Congress held in the second half of the twentieth century, much work has been done, and many debates conducted, to attempt to reconcile the one-sided

understanding of evangelism and the defensive beliefs in biblical and theological concepts in order to reach a general consensus for a holistic concept of mission within the worldwide evangelical movement. Much of the debate has been at a theological level with a view to clarifying what action the evangelical church can take to bring its mission of evangelism and social involvement into line with the biblical concept of the Kingdom of God. Social justice always demands action at two levels. Stott (1996:196) breaks down these two functionally distinct levels into ‘social service’ and ‘social action.’ Social service includes philanthropic activity, works of mercy, relieving human need, and seeking to minister to individuals, whereas social action covers political and economic activity, the quest for justice, removing the causes of human need, and seeking to transform the structures of society. Any such social involvement mission that is to be permanently and structurally better or complete for mankind must be approached at both levels, not simply on the level of humane or personal relief. Despite their distinct functions, these two levels must work together in practice to fulfil the entirety of human needs effectively. Stott explicates the cohesive working relationship between these two:

On the one hand, social action of a political kind lacks integrity if it is not supported by a personal commitment to social service. On the other hand, some works of mercy have inescapably political implications – for example, teaching the oppressed to read and write (Stott, 1996:196-197).

Entering into the twenty-first century, the evangelical church’s regrettable slowness to respond in social action, despite limited participation in social service in the form of humanitarian relief work, may prompt questions about whether the practice of the evangelical church really exhibits an adequate understanding of holistic mission, particularly in the involvement of political issues with regard to social justice, or whether this understanding remains in the aspect of ‘theory’. It is a general understanding that there is still persistent reluctance in preaching to explicate the Kingdom idea of the obligation to obey all of Christ’s commands, i.e., the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, and to encounter the unfinished business of social justice. The failure to make this essential link in preaching is partly the reason why in some places where the altar call has been most insistently given certain great social injustices have been tolerated so long.

In addition, the complexity of our pluralistic world has presented problems for the evangelical church in adopting an exclusive biblical or theological based concept for

social betterment. The failure of the Moral Majority movement in the 1980s is an example of an exclusive application of a biblical and theological concept. Weyrich (1999:44), the evangelical figurehead of the Moral Majority, admitted that “I believe that we have probably lost the culture war ... in terms of society in general, we have lost ... even when we win in politics, our victories fail to translate into the kind of policies we believe are important.” The Bible alone cannot be understood as a handbook for a political or economic program. Theological writings developed by theologians and scholars have been foundational in the recovery of the doctrines of creation, redemption, Christ’s lordship, covenant, and history, and they have enabled the evangelical church to envision the ongoing process of the Kingdom of God for His sovereignty and redemptive work in human history. However, the lack of political expertise and experience may also prevent the evangelical church from moving forward with a comprehensive plan for social justice issues. The task thus is no longer to avoid the issues or to separate from this world, but to enlist all spiritual, rational, and moral energies for a comprehensive engagement with the religious, philosophical, and social arenas. Purely philosophical deontological approaches or teleological ethics prove to be limited in scope and effectiveness in terms of the highest good. On the other hand, the evangelical church must recognize the complexity of social, economic, and political aspects of our society, including the pragmatic process of certain pure philosophical theories, and then work in conjunction with the main goal of acting according to clear biblical and theological understanding on all levels of activity. In addition to the founding theological principles of a Kingdom idea of social involvement responsibility, the evangelical church must sort out the very fundamental understanding of theology for social concerns and should also not ignore equipping themselves with the knowledge and expertise on respective areas of social problems.

God’s covenant with Abraham and his descendants was an indication that God wanted His Kingdom to extend among all nations. The incarnation of Jesus Christ was a model for the church to exhibit how all dimensions of His Kingdom are extended on earth through the proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom and healing of both the vertical and horizontal relationships between God and among humanity. Only the God of righteousness can save humanity from the bondage of sins and oppression and cause every one of them to prevail in justice. He brings justice to the nations through faithfulness and intervenes in history on the strength of His covenant with Abraham in order to liberate a weak and oppressed nation. Jesus calls His disciples to follow Him in

incarnational ministry by devoting their lives to helping others know and follow Him as well as by demonstrating what Jesus commands without any reduction. In Jesus' moving description of who would be found suitable to enter the Kingdom in the last judgment, one's attitude toward the poor, the weak, the needy and the oppressed plays a decisive role (Mt. 25:31-46). The key for those who have the knowledge of God and who long for the perfect consummation in the Kingdom of God at the second coming of Christ is to practice justice and love toward the afflicted and the needy as God's instruments (Romans 6:13).

The goal of this thesis is to prove to the evangelical church the necessity of a holistic Kingdom mission in evangelism and social justice in word and deed in order to make an impact both religiously and ethically in the world. A renaissance of the social justice mission may not be a certainty; it may not happen in the near future but, hopefully, the evangelical church will start to foster an encompassing mission of all dimensions of the Kingdom of God with the great triumphs of the power and influence of Christ for the sake of all nations. The will of God is to bring His Kingdom, the total order, to fruition on earth as in heaven. This emphasis on the mission of social justice through the church, however, does not mean that christianized works of social service and social action on earth should be substituted for the divine demand of obedience in faith for eternal salvation. The common grace of social justice can be described in terms of the provision of an area for the operation of special saving grace, not the saving grace itself, for all nations. It is not even to be seen as the preparation for regeneration, but only as the provision of a domain within which the church can work to proclaim the all-encompassing redemption which they have already anticipated by faith in Christ. Nevertheless, any operation of the blessing that is the working of the church must be rooted in saving grace, which is the fullness of meaning of the entirety of creation as well as the final entrance into the fullness of the Kingdom of God. Christians know already in which direction history is moving: toward the Kingdom of God. Therefore Christians must work vigorously to prod society, including non-believers, through the mission of both evangelism and social justice, and to move them in that direction.

There is no doubt that the world outside the church experiences some kind of salvation in social justice through Christ. But, as Samuel and Sugden (1985:211) argue and insist, "conscious acknowledgment of that victory [and salvation of Christ on the cross] takes place in [and through] the church, and salvation in its full sense is linked with that

conscious acknowledgment.” Social justice alone is not the fullness of salvation but only one part of the two processes rooted in redemption. Evangelism and social justice are both part of the Christian duty to accomplish God’s will in this world and to move history now, like the mustard tree and the leaven (Mt. 13:31-35), in the direction of the coming Kingdom until the *parousia* of Jesus Christ. The complete salvation includes a right relationship with God in an acceptance of Christ in faith and, in turn, the reconciliation with others. Only the people of God who are born of water and the Spirit will receive the complete salvation and enter into the ultimate designation of the eternal Kingdom (2 Peter 1:11). In other words, the final and preferred recipients of the fullness of the Kingdom will be the little flock who are the children of God and who care for the poor and oppressed (Luke 12:32-33). A holistic mission in evangelism and social justice will bring a betterment of the world by moving humanity to the ultimate fullness of the Kingdom. That mission is biblical; a proper understanding of it will protect the church today from the errors of narrow biblical and theological interpretation.

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