

ALL FOR LIFE; LIFE FOR ALL

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Abstract: This article is an attempt to articulate a Christian perspective on ecology from three important progressive phases of the history of salvation as recounted in the biblical revelation, namely, 1) creation, 2) incarnation, and 3) transformation. The author takes the readers for a tour to creation with God to maintain appropriate approaches and attitudes ensuring the flourishing of all in the universe. It is an invitation to see the creation with the eyes of God, to *love* the world with the heart of God, and to *go* to the world with the good news of wholeness. In the words of the author, the good news for creation may be labelled as: *all for life; life for all*.

Keywords: Christian, Creation, Ecology, Environmental Ecology, Human Ecology, Interrelatedness, Liberation, Transformation.

1. Introduction

Life, though it may be considered in many ways, is the beginning, middle, and end of *everybody*, including all beings having a body and an existence in the universe. It is the source, strength, and summit of all human aspirations, attitudes, approaches, and actions; it is also the horizon of all activities. Life is the leitmotif of all imagination and the fundamental principle on which all other things depend – the basic good around which thoughts, words, and deeds revolve. Progress of any kind depends on life. Whether development is material, physical, mental, intellectual, emotional,

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social, ethical, spiritual, etc., life is the substratum of all discussion and decision making. Where there is no life, there is no scope for the future.

Creation is the celebration of life; it is an epiphany of life. The event of creation is the revelation of God's life. Indeed, creation is a celebration of the diversity of life, of the manifesting of the unity and the beauty of life. Creation of earth and heaven preceded the creation of human beings. Human beings were created in the image of God. And God blessed them by saying "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28). Human beings are called upon to represent the image of God on earth and to lead the orchestra of life.

In what follows I would like to discuss the Christian perspective on ecology, focusing on three important progressive phases of the history of salvation; namely, 1) creation, 2) incarnation, and 3) transformation.

2. Creation: "And God Saw Everything That He had Made, and Indeed, It Was Very Good" (Gen 1:31)

The story of creation in the Bible is the celebration of life. The *Book of Genesis* presents creation as a thoughtful and joyful revelation of God, who is love, life, and light. At the end of each act of creation, there is a positive attestation made by God. For instance, after the moment of creation of light, "And God saw that light was good" (Gen 1:4). Taking the barometer of creation, "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). This is an indication of the divine plan for creation, the essence of which is God's appreciation of the goodness of creation, which forms the hallmark of the Christian faith vision and the horizon of living. Creation and everything in the cosmos is good and reveals the goodness of God's work. Saint Ephrem presents the divine plan of nature and Scripture in a magnificent manner when he sings:

In his book Moses described
 the creation of the natural world,
 so that both the natural world and his book
 might testify to the Creator:
 the natural world, through man's use of it,
 the book, through his reading of it" (*Hymns on Paradise* 5:2).

The significant point to note here is that both Nature and Scripture reveal the Creator, who is good. Returning to the first chapter of the *Book of Genesis*, we may trace the intention of God in creating human beings, which is depicted as unique and specific as follows:

Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created humankind in his image (Gen 1:26-27).

God had a special purpose and significance in creating human beings; their significance consists in the fact they are created in the image and likeness of God. Being in the image and likeness of God is an invitation to take care of everything in the universe as God would care for it. God is the creator, the saviour, and the sanctifier. This is a blessing and a challenge to human beings, for they share in the creative, saving, and sanctifying power of God. Since they share in the image of God, human beings have to make the presence of God visible, tangible, and credible in the universe. It is an existential necessity. They should accompany and animate everything in creation, as if God were present and active.

This idea of a caretaker is beautifully illustrated in the second chapter of the *Book of Genesis*, “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it” (Gen 2:15). Maintenance and beautification of the garden is the work and task of human beings. It means that they are called to protect, preserve, and promote the order and harmony of life. Human beings, being created in the image and likeness of God, are called to exercise the loving and life-giving ministry of a steward or caretaker.

Human beings, who are made from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7), are known for their earthliness. The very name Adam is derived from the Hebrew word *adamah*, meaning dust of the ground – earth. In addition, the creation account found in the second chapter of the *Book of Genesis* gives us further clues to the image of God in which every human being is created and should

be reflected. After the creation of man, “the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed” (Gen 2:8). The image of God becomes clear from the passage; it is human prerogative to imitate the Lord God who is a Gardener, taking good care of the garden. As a result of the joyful and faithful work of the first human beings in the garden, there was a beautiful and fruitful garden: “every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:9). God’s image as a good Gardener is the image with which every human being is endowed and is supposed to express in one’s life and activities. The image of God as the Gardener is further illustrated by Jesus in his teaching on the parable of the vine and branches, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower” (John 15:1). The image of human beings resembling the image of God has to be of one who takes utmost care of each and every thing in the garden to ensure a faithful, joyful, beautiful, and fruitful season.

The creation account of the Bible shows clearly that human beings are made in the image of God and should behave according to the precepts of the Lord. Any breach in the relationship of people with Yahweh will be reflected in all their other relationships as well. The consequence of disobedience of Yahweh’s command is portrayed with many details in the third chapter of the *Book of Genesis*: human beings hide themselves from the sight of God (Gen 3:8), man accuses the woman (Gen 3:12) and they are driven out of the garden (Gen 3: 23). The scene is significant for all times and especially for our times: Creation belongs to God and to maintain harmony in creation, there is the need to recognize, respect, and respond to all the realities of relationships, namely, to God, the world, and to human beings. Any interruption in the rhythm of the creative order will be reflected in an otherwise prosperous and harmonious life. The biblical perspective on ecology, and consequently of Christian faith, consists in the belief that God is the Lord of all. Therefore, reverence for everyone and respect for everything in the universe is inherent in the Christian world vision.

The message of John Paul II for the celebration of World Peace Day in 1990 entitled *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation* is a wakeup call to address the ecological issues of our times. He begins his message by observing:

In our day, there is a growing awareness that world peace is threatened not only by the arms race, regional conflicts and continued injustices among peoples and nations, but also by a lack of due respect for nature, by the plundering of natural resources and by a progressive decline in the quality of life. The sense of precariousness and insecurity that such a situation engenders is a seedbed for collective selfishness, disregard for others and dishonesty.¹

John Paul II further observes:

... biblical considerations help us to understand better the relationship between human activity and the whole of creation. When man turns his back on the Creator's plan, he provokes a disorder which has inevitable repercussions on the rest of the created order. If man is not at peace with God, then earth itself cannot be at peace.²

John Paul II points out the cause of the ecological crisis due to "the uncontrolled destruction of animal and plant life or by a reckless exploitation of natural resources."³ He qualifies the ecological crisis as an ethical problem,⁴ which needs to be addressed sincerely, seriously, and systematically. John Paul II suggests the following remedial steps:

- a) The urgent need for solidarity: "The ecological crisis reveals the urgent moral need for a new solidarity, especially in relations between the developing nations and those that are highly industrialized."⁵

¹John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator: Peace with All of Creation*, 1990, §1.

²John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator*, § 5.

³John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator*, § 7.

⁴John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator*, § 6.

⁵John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator*, § 10.

- b) Address the structural forms of poverty: "The proper ecological balance will not be found without directly addressing the structural forms of poverty that exist throughout the world."⁶
- c) Simple Life Style: "Simplicity, moderation and discipline, as well as a spirit of sacrifice, must become a part of everyday life, lest all suffer the negative consequences of the careless habits of a few."⁷
- d) An education in ecological responsibility is urgent: "responsibility for oneself, for others, and for the earth."⁸
- e) The Aesthetic Value of Creation: "Our very contact with nature has a deep restorative power; contemplation of its magnificence imparts peace and serenity. The Bible speaks again and again of the goodness and beauty of creation, which is called to glorify God."⁹
- f) A sense of Fraternity: "The inspiration of Saint Francis will help us to keep ever alive a sense of «fraternity» with all those good and beautiful things which Almighty God has created. And may he remind us of our serious obligation to respect and watch over them with care, in light of that greater and higher fraternity that exists within the human family."¹⁰

At the conclusion of his message, John Paul II projects a concise and comprehensive Christian perspective on ecology shaped by faith in God the Creator. He writes:

The commitment of believers to a healthy environment for everyone stems directly from their belief in God the Creator, from their recognition of the effects of original and personal sin, and from the certainty of having been redeemed by Christ. Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation, which is called to join man in praising God.¹¹

⁶John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator*, § 11.

⁷John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator*, § 13.

⁸John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator*, § 13.

⁹John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator*, § 14.

¹⁰John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator*, § 16.

¹¹John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator*, § 16.

The song in the *Book of Daniel* is of great significance, for it demonstrates the image of God in human beings resembling the image of God the Creator, who saw that everything was good. It is a very beautiful and lengthy hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord God, the Creator. A few lines are given below in order to see and taste the deep-seated belief of Christians in God the Creator and the perspective to which they hold their behaviour, including that of the worshipping community:

Bless the Lord, Sun and Moon;
Sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.
Bless the Lord, stars of heaven;
Sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.
Bless the Lord, all rain and dew;
Sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.
Bless the Lord, all you winds;
Sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.
Bless the Lord, fire and heat;
Sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever
Bless the Lord, winter cold and summer heat
Sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever
Bless the Lord, dews and falling snow
Sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.

(Daniel 3:62-68)

The Christians make use of this hymn on Sundays and solemn celebrations, which is a reminder of their genuine approach to and appreciation for creation and everything in it. A detailed narrative hymn of blessing recounted in the *Book of Daniel* is illustrative of harmonious living of human beings with God, the world, and other humans, which is in tune with the divine design, for Yahweh himself appreciated his creation and set the pattern in place. The Christian perspective on ecology is at its most beautiful expression in this song, for it recovers the image of God in human beings: seeing the goodness and beauty of creation and raises their hearts in praise and worship, manifesting the healthy relationship of human beings with creation and their grateful relationship with God, which ushers in peace and harmony in the world. In other words, the Christian perspective of ecology

consists in seeing things in the perspective of God, who saw that everything was good.

3. Incarnation: “For God so Loved the World that He Gave His Only Son” (John 3:16)

Passing from the moment of creation to the event of the Incarnation, it is again the celebration of life. If God saw at the moment of creation what he had created was good, then, in the event of the Incarnation, God reveals his unfathomable love for the world. The Scripture observes, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3:16). There is a qualitative change in the mystery of the Incarnation. At this historical juncture ‘love’ which was implicit in ‘seeing’ is made explicit – the Word becoming world. The purpose of God’s love is the same as God’s seeing, that is, life. Therefore, the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption in Christ celebrates life. The perspective of God’s love is life – life in abundance: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). This revelation of Jesus gives us a clue to the image of God, which human beings have inherited at the moment of creation and have to reveal in their daily life, namely, the image of God – all for life and life for all. Hence there is no room in Christian belief for any kind of disrespect of life in any form or an exploitation of any life. The world and everything in it finds an added value on account of the mystery of the Incarnation and emphasizes the sacredness and sacramental nature of the world. It is an added reason for the celebration of the world – the celebration of life – which takes into account every element of the universe.

The celebration of life is audible and visible at the Nativity of Jesus. The angels sang, “Glory to God in the highest. Peace on earth and hope to human beings” (Luke 2:14). As the angelic hymn discloses, the birth of Jesus – the mystery of the Incarnation – brings the tidings of glory of God, peace on earth, and hope to human beings. Once again all the three realms or triadic relationships – God-World-Human beings – recover joy, peace, and hope respectively, which is the sign of the genuine celebration of life. As in the past, human beings continue their

search for peace and hope, which is a sign of the sincere search for life. The angelic hymn directs our steps to the celebration of life, which demands that people of good will establish the triadic relationship, namely, to God, the land, and to people. This means according to the Christian perspective that the glorification of God, the establishment of peace, and the rendering of hope to human beings are inherently interconnected and constitute the eternal celebration of life. This may be further elaborated by saying that the Christian perspective on ecology heavily depends on the triadic relationship, that is, oneness with God, rootedness with creation, and relatedness with every human being. At the moment of creation the mystery of the Incarnation, liberation and redemption were also worked out in relationship with God-world-neighbour with the divine grace and mercy. If the event of the Incarnation gives us some clue to the image of God, which in fact it does, then it is of the image of God who loves the world and gives life to the world. And this is the image of God with which all Christians are equipped and are enabled to show excellence in their human action.

The love of God prompts us to love the world and to work for life in its fullness. Jesus is the revelation of God's love – compassionate love – for the world. He revealed the love of God through his birth in a manger and his death on the cross. The parable of the grain of wheat told by Jesus illustrates His mission on earth. He taught: “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24). This is the philosophy of life; this is the theology of life; this is the spirituality of life; this is the mystery of life. Jesus through his ministry and his death on the cross has witnessed to the reality and mystery of life. The Christian perspective on ecology is embedded in the person and ministry of Jesus. Jesus is the icon of the invisible God. In order to understand the image of God, in which all people are created, we need to turn to Jesus Christ. In this connection, Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). In order to address the ecological issues of our times, it is of paramount importance to follow the

true way to life, which Jesus has set before us – the path of mystery and mastery.

For the fullness of life, it is important to reflect on the process of development, especially whatever we do in the economic sector for the progress of development. Perhaps the most important question we may have to ask is the very notion of development. It is high time to ask whether the developmental projects attend to the betterment of all and to the integral development of each one. Or are they simply catering to the needs of only a few of the society, the well-to-do. Benedict XVI took up the question of development along the lines of *Populorum Progressio* of Paul VI and addressed this question squarely in the context of the economic crunch of 2008. Significant is the concept of human ecology which he introduced in the encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*. Pointing to the integral vision of ecology, Benedict XVI invited the attention of the people of good will to consider the indivisible unity of environmental ecology with human ecology:

If there is a lack of respect for the right to life and to a natural death, if human conception, gestation and birth are made artificial, if human embryos are sacrificed to research, the conscience of society ends up losing the concept of human ecology and, along with it, that of environmental ecology. It is contradictory to insist that future generations respect the natural environment when our educational systems and laws do not help them to respect themselves. The book of nature is one and indivisible: it takes in not only the environment but also life, sexuality, marriage, the family, social relations: in a word, integral human development.¹²

Emphasizing the need of environmental ecology, Benedict XVI underlined the need to attend to human ecology. In fact, they are interrelated and one mirrors the other. He brings to our attention the underlying factor for a genuine development, “The way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself,

¹²Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 2007, § 51.

and vice versa.”¹³ Explaining the root cause of the ecological crisis, he wrote:

There is need for what might be called a human ecology, correctly understood. The deterioration of nature is in fact closely connected to the culture that shapes human coexistence: when “human ecology” is respected within society, environmental ecology also benefits.¹⁴

A shift in lifestyle is what Benedict XVI advocates to address the ecological crisis, “What is needed is an effective shift in mentality which can lead to the adoption of new life-styles «in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others».”¹⁵ In this proposal there is a beautiful resonance of the Indian ideal for harmonious living, that is, *satyam* (truth), *shivam* (goodness), *sundaram* (beauty). A sincere search for truth, goodness, and beauty and communion with others will disclose the inherent interconnectedness of each thing with everything and someone with everyone in this universe. Unambiguously Pope Benedict teaches,

The Church has a responsibility towards creation and she must assert this responsibility in the public sphere. In so doing, she must defend not only earth, water and air as gifts of creation that belong to everyone; she must above all protect mankind from self-destruction.¹⁶

The warning Benedict XVI has indicated is real. There is no mincing of words in underscoring the subtle but substantial integrity of both the environment and human beings.

Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other. Herein lies a grave contradiction in our mentality and practice today: one which

¹³Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, § 51.

¹⁴Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, § 51.

¹⁵Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, § 51.

¹⁶Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, § 51.

demeans the person, disrupts the environment and damages society.¹⁷

The Christian perspective on ecology has two important aspects which are inseparably connected: environmental ecology and human ecology. Everything has value. Nothing is devoid of value. All are good in the sight of God. God loved and loves all. God is the Lord of All. In the Christian perspective, it is therefore essential to recognize, respect, and respond to all in the universe with the fundamental image of God imprinted on every human being. Benedict XVI developed this idea of human ecology to the demands of “social ecology” in his world peace message in 2007 entitled *The Human Person, The Heart of Peace*, which is very insightful and practical. He writes:

Alongside the ecology of nature, there exists what can be called a “human” ecology, which in turn demands a “social” ecology. All this means that humanity, if it truly desires peace, must be increasingly conscious of the links between natural ecology, or respect for nature, and human ecology. Experience shows that disregard for the environment always harms human coexistence, and vice versa. It becomes more and more evident that there is an inseparable link between peace with creation and peace among men. Both of these presuppose peace with God.¹⁸

In the teaching of Benedict XVI, the Christian perspective on ecology attains its beautiful integration and comprehensive presentation, which takes into account God, creation, and human beings.

God so loved this world that he sent his only begotten Son that world might have eternal life. God became a human being in the world. This is the mystery of Incarnation. Human beings created in the image of God have to live this love of God for the world and other human beings so that they might experience life in its fullness and enter into eternal life. It is this love which is to be manifested to all persons in creation.

¹⁷Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, § 51.

¹⁸Benedict XVI, *The Human Person, The Heart of Peace*, World Peace Message 2007, § 8.

5. Transformation: "Go into All the World and Proclaim the Good News to the Whole Creation" (Mark 16:15)

Moving from the event of the Incarnation and Redemption to the current phase of Transformation, the disciple of Christ is asked to "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). The message for the present age is loud and clear: the good news is to be preached to all creation. Creation is at the heart of the mission of Christians. Saint Paul attests great importance to this process of transformation when he writes, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now, and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly" (Romans 8:22-23). All creation and all of humanity are in the age of the Spirit undergoing this transformation. The restoration of the image of God is the goal of human beings. In other words, the recovery of the image of God and the concurrent approach of human beings to creation is the objective in this stage of transformation. The Christian perspective on ecology that emerges from the command of the Lord is in continuation of the earlier phases of the history of salvation. The continuity and culmination of the message and mission of the Christian perspective on ecology may be summarized as follows: to see the truth, goodness, and beauty of creation as God saw everything was good; to love the truth, goodness, and beauty of the creation as God loved by sending his only Son; and to go and seek for the truth, goodness, and beauty of creation as the Lord commanded.

In this process of transformation of creation and human beings, it might be appropriate to draw a roadmap to see, to love, and seek for the truth, goodness, and beauty of creation.

5.1. All for Life and Life for All

Life is the basic good, without which we cannot even imagine any kind of development. Life is the bedrock of any activity. This is all the more true in the case of human beings. Life is the source, strength, and summit of human thinking, talking, and walking. In other words, all aspirations and actions are fostered and carried out in view of having life in all its truth, goodness, and beauty. Human development is a programme of development which

guarantees life to all, regardless of their diversity. Life may be understood and interpreted by people differently. No doubt, life is dynamic and moves in different directions. The flourishing of life, as also the flourishing of human life, is within the purview of imagination. Life – life in its fullness – is the goal of all human enterprise. Life – eternal life – was the driving force behind the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3:16). The story of creation, redemption, and new creation speak in one voice about life and its paramount importance in the history of salvation. In this march *all for life and life for all*, attention should be given to human dignity, the integrity of the human person, and the solidarity of human beings. Dignity, integrity, and solidarity serve as the criteria of genuine development. If development does not serve to recognize, respect, and respond to the dignity, integrity, and solidarity of human beings, it is not worth the name.

5.2. Rational in Processing and Relational in Praxis

A project of development to be genuine, stable, sustainable, and harmonious should be rational and relational in its dealing with reality. Any developmental project has to have repercussions on all things and everybody. The truth is that in the long term every project is going to have a global impact, but very often this is ignored or conveniently neglected in order to foster only business interests. The term ‘rational’ stands for reasonability. No doubt, we must be reasonable in our thoughts, words, and deeds. Reasonableness means that the development is not for a few and at the cost of others. In many cases people cleverly argue things in favour of the project in the pipeline and cunningly cover up the whole truth. Rationality should not be for the benefit of a few at the expense of others. Human reason can find arguments to defend one’s own interest, often sidelining the interest of the vast majority. Any development scheme should be thoroughly scrutinized and evaluated, so that all possible foreseeable damages and dangers can be avoided.

To be more precise on a rational approach, there must be a thorough evaluation of the development project in the light of the past, present, and future. This will ensure that we are reasonable and responsible people. We have inherited resources from the past. Now, with our rational reflection, we must make the best use of all that is given to us for the promotion of life and its flourishing. This process makes sure that human engagement and involvement in the natural environment do not hamper the growth and development of anything; instead, it accelerates the holistic progress of all. This will check the short-sighted developmental projects which may bring quick affluence but will plunder natural wealth and the health of people and thus hinder prosperity. Being rational in developing projects with reference to the past, present, and future will reassure the rights of the aboriginals along with others, as well as the entire ecosystem, which is the substratum of life in all its variety. There should be no rush to rash decision making. Haste makes waste. In a world characterized by the race for power, position, prestige, we very often take decisions in haste. Hence life in the neighbourhood is often becoming increasingly unbearable and disastrous. In order to address the adversities related to technological development, we need to be always rational in processing our policies, plans and projects, paying attention to the past, present, and future consequences of the projects undertaken.

The process of development has to be relational, because life is founded on manifold relationships. It is a challenge to become aware of the inherent interrelationships with everything and everybody in the world. When development is planned and processed in terms of essential relationships, it can be green and healthy. Truly we are what our relations are. And if we need to be whole, there is the necessity to be related with *everybody* in the world. When planning and executing developmental projects, if the initiators take into account the triadic relationships – God, creation, and human beings – there will be holistic and comprehensive progress. This means that each developmental scheme has to recognize, respect, and respond to all the demands of these realities surrounding us. Most of the time, when we think

of projects, we consider only our own immediate interests and how we can make money from them. This seems to be the dominant trend that pervades our planning and execution. However, these days, because of the requirements of legislation for industries, planners and industrialists are paying attention to environmental pollution. But very seldom is there any serious thought given to the use of the land, which is a habitat for numerous beings, all of which are essential for maintaining the ecosystem. Ecological harmony is not given the due attention it deserves. There is no consideration of the God-relationship in the matters of development. God who is the giver, the sustainer, and the transformer is out of the picture in these discussions. Often He is sidelined and marginalized in our talk about development. It is high time to restore the divine perspective in this matter of development. Development has to incorporate divine wisdom into the very structure of planning of any project worthy of its name. Once the divine perspective is introduced into the developmental structure, it will ensure the welfare of all people as well as of the land.

5.3. All Persons and the Whole Person

Economic policies are meant to be for the welfare of all in the world, the *oikos* – the house of all. *Oikonomia* works for the *oikos* as a servant works within the limits of ethics for the well-being of the house. Economic policies should promote economic growth as well as integral human development; they are for the whole person and all persons. According to *Caritas in Veritate*, “Authentic human development concerns the whole of the person in every single dimension.”¹⁹ The encyclical concludes its universal teaching, reiterating the important task of bringing about the “development of the whole man and of all men.”²⁰ Always economic policies are drawn in view of development. As a Christian, one is duty bound to chalk out economic plans and policies in view of the development of all persons, since we have the same identity and destiny. The economic policies moulded in

¹⁹Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, § 11.

²⁰Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, § 79.

the Christian perspective should be integral and comprehensive, addressing the different dimensions of the human person, namely, body, mind, and soul.

These dimensions could be further elaborated on the basis of the human person composed of five sheathes, namely, *Annamaya* (food layer), *Pranamaya* (breathing layer), *Manomaya* (mental layer), *Vijnanamaya* (wisdom layer), and *Anandamaya* (bliss layer) *koshas* (sheathes). Though there is no such precise synthesis of the constituent elements of human being in the Bible, it might not be out of place to knit together these elements spread out in the Bible. For instance, soon after the creation of man, the Lord God planted a garden "pleasant to the sight and good for food" (Gen 2:9), which alludes to the *annamaya kosha*. Further, it is also interesting to note that the Lord God "formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being" (Gen 2:7), which echoes the insight into to *pranamaya kosha*. Later, in the creation account, God created animals of the field and birds of the air and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. Surprisingly, the text reads, "whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name" (Gen 2:19). The naming activity of man involves the *manomaya kosha*. So also the creation account gives us a clue to *vijnanamaya kosha* and *anandamaya kosha* in the collective decision of the Godhead, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness" (Gen 1:26). The image of God is the image of wisdom and bliss. After the creation of man God puts him in the garden to till and keep it and gives him the power of wisdom to discern what is good from evil, "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat" (Gen 2:17). Indeed, every human being is called upon to imitate the wisdom of God, which points to the *vijnanamaya kosha* of human being. Regarding joy, the Psalmist muses, "Let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy" (Psalm 5:11). Is it not appropriate to infer from this that God is joy or bliss. So whoever takes refuge in God rejoices. "Rejoice and be glad" (Matthew 5:12) is the command of the Lord. Moreover, Jesus told his disciples: "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may

be complete" (John 15:11). Is this not an allusion to the very being of God, which is *ananda* or bliss? The apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, *Joy of the Gospel*, reiterates the true image of God, that is, bliss. If human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, which is fundamental to biblical revelation, then they also participate in the bliss of God as well. These preliminary observations on *panchakosha* from Christian perspective help us to contemplate the reality and mystery of human beings. This understanding discloses the mystery of the human being and the intricate interrelationships that pervade a human person. Hence, economic policies should address all these layers of human existence.

6. Conclusion

The reflection of a Christian perspective on ecology is centred around the different faces of the history of salvation, namely, creation, Incarnation, and transformation, in the light of Christian revelation. The Lord God saw everything good in the event of creation; God so loved the world that he sent his only Son to offer eternal life at the event of Incarnation, and the Lord commands the disciples to go and proclaim the good news to all creation in the event of transformation. The simple and profound Christian perspective on ecology has evolved in the course of the history of salvation. It consists in seeing, loving, and going for the truth, goodness, and beauty of creation, which means contemplating the sacredness of creation, caring for creation and everything in it, towards the flourishing of life in its fullness, and to be on march to share the joyful good news to the whole of creation so that everything may come to bloom and praise the Lord. Such a perspective on ecology will reveal the image of God inherent in human beings in their everyday life – walking the way of *All for Life; Life for All* – which in turn helps people to glorify the Lord God, to establish peace on earth, and to extend hope to all. The Christian perspective on ecology, thus, is a creative, redemptive, and celebrative one, which takes into full account the natural ecology, human ecology, and social ecology.