

# The Judaeo-Christian Tradition as a Source of a Paradigm of Sustainable Development<sup>1</sup>

## Tradycja judeochrześcijańska, jako źródło paradygmatu rozwoju zrównoważonego

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### Abstract

The economic development of the last two hundred years has had no precedent in human history. Its dynamic was mainly a result of knowledge and technological progress, but was also associated with the adoption and acceptance of utilitarian values and thus the formulation of social aims in terms of profit for the producer and utility for the consumer. This attitude, perforce a short-term one, triggered an unusually fast increase in production, which allowed many societies to make a civilization leap, albeit at the price of an imbalance in global social and ecological conditions.

An attempt to restore ecological and social balance involves a change of economic paradigm to one that takes into account social needs and the limitations of nature. The economics of sustainable development is a concept, where economic objectives and the time horizon have been reformulated to include not just the question of economic development, but also ecological and socio-cultural aspects, and development itself is considered from a long-term perspective. It is a relatively modern concept, that only started to be considered as an alternative to conventional economic attitudes in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The roots of the concept of sustainable development are usually traced back to a German culture of a forest resource management. However, the idea of development taking into account the spheres of ecology, social relations and economics seems to have its beginnings already in sources from earlier Judaeo-Christian civilisation.

The texts of The Old and New Testament and supplementary writings of Judaism and Christianity create a coherent image of social development, where the areas of ecology, social needs and economic activity take equally meaningful positions. Contrary to the opinion, popular in the 1960s based on the quote from *Genesis (let them have dominion over all the earth)*, that Judaeo-Christian civilization is responsible for ecological catastrophe, both Judaism and Christianity sources contain a strong ecological message. Regarding social development, the problems of equitable social relations are a core issue in the Old and New Testament. The third area of in-depth analysis studies economic processes at micro- and macro-levels that are limited just by the rules of social fairness and the limitations of nature.

The paper presents a selection of sources contained in Judaeo-Christian writings relating to issues of development in the areas of ecology, society and economics, which lay the foundations for the modern paradigm of sustainable development.

**Key words:** Sustainable development, Judaeo-Christian civilization, ecology, society, economics, Old Testament, New Testament

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## Streszczenie

Rozwój gospodarczy ostatnich dwustu lat był w historii ludzkości zdarzeniem bez precedensu. Jego dynamika wynikała przede wszystkim z postępu wiedzy i technologii, ale wiązała się również z przyjęciem i akceptacją wartości o charakterze utylitarnym, a co za tym idzie sformułowaniem celów społecznych w kategoriach zysku producenta i użyteczności konsumenta. Takie podejście, z konieczności krótkookresowe, wyzwoliło niespotykane szybki wzrost produkcji, umożliwiając dokonanie cywilizacyjnego skoku wielu społeczeństw, jednak za cenę zachwiania globalnej równowagi społecznej oraz ekologicznej.

Próba przywrócenia równowagi społecznej i ekologicznej musi wiązać się ze zmianą paradygmatu gospodarczego, na ten uwzględniający potrzeby społeczne oraz naturalne ograniczenia. Ekonomia zrównoważonego rozwoju jest koncepcją, w której cele ekonomiczne oraz horyzont czasowy zostały przeformułowane, obejmując poza rozwojem gospodarczym również obszary ekologii i społeczno-kulturowy, a rozwój rozumiany jest w perspektywie długookresowej. Koncepcja ta traktowana jest, jako stosunkowo współczesna i dopiero w drugiej połowie XX wieku zaczęto rozważać ją, jako alternatywę dla konwencjonalnych metod gospodarowania. Jej korzeni upatruje się w niemieckiej kulturze gospodarowania zasobami leśnymi, jednak koncepcja zrównoważonego rozwoju sfery ekologicznej, społecznej i gospodarczej wydaje się mieć swój początek już u samych źródeł cywilizacji judeochrześcijańskiej.

Teksty Starego i Nowego Testamentu, oraz uzupełniające je pisma uznawane przez judaizm i chrześcijaństwo, tworzą spójny wizerunek rozwoju społecznego, w który sfery ekologii, potrzeb społecznych i gospodarki zajmują równie istotne pozycje. Wbrew powszechnej jeszcze w latach 60. opinii, oskarżającej, w oparciu o fragment *Księgi Rodzaju (napelniajcie ziemię i czyncie ją sobie poddaną)*, oskarżającej tradycję judeochrześcijańską o katastrofę ekologiczną, jej źródła zawierają silnie proekologiczny przekaz. Jeśli chodzi o rozwój społeczny, zarówno w Starym, jak i Nowym Testamencie, problematyka sprawiedliwych relacji społecznych stanowi trzon tematyczny wspomnianych tekstów. Trzecim obszarem, pogłębionej analizy są procesy gospodarcze zachodzące zarówno na poziomie mikro i makroekonomicznym, których ograniczeniem jest właśnie zachowanie zasad sprawiedliwości społecznej oraz ograniczeń płynących z natury.

W artykule przedstawiono wybrane, zawarte w źródłach judeochrześcijańskich, zagadnienia rozwoju w ramach trzech obszarów: ekologicznego, społecznego i gospodarczego, tworzące zręby współczesnego paradygmatu rozwoju zrównoważonego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** rozwój zrównoważony, cywilizacja judeochrześcijańska, ekologiczny, społeczny, gospodarczy, Stary Testament, Nowy Testament

## Introduction

From the beginning of our era right up until the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was no rapid economic development with a slow pace of change being characteristic throughout the world. A clear acceleration in economic development only came with the industrial revolution, especially in what is broadly understood as the Western world. The pace of these changes, expressed in GDP *per capita*, is shown in Table 1. The sudden growth in production was accompanied by population growth and an increase in life expect-

tancy. For example, life expectancy increased from 24 years in the year 1000, to 36 in 1982 and 63 in 2003, and to 76 years in the West (Maddison, 2007, p. 69). Such growth was made possible thanks to increasingly efficient use of resources and technical progress, as well as support from new academic disciplines – economics and management – and changes in mentality leading to the strengthening of utilitarian values. These phenomena, coupled with the world-changing industrial revolution, laid the foundations for the dynamic form of capitalism we know today, accompanied as it is by practically con-

Table 1. Level of GDP per capita according to region, during the period 1 to 1998 A.D. (based on prices from 1990, in \$). Source: Adapted from: Maddison A., *The World Economy. A Millennial Perspective*, OECD Publications, Paris, 2001, p. 264.

Region/Year	0	1000	1500	1600	1700	1820	1870	1913	1950	1973	1998
Western Europe	450	400	774	894	1024	1232	1974	3473	4594	11534	17921
Eastern Europe	400	400	462	516	566	636	871	1527	2120	4985	5461
Former USSR	400	400	500	553	611	689	943	1488	2834	6058	3893
USA			400	400	527	1257	2445	5301	9561	16689	27331
Australia, New Zealand, Canada			400	400	400	753	2339	4947	7538	13364	20082
Latin America	400	400	416	437	529	665	698	1511	2554	4531	5795
Japan	400	425	500	520	570	669	737	1387	1926	11439	20413
China	450	450	600	600	600	600	530	552	439	839	3117
India	450	450	550	550	550	533	533	673	619	853	1746
Africa	425	416	400	400	400	418	444	585	852	1365	1368
World	444	435	565	593	615	667	867	1510	2114	4104	5709

stant economic growth, which of course brought part of the world into an era of widespread prosperity (above all, in the *Triad* region, in other words, North America, Western Europe and East Asia), but at the same time posed some dramatic dilemmas, concerning the sense of constant growth and the price paid for it, measured in terms of pollution and exploitation of the natural environment, diseases of civilization and disruption of the demographic balance. However, inequality in economic changes also brought the world into an era of unprecedented social inequalities. It became clear that simply following only the dictates of economic growth poses a threat to nature, social order and thus to humanity. Seeking a path to development that would make it possible to improve the quality of life, whilst at the same time respecting the natural environment and the subjectivity of the individual became a matter of necessity, as has been shown by numerous studies and reports, such as successive editions of the *Living Planet Report*, for instance, including the 2014 edition, which warns of the effects of excessive consumption, *business models that focus on short-term profits and fail to account for externalities and long-term costs*, as well as of holding onto *inefficient, outmoded (...) ways of generating (...) energy and producing food, leading to ecological overshoot* (Living Planet Report, 2014). J. Randers also warns of the latter in his book *A Global Forecast for the Next Forty Years. 2052*, especially in the context of a lack of political will to put an end to destructive human activity, as a result of which, according to the author's estimations, until the 2050s, the world population and the world economy will continue to grow more slowly, but still sufficiently fast as to further worsen the climate crisis, accompanied by a growth in the level of poverty of the poorest members of global society, meaning that though there will still be enough food, energy and water to satisfy demand, there will not be enough to meet our needs (Randers, 2012). Threats concerning climate change, vanishing biodiversity, inequality and other social problems are the effect of the short-term, and thus also short-sighted perspectives adopted by society with reference to the economic and political systems it creates. The culture of the West, oriented towards the now and the near future, which thanks to its strength and values has spread a cult of efficiency, consumption and constant growth, finding itself faced with the problems discussed, is however making attempts to come up with recommendations as to how to find a way out of this dramatic situation, now known to us as the idea of sustainable development, presented in 1987, in the UN Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (The Brundtland Commission) as *development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs* (Hauff, 1987, p.

46). Based on another approach, sustainable development is understood to mean economic growth accompanied at the same time by protection of the quality of the environment, where both processes have a mutually reinforcing effect. It is essential to this form of development for there to be a stable relationship between human activities and the natural world, thanks to which the chances of future generations to enjoy a quality of life which is at least as good as our own do not decrease (Mintzer, 1992).

H. Rogall defines sustainable development in very specific detail when he writes: *sustainable development seeks to guarantee everyone alive today and future generations sufficiently high ecological, economic and social-cultural standards within the limits of what can naturally be sustained by the Earth, applying the principle of intra-generational and inter-generational justice* (Rogall, p. 44). This definition proposes there to be four dimensions to sustainable development – namely, the economic, ecological, social and cultural, which in practice makes the economic process a complex and interdisciplinary one, which reaches far beyond the bounds of mainstream economics and requires a rejection of the orthodox economic paradigm in favour of recognizing the economic and social spheres and the natural environment as an integral whole. This approach is not a novel concept, however, but rather a return to the universalist way of understanding reality, which is no stranger to the science of economy and appeared, for example, in the thinking of the Physiocrats, the classical economists, the theory of K. Marx, and, more recently, in that of A. Sen. Going even further back, it was formulated within the framework of general systems religious belief, including in Judeo-Christian civilization. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate a direct relationship between cultural heritage arising from this civilization, and the concept of sustainable development, understood as simultaneous development in both the economic and social spheres, taking into account respect for the limited potential for renewability of nature, where the objective of economy is not to maximize profit and utility, but the quality of life of people in their ecosystem.

#### **The ecological aspect in the heritage of the Judeo-Christian tradition – do not destroy and repair**

The ecological aspect of how societies function was most fully and clearly manifested in pagan cults, in which nature held a dominant position due to being attributed qualities of subjectivity and agency. By rejecting an anthropocentric vision of the world and making man an equal-ranking part of the natural system, religions of the Far East – and more specifically, Taoism, Buddhism and Hinduism – also created sets of values conducive to the respect of nature.

It was only with the message of the Abrahamic religions, or *religions of the Book*, that human beings were raised to a level superior to the other creatures that inhabit the earth, as first formulated in the Book of Genesis: *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth* (Genesis 1:28)<sup>2</sup>. This principle was to become an important source of Western individualism and legitimized the supremacy of the needs of the individual over the balance of nature, but the wider message of Judaism concerning ecology, contained in the Pentateuch, the Talmud and rabbinical commentaries protected the interests of nature against the excessive arrogance of man. The most important imperative in guiding human conduct was *do not destroy or waste* (from the Hebrew *Bal tashchit*), which is considered to be founded on the *Book of Deuteronomy*, Chapter 20:19-20. This passage contains a ban on the cutting down of fruit trees when laying siege to a city. The destruction of fields, vineyards and orchards may have been a possible tactic of warfare, but it was one that was rejected by the Judaic tradition. At the same time, that principle applied not only to armed conflict, but it also extended to other areas of human activity, as explained by Samson Raphael Hirsch, the nineteenth-century German rabbi: *Do not destroy anything! Be a 'mentsh' [responsible person] (...). I lent them (ed. the gifts of nature) to you for wise use only; never forget that I lent them to you. As soon as you use them unwisely, be it the greatest or the smallest, you commit treachery against My world, you commit murder and robbery against My property, you sin against Me!* (Gottlieb, 2006, p. 247). Anything which may indirectly or directly serves the interests of man may not be over-exploited, destroyed, polluted or wasted. This attitude is complemented by the rule contained in the Talmud of *healing / repair of the world* (from the Hebrew *Tikkun olam*), which refers to the responsibility of Jews to perfect the world (Bildstein, 2005, p. 17).

The above principles, because of their general nature, set out a path for relations between man and nature, and are supplemented by more detailed principles which contribute to the ecological profile of Ju-

daism. The ancient Israelites were agricultural tribespeople. The climatic conditions under which they had to operate were marked by a scarcity of rain and the threat of desertification. Their lives thus depended on the cycles of nature, and this was reflected in the specific festivals they celebrated<sup>3</sup>. The Torah however remained central to life, as the means by which all aspects of human life could be analysed and experienced. Through the Torah, everything became holy, including nature (e.g. *Book of Exodus* 19:18-19), by means of which God spoke to a man, supplied his needs, and nature in turn became the means by which the Israelites fulfilled their obligations to God (*Book of Exodus* 23:10-19). Such admiration and respect for nature was manifested amongst other things in the Jewish tradition of the blessing<sup>4</sup> of nature and the pleasures which flow from it. One of the specific commands of an ecological nature was concerned with speciation and the prohibition of crossing species. According to the *Book of Genesis* (1:1-25), the work of creation was founded on the division of beings, whilst at the same time recognizing the diversity of species. The principle of not mixing species (in Hebrew: *Kil'ayim*) was repeated in the *Book of Leviticus* (19:19): *Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind: thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed* and in the *Book of Deuteronomy* (22:9-12), and was subsequently expanded upon in the Jerusalem Talmud, where the ban on crossing different types of grains, vines, animal species and textiles is discussed in detail (Gottlieb, 2006, p. 44). Today, this rule is particularly subject to discussion in the context of GMOs. Some contemporary commentators consider that man created in the image of God should act as his partner in perfecting the world, while others take the point of view that transgenic foods are a violation of the rules against the crossing of species and amount to destruction of the natural order established by God (Omobowale, Singer, Daar, 2009). Transgenic foods may also involve the unwitting consumption of unclean foods. *Kashrut*, the dietary laws which restrict which foods are fit for consumption (or *kosher*) in Judaism, due to certain species being considered unclean, can also be understood in an ecological context<sup>5</sup>. Cloven-hoofed ruminants, which are notable

<sup>2</sup> Quotes from the Old and New Testament are taken from the 1611 King James Bible (KJV), Cambridge Edition, Cambridge, circa 1900.

<sup>3</sup> For example, *Sukkot*, during which there were rites of blessing of rain, and also bunches of branches of palm, myrtle, willow and citrus trees symbolizing fertility, youth and vitality (Gal-Ed, 2005, p. 138); *Shavuot*, associated with the harvest, when houses and synagogues were decorated with greenery and flowers, and fruits and dairy products were consumed (op. cit. p. 65-82) and the spring festival of Passover, when the first ears of barley are cut, to be offered to God as a sacrifice. After seven weeks, on the fiftieth day of the said holiday of *Shavuot*, a sacrifice of the first grains of wheat is offered (op. cit. p. 31-62).

<sup>4</sup> For example, the blessing spoken upon seeing the first blossoming tree of spring: *Blessed are You, Hashem, Our God, Sovereign of the universe, who ensured that nothing is lacking in His world and created in it good creations and good trees in order to pleasure mankind with them. You causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; And wine that maketh glad the heart of man. Blessed be Hashem, Our God, Sovereign of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine* (translation of Polish text based on: *Tu Biszwat, czyli Nowy Rok Drzew/ Tu BiShvat, or 'New Year of the Trees'*, www.jewish.org (01.12.2015).

<sup>5</sup> There are numerous explanations of kosher rules, some of which explain the uncleanliness of some animals as being due to their significance in the cults of neighbouring

for making the most efficient use of plant food, may be consumed, while amphibians, reptiles and aquatic crustaceans, as well as any predators, are considered unclean. For ecological reasons, it is prohibited to consume animals, whose purpose is to control the populations of other species and eliminate parasites (for example, frogs, toads or newts which feed on mosquito larvae) (Gottlieb, 2006b, p. 57-58). Based on the principle of *kashrut*, Judaism requires that the consumption of meat be restricted, a requirement which not only has an ecological dimension, but an ethical one too – the killing of animals was a sacred activity that had to be carried out by a qualified *shochet* (slaughterer), which could have been a way of restricting the unconsidered and excessive killing of animals<sup>6</sup>. The Torah requires mercy and pity to be taken on animals (*Book of Exodus* 23:4-5, 12; *Book of Deuteronomy* 22:4, 25:4). One of the bans on consumption concerned the consumption of body parts and blood of animals that are still alive, which was specified in greater detail in the *Seven Commandments of the Sons of Noah* (Mello, 2002, p. 157)<sup>7</sup>, and it is written elsewhere that: *Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again* (*Book of Deuteronomy* 22:4), while the *Book of Proverbs* also says that animals should be treated with respect (12:10). The prohibition on cooking the meat of a young animal in its mother's milk can be regarded as a sign of ethical reflection on the fate of the animals (*Book of Exodus* 23:19, 34:26, *Book of Deuteronomy* 14:21). It is also worth recalling the concern for the sustainable management of resources and for the conservation of species that can be understood from a fragment of the *Book of Deuteronomy* (22:6-7) about the need to spare the life of the mother of young chicks. This concern for ecological balance was also echoed in the idea of the Sabbath year, which required that nature be given a period of rest, ordering that crops be left fallow, which improved the fertility of the soil, with any crops that grew being intended for the poor and wild animals (*Book of Exodus* 23:10-11). In addition, the weekly Sabbath was intended for both people and animals (*Book of Exodus* 23:12).

The tradition of Judaism, being deeply related to nature, thus created a strong ecological message, which

became the natural heritage of Christianity. However, at a textual level, that pro-ecological message is less clearly echoed in the *New Testament*. Christianity, being a re-interpretation of Judaism based on the spirit of Greek philosophy, provided a far more abstract point of reference. In contrast to the clear and unambiguous directives of the *Old Testament*, the general, universalist moral theory presented in the *New Testament* allows it to be read in an extra-historical context. Until as late as the 1960s, the predominant point of view was still that Christianity had not made any contribution on ecological matters (Bakken, Engel, Engel, 1995), with some researchers looking for the sources of the 20<sup>th</sup> century ecological crisis in modernism, the capitalist economic system, as well as the extreme anthropocentrism and individualism that have developed on the basis of Western Christianity, and Protestantism in particular, which ultimately *disenchanted* nature and deprived it of its divine element (White, 1967). Understood in this way, Western Christianity allowed nature to be understood objectively, as a resource; to be treated with arrogance of a higher being, created in the image and the likeness of God. At the same time, because of the dualism characteristic of the Christian vision of existence, the material world has for many centuries been portrayed with contempt, as a source of sin. However, as already mentioned above, the abstract nature of Christian philosophy means that the problem is not the presence or absence of certain issues in the *New Testament*, but how the message of that source is interpreted. At a descriptive level, accounts in the *New Testament* which are drawn from nature are the source of many parables and comparisons (Najda, 2007), which is understandable because of the deeper relationship between nature and man at the time when the gospels were written. Here, the message concerning man's relationship to nature appears to be especially important. In the *New Testament*, the importance of ecological balance is underlined, by the promise of the salvation of all creation, not just mankind: *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of*

pagan cultures; while others explain it in terms of a threat to health or life resulting from the consumption of certain species.

<sup>6</sup> Ritual slaughter of animals is considered inhumane today, but in a historical context, such an assessment is unfair. Animals could be killed by a qualified person, which minimized the risk of prolonging their agony, and death was caused by using a clean, sharp, unserrated knife of a suitable length to sever the trachea, nerves and arteries in one swift and resolute movement. At the same time, it was recommended that the animal not be observed by other animals during the course of the slaughter, to spare them pain and fear.

<sup>7</sup> Historically, the eating of live animals was not unusual. For example, the earliest surviving Polish cookbook, the seventeenth-century *Compendium Feculorum*, contains the lines [translated from the Polish]: *take thee a live capon, pour wine vinegar down its throat using a funnel, tie it up and leave it to hang for five hours, then pluck with care, prepare and bake it in the usual way or cook it as you wish or by such means shall you a turtle cook, first by cutting off the legs and head alive, then when boiled, carefully remove the top shell, season well with salt and place the turtle on a platter* (Spychaj, 2009).

God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now (Romans 8:19-22). As for the *1st Epistle to the Corinthians*, it says the following: *For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof (1 Corinthians 10:26)*. In the letters of Paul, nature is thus considered to be an object that is of equal standing in God's grace, and the author shows his environmental awareness at least in his praise for not eating meat (Romans 14:21) and twice makes reference to the proper treatment of animals (1 Corinthians 9-10, 1 Timothy 5:18). In the *Gospels of Mark and Matthew*, nature is related to the divinity of Jesus, from the moment of his birth, which is marked by a shining star (Matthew 2:2), until the time of his death, when darkness engulfed the earth (Matthew 27:45), while, during the forty days of fasting in the desert, Jesus was accompanied by wild beasts (Mark 1:13), and the place of his last prayer was in an olive garden. The relationship between God and nature was made especially clear in the *Apocalypse*, where the natural catastrophes and cataclysms have often been interpreted as a lament for the earth as excessively exploited by the Roman Empire, or according to more contemporary interpretations, by humankind in general (Sintado 2015, p. 294-307): *and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up (...). And the third part of the creatures which (...) had life, died (...) and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter (Revelation 8: 6-13)*. Descriptions of nature as destroyed or nature as destructive to man in descriptions of the apocalypse are accompanied by a rupture of the relationship with God. Ideas of nature as resulting from God, and harmonious with Him, are reflected in 20<sup>th</sup> century Christian philosophy of being, not least in the views of T. de Chardin, who saw being in the broad, cosmic sense, but also from an ecological perspective, as the process of evolution of matter, from which life emerges and moves towards the point of pure consciousness. From this perspective, the relationship between the individual and nature ceases to make sense, because the whole of being is permeated with consciousness (spirit), and the position of man is defined as at one with nature, with the process of evolution embracing being as a whole. The whole of creation is moving towards the Omega Point and salvation is something to be found by creation as a whole. The ecological connotations of T. de Chardin's views were acknowledged by the Catholic Church several decades after their publication, even though the Holy Office<sup>8</sup> continued to warn against the dangers of reading the works of T. de Chardin until as late as the 1960s, due to them containing ambiguities with regard to Catholic doctrine. J. Ratzinger did, however, call upon the philosophy of T. de Chardin both in his *Introduction to*

*Christianity*, which makes several references to a cosmic vision of that religion, and also, once as Pope, during the homily he gave in Aosta, where he calls the cosmos a *living host* (Benedict XVI, 2009). Ecological concerns also appeared in papal teachings during the pontificate of John Paul II, though portraying man as being responsible for the natural world, but external to it: *The man of today seems ever to be under threat from what he produces, that is to say from the result of the work of his hands and, even more so, of the work of his intellect and the tendencies of his will. (...) what this manifold activity of man yields (...) turns against man himself. (...) Man (...) is afraid that what he produces (...) can become the means and instrument for an unimaginable self-destruction, compared with which all the cataclysms and catastrophes of history known to us seem to fade away. This gives rise to a question: Why is it that the power given to man from the beginning by which he was to subdue the earth turns against himself, producing an understandable state of disquiet, of conscious or unconscious fear and of menace, which in various ways is being communicated to the whole of the present-day human family and is manifesting itself under various aspects* (John Paul II, 1979). Here, man is thus somehow abstracted from nature (of his own fault). Again, in an earlier document published by Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes* (a work in the creation of which K. Wojtyła was also involved), the question of moral responsibility for the environment was also raised, though in the context of objective considerations – saying that, when treated with due respect, the earth will *bear fruit and become a dwelling worthy of the whole human family* (Paul VI, 1965). A move away from a deeply anthropocentric approach to ecological issues first became visible in the works of Benedict XVI, observing that *the book of nature is one and indivisible* (Francis, 2015; Benedict XVI, 2009), after all man does not create himself, he *is spirit and will, but also nature* (Francis, 2015; Benedict XVI, 2011).

Even though the issue of ecology had been raised in papal teaching since the 1960s, Pope Francis's *Laudato si'* is the first document to be fully dedicated to the issue. Moreover, it also includes important comments on sustainable development.

The majority of the document relates to real problems and environmental threats, and the position adopted is very much in the spirit of the vision of T. de Chardin, with Francis seeing man not as the crowning achievement of creation, but rather as a fragment of it: *The ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God, which has already been attained by the risen Christ, the measure of the maturity of all things. Here we can add yet another argument for rejecting every tyrannical and irresponsible domination of human beings over other crea-*

<sup>8</sup> In 1965, the institution's name was changed to the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

tures. *The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness* (Francis, 2015). Christian eco-philosophy, or eco-theology to be more precise, is something that has developed not only within the Catholic faith. In the Protestant tradition, alongside T. de Chardin's theory of being, such thought was based on the writings of A. N. Whitehead, whose process philosophy described the world as interrelated processes, of which man is an integral part, meaning that all choices and acts of individuals have an influence on surrounding reality. This concept provided the inspiration for the works of J. B. Cobb (1995), who emphasized the continuity and dependency between humans and living nature, and advocated abandoning the anthropocentric point of view and the associated marginalization of the significance of the *nonhuman world*<sup>9</sup>. The Eastern Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew, in his Message to 19<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP19), wrote: *There is no distinction between concern for human welfare and concern for ecological preservation. The way we relate to nature as creation directly reflects the way we believe in God as Creator of all things. The sensitivity with which we handle the natural environment clearly mirrors the sacredness that we reserve for the divine* (Patriarch Bartholomew, 2013).

Both the ecological tradition of Judaism, and later – Christianity – go far beyond the command *to subdue the earth*, defining the boundaries of the first of the planes of social development in terms of sustainable development.

### Social balance in the Judaeo-Christian tradition

Judaism developed one of probably the most sustainable concepts of how society functions, protecting against the growth of excessive social inequalities, permanent accumulation of capital, the burden of debt on successive generations, hunger, and even the loss of a sense of purpose in professional life. The source of such practical solutions, as in the case of the Christian tradition, was in the commandment to love thy neighbour, as well as in the expectation of mercy, and not sacrifice, as expressed in the *Book of Hosea* (6:6). The mechanisms to prevent social inequalities, accumulation of capital and power and inheritance of one's parents debts were the institutions of the Sabbath year and the Jubilee year. The former appeared in cycles every seven years, referring to the

seventh day of rest, which also explains why land (including orchards and vineyards) was not cultivated during the Sabbath year, and was allowed to lie fallow, while yields of crops from the Sabbath year could be used by both their owners as and all those in need: the poor, travellers, etc. It was also a year for the release of debts: *At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD'S release (Deuteronomy 15:1-2)*. Every forty-nine years (seven times seven), however, there was a Jubilee year, during which, in addition to the principles of the Sabbath year, any sales of land were cancelled, with the land being returned to its original owner<sup>10</sup>, and all slaves were also liberated. As T. Sedláček writes: *These provisions express a conviction that freedom and inheritance should not be permanently taken away from any Israelite. Last but not least, this system reminds us that no ownership lasts forever and that the fields we plow are not ours but the Lord's* (2011, p. 78). There was also a redistribution of wealth in the form of the leftovers of the harvest: *And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger (Leviticus 19:9-10)* and *tzedakah*, broadly understood to signify charity, which consists of, among other things, a tithe<sup>11</sup> of one's income being passed onto the temple, which is handed out every three years to the most disadvantaged, as well as of other forms of material support too. Charity in Israeli society was seen not in terms of an act to guarantee future salvation, but as a shared obligation, which also should be met in a discreet way in order to maintain social cohesion as a primary goal.

The concept of social balance in Judaism was not limited only to the tools of redistribution described above. Instead, they were rather the method of implementing of the main determining themes of the Judaic concept of social justice: care for the community, care for the needy, in other words, charity, and the aforementioned obligation to repair the world. Judaism (just like Christianity too in fact) was a religious and social system created for a relatively small group of people, and one of its fundamental values was therefore a focus on the common good and the importance of nurturing community. This is evident not only in the mechanisms described above, but also

<sup>9</sup> Eco-theology, a field of thought which developed from the end of the 1960s, is part of the process of reflection on the religious sources of sustainable development, but because of the breadth of the subject, the issue is only touched upon briefly here.

<sup>10</sup> Originally, the land was divided among the different tribes of Israel.

<sup>11</sup> A tenth part of income or the harvest. In the case of the particularly rich, it was, however, a fifth part, though it would not be so big as to subject the rich man to an unsatisfactory quality of life. According to J. Attali, the Talmud even says that the rich should eat well and prosper, so as not to be tempted to advise the poor to follow his example of frugality! (Attali, 2003, p. 95).

in later tradition: as one Hasidic proverb says: *The community of the living is the carriage of the Lord* (Easwaran, 2005, p. 147). And in the Babylonian Talmud, it says: *When the community is in trouble let not a man say, 'I will go to my house and I will eat and drink and all will be well with me'* (Babylonian Talmud, Taanit 11a). Care for the community can also be seen in the order to provide support to the most vulnerable members of society, even if they are not necessarily native to that society, as is shown in the following verses: *And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself* (Leviticus 19:33-34) and *He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt* (Deuteronomy 10:18-19; Exodus 22:21) or *For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother (...)* (Deuteronomy 15:11) and: *thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor* (Exodus 23:6). The command to improve the world also has a social dimension, which in this context must be understood as the elimination of poverty and injustice from the world through the mercy and justice: *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy* (Micah 6:8). The message of the *New Testament* makes the principle of charity a key element of Christian social ethics. Commands to ensure the fair distribution of wealth, give alms, eliminate inequalities and guarantee support for the most needy, in other words, attitudes that strengthen social capital and foster widespread prosperity are replaced in the *New Testament* by a more generalized commandment of love and an imperative of solidarity.

When discussing the context of social development, it is also worth paying attention to the importance of work in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. In the *Old Testament*, it was something that was seen as important, due to man's obligation to repair the world. This is also why it was treated as a form of divine blessing, as an authorization to continue the work of God by caring for the Garden of Eden. After original sin, the privilege of shaping the world in the likeness of the Creator became an unpleasant chore, one to be fulfilled with sweat on one's brow, but work still remained a way of achieving human potential. Physical work seem to be held in particular esteem. David, before he became king, kept a flock of sheep, as did Amos, the judge Gideon was a farmer before an angel called upon him, whilst he was threshing grain, to rescue Israel from the Midianites. In the *New Testament*, Jesus and Joseph were said to be carpenters, while John, James and Peter were fishermen. According to the rules of the *Old Testament*, it was important that the work was not done under conditions

of coercion (Attali, 2003, p. 36), it not being allowed to force anyone to work. The sick, the old and young are particularly protected from working under harmful conditions. According to the *Old Testament* of work, it also had an important economic dimension, thanks to its relation to growth in wealth (*Proverbs* 10:4; 12:24, 27; 13:4; 18:9, etc.), which was a desired state, and evidence of God's blessing.

In the *New Testament*, both Jesus and his disciples worked, but the very act of work itself, especially physical labour, was viewed more ambiguously, because, as a result of sin, it had become a matter of human destiny and obligation (*1 Thessalonians* 4:11; *2 Thessalonians* 3:10-12), could be a source of humiliation – the function of tax collector was portrayed with a certain disdain (even though the principles of social justice expressed in the teachings of Jesus – of rendering unto God what is God's and unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar – demonstrate an acceptance of the system of redistribution of wealth), as is the physical work of tending to pigs mentioned in the *Parable of the Prodigal Son* – but could also be a way of devoting oneself to the worship of God (*Colossians* 3:23; *1 Corinthians* 10:31), and be seen as a natural necessity, as expressed in the quotation, *if any would not work, neither should he eat* (*2 Thessalonians*, 3:10). Both in the *Old* and the *New Testament*, work, however, did not constitute an end in itself, and the balance between work and leisure was meant to be guaranteed by the seventh day of rest, to be devoted to contemplation of the effects of one's actions. God after all did not rest after he had completed the act of creation out of tiredness, but to admire the effects of his work. A day of rest from work is to be understood as a call to stop what you are doing and admire what has been achieved – and ultimately as salvation from the oppression of the continuous treadmill of work.

The message of the Bible concerning social order is perhaps the main theme of the work. The observations made only represent a small fraction of the social phenomena which are commented on therein, those that are of particular relevance in the context of contemporary problems – such as the issue of inequality of distribution of income, the stratification of wealth, problems associated with the accumulation of capital, and with social capital, or those related to employment. These issues are an integral part of any model of sustainable development, and play a key role in creating the next plane of any such model.

### **The significance of material goods and the rules of economic life in the Judaeo-Christian tradition**

According to the *Old Testament*, the material world and material goods were not a taboo, and earthly life could be a revelation of God's blessing: *And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy*

God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. (...) And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers to give thee. The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand (Deuteronomy 28:2-12). Wealth, and even luxury were not unwelcome to God, and in the *Book of Exodus* (26:3-13), they were even demanded, in the description of the splendour of the tabernacle dedicated to him, and he also expected a portion of income as a way of paying honour to him (*Proverbs* 3:9). Wealth was evidence of divine favour (*Proverbs* 10:22), and its accumulation was in keeping with divine law, being seen both as an activity to be engaged in for the glory of God, while at the same time also being the fruit of his grace (*Deuteronomy* 8:17-18; *1 Chronicles* 29:11-12). Such a blessing was enjoyed amongst others by Moses, Jacob, Isaac, Abraham, Boaz, David, Solomon and Nehemiah; but material goods were not allowed to become a *golden calf* and an end in itself (*Job* 31:25): *Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom! Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?* (*Proverbs* 23:4-5), and also were not allowed to be derived from dishonest practices: *Ye shall do no unrighteousness (...) in meteyard, in weight, or in measure* (*Leviticus* 19:35). *Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase* (*Proverbs* 13:11). The owner of wealth not only enjoyed a privilege, but above all had a burden of responsibility to the rest of the community (*Ecclesiasticus (Book of the Apocrypha)* 29:1-28), to use it in the best interests of all, according to the principle of justice (*Deuteronomy* 15; 24:6; *Ezekiel* 18:7-8), to make use of it to foster virtues of generosity and solidarity, but also entrepreneurship (*Deuteronomy* 15) and in the service of God (*Matthew* 25:14-30). In several passages, the influence of the ethics of moderation is also noticeable, for example: *give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain* (*Proverbs* 30:8-10). Wealth was a gift, and its function was to guarantee social order, for example,

through its redistribution in the form of gleanings of the harvest, *tzedakah* and the fulfilment of recommendations in the Sabbath and Jubilee years. Relative equality and widespread prosperity are the founding principles of economic governance according to the *Old Testament*. This was to be seen in the method of distribution of land, which could not be sold (because it belonged to God, *Leviticus* 25:23-28), but only leased, and returned to the original owner in the Jubilee year; the obligation to treat employees fairly and to pay them a wage that they can live on and which is paid on time (*Deuteronomy* 24:14-15; *Proverbs* 3:27-28); as well as a specific approach to financial matters. In the Judaic community, there was an order to provide support for the needy in the form of charitable loans, and, at the same time, a ban on collecting interest from members of the community is repeated in many places (*Exodus* 22:25-27; *Leviticus* 25:35-37; *Deuteronomy* 23:19-20; etc.). The *Old Testament* model of economic governance included not only an order to care about the needy, but also certain indications as to how to generate wealth. Chapter 11 of the *Book of Ecclesiastes* encouraged reasonable risk-taking, while protecting invested capital by spreading it over several different projects (*Ecclesiastes* 11:1-6). Judaism explicitly forbade many practices that had an impact which was not good for consumers and was negative from the point of view of free competition, such as for example: deliberately not paying debts, delaying payment, bribery, corruption, speculation, overcharging, false weights and measures, the sale of defective goods (Kietliński, 2006). As S. Wagner-Tsukamoto (2013) claims, the stories of Joseph and Solomon determined the direction of state economic policy. Both Egypt governed by the Pharaoh with Joseph's support, and Israel under the rule of Solomon, were countries of prosperity. Joseph achieved his position thanks to his proficiency in managing and understanding changes in economic situation, which he proved by interpreting the Pharaoh's dream of the fat and lean cows. The terrible effects of the lean years were able to be avoided thanks to appropriate fiscal policy (*Genesis* 41:34; 47:24-26) and the imposition upon subjects, in years of prosperity, of taxes amounting to one-fifth of the harvest. Egypt in the times of Joseph was characterized by religious and ethnic diversity, which provided the foundation for cooperation and development. The story of Solomon also describes the importance of the involvement of government in creating prosperity and promoting the public good and the importance of economic (and socio-cultural) pluralism. Solomon built up his power, amongst other things, based on his broad-ranging foreign policy, which was supported by a huge number of marriages concluded to strengthen ties in international politics. The collapse of Solomon's power came with the negation of the principle of equal treatment for all and the granting of special privileges to the tribe of Judah, which alienated the

other tribes and placed an unjust burden of higher taxes on citizens. Just as in Egypt under the government of the Pharaoh and his advisor Joseph, prosperity and success lasted as long as the government continued to act on behalf of the public good, by respecting pluralism, openness and supporting cooperation between different social groups. These values were destroyed in Egypt, with the advent of the new ruler and his decision to kill the first-born sons of the Israelites and the introduction of measures to force members of this tribe to carry out harder work than they ever done before. In both cases, the restriction of rights, freedoms and liberties coupled with a differentiation in the rights and privileges of different groups turned out to have an adverse effect on development, resulting in a loss of social, cultural and ethnic diversity.

The values of the *Old Testament* provide a clear template for action in the economic sphere, right up from micro- to macro-economic level. According to W. Sombart, this was to become the foundation of the capitalist system, which can be seen in the relationship of the Jews with God, a relationship that is based on a contract – in return for obedience to the divine commandments, reward on earth is obtained in the form of God's blessing, without which it is not possible to achieve success or wealth, meaning that wealth thus becomes a desired state, even a proof of piety. Prudence, saving and hard work, in other words those attitudes that M. Weber attributed to the Puritans (Weber, 2011), were, in W. Sombart's view, attributes that were previously particularly characteristic of the Jews (Sombart, 2001), before going from the attitudes that enable the development of capitalism.

In the *New Testament*, the attitude towards material goods and wealth is less enthusiastic, as is attested to by numerous well-known quotes (*Matthew* 19:21-24; *Luke* 18:25-27; *James* 5; *Revelation* 9:17-22, etc.). Here, the view of material goods is clearly influenced by Platonic idealism and the resulting indifference to the material world, as well by the Stoics' distrust of wealth and honours. At the same time, the founding principles of Christian ethics were characterized by considerable similarity to the attitudes of the sect of the Essenes<sup>12</sup>, which recognized equality, work on behalf of the group, the sharing of goods, and care for the needy and the poor as its basic values, and wealth as being associated with a source of suffering, oppression and social injustice, in the same way as slavery. Despite the ambivalent position to wealth in the *New Testament*, and a message that in most cases does not leave any room for ambiguity – *Ye cannot serve God and mammon* (*Matthew* 6:24), as T. Sedláček has counted, as many as nineteen out of thirty of Jesus's parables are concerned with questions of an economic nature (Sedláček,

2012, p. 146), which proves that economic phenomena were still given significant weight in the Gospels. The model of economic life here differs from the specific orders and prohibitions contained in the *Old Testament*. However, despite the fact that the negative attitude of the *New Testament* to wealth is often emphasized, in fact, it is not wealth itself, but the dishonesty, injustice and anti-social behaviour of the rich which are condemned. Joseph of Arimathea was wealthy, Nicodemus, the Roman centurion, donated his riches for the building a synagogue and took pity on an ailing servant (*Matthew* 8:5-13, *Luke* 7:5), while a rich Ethiopian official also felt the call to Christianity (*Acts* 8: 25-40), and Paul the Apostle, originally known as Saul of Tarsus, was not a poor man, but a Roman citizen, born into a Pharisaic family. However, it is neither the attitude to wealth, nor to the methods by which it is obtained that constitute Christianity's most important contribution to shaping attitudes that support economic development. In Christianity, the values of Judaism were transformed in the spirit of the philosophy of Ancient Greece, with particular emphasis on the freedom of choice (*1 Corinthians* 6:12, *Galatians* 5:1; *2 Corinthians* 3:17; *1 Peter* 2:16; *Luke* 4:18) and the personal responsibility of the individual (*2 Corinthians* 5:10; *Galatians* 6:7-8; *Matthew* 27:24; *Ephesians* 2:10; *Romans* 14:12; *Luke* 10:30-37, 12:48; *Colossians* 3:23; *2 Thessalonians* 3:11-18), thus contributing to the emergence of an individualistic society that gave rise to the world's fastest-growing civilization in economic terms, namely Western civilization. Many theorists have pointed to Christian values as the source of the capitalist economy, including M. Weber and R. Merton who saw pro-development values in the Protestant model, as well as J. Gimpel, M. Novak and N. Rothbard, who attributed them to Catholicism. M. Weber's thesis concerned the influence of puritanical Protestantism, as well as the deep individualism and virtues of hard work, savings and moderation related to it, on the emergence of industrial capitalism (Weber, 2011). R. Merton (Shapin, 1988) saw a correlation between the piety of Protestantism, and the development of experimental science and the elimination of illiteracy. According to M. Novak, it was in fact the medieval Catholic Church that created the conditions that made the development of capitalism possible, and it did so not in the centres of large cities, where, according to the proponents of a pro-capitalist profile of Protestantism this process was supposed to have begun, but in rural areas, where Cistercian monasteries for the first time introduced a rationalized approach to management and technological change, allowing for the greater mechanization of work, and in effect creating competing business entities. In relation to this, M. Novak made reference to the work of J. Gimpel, ac-

<sup>12</sup> One of the three most important ancient Jewish religious sects, alongside the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

ording to whom Cistercian monasteries were some of the most economically efficient entities that existed in Europe, and perhaps even worldwide during in the period under consideration (Isaac 2005, p. 183) and that the work they did was not done in the usual spirit for the time during feudalism, but instead was conducted according to the principles of the capitalist economy. N. Rothbard (1976), referring to Thomism and the Spanish Scholastics, also traces the sources of capitalism back to Catholic values. The common aim of the work of these authors was to prove that the various branches of Christianity made it possible to put the Western civilized world on the path to rapid economic growth and development thanks to values that were religious in origin and supported the development of capitalism.

The message inherited from the Judaeo-Christian tradition, in addition to its ecological and social aspects, thus also leaves an equally important amount of room for economic development, as the final element necessary for sustainable development.

### Conclusion

The economic growth and development that have characterized the world for the past the 200 years have had no precedent. This phenomenon has helped to bring about an increase in the quality and length of life of many of the inhabitants of our planet, practically eliminating problems of hunger and illiteracy in developed regions and reducing the level of such problems in developing countries. Such impressive material development has, however, been achieved at the expense of the environment, exploited by an economy of greed and the objectification of living natural resources, and at the expense of social relations on a global scale, where the gap in wealth between the richest and poorest countries (and individuals) has never been as deep before as it is today. At the same time, work and consumption have become perhaps some of the most important forms of conducting social relations, and this has come about as a result of the holding up of short-term utilitarian values, obsessed with the profit of businesses and utility to the consumer, as the founding values of the economic process. Today, Western society, which has been built on the foundations of Judaeo-Christian civilization, is increasingly recognizing the need for an understanding of economic development, as one of the elements of progress, on an equal footing with progress of a social and environmental nature. An attempt to shake the foundations of the neo-classical economic paradigm, which is visible in the increasingly bold formulation of economic goals at variance with utilitarian principles, an increase in the popularity of approaches represented by the social economy, happiness, moderation, or, it being the main topic of this text: the economics of sustainable development, are proof of the mental shift which

may be a contributory factor in bringing about a transition to the next phase of capitalism. These approaches, which take account of social needs other than just those which can be met through consumption and work – needs concerned with distributive justice, which respect the limitations of nature, and, at the same time, recognize material development as a desirable process – have their genetic code in the roots of Judaeo-Christian civilization.

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