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Sandal Jan-Urban, Doctor of Philosophy, Professor, Rector and Owner, Fil. Dr. Jan-U. Sandal Institute, 31 Kløverveien, 1475 Finstadjordet, Norway

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-8072-0822

e-mail: jan-u.sandal@janusandal.no

God's Economic System

Abstract. Introduction. This article analyzes God's economic system based on biblical scriptures. The Bible contains perspectives that are favorable to man and society. There are basically two economic system in the world today; one is to satisfy human needs and desires through hard work as much as that is possible, and the other is based on biblical principles in the Word of God.

Purpose. The purpose is to analyze biblical scriptures on the subject of God's economic. A number of research questions are prominent: can man achieve the same result without God's economic system, and what is the church? The research methods are based on the use of relevant biblical references and on the exegetical observation, interpretation and application of the Scriptures.

Results. God as the provider is the basic principle of God's economic system and occurs from the beginning of the Scripture. The economy of God is in faith and not in finances and material things. God dispenses Himself into the human race. Dispensation is an administrative arrangement for the household. God's people are the body of Christ; a church is not a building or organization; it is a living entity. Managing the careers or businesses may be more important than serving others, doing good, spending time with family and friends or paying attention to civic and spiritual life but emotional attachment to wealth and status is an obstacle to trusting God for all that is needed in life, thus avoiding dependence on financial resources.

Conclusions. The article shows that God's economy system does not exclude riches and wealth, prosperity, material goods or any other treasures. God's economy system is simply worshipping God with prayer and praise and trusting God as the provider of all good things in this life and in eternity. Research has shown the need for clarification of relevant biblical principles, and continuous research on the topic God's economy system is much wanted.

Keywords: God's economic system; wealth and prosperity; churches; household management; family; prayer and praise.

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Сандал Я. У., доктор економічних наук, професор, ректор, Інститут Яна-Урбана Сандала, Фінстадйордет, Норвегія

Божа економічна система

Анотація. У статті досліджено Божу економічну систему на основі біблійних писань. Встановлено, що сьогодні у світі існують дві економічні системи: перша задовольняє людські потреби та бажання через наполегливу працю наскільки це можливо, а друга базується на біблійних принципах у Слові Божому. Акцентовано, що Біблія містить перспективи, сприятливі для людини та суспільства. Методи дослідження базуються на використанні відповідних біблійних посилань, а також на екзегетичному спостереженні, тлумаченні та застосуванні Святого Письма. Відмічено, що Бог як постачальник є рушієм Божої економічної системи. Господарство Бога полягає у вірі, а не у фінансах і матеріальних речах. Стаття показує, що Божа економічна система не виключає багатство та процвітання, матеріальні блага чи будь-які інші скарби, але Божа економічна система — це просто поклоніння Богу з молитвою та хвалою та довіра Богу як постачальнику всіх благ у цьому житті та у вічності. Дослідження показали потребу в роз'ясненні відповідних біблійних принципів, та необхідність подальших досліджень на тему Божої економічної системи.

Ключові слова: Божа економічна система; багатство і процвітання; ведення домашнього господарства; родина; молитва і хвала.

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Formulation of the problem. Most people experience the fruits, good and bad of the economic system under which they live their lives. Nevertheless, most people are probably more or less familiar with the fact that there are economic systems in the world, but not everyone knows that there is a Divine Economic System. An economic system contains, or aspires to contain principles of governmental rule and power structures over land and

people. Economic systems of growth are human-made structures and follow the nature of humanity, both in logic, greed, desire, power and ethics. What they have in common is that they have all failed to predict the future, have all failed to function as successful and prosperous instruments of government over land and people, and have all failed to promote a fair distribution of wealth or to promote a positive vision and hope for the future. The

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Bible contains perspectives that are conducive to political, economic, religious, and moral freedom, but it does not prescribe any particular form of government or any particular human-made economic system. State-controlled or centralized economies, that concentrate power in the hands of a few individuals, limit the freedom they purport to protect; therefore, power should be distributed to protect individuals from greed and exploitation. The study of economics culturally, traditionally and scientifically revolves around a number of adopted forms and methods, empirical, experimental, observational, mathematical, etc. and attempts to explain or predict relevant phenomena. God's economic system is visualized in the Bible, the Word of God.

Formulation of research goals. The article raises a number of scientific questions. What is God's economic system? Does God's economic system exclude riches and wealth, prosperity, material goods or any other treasures that man can obtain? Can man achieve the same result without God's economic system? What is a church?

The methods are based on exegetical observation, interpretation and application of the Scripture. The methods present a systematic approach that include keywords, contextual studies, comparison and contrast, current scholarly issues, problems in interpretation of Biblical texts. Biblical verses are analyzed and compared.

Analysis of recent research and publications. In this research, the references to the Scripture are based on the King James Bible, published in 1611, and referred to as the KJV (The Holy Bible King James Version, 1611) [11]. In 1604, King James appointed about 50 scholars to work on the translation and the new English translation was approved by him as the head of the Church of England and is therefore dedicated to the king. The KJV has been widespread throughout the Anglo-American continent ever since its publication and is still the most popular version of the Bible, used by over 31% of Christians and considered the most faithful, scholarly, and accessible translation of the Bible to date.

Quite a few scholars have studied the subject of God's economic system. At a summer conference in Los Angeles in 1964, Witness Lee gave a speech on the subject, which was later published in book form titled *The Economy of God*, published 1968 by Living Stream Ministry [6]. The book, which is based on the speech and an update of the wording, deals with the phenomenon that the economy of God is in faith and not of finances and material things, referring to 1. Timothy 1:4.

Austin Hill and Scott Rae, in their book *The Virtues of Capitalism: A Moral Case for Free Markets* [5] state that God created the world and called it good, referring to Genesis 1: 31. They also refer to the fact that the material world is good and that man has been entrusted with dominion over the earth and should enjoy the benefits but also take responsibility for caring for the world. They conclude that it is very important to recognize that a person's prosperity is ultimately a blessing from God.

Linda H. Chapman, in her book *God's Economic System: Kings & Priests* [1] argues that there are basically two main economic systems in the world today. One is to satisfy human needs and desires through hard work as far as that is possible and the other is based on biblical principles in the Word of God and operates accordingly. God's economic system is using the God given abilities and talents to create wealth and to change the economic status to enjoy the benefits of a prosperous and abundant life.

Audrey L. Dickey, in his book *God's Way and Finances: The Kingdom of God's Economic System vs. the World's Economy* [3] states the fact that no one can serve two masters; in wealth, money, possessions, or whatever, "You cannot serve God and Mammon" referring to Matthew 6.24. There are two economic systems in the world; the Kingdom of God's and the world's and people will have to decide which one to serve.

Dwight Nichols, in his book *God's plans for your finances* [8] states that the Bible does not teach socialism, but proposes a free enterprise system in which each individual has the right and responsibility to produce, save, invest and create wealth. The economic inheritance is much broader than just paying bills and meeting the daily needs, Nichols points out, citing Psalm 37:25 "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging for bread".

Ron McKenzie, in his book *God's Economy* [7] refers to Exodus 20:15 and Luke 10:27, quoting do not steal and love your neighbor as yourself. His critique of modern economics is that it is pragmatic, and focuses on what will work. Instead, one should accept that everything on earth belongs to God whether people acknowledge God or not. What is wanted is an economy that is good and right in God's eyes.

Andrew Hartropp, in his book *God's Good Economy – doing Economic Justice in Today's World* [4] raises a crucial question; what is economic justice? The author answers by stating that what the Bible says is true, absolute truth. He refers Deuteronomy 32:3-4, God loves justice and is just in all He does; justice is rooted in who God is.

David Swanson [12] in his book *The Economy of God: Discovering the Joy of Financial Obedience*, discusses the joy of obedience to God in financial matters. He has witnessed how money has become the source of pain, strife, frustration and division. At the same time, he emphasizes the fact that Jesus spoke more about money than any other single subject in the Bible. He refers to Luke 16:10 and highlights that working and producing, earning, spending, saving and giving should be done in obedience to God to honor Him and thus be a blessing to all who participate.

Paul L. Cuny in his book *Secrets of the Kingdom Economy: How You can Flourish in God's Economy* [2], discusses the principles of the kingdom economy; how it is possible to move from the ordinary to the extraordinary and overcome otherwise economic downturns and

suffering referring to Matthew 6:10. God's kingdom is open to everyone; God does not look at the position or occupation, but at the personality of each person.

John Raumann, in his book *Stewardship and the Economy of God*, [10] begins by examining of the early Christian use of the Greek word *oikonomia*, which gives the term *stewardship* in the New Testament. The word study approach will avoid starting with the word *stewardship* in English language Bibles and direct attention to the economy of God.

Soon Paik, in his book *The Economy of the Kingdom of God* [9], emphasizes that a Christian life is to live three lives in the present world in the aspect of the coming Kingdom of God. It means to live in the spiritual live, in the Trinity, the glorious economic life as an economic man and woman and in the glorious Biblical life that preserves the Kingdom of God.

Outline of the main research material. The material world is fundamentally good, because it was created by God: Genesis 1:31 KJV "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, *it was* very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day". Human beings are set free to use and benefit from the material world but also to take care of the world in a responsible way.

God-given intelligence, initiative and creativity provide innovation and for the benefit of humanity. Society is to be honest, which means that people should not cheat each other in economic matters, and individuals can legitimately own private property although God is the ultimate owner of everything, Lev. 25:23 KJV "The land shall not be sold forever: for the land *is* mine; for ye *are* strangers and sojourners with me".

In addition to taking care of nature, being responsible also means taking care of oneself and one's family. God has not forgotten those who cannot provide for themselves, the poor ones. God's Law for society provides many ways to financially support those who cannot support themselves, Deuteronomy 15:1-11, 26:12-13 KJV and it is the responsibility of the wealthy to look after the needs of the unfortunate. Keeping the Sabbath tradition of setting aside one day a week for rest, would help people trust God to provide for them during the six working days.

Man should lend to many but not borrow. Individuals are responsible for their own prosperity, Prov. 10:4-5 KJV "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: But the hand of the diligent maketh rich. He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: But he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame". There is no automatic prosperity guaranteed by God, and wealth does not last forever. Wisdom and character are necessary to create a life of prosperity. Entrepreneurial character, a strong work ethic, and personal responsibility are critical to creating a life of economic prosperity.

The opposite, the lazy and slothful is also well described; Prov. 19:24 KJV "slothful *man* hideth his hand in *his* bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again" and Prov. 24:30-34 KJV "I went by the field of the slothful, And by the vineyard of the man void of

understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, And nettles had covered the face thereof, And the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; And thy want as an armed man".

In any case, it is God's blessing that makes the man prosperous as shown in Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 KJV, "There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto, more than I?" The same blessing is shown in Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 KJV, "Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion. Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God. For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart". Wealth and prosperity do not come from the man alone, but from God's blessing. This fact is as true today, in the advanced global economy, as it was in the old ancient agricultural economy and from the very beginning.

To enjoy the fruits of life's struggle, be it labor, strenuousness or entrepreneurship, everything is made possible by God and He says it is a good thing to enjoy life as a gift of blessing. Godly work is willing to depend on God's guidance and authority, and the magnificent growth is spread worldwide as a blessing of God.

Abraham trusted God and depended on his provision, Genesis 22:14 KJV "And Abraham called the name of that place *Jehovahjireh*: as it is said *to* this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen". God promised Abraham fame, fruitfulness and good relationships, Genesis 22:17 KJV "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies". By himself Abraham could not provide what he accomplished, only by God's blessing was it possible. Abraham became very wealthy, having acquired servants, livestock, silver, gold, land, unspecified number of people and precious metals as the result of commercial transactions, Genesis 13:2 KJV "And Abram *was* very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold". Abraham was a pastoral patriarch with a large number of people and animals under his care and he was obviously a steward of God's resources.

The economic system of kings is a different story. Kings have the formal power to dictate activities, to confiscate wealth, labor, people and land. Kings gain the formal power either by succession or by conquest. Either way, they also depend on God's blessing.

King Solomon's first great task was to build the Temple of the Lord. This was a massive and impressive

accomplishment that made Israel a powerful kingdom in terms of military strength, economic wealth, territorial size, centralization of government and worship. The large labor force was conscripted from all of Israel and consisted of enslaved workers and paid Israelites; 1 Kings 5:15-17 KJV "And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains; Beside the chief of Solomon's officers which were over the work, three thousand and three hundred, which ruled over the people that wrought in the work; And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house". King Solomon enjoyed great prosperity, wealth and prestige by God's blessing. King Solomon was the wealthiest and most powerful man on earth in his day, but soon his fortunes changed.

As the centralized government, the building projects, the military and infrastructure grew the need for more labor, free and enslaved, food and other necessities expanded rapidly throughout the country. Israel eventually ended up like any other nation with centralized government and heavy bureaucracy introducing forced labor, heavy taxation and a central elite ruling over the rest of the country. As long as King Solomon worked according to God's plans he was blessed, but as he grew accustomed to power and wealth he became selfish, arrogant, and unfaithful. He began to use much of the nation's wealth for his own benefit, he had seven hundred princesses and three hundred concubines, he loved many foreign women who turned his heart to other gods, he was no longer faithful to his God, and Israel would soon descend from its peak.

Gideon represents obedience and faithfulness to God. Gideon delivered the Israelites from the power of the Medianites and there was peace in Israel for forty years. However, Gideon did not want to rule over the people, Judges 8:22-23 KJV "Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you". Gideon was blessed with seventy sons and many wives, Judges 8:30 "And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives". Anyhow, when Gideon died, the Israelites forgot about their God and turned to other gods, Judges 8: 33 -35 KJV "And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baalberith their god. And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side: Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel".

Sowing seed in the ground means success in everything the man does. Sowing the best means there will be plenty to reap, Ecclesiastes 11.6 KJV "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not

thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good". Similarly, being generous will bring a return of prosperity, Proverbs 11:24-25 KJV "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself". Obedience is the key to success when sowing, Deuteronomy 28:2-5 KJV "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." Understanding the phrase "reaping what you sow" is very important to the meaning of God's plan for the economy and the well-being of the poor and the rich.

God's economy means that God dispenses Himself into the human race. Dispensation has almost the same meaning as the Greek word economy, which means an administrative arrangement for the household, a household government or the distribution of the stewardship God's plan to his children. God's economy is in faith and not in finances and material things.

In 1 Timothy 1:4 KJV God's plan appears, "Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do." The substance of God is Spirit, John 4:24, KJV "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth". Man is created with three parts, a spirit, a soul and a body, 1 Thessalonians 5:23 KJV "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ". Only man has the innermost organ, the spirit, to be in contact with God, no other creature is equipped with this part.

The purpose of God's economy is to release the Tribune God in one Spirit into the human spirit so that God's people can worship God in truth. In fact, God created man to be His empty container, or vessel, so he could contain Himself and be the only content, 1 Corinthians 2:5 KJV "that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God", and 2 Corinthians 4:7 KJV "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us". God wants to fill man completely so that He can express Himself through man as being the living Body of Christ. These people are the house of God, Ephesians 3:15 KJV "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named", the church, the Body of Christ.

Throughout history, people have had ideas about what the church is or what it should be. The ideas are diverse, shaped primarily by religion, history, tradition, society, politics, market forces, and horrifying ideologies. Churches represent magnificent buildings, structures, organizations, people and enormous profits and wealth as

well as political power, condemnation, exclusion, oppression and violence. People belong to churches through membership; they form groups that worship on Sundays, follow the teachings of Jesus, do charitable and social work, and engage in a wide range of other social activities characterized mainly by club formats. This is what people have made out of the church, but to find God's meaning of the church one has to read the Word of God.

The first time the word church is mentioned in the Bible is in Matthew 16:16-18 KJV «And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it». Christ is the son of the living God; therefore, the Church must also be a living entity, not a building or a physical structure. The church is the assembly, or congregation of all those who have been called out of the world by God.

The church belongs to Jesus; the first time He mentioned the church, He said, «My church. The church is not of anybody or anything else than the Lord Himself». The church is not something made by a human organization or belonging to a denomination or bearing the names of people, places or ideologies. The "rock" is the foundation of the church, the message, not a place or a building. The great mystery consists of two parts, Christ and the church, Ephesians 5:32 KJV "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church". Christ and the church together are the great mystery. Therefore, the church is a living entity, not a physical structure. The church is the called-out ones, those who believe in Jesus Christ and have been joined to Him by faith. God's economy is to dispense Himself and fill man with God's Person in His Trinity and life will then be meaningful and full of purpose. Man must worship God in spirit and truth, which is with prayer and praise.

Wealth is sometimes the result of work or entrepreneurship and can lead to a privileged position and thus be an effective barrier to prayer and praise and to follow Jesus. Managing one's career or business may be more important than serving others, doing good, spending time with family and friends, or paying attention to one's civic and spiritual life. Jesus' encounter with a young rich man, who asked "what can I do to inherit eternal life", speaks directly about economic activity, Mark 10:21 KJV "Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me". When the young man heard the answer, he was shocked and went away saddened. His position and emotional attachment to wealth and status prevent him from following Jesus. The solution is not to try harder, to increase wealth, to advance in one's career or to do more

good, but to accept God's love and to follow Jesus, trusting God for all that is needed for life and not rely on financial resources.

The temple incident shows Jesus attacking the materialistic tradition that keeps people from worshipping God, Mark 11:15-18 KJV "And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; And would not suffer that any man should carry *any* vessel through the temple. Then He taught, saying to them, Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations? but you have made it a den of thieves. And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine." The temple was a place of prayer, and it was a place that was supposed to be open to all nations and not a place to make a profit from people seeking God, therefore Jesus entered the temple to restore it to its purpose.

Some Pharisees and supporters of Herod were sent to catch Jesus in a speech for which he could be arrested. They wanted Jesus to tell them whether or not it was right to pay taxes to Cesar, or not. They showed Him a Roman coin to answer them, Mark 12:16-17 KJV "And they brought *it*. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him". This was not a voluntary gift, but a legal obligation. The circulation of the coins in the country was proof of the government's right to legally collect taxes. God's own people were to give God what He demanded as His spiritual subjects. The image and likeness of God, the soul, is what they are to give to God.

Conclusions. God's economic system does not exclude riches and wealth, prosperity, material goods or any other treasures that man can come into possession of. In fact, achieving ones goals in life is considered the fruits of God's blessing. On the other hand, people cannot fulfill their duties by themselves; they are not sufficient by themselves. That is why God's economic system is not based on financial resources but on trusting in God for everything that is needed for life. God creates all the wealth that belongs to the material world, and therefore it is good. Success in the material world can be more important than serving others and it can take attention away from one's relationship with God. God's plan is to completely contain Himself in human beings, therefore humankind must worship God in spirit and truth. God's economy means administrative arrangements for the household and a household management, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. The church is the Body of Christ; it is not a building, an organization, religious or political structures or denominations. Even thou Word of God is clear, people have made a huge

variety of business, profit, and power structures out of the living Body of Christ. God's economic system is simply to worship God with prayer and praise, relying on God as the provider of all good things in this life and in eternity.

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