Five

# HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

*The Possibilities and Perils of Economic Growth*

**"Man is a creature of desire and not a creature of need."**

Marcel Amuses

**"Be content with what you have, because God has said,**
**'Never will I leave you;**
**never will I forsake you.' "**

Hebrews 13:5

*SYNOPSIS: Sustained economic growth tends to improve the quality of life for all segments of a society. Christians are wary because economic growth can encourage greed, conspicuous consumption, reliance on wealth for security and conflict among nations. For centuries economic growth came from one society or nation plundering another. Then as explorers opened up new territories and transportation became more efficient, the wealth of most nations became a function of trade. While comparative advantage and trade are still important today, economic growth is increasingly dependent on the development of new technology and on innovation. For Christians unlimited economic growth is not an acceptable goal in and of itself; rather, Christians desire economic growth that enables all people to better honor God.*

People have always wanted to improve the quality of their lives. It's no fun to work twenty hours a day or to forage for food amid dwindling resources. We want easy access to basic supplies as well as a chance to enjoy "the good life." This basic desire for both necessities and luxuries drives us, individually and socially, into economic growth. We define economic growth as the sustained increase in the output per person of a society or nation.

Growth is a mixed blessing as Karl Case and Ray Fair observe:

> It is through economic growth that living standards improve, but growth brings change. New things are produced, while others become obsolete. Some believe growth is the fundamental objective of a society, because it lifts people out of poverty and enhances the quality of their lives. Others say economic growth erodes traditional values and leads to exploitation, environmental destruction, and corruption.[1]

Economic growth is no modern invention. In Genesis 1:28 men and women are directed to "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea." Some see this as a mandate from God for society to strive continually for maximum productivity, to take the economy to its full potential, to pursue development relentlessly. Robert Nelson has identified this position as one of the major tenets of modern economic theology. According to this view, if we succeed in eliminating economic scarcity, we will curb avarice and the pursuit of self-interest. This in turn would reduce strife and conflict, and generally transform the human condition. That is, if there's plenty for everyone, there's nothing to fight over.[2]

But, judging from the moral and spiritual condition of the world's wealthiest nations, economic growth has done little to save souls and promote charity among all members of society. In fact, the pursuit of economic growth has often led to egregious abuse of individuals, families, communities, organizations and the environment. Yet we want people to find meaningful employment, to have access to health care and "eat and drink to their full." In the view of the Talmud, the highest degree of charity is to assist a poor person with a business loan or help the poor find employment because work restores self-respect and independence.[3] Economic growth and progress makes this more likely. As some Christian economists would argue, however, unlimited economic growth as an economic objective in itself is clearly objectionable because it encourages greed, conspicuous consumption, reliance on wealth for security, and conflict among nations. A more theologically acceptable goal is to develop the world to enable humanity to honor God.[4]

In this chapter we will consider from a Christian perspective how the idea of economic growth has developed over the centuries, and what policies have evolved. We will also look at the benefits and costs of growth. Our challenge is to find a scriptural balance on this essential issue that directly touches the everyday well-being of so many billions of persons.

### When Growth Comes from Plunder

There has been little overall economic growth throughout most of human history. Prior to the 1700s the common way for one community or nation to gain was through plundering the resources of another. God allowed the Israelites, after wandering in the desert for forty years, to occupy the fertile lands of Canaan and those east of the Jordan. In an agrarian economy, ownership of land was a great privilege, and the land the Lord God provided was a good land—"a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey"; where the rocks are iron and copper can be dug out of the hills (Deut 8:7-9). While much of the land possessed by the twelve tribes of Israel was unoccupied, frequently God commanded towns and cities to be destroyed along with all their inhabitants, from fighting men to women and small infants (Josh 10:40). God wanted to prevent the infiltration of the idolatry of the Gentiles into the theocracy of Israel. Similar commands were often given by God with regard to the material plunder of the conquered people: it was to be destroyed rather than taken (Josh 7).

History records literally thousands of examples of this philosophy of economic growth through plunder. Beginning with Columbus in 1492, the development of maritime skills encouraged Spain and Portugal to launch expeditions westward in search of an ocean highway to the spices and other product markets of Asia. Jumping off from the Azores and Canary islands into the westward flowing north equatorial currents and the northeast trade winds (with the returning Gulf Stream current and westerly winds), the mercenaries soon stumbled upon the islands of the Caribbean, Central and South America, and Florida. The passion among the Spanish was for gold.

In Española and the other islands Columbus found friendly natives, aloes, cotton and spices, and a limited supply of gold ornaments, which the natives were more than willing to trade for useless trinkets. Leaving thirty-nine colonists at La Navidad, Columbus returned a year later to find them all dead—killed by each other and by natives grown hostile. Shortly after Columbus's departure the men had begun indulging their lust for the Indian women, taking multiple partners. Simultaneously, they gave up bartering for gold and simply seized it from the natives, using violence as necessary. They then began killing one another over the gold. Columbus returned and immediately instituted an annual tribute of gold upon the natives. Natives who did not meet the tribute from the scant gold available were savagely punished. As the natives rebelled, they were forced to build forts and were conscripted for other labor. If natives responded with violence, punishment was swift and harsh, with the inhabitants of whole villages sentenced to execution or torture. Within two years 100,000 of the 300,000 native population of Española had perished and within a decade only 20,000 were left.[5]

While it took a quarter-century of bouncing from island to island and shoreline to shoreline, eventually in early 1519 Hernando Cortes happened upon the Aztec empire in Mexico, a generally bloodthirsty society that used the terror of human sacrifice—including the slaughter of babies and day-long killing orgies—to maintain a tight autocracy. The Aztecs had substantial gold, and they were no match for the Spanish guns and cannon, steel swords and lancers on horse.

The destruction of the Inca empire, spread throughout northern South America, particularly Peru, took Pizarro a bit longer, but the result was the same. By the 1570s it was over. The gold was flowing back to Spain in quantities beyond the wildest expectations. The Spanish war machine, a well-administered and ruthlessly applied system of native slave labor, together with the introduction of a myriad of European diseases, resulted in an estimated decline in the Mexican native population of 90 percent (from 25 million to 1-2 million) and about a 20 percent decline in the Peruvian native population. By early 1600 Spain was the greatest economic power in the world.[6]

Economically, however, Spain ran into two problems. First, economic growth sustained by plunder requires the flow and stock of plunder to continue. Competition from other European nations, particularly Britain, France and Denmark, made this impossible for Spain. Second, as Adam Smith would so clearly articulate a couple centuries later, the wealth of nations and the consequent basis for economic growth is not gold. In the absence of productive capacity, more gold simply drives up prices, the result being high inflation and a constant or even falling standard of living. While Spain was plundering, it was not producing. The lack of productive capacity had been made worse by the Spanish Inquisition, which had driven the majority of the most innovative and entrepreneurial individuals out of Spain for centuries to come.

In the long run economic growth through plunder is technically ineffective. How should Christians view it? Certainly, with respect to the taking of the lands of Canaan, it is difficult to reconcile the God who evidences his love for us daily in acts of compassion with the God who ordered the killing of all breathing things, including infants. This presents theological issues that we can't fully consider in these pages. But we do know three things. First, in the Old Testament God was attempting to establish a covenant people, a nation set apart from the idolatrous societies around them through their love of and dedication to the one God and their devotion to his laws. Second, the instances where God directed the destruction of whole communities were few. Third, as we see again and again in Old Testament history, when Israel failed to drive the Gentiles completely out of their land, Israel adopted the heathen customs of their neighbors, typically within one generation following the death of a strong spiritual leader. Unity in government was lost, the guiding foundation of God's law was abandoned or compromised, and idol worship and human-made religion led the majority of Israelites away from faith in God.

What about the many instances of growth by violent and cruel plunder involving ostensibly Christian nations, the church and Christian persons? The Italian Christopher Columbus was a deeply religious Christian and a lay member of the Order of St. Francis. His name, Christopher, literally means "Christ-bearer." According to his journals, the primary inspiration for his voyage to the new world came from Isaiah 49: "I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Failing to secure financing from the kings of Portugal and England, he happened to solicit the Catholic Majesties of Spain at the very moment that the Moors were surrendering. Not having decided on the appropriate expression of gratitude to God for their deliverance, their Majesties funded Columbus's expedition as a crusade to discover new lands for the glory of God and his church, and to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. Columbus christened his first island landfall San Salvador—"Holy Savior"—and upon his return to Spain the Majesties fell to their knees, singing the Te Deum. Pope Alexander VI, in a 1493 message of congratulations to the Spanish rulers Ferdinand and Isabella, rejoiced that they had undertaken this expedition "in order to induce the natives and inhabitants thereof to worship our Redeemer" and that the "name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ might . . . be introduced to the aforesaid lands and islands."

So we see that the violent plunder of the New World began, at least, with good intentions, even Christian intentions. Yet we also see here a danger underlying the individual and corporate drive for economic growth. Often what pushes growth is the desire to be like God; to have security, power, prestige or even to be worshiped. Ever since the Garden, Satan has stood ready to use these desires to destroy the soul. Near the end of his life, Columbus wrote in his diary: "Gold constitutes treasure, and he who possesses it may do what he will in the world, and may attain as to bring souls to Paradise."[7]

## Growth Through Trade

As noted in chapter one, God has chosen to endow individuals with differing talents and skills. This clearly establishes a basis and a need for trade, since those variously gifted people have to do business with one another. Thus trade has been an aspect of life almost since Eden. Tubal-Cain, who forged all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron (Gen 4:22) certainly needed to trade his goods with others for wheat and wine. Solomon provided food for the royal household of Hiram in exchange for the cedar and pine logs of Lebanon to be used in the construction of the temple (1 Kings 5:6-9).

Over the centuries individuals have attempted to gain ground economically through trade. Because there has been little overall economic growth throughout most of human history, merchants became very valuable to their nation-states. Savvy traders could enhance the power of one nation over another. This was a zero-sum game: one nation's growth could only come at the expense of the trade losses of other nations. In essence it was moderate plunder with a pleasant face. This approach to national economic growth, which first emerged in the early 1500s, became formally known in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as "mercantilism."

The major tenets of mercantilism are simple. The most important determinant of a nation's wealth is its trade balance. A nation will thus become wealthy only if it exports more than it imports. Increased wealth is considered synonymous with economic growth. Merchants (rather than the aristocracy) are the key players in such a system and should be provided every comparative advantage in world trade that the power and coercion of the state can provide. If military force allows a monopoly to be established in a distant foreign market, then merchants should charge the highest price possible. Restraint was to be exercised in the consumption of imports, but dumping in foreign markets was condoned as national policy. Domestic wages should be kept as low as possible in order to discourage the consumption of imports and assure a surplus for export. Export cartels were officially sanctioned, goods were to be shipped by national transport only, and military force was acceptable as a means of maintaining foreign trade power and sovereignty. The importation of raw materials from trading partners was encouraged because domestic labor could then be used to capture the added value from finishing and processing. Exploitation in the pursuit of national economic advantage was not viewed as vice. It was a matter of national survival.[8]

Naturally, abuses occurred. One example is in the development of the sugarcane trade. Brought by the Arabs from India and grown in the Mediterranean, using slave labor from East Africa, sugar was brought to Europe as a result of the Crusades. Although slavery had long since given way to serfdom in Christian Europe, racism permitted the export of African slaves to sugar plantations in the Cape Verde Islands and later South America and the Caribbean. Inhuman working conditions and superprofits resulted in the estimated import of some ten million African slaves over three centuries. Unspeakable shipboard conditions produced an average shipping loss of one in seven slaves, with losses of one in three not considered excessive. Caribbean slaves died faster than they reproduced.[9] Even in genteel England, any efforts to outlaw shipping African slaves were vigorously opposed by plantation owners and shipping interests. Because of the trade advantages from the sugar cane, they argued, such reforms would be detrimental to the national economic interests of Britain.

Then in 1787 a Christian member of Parliament wrote: "As soon as ever I had arrived thus far in my investigation of the slave trade, so enormous, so dreadful, so irremediable did its wickedness appear that my own mind was completely made up for the abolition. A trade founded in iniquity and carried on as this was, must be abolished." His name was William Wilberforce, and he became slavery's most influential foe. Year after year he introduced into Parliament a bill for the abolition of the slave trade. He organized a boycott of slave-grown sugar. He brought 519 petitions signed by thousands of British subjects to the House of Commons. The bill for abolition finally passed on February 22, 1807.[10]

While efforts by Christians such as Wilberforce brought the leaven of the kingdom of God into the brutal world of trade advantage by coercion, the real waning of mercantilism came with the rise of the Industrial Revolution in England. At the time philosophers John Locke and David Hume were emphasizing individual liberty, the rights of the individual to pursue ideas and engage in daily life with minimal interference from the state. If economic growth were to flourish, it was now argued, the functions of government should be limited to provision of law and order, the enforcement of contracts, and the maintenance of major public works. As the Magna Carta made the sovereign subject to God, the new democracy movement made government subject to the citizens. This, together with the accumulation of capital, the division of labor, regional and international absolute advantages, and the facilitation of voluntary exchange among self-interested parties, was the true source of the economic growth and the wealth of nations, according to economic philosopher Adam Smith. These ideas coincided with the development of new technology, and the Industrial Revolution began to roll.

### Technological Progress

Most economists today agree that the major determinants of the rate of economic growth include:

- comparative rather than absolute advantages
- a stable political and legal framework
- clear property rights, including protection of intellectual property rights (together with tax laws that encourage entrepreneurship)
- stable human rights
- free markets
- maximization of competition (freedom of exchange)
- investment in human capital (education)
- regulation of financial markets
- moderate government consumption, with low inflation
- increased capital per worker (capital accumulation)
- technological progress through innovation and investment in basic and applied research and development

But it's that last factor that has proven most important. When the contributions of all the major factors to long-term economic growth per person are examined, advances in knowledge, or innovation and continual technological progress, consistently account for more than half of the gains.

Economic growth through technological progress is the process termed *creative destruction* by economist Joseph Schumpeter. It is a dynamic progress where equilibrium in markets is short-lived; in fact, markets for products and services now often come and go faster than grasshoppers on a hot tin roof, and those who hesitate to act are quickly left by the side of the road. The Enlightenment, with its emphasis on the scientific method and reason, certainly paved the way for an acceleration in technological change, the rise of the Western Industrial Revolution and a shift of emphasis to financial capital and democracy. The laissez faire capitalism of the Industrial Revolution encouraged self-initiative and self-improvement, the breaking down of class barriers and traditional community, and the rise of a chaotic world of ever-faster changing technologies, prices, and economic identities.[11]

The pace of change was astounding and unprecedented. In the United States, for example, canals, turnpikes, steam power and railroads slashed transportation costs 95 percent between 1800 and 1859.[12] From 250 miles of track laid between Baltimore and West Virginia in 1828, total railroad mileage expanded to over 110,000 miles by 1900. From 75,000 jobs in 1810, manufacturing employment exploded to almost 5.9 million jobs by 1900.[13] The proportion of the population that was urban rose from 6 percent in 1800 to 40 percent by 1900[14] and inflation-adjusted output per capita rose 133 percent.[15]

Communities often sprang out of nowhere and disappeared as rapidly. In 1850 New England was 70 percent open farmland and 30 percent woods. Today the proportions are reverse. The invention of the McCormick reaper and the development of the railroads shifted the agricultural comparative advantage to the large, rolling fields of the Midwest. By 1860, nearly half of Vermont-born people (200,000 out of 450,000) had relocated.[16]

From 1860 to 1880 Chicago's lumber shipments rose from 220 million board feet to over a billion as growth in the railroads generated demand for wood for fuel, bridges and ties, demand for fence posts boomed in the West, and the innovation of the balloon frame house using mass-produced nails revolutionized the building industry.[17] In 1890 Henry Bagley, a railroad man from Cincinnati, gazed upon the stately virgin white pines and poplars of the Chattahoochee region of Georgia and saw a low-cost way to meet the seemingly insatiable demand for wood by the railroad industry and the growing housing and nonresidential construction industries. Besides the profits from the sale of the timber, Bagley earned revenue on the freight charges for hauling the timber to the various consumer markets. Within thirty years nearly all the hills of northern Georgia were "turned into sunny groves of stumps."[18]

Edison invented the light bulb in 1879 and harnessed electricity. The turn of the century saw a burst of structural change with the arrival of the automobile, the telephone, airplanes, phonographs, radios and more. But few bursts of "creative destruction" rival the microprocessor miracle. The first integrated circuit on silicon was followed thirteen years later in 1971 by the silicon-etching process and the microprocessors. In the next three decades processing power jumped seven thousandfold, single chip memory 250,000 times and transmission speeds by a factor of nearly 200,000. Chips sold for $7,600 per megahertz in 1970 and 14 cents in 2008. Shipments of personal computers went from zero in 1970 to 202 million in 2005, with 62 percent of U.S. families owning one or more personal computers and 55 percent hooked to the Internet. Eighty-two percent of all adults in the United States use the Internet and 86 percent of all children age three to seventeen. The total supply of U.S. computer programmers, operators and scientists leaped from 284,271 in 1970 to an estimated 2.5 million in 2008.

Microprocessors are used in everything from navigation systems to medical diagnosis, monitoring industrial waste and genetic testing. Processing an Internet transaction costs a bank a penny compared with $1.14 with a pen, paper and teller. Microprocessor chips have reduced the costs of operating home appliances by one-third to two-thirds over the last twenty-five years. Wal-Mart cut up to 20 percent off the cost of operating a delivery truck by installing computers, global positioning gear and cell phones in 4,300 vehicles.[19]

While the types of technology have changed, we still find that economic growth comes mostly from innovations and less from trade or plunder. So, from a Christian perspective, is this a better place to be? Yes. But there are still some cautions. Achieving economic growth through violence is certainly not a Christian ideal, and it's not much better to win a trade war at the expense of others. Yet we must ask whether unlimited economic growth is theologically acceptable. To help answer this question, let's briefly consider the benefits and costs of economic growth.

### The Benefits and Costs of Growth

A major benefit from economic growth is jobs; the opportunity for individuals to find a wide variety of employment at sustainable wages. While a rising tide does not lift all boats equally, during periods of sustained economic growth all segments of a nation's population appear to benefit through lower unemployment rates, higher labor-force participation rates, greater income from wages and lower levels of poverty. In chapter one we saw that God's call to work preceded the Fall, and that men and women have a right and an obligation to work. Made in God's image, men and women find that it is natural and rewarding, and in many cases dignifying, to be engaged in productive work. To deny or deprive others of work is to offend against the image of God in them.

Other positive aspects of economic growth are obvious. Certainly, if we had to choose, most of us would prefer indoor plumbing to open outdoor latrines, penicillin to the application of leeches for the treatment of a fever, flying between London and New York to riding for a month on a leaky vessel in stormy seas, electric lights to candles for bedtime reading, and working in an air-conditioned office instead of an open field or shed when the thermometer hits 90 degrees. These examples just begin to touch the surface with regard to the explosive rise in the standard of living in most industrialized countries over the past three centuries.

Food and drink are, for example, the most basic component of our standard of living. As reported by Fernand Braudel, in Holland in the 1700s meat was normally for nobles. "Poor townspeople rarely saw it: for them there were 'turnips, fried onions, dry if not mouldy bread' or sticky rye bread and 'small beer.'

. . . The evening meal was often only gruel made from left-over bread soaked in milk."[20] And note the changes in the United States in the last century. About 1900, Americans spent 46 percent of their income on food, and today they spend 14 percent. Over this time the price of bread has fallen by 70 percent, the prices of milk and tomatoes by 82 percent, the price of chicken by 91 percent and the price of eggs by 94 percent.[21] This has been accomplished through extraordinary increases in agricultural productivity (three- to fivefold), improvements in shipping (e.g., containerization and refrigeration) and storage (e.g., flash freezing), modest improvements in processing, and significant changes in retailing. Since 1970 the average items per American supermarket have increased from 7,800 to more than 19,600; there are also more cash registers, operating hours and total floor space.[22] Together with the steady decline in food prices, price dispersion within categories of food products is at an all-time high as bar code scanners reduce the need for stock clerks and improve inventory management. As part of the free market's relentless drive to meet the specific desires of consumers, product variety at U.S. grocery stores has exploded as well. Over the past two decades the number of cereals has gone from 34 to 192, salad dressings from 79 to 260, cheeses from 65 to 300, laundry soaps and detergents from 12 to 48 and soft drinks from 26 to 252.[23] You want milk? Choose from whole milk, no-fat, 1 percent , 2 percent, 3 percent, lactose free, chocolate flavored, heavy cream, half and half, and synthetic creamer.

Economic growth has brought medical progress and concomitant reduction in physical suffering and increased life expectancy. Improved transportation and communication systems have facilitated social contact and the sharing of information. Individuals are more likely to be aware of both employment and consumption opportunities and thus far less likely to be exploited.

But, of course, there are costs to economic growth as well. The drive to maintain or increase the standard of living has caused the work week to rise steadily over the past twenty years and wives, including mothers with young children, to enter the labor force in droves (see chap. 7). This growing fixation with personal possessions and a rising standard of living has reduced time spent in family relationships and often made communities little more than a collection of well-appointed motels. For many people, time spent with God has been sacrificed for the idols of material and career, and the spiritual harm is reflected in a myriad of deteriorating social indicators.

The competitive market process of "creative destruction," as old goods and livelihoods are replaced by new ones, is painful. Workers find themselves displaced from occupations in which they have been employed for years, even decades. Certain groups, such as older workers, minorities, the less educated and union members, do not fare as well as the economy transitions from one industry to another. It takes these groups longer to find new jobs and their post-displacement wages tend to be lower than what they had been earning.

Finally, there is the issue of environmental degradation (see chap. 11). In an increasingly global economy where competitive advantage requires either lower costs or higher productivity, producers are unlikely to voluntarily absorb the environmental costs that spill over from their activities. The record in the United States is clear. While there may be individual firms that are exceptions, industry has generally used every means possible to keep from assuming the costs of the environmental damage they generate. Companies are successful at this largely because they are a small, motivated, well-funded interest group. By contrast, the citizenry that suffers from environmental abuse has few financial resources, and the potential individual gains from winning are small relative to the costs of fighting. For example, the U.S. Clean Water Act of 1972 had to be approved over a presidential veto. The Environmental Protection Agency's charge was simple: establish technology-based uniform water standards and issue permits to individual businesses giving emission limits based on those standards. Almost three decades later the progress has been minimal. Industries took the EPA to court on procedural challenges over the standards, with the result that guidelines have been issued for only fifty-one industries and only sixty-four permits issued. Enforcement, in most cases, has relied on telephone calls or letters. The EPA has almost never brought civil or criminal charges, and even in cases of successful court action, fines and prison terms are not severe. With the mushrooming of new high-growth industries, it is unlikely that EPA's performance will improve.[24] As detailed in chapter one, God has given men and women dominion over creation, and they will be held accountable to God for their stewardship of those natural resources.

### Conclusion

Christians certainly do not want to advocate policies that inhibit the improvement in the material and physical condition of our billions of brothers and sisters around the world. At the same time, for Christians unlimited economic growth as an economic objective in itself is clearly objectionable. A more theologically acceptable view is to develop the world to enable people to honor God and to fulfill his calling. We want to encourage economic growth, but within the constraints of Christian ethics.

It would be near-sighted, for example, for Christians to stubbornly advocate protectionism in the long run of industries whose competitive advantages and customer base are clearly on the wane. The French weavers who fought the mechanization of the textile industry by sticking their wooden clogs into the gears of the water-powered looms simply saw their jobs lost to factories from England and the American mills in New England. At the same time, however, job displacement is painful to individuals and their families. The research in the United States is clear. Beyond the negative effects on self-esteem and self-worth, displaced workers generally make less money in their new jobs when they are older, less educated, less skilled, black, female or union members. And it takes these people longer to find new work. That's the dark side of progress: it can leave our neediest citizens behind. And those are the very people Jesus urged us to care for.

But progress will continue. Rather than stand against the inevitable restructuring of industries and markets, Christians should support policies to ease the painful impact of job displacement on individuals and their families. Federal law now requires companies to give notice well in advance of plans to close production sites. Federal and state programs and many individual companies provide displaced workers with a variety of services such as career planning, résumé writing, practice in job interview, out-placement identification of new positions and retraining. If a worker's job is lost due to foreign competition, federal funds are available to finance the costs of retraining. Some states even allow displaced workers to take their unemployment insurance payments in a single lump sum to be used for education. These are examples of policies and programs that Christians can advocate. Simultaneously, churches and Christian organizations can provide support groups for the unemployed, job banks, training in résumé writing and sponsor courses to retrain individuals in skills for which labor market demand is growing.

While economic growth has obvious costs, it has many more advantages. Christians can generally support sustainable economic growth, not in idolatry or greed, but in a sincere desire to please God.

## Discussion Questions

1. Countries, individual companies and individual persons have become wealthy through the exploitation of other countries and individuals. Should reparation be made to cases such as the African Americans or former European colonies? If so, what form should the reparation take?
2. List five major benefits of economic growth. Now list five major costs.

3. Is it mercantilist thinking to want to have a positive trade balance? How can countries such as the United States have steady economic growth and a high standard of living with negative trade balances year after year?
4. Do the winners in the economic growth process share their gains with the losers?