Mapping a theology of change for Christian development organizations

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"…unlike in the secular world, for us as a Christian humanitarian organization, strategy is identity" - Kevin Jenkins, President and CEO, World Vision International, 2010 Triennial Council, Kuala Lumpur, 25 August

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This paper sketches what a Christian theology of change for an international development agency might look like, and how different theories of change popular in the development sector might relate to it.

Language is important here. Terms should not be used carelessly. For this reason I use the term *theory* of change for those propositions which are capable of investigation using accepted scientific methods. Those methods may belong to the pure sciences or social sciences, and may involve complex issues of measurement and causal attribution. The important point is that theories can be investigated and tested in some way by using scientific principles. A theory which is not capable of being falsified by these methods is not a *theory* in the sense used here.

It is unnecessary to add that there are different kinds of truth, such as the dogmatic and existential claims of religions, which are beyond the realm of proof. Not everything which is true is provable. Not everything which is worthwhile is measurable.[1] Not everything which is central to our human identity or understanding is susceptible to rational analysis. It is unwise to be dismissive of these harder truths. To focus only on the provable demonstrates not human mastery, but human smallness. As Hamlet cautioned: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

Christians hold as bedrock truth that a triune God exists, that God has intervened definitively in human history in the person of Jesus Christ, that evil exists, and that history as we know it will cease with the final consummation of all things in God's coming Kingdom. There is an internal logic which binds these propositions together in a systematic theology. But in the end, such assertions, bundled or unbundled, lie beyond the reach of any scientific method. Their acceptance is a matter of revelation or inner conviction, not empiricism. Personal discernment, reflection and direct communion with the Spirit of God are the means by which such claims are weighed and sifted. In short, these sorts of claims are adopted as a matter of *faith*.

Harvard Professor Harvey Cox suggests that Christian faith has been burdened by an over-emphasis on contestable dogma.[2] He sees that truth in the Christian faith is revealed by a more dynamic process in the choice to follow the person of Jesus Christ. This is the difference between faith and beliefs. Dry beliefs expressed in catechism or creed can be unhelpful. This insight reinforces the notion that while Jesus Christ cannot be known in the same way as the Periodic Table, he can be discovered in personal and liberating ways on the active quest of faith.

Christian social engagement: a brief historical excursis

While dogmatic content of Christian faith is not provable, the social impacts of the Christian religion are a matter of historical record. It is beyond any doubt that the Christian faith has spawned many

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[1] The physicist Albert Einstein put it this way: "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted." (attributed)

[2] Harvey Cox *The Future of Faith* (New York, HarperOne, 2009), esp. Chapter 5

movements for social good. Even the greatest detractors of the Christian faith concede that.[3] Hodgkinson reports that:

> "Actions on issues relating to soup kitchens, shelters for the homeless, care of battered women and children, counselling for families under siege, child care, international efforts to curb hunger and provide disaster relief were not initiated by government but to a large extent by people in congregations...."[4]

Stephen Monsma echoes "Typically, religiously motivated persons have been the first into areas of societal need. Secular agencies and government have followed."[5]

The Christian Scriptures themselves provide the first descriptions of organized food distributions and care for the vulnerable under the auspices of the church.[6] During Roman times, especially after official recognition of the Christian faith, the contributions of Christianity included: the elimination of infanticide, the end of gladiatorial sports, improving the rights of women, providing burials for paupers, promoting humane treatment for slaves, and establishment of public healthcare. The First Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. urged the Church to provide for the poor, sick, widows and strangers. It also ordered the construction of a hospital in every cathedral town.

In the middle ages, the Christian church made startling contributions to music and the arts. The monastic orders had a pioneering role in providing care for the aged and infirm, in establishing teaching institutions, and in providing places of refuge for the persecuted. Christianity encouraged scientific exploration, believing that new discoveries brought ever greater glory to God as the creator of all. Importantly, "...the Catholic tradition emphasises contemplation and the goodness of the intellect in itself..."[7] It is important to debunk the popular but mistaken view, based on the individual treatment of Galileo, that Christian faith somehow stood in opposition to the development of modern scientific thought. The general charge of anti-intellectualism cannot be sustained.[8] More recently, advances in biblical scholarship have provided a renewed appreciation of genre in the understanding of individual texts. Poetry is respected as poetry, and allegory as allegory. This has promoted the authority of Scripture by applying a more sensitive hermeneutic. It has also prevented false conflicts with science arising from an uncritical literalism.

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[3] Bertrand Russell, *Unpopular essays* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1950) 92 "Infanticide, which might seem contrary to human nature, was almost universal before the rise of Christianity, and is recommended by Plato to prevent over-population"; and at 137: "Christianity also did much to soften the lot of slaves. It established charity on a large scale, and inaugurated hospitals"

[4] Virginia A Hodgkinson "The future of individual giving and volunteering: the inseparable link between religious community and individual generosity" in Robert Wuthnow and Virginia A Hodgkinson (eds.) (1990) *Faith and philanthropy in America: Exploring the role of religion in America's voluntary sector* San Francisco, Josey-Bass, 285

[5] Stephen Monsma (1996) *When sacred and secular mix* Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 8

[6] Acts 6: 2-4

[7] Charles Curran "The Catholic identity of Catholic institutions" *Theological studies* March 1997, 10

[8] As an example, Monsma notes that "It was the Puritans in New England who founded Harvard and Yale.", 8.

In the industrial age, Christians had a prominent role in reforming social ills, such as child labour, debtors' prisons and unsafe industrial conditions. Christians led the campaign for the abolition of slavery. The Sunday School movement was established, not primarily to promote the Christian faith, but to provide basic literacy for the children of industrial slums who might otherwise be trapped by circumstance. In the late 19th century in the face of glaring social inequities, Christians had a major role in the emergence of Christian socialism and labour movements. Great social reformers like John Wesley[9] and William Booth championed the rights of the underprivileged, and laid the groundwork for Archbishop William Temple, and others, in formulating the idea of the welfare state.

In more recent times, Christians have continued the tradition of social activism in campaigning for civil rights, and in helping to frame the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Christians also have a long involvement in pacifist and environmental causes. Most recently, Christians have provided a key voice on issues of global poverty, and climate justice through such campaigns as the Jubilee movement and Micah Challenge.[10] Former English Prime Minister Gordon Brown has described Jubilee 2000 as the most important church-led social movement in Britain since the campaign for the abolition of slavery two hundred years ago. [11]

It may seem tendentious to omit reference to the Inquisition, the Crusades, the various sectarian purges, the Salem witch trials, and perhaps more topically, the many cases of institutionalized child sex abuse. These episodes are shocking and egregious, but they do not reflect in any intrinsic way on the Christian faith. The vitality of Christian faith is based on sacrifice in the service of others – that was the way of Jesus himself. Any coercive or selfish use of power is entirely abhorrent to it. For this reason it would be unfair to allow these abuses to obscure the many positive contributions made by the Christian faith to the transformation of Western society over the last two millennia.

This account so far paints a decidedly Western picture, being that with which the author is familiar. A vivid picture of Christian social influence is also reflected in other traditions. For example, the Greek Orthodox Church has operated schools in the Holy Land for centuries. In a truly startling tribute to inter-faith relations it is reported that "During the days of the Ottoman Empire the Orthodox Church was the only organization authorized to build and run schools, thus contributing to the preservation of the Arabic language and culture."[12] In the case of Russia and eastern bloc countries the orthodox churches were a sentinel of hope during decades of communist oppression. They have since enjoyed a spectacular revival.

The hope invested in the orthodox churches has been matched by action. As one example, the Romanian Orthodox Church reports that during the last 20 years it has set up:

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[9] John Perkins *Beyond charity; the call to Christian community development* (Grand Rapids, Baker books, 1993) 70 recounts Wesley's startling contributions, and the impediment of racial prejudice in these social awakenings in taking hold in North America.

[10] Those interested in reading more about Christianity's general contributions to Western society may wish to read Rodney Stark (2003) *For the glory of God: how monotheism led to reformations, science, witch-hunts and the end of slavery* New Jersey, Princeton University Press

[11] Rick James *What is distinctive about FBOs* International NGO Training and Research Centre, Praxis Paper 22 (February 2009) at 8-9.

[12] Website: Greek Orthodox Schools of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem http://www.greekorthoschools.com/

"394 social-charitable settlements [which] operate within the Romanian Patriarchate … 88 for children, 89 for aged people, 65 for assisting families and persons in distress, 92 social canteens and bakeries, 25 social-medical centres and policlinics, 14 centres of diagnosis and treatment for persons with special needs, 6 centres for homeless people, 4 centres for the victims of violence in the family and aggressors, 2 centres for the victims of trafficking in persons, 9 kindergartens and family centres." [13]

In Russia too research suggests that: "Orthodoxy, as it is seen by the majority of Russians, is not private religiosity but a public religion. The Church plays and is expected to play a significant role in the affairs of the society."[14] This data "challenges the received view of the Orthodox Church as monastically oriented, state dependent, and socially passive." [15]

Christianity in South America provides a very different example of positive social activism. While at times the record of the institutional church has been dubious, it has also had very fine moments. For example, native peoples were protected from enslavement by Jesuits who established semi-independent settlements called 'reductions'. It is reported that Pope Gregory XVI challenged Spanish and Portuguese sovereignty, appointed his own candidates as bishops in the colonies, condemned slavery and the slave trade in 1839[16], and approved the ordination of native clergy in spite of entrenched government racism.

In the second half of the 20th century the emergence of liberation theology offered real hope with its unambiguous affirmation of God's preferential option for the poor.[17] This represented a moral and political challenge to the military dictatorships, and the unjust economic systems which characterized much of Latin America during the 1960s and 70s. That legacy is reflected in the present day in the myriad of "small and humble practices of faith … which serve to empower and lend dignity to the poorest, while at the same time contributing to a sense of community."[18]

It is interesting to speculate on whether a new wave of social transformations will be driven by indigenous Christian communities in developing countries in the coming years. This enquiry is pertinent because the Christian faith is gaining greater scale and influence in many new country contexts. Christianity remains the most popular religion on the planet, but the profile of adherents is radically changing: "In the year 1900, Europe and North America comprised 82% of the world's Christian population. In 2005, Europe and North America comprised 39% of the world's Christian population with African, Asian and Latin American Christians making up 60%… . By 2050, African, Asian and Latin

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[13] Website of The Press Office of the Romanian Patriarchate http://theorthodoxchurchinfo/blog/news/2010
[14] Inna Naletova (2002) "The Orthodox Church in the mirror of public opinion: An analysis of recent polls and surveys" in A. Bove (ed.) *Questionable Returns* Vienna, IWM Junior Visiting Fellows Conferences, Vol. 12, 18
[15] Naletova, 14
[16] See papal bull *In Supremo Apostolatus*
[17] The Consejo Episcopal Latino Americano (CELAM) held at Medellín, Colombia in 1968 asserted God's preferential option for the poor.
[18] Nancy E. Bedford "Whatever Happened to Liberation Theology?" Christian Century, Oct. 20, l999 Available online at http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=820

American Christians will constitute 71% of the world's Christian population. These numbers do not take account of the fact that the majority of North American Christians will be non-white."[19]

The affluent West is becoming increasingly secularized or "post-Christian." It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the complex reasons why this is occurring, suffice to say that materialism, the confidence placed in scientific positivism, and the cult of the autonomous individual have all had a part to play.[20] At the same time, the rapid expansion of Christian faith in developing countries is fuelling one of the most profound re-orientations in the history of religions. A corollary of this is the enormous potential for social good as the Christian faith gains greater traction.

It is acknowledged that there is also potential for sectarianism, triumphalism, narrow fundamentalism, and an unhelpful patriarchy associated with some Christian traditions. More optimistically, however, Scripture teaches that the Spirit of God inexorably seeks for compassion and justice. In particular, the Pentecostal expressions of faith offer a fresh vitality here. It is interesting to note that rapid growth in Pentecostalism in developing countries is not necessarily associated with biblical fundamentalism. Professor Cox sees this as one of the great hopes of Christianity in his acclaimed work *The Future of Faith*.[21] Others are far more cautious.[22]

Locating international development agencies in this broader story

A contrast emerges from this overview. The world's leading Christian international development agencies were established in the West in the first half of the twentieth century, as yet one more initiative for social good. This was a time when the Christian faith was stronger and more generally accepted. Their Constitutions reflected a calling to minister on the basis of the Christian faith.

In the ensuing years, the Christian faith in the West has lost much of its historic authority within general society. The secularization of Western society has coincided with the professionalization of the development sector[23]. Earlier generations of development work were associated with missionary endeavours, church volunteers, or skills co-opted from other disciplines. Community development is now recognized as a profession in its own right with most practitioners receiving their training in degree level courses offered by secular universities.

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[19] Soong-Chan Rah, The next evangelicalism: freeing the church from Western cultural captivity (Downers Grove Illinois, IVP Books, 2009) 13

[20] For a comprehensive and nuanced analysis in an Australian context I recommend for further reading: Tom Frame (2009) Losing my religion: unbelief in Australia Sydney, UNSW Press

[21] Cox, Chapter 14

[22] Two reviewers of this paper who live and work in South America believe Cox is somewhat romantic in his assessment. They are Valdir Steuernagel, Partnership Missiologist for World Vision, and Ruth Padilla de Borst also from World Vision. They do accept that there is great promise in the more historic forms of Pentecostalism that bring Spirit and Word together. However, caution is expressed about the pseudo-gospel of health and wealth – colloquially called prosperity teaching – which characterizes some neo-pentecostal movements.

[23] Throughout this paper the terms 'development' and 'developing' are used. This is because these are terms used consistently in the general parlance of the sector. It is noted, however, that there is a very live debate about what the terms "development" and "developing" might mean and imply, and that this may make it harder for some to engage with this paper.

The professionalization of the development worker has undoubtedly brought many advantages which Christians should be quick to acknowledge. These benefits have included the development of deep specialist skills, collegial networks, academic rigor and discipline in program design, shared research, an emphasis on assessment and evaluation, and, in general, an appetite for empirically-supported field investment. This healthy suite of professional norms is to be commended. There have, however, been some critical losses which will be discussed below as development *theory* has contended with development *theology*, sometimes in uncomfortable and unsympathetic ways.

An outcome of the secularization of Western society and the professionalization of the development sector has seen some agencies renounce their earlier Christian impetus, for example, Oxfam, Save the Children, and Christian Children's Fund. Whilst the particular reasons behind such decisions are too complicated for this paper, one wonders whether Christian faith was seen to have outlived its usefulness to these organisations, or was felt to be excluding or limiting in some way, or was simply abandoned as anachronistic. If any of these are true then the Christian faith has failed miserably to properly explain itself. This paper will explore what in general is a very positive dialogue between theory and theology, between provable and revealed truth.

While all this has been happening, the seismic shift in global Christianity noted above is well underway. In 1900 there were only 9 million Christians in Africa[24], in the year 2000 there were 380 million, and by 2025 there will be a predicted 663 million.[25] This has led to a strange irony. While Christian faith has been rapidly losing ground in the West, where most major development agencies have their origin and support base, it is being enthusiastically embraced in many developing countries where their field work is directed. It follows that some countries see a value in the Christian faith which is no longer apparent to ex-Christian agencies from the West.

The irony may be compounded by the adoption of participatory development approaches, that is, the recognition that the preferences of local communities should be respected in decision-making which affects them. It is easy to imagine that some of preferences may become problematic for secular or post-Christian agencies. [26]

Part I: Sketching the elements of a Christian theology of change

Recalling the story of Christian social engagement, in different cultures times and places, shows that God is continuously at work in the world. Christianity has an inherent capacity to renew itself as it

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[24] Representing mainly Coptic Christians and Ethiopian Orthodox Christians

[25] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_Africa citing David Barrett in the *World Christian Encyclopedia*

[26] Here I relay a personal story. When travelling in Zimbabwe as part of a World Vision delegation I was approached by a group of women villagers after a forum on public health issues. "You're from World Vision aren't you?" they enquired. "Yes" I said. After brief reflection on the forum, the ladies then asked: "But do you know what we need more than anything else?" I looked blank. Then their answer came: "Bibles translated into the Shona language."

The reflection of church growth theorist Donald McGavran also resonates: "contrary to much superficial thinking, the greatest need of the masses is neither aid nor kindness. Their greatest need is not handouts, but a world view, a religion, which gives them a bedrock on which to stand as they battle for justice" Donald McGavran *Understanding church growth* (Grand Rapid, Eerdmans,1988) 286

speaks into ever changing social contexts. God is continually calling to us to take part in his magnificent agenda for change.

In short, the Christian theology of change is that it is God himself who brings about change in the world, with humans aligning themselves as active participants in his redemptive purposes. The change God seeks is fullness of human life: while this entails rescue from harm and impoverishment, it equally requires the promotion of goodness, wholeness and knowledge. When it comes to Christian development organizations, their incubus of change is not a secular theory after which humans seek to remodel aspects of the world; rather, it is the very heart of God himself who calls out to humans to engage with his redemptive purposes.

The Christian scriptures are authoritative because they show us what God is like. When we examine these scriptures we find a compelling story of God's continuous involvement with the creation which he made good. God crowned his creative effort with humans whom he endowed with extraordinary capabilities and freedom. Humans exercised their freedom unwisely, turning away from God, rejecting his counsel, and choosing to go their own way. God has eagerly sought to intervene in history ever since to restore a relationship founded on loving communion between himself, humans, and the created order.

God's redemptive response throughout history is to participate actively in his world, as he does throughout the Old Testament, liberating and redeeming His people. Supremely though God is incarnated in Jesus Christ as the perfect, suffering change agent, who acts decisively for justice with love. Jesus proclaims Good News, especially for the poor. The death and resurrection of Jesus transforms our understanding of power and purpose, and provides hope for renewal in all dimensions of life.

Everything which separates us from God has been overcome in Jesus. His resurrection assures us about the coming reign of God of which the prophets spoke. Jesus teaches his disciples to seek this kingdom, a kingdom in which the world is turned upside down, and where the powerful learn to serve.

Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ calls people to follow him as disciples. As a collective body, Christians penetrate the world and seek to transform it. This provides the operational basis for a theology of change. The vocation for Christians is the daily, contextualized, prayerful following of Jesus, who God sent as the world's ultimate change agent. All the while, Jesus' followers are aided and comforted by the Holy Spirit who dwells with his people. Thus a strong Trinitarian picture emerges of the God who sends, of Jesus who we follow, and of the Spirit who calls and empowers. Against this background, some specific elements of a Christian theology of change can be proposed.

While a Christian theology of change is Trinitarian, Jesus supremely reveals to us what God is like. God's self-disclosure in Christ is therefore "foundational to every other reflection."[27] We must operate from a comprehensive picture which tries to make sense of the total life of Christ: his incarnation, actions,

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[27] Thomas Kramm, referenced in David J Bosch *Transforming mission: paradigm shifts in theology of mission* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1991) 22

teachings, death, resurrection, and the promise of his coming kingdom. This paper proposes seven indispensible elements for a Christian theology of change.

1. A biblical holism

When we examine the life of Christ, a holistic vision of ministry emerges. The biblical picture of salvation is as "coherent, broad and deep as the exigencies of human existence."[28] The restoration of *human community*[29] is one foundational aspect: "…in contrast to Western society's emphasis on the autonomous individual, Christianity sees each human life as profoundly inter-connected with others in a series of overlapping relationships."[30] When salvation is viewed only in personal individualistic terms a narrow, anemic and unbiblical picture emerges. Leading missiologist David Bosch explodes the myth:

> "In a world where people are dependent on each other and every individual exists within a web of inter-human relationships, it is totally untenable to limit salvation to the individual and his or her personal relationship with God. Hatred, injustice oppression, war, and other forms of violence are manifestations of *evil*; concern for humanness, for the conquering of famine, illness and meaninglessness is part of the *salvation* for which we hope and labour."[31]

Salvation involves the restoration of relationships and communities, even nations. Going even further, Scripture indicates that God's plan of salvation also extends to the physical world and non-human elements of creation. The apostle Paul explicitly teaches that all of creation is groaning with anticipation, waiting for the time when it will be renewed.[32]

This broad picture shows that it is "a false anthropology and sociology to divorce the spiritual or personal sphere from the material and social."[33] Jesus never made such distinctions. In his ministry there is no demarcation between saving from sin and saving from physical affliction. One constant reminder of this is the frequent use of the same verb in the New Testament texts to describe both occurrences.[34] Myers complains that it is only our deep-seated captivity to a Western worldview which tries to force such a separation.[35] The South American theologian Leonardo Boff links the physical and spiritual even more bluntly. In speaking about the material deprivation of poor communities he warns:

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[28] Bosch, 400

[29] In this regard, human community can look to the eternal self-giving love of the Holy Trinity as its inspiration. This is what it truly means to be made in the image of God. Gen:1:26-27

[30] Daniel G Groody, *Globalisation, spirituality, and justice* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2007) 23

[31] Bosch, 397

[32] Romans 8:22

[33] Bosch, 10. It is noted that anthropology and other social sciences recognize the critical role of religion in human culture and society. Culture is holistic. It is a system of elements which are interrelated and interconnected.

[34] The verb σώζω, *to save,* is translated variously in English as to heal, to deliver, to make well, to survive and to bring safely – among other uses.

[35] Bryant L Myers *Walking with the poor: principles and practices of transformational development* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1999) 7

"Unless we attack this kind of poverty directly, in the name of Jesus and the apostles, as a challenge to evangelization, we shall be mocking the poor, by handing them an opiate religion, a religion which answers their cry for help with cynicism."[36]

The first thread of a theology of change for a Christian development organisation is that it must have a holistic outlook. This means that it cannot be compartmentalized without being diminished. This is where the practical problems start. People, and by extension, Christian NGOs, may have very different callings and gifts. It is a frequent mistake to conflate a particular calling, ministry or gift with the whole gospel of salvation. A Christian theology of change will require a steady commitment to the greater vision, no matter what any particular contribution may look like. To adapt Bosch on this point:

"neither a secularized agency (that is one which concerns itself only with this-worldly activities and interests), nor a separatist agency (that is one whose piety involves itself only in soul saving and preparation of converts for the hereafter) can faithfully articulate the mission of God."[37]

Each must reckon with the holistic biblical vision which is laid down as a constant challenge.

A particular risk for Christian development agencies is that, over time, they may tend to conflate their practical service and good works with the whole gospel. Dayton states:

"To restore our humanity *completely* is to restore us in the image of our Maker. … To carry out 'development' which does not potentially lead to a re-established relationship with the Ruler of all the universe is to carry out development that is sub-Christian." [38]

And again, Dewi Hughes from TEARfund cautions: "in the last analysis, no theory of practice that ignores our relationship with God can give us a true picture of what meaningful human life is."[39] It follows that a Christian development organization is one which recognizes a holistic gospel while, organizationally speaking, its focus may be in one or more particular areas.

There are important practical implications which flow from recognizing a commitment to biblical holism, while at the same time, affirming the specialist nature and calling of a Christian development organization. Australian theologian Peter Adam argues that:

"Incarnation without verbal revelation means a dumb incarnation of uninterpreted presence ... There is no reason to be content with a notion of incarnation which is only personal or sacramental, and which does not value verbal revelation in Christ's ministry and in our own. ... I am not arguing for unincarnated words, for messages without presence. I am claiming that

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[36] Leonardo Boff, *Good news to the poor* (Wellwood, Burns and Oates, 1992) 56

[37] Bosch, 11

[38] Ed Dayton in John Steward *Biblical holism: where God people and deeds connect* (Melbourne, World Vision Australia, 1994) 89

[39] Dewi Hughes *God of the poor, a biblical vision of God's present rule* (Milton Keynes, Authentic, 1998) 2

>verbal revelation is part of Christ's incarnate ministry, and ... incarnated ministry should also include incarnated words, the message of the Gospel."[40]

There can be no argument with the statement that Christ's ministry included words of hope and that these words are part of long-term holistic ministry. The outstanding issue is *who*, in an organisational sense, should properly take responsibility for communicating them.

Biblical images of the early church present it as "organic, dynamic and interdependent." [41] The overwhelming picture in Paul's writings is of every Christian living in total interdependence on one another.[42] By extension, each corporatized or institutionalized expression of Christian ministry is also interdependent on each other part. For Paul, "there is no expectation that each Christian, or every group of believers, will serve God in precisely the same way, each encompassing the whole range of possible expressions of Christian faith." [43]On the contrary, Paul teaches that there are a variety of gifts and that we should rejoice and respect the gifts of others, not "deprecating or envying the fact that God calls others to express their faith in a different way." [44]

It follows that not every part of the body is expected to encompass every aspect of God's mission to the world. Edmonds states that: "verbal proclamation of the good news becomes an issue only when ... agencies are considered in isolation from the rest of the body."[45] When the various parts of the body are considered to be complementary a holistic picture of ministry emerges.

Should then a Christian development organisation initiate verbal proclamation of the gospel if its key self-understanding is that it is called into being to do development work? Clearly, it must act in ways consistent with long-term biblical holism. The local churches, if they exist, will be best placed to explain Christian faith and to undertake pastoral care in the community. There may also be other types of organisations which see this work as their gift.[46] The development agency must respect the role of others within the broader Christian fellowship and in particular must not seek to replace or supplant the church. There will also be many occasions when individual Christians who work for Christian development organisations are called upon to explain their hope or motivation, and they should do so gladly. A concomitant to biblical holism, however, is that the Christian development organisation will take responsibility to build up, support and encourage the church. This may include working with others to help establish faith communities where there are none and the context permits.

The Christian development organisation will also make full use of Christian scripture in explaining its development work and approach, and in this it may communicate something of the hopeful message of

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40 Cited in Doug Edmonds An incarnational agency in an evangelical world (a theological consideration of Anglicare's role in mission) Launceston, Anglicare Tasmania (Paper presented on 2 September 2008 at the Anglicare Australia 2008 Conference, Sydney, NSW) at 4.
41 Edmonds, 6
42 1 Corinthians, Chapter 12
43 Edmonds, 6
44 Edmonds, 6
45 Edmonds, 6
46 Ephesians 4:13 notes that Christ chooses some to be evangelists.

Jesus. However, it would be gratuitous, confusing and potentially disrespectful for a Christian development organisation to organise or conduct evangelistic campaigns which would stand apart from its development activities. To do so, would be acting out of character and outside its sense of mission.

2. An attitude of serving Christ

A unifying feature of every Christian ministry is the knowledge that it is Christ who is served. Jesus Christ both pioneers and calls. He leads the way. Karl Barth affirms that, "the action, work, or activity of Christ unconditionally precedes that of the human called by Him..."[47] Organizations who take Christ's name look and listen for Christ, offer obedience, and follow.

For development organizations which seek justice and mercy, there is abundant Scriptural assurance about Christ's affinity with, and service to, the poor. Jesus' own identification with the poor is so close that serving the poor is equated with serving Christ himself.[48] New Zealand theologian David Flett puts this elegantly by saying, "The Christian community's holy distance from the world is her active existence in solidarity with those for whom God has decided."[49] It is salutary to remember that the purpose of God's election is to enlist Christians in his service. It can be nothing else. When that service is withheld, election loses all meaning.[50] Mission is never about parochialism or privilege, or any notion of presumptive blessing. It is only ever about service.

Knowing that it is Christ who is served by the Christian development agency fundamentally changes the self-understanding of its work. A Christian development agency does not conceive what it does as service delivery, even though it may deliver services. A Christian development agency does not understand itself as a centre of professional development expertise, even though it should be highly professional in its activities. Nor does a Christian development agency see itself as simply working alongside the poor, even though that is always a primary concern. A Christian development agency understands itself as engaging in Christian *ministry* which primarily serves Christ. [51]

Consistently, those Christians engaged in the work of the organization will not see themselves as just doing a job. They will understand their work as vocation, or calling, or some kind of outworking of their faith. This, in theory at least, will imbue a sense of passion and motivation. James in his research makes reference to the 'extremist commitment' of Catholic nuns coming from their faith. This came, he reports, from a deeper place than humanitarian values:

> "The nuns in particular were working from a sense of calling not career. They displayed extraordinary, long-term commitment. They coped with incredible difficulties in a sacrificial way.

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[47] Karl Barth qquoted in John G Flett *The witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, and the nature of Christian community* (Grand Rapids, William B Eerdmans, 2010) 261
48 Matt 25:37-40
49 Flett, 234
50 Bosch 18
51 The Mission of World Vision captures this emphasis: "World Vision is an international partnership of Christians whose mission is to follow our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in working with the poor and oppressed to promote human transformation, seek justice, and bear witness to the good news of the Kingdom of God."

'Even when you are having an awful time in Soweto watching necklace killings you go on.' They expected testing and suffering and accepted difficulties with humour. They were in a different league to career-orientated NGO workers." [52]

Understanding work as Christian vocation also frames accountability in a different way. None of these observations are intended to disparage the contribution of non-Christian colleagues who are committed and highly professional in their work. Christians must never indulge feelings of superiority; they must repent of them. James observes: "Faith should not be used as a weapon for exercising control, nor to encourage judgemental, exclusive, and intolerant attitudes."[53] They do help explain, however, the way concepts of *service* and *accountability* will be framed for many Christians in the work place.

3.   The coming Kingdom: locating development work within God's meta-narrative

The theological concept which overarches *holism* and *service* for the Christian development agency, and makes theological sense of its work, is the coming *reign* or *kingdom* of God. Sadly, this is perhaps the most important and yet least understood doctrine of modern Christian faith.

The kingdom was at the centre of Jesus' life and ministry. It is sometimes forgotten that his call to repentance, which tends to have a more familiar ring, did not occur in a vacuum; it was made squarely in the context of the coming reign of God.[54]The kingdom of God was the most consistent and pronounced theme of his teaching.[55] In the synoptic gospels (Mark, Luke and Matthew), more attention is given to this topic than any other.[56] The kingdom motif was present in Jesus' proclamations, in his parable teachings, in the beatitudes, in his expositive discourses, and apocalyptic material, as well as other sources. Jesus' life of actions also speaks about this anticipated reign of God. There is eloquent testimony about the kingdom in his miracles, in his relationships with the poor and the outcast, and in his indignation and anger at injustice. Most profoundly, the promised hope of this kingdom is vindicated in the person of the resurrected Christ.

So what is this kingdom teaching about? In one paragraph, the Christian teaching about the kingdom of God is that God was unhappy to leave the world in its fallen, sinful, and sub-optimal state. He sent Jesus to redeem all of creation and to inaugurate a new and completely righteous reign over all things. While God's reign or kingdom has broken into the world, it will not be fully consummated until some point in the future, usually believed to coincide with the return of Christ. Christians are called to live as signs and incarnated expressions of the kingdom, recognizing that God's reign has begun, while also anticipating the fullness of what is yet to come. [57] Christians should reflect the eternal values of the kingdom of God,

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[52] James, 14

[53] James, 20

54 Why do we repent? Mark provides the answer in 1:14: "Because the Kingdom of God is at hand!"

[55] Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the teaching of Jesus*, 54. "The central aspect of the teaching of Jesus was that concerning the Kingdom of God. Of this there can be no doubt..." Cox, at 48 says: "It was the heartbeat of his life, his constant concern and pre-occupation."

[56] James D G Dunn *Unity and diversity in the New Testament* (second edition), 13ff; Hans Kung, *The church*, 88 where it is noted the phrase *the reign of God* is used about 40 times in Luke.

[57] German theologian Jurgen Moltmann has written extensively about how the promise of God's coming kingdom should impact the lived present. He developed the term *presentative eschatology* to describe this relationship: "'Presentative

such as peace, justice and love, as a present expression of an unfolding reality. The final outworking of God's kingdom will be when he comes and makes his home among his people in the renewed earth, which is his eternal home.[58]

The final reign of God over all things corresponds to the Old Testament notion of *shalom*. This Hebrew word refers to the transcendent peace of God, which is achieved when the whole created order sits in its proper place and relationship before God. Boff captures this aspect well by saying,

> "Biblically it signifies the totality of God's creation redeemed and organized on the criteria of God's loving design. The reign represents the comprehensive politics of God, to be implemented in the history of the cosmos, of nations, of the chosen people, and in the depths of each human heart."[59]

With this brief overview it is now possible to unpack some of the implications of this teaching about God's kingdom. These are vital to any Christian development agency in properly understanding the place of its work from the perspective of Christian theology.

The first implication is that God's kingdom will be established on this earth, not heaven above. The New Testament does *not* teach that our ultimate hope is that the immortal soul of the redeemed human goes off to be with God in heaven for an afterlife which commences immediately upon death. This popular but mistaken view is little more than shallow Gnosticism. Rather, the Christian teaching is that the redeemed inherit a renewed, transformed earth at the time of a general bodily resurrection. Walter Wink emphasizes: "The gospel is not a message of personal salvation *from* the world, but *a message of a world transfigured, right down to its basic structures*."[60] God's eternal kingdom will reign *on earth* forever. Tom Wright explores the many profound implications of this difference in his seminal work *Surprised by Hope*.[61] It is absolutely clear that Christians need to care for this world which is loved by God, and which is to be the ultimate home for both God and humans.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray about this in the Lord's Prayer. This is very telling. The first intercession it contains is, "Thy kingdom come, on earth..." This confirms that the home of the Christian's calling and sanctification is in the present time and place.[62] Christians constantly enlist themselves in the service of God's kingdom whenever they pray this prayer. They commit themselves "to initiate, here and now, approximations of God's reign."[63] The biblical picture we are given is of a God who graciously invites his people to have an active, participatory role as he builds the promised kingdom. Christian development

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eschatology' means nothing else but simply 'creative expectation', hope which sets about criticising and transforming the present because it is open towards the universal future of the kingdom." Jurgen Moltmann *Theology of hope* (SCM Press, London 1967).

[58] This is captured in some of the most beautiful and expressive verses in scripture: "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." Rev. 21:3-4

[59] Boff, 32

[60] Cited in Myers, at 49

[61] Tom Wright *Surprised by hope* (London, SPCK, 2007)

[62] Bosch, 397

[63] Bosch, 35

organizations engage in "a process of change that affirms the joint roles of God and humans."[64] The fullness of Christian salvation consists in the reversal of the consequences of human sin, which will be demonstrated in acts of co-creation at the prompting of God. And that process of change involves working towards the comprehensive vision of *shalom* in all its dimensions.

Development workers know how frustrating and complex their work can be. So often the very best efforts of agencies seem weak and inadequate. Results can be painfully slow and shaky. An important biblical text identified in this regard by Tom Wright is 1 Corinthians 15:58.[65] This verse is at the end of a dense passage about the fullness of resurrection life. The passage boldly assures that workers in God's service should stand firm: "Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." Somehow, God takes the efforts offered in the service of his kingdom, no matter how weak and inadequate that they may seem, and transforms them for his eternal purposes. There is both a *continuity* and a *transformation*, but how this works is unclear.[66]

The resurrected body of Christ, the one person resurrected ahead of all others, provides a very significant pointer. Christ's physical resurrected body is apt for a renewed world; but moreover it has been transformed from dead and broken into alive and well. And yet while renewed, the marks of Christ's suffering on the cross are still impressed upon it. For the Christian development agency there is the certainty that God will somehow transform their present efforts offered in his service into an ultimate, eternal, and life-giving fullness. [67]

4. Taking a realistic account of sin and evil

An orthodox Christian faith recognizes the reality of evil which impacts our world. Any development paradigm which does not take a realistic account of evil will, by definition, be inadequate. There are different understandings about how evil influences the world. Some approaches stress "structural" evil, such as oppressive systems, others more personalized manifestations of evil, and still others highly speculative understandings. While there may sometimes be disagreements about the *how* of evil, there is complete agreement within every catechism of the Christian church about its present reality. This includes its broader social impacts.

The Christian development organization will stand in the prophetic tradition denouncing all systems which hold people captive and diminish their humanity. There are many structural and corporate manifestations of evil which rob people of their fullness of life. Developing country debt, child trafficking, slavery, child labour, institutional corruption, military aggression, ethnic 'cleansings', land seizures, gender discrimination, and unfair global trade terms represent some of many possible

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[64] Myers, 15
[65] Wright, 204-05,219
[66] Ernest Lucas 'The New Testament teaching on the environment' *Transformation* (1999) 16:3, 93-99, 96
[67] The resurrection was also a stunning counter-narrative against the whole religious, social, economic, and political systems of the Roman world.

instances. The Christian faith cannot affirm complete trust in God without designating as evil all that destroys life, and by "challenging the power of anti-gods"[68] by whatever name they are known.

In relation to more personal understandings of evil , Myers complains that the modern story of the West has simply no answer.[69] He suggests that development practitioners need to overcome their blind spot in terms of the spiritual world.[70] This is one area where development theology and development theories will find it hard to establish a common ground. It is interesting that the developing world does not share Western sensibilities around this issue. Myers reports that: "The poor often live in fear of an unseen spiritual world of curses, gods, demons and ancestors"[71] which may have a deep, ongoing, and destructive impact on their lives. It follows that: "…accepting local worldviews uncritically is sometimes a source of poverty, not an answer to it."[72]

The presenting issue is finding a development praxis which can provide an adequate response to the reality of evil, in all its expressions. A blanket denial is not an honest response for Christians.

Christian theology affirms that evil has been conquered in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and that evil must, in the final analysis, yield to the reign of God. The power of prayer in this connection is a matter of general acceptance within Christian faith. The famous dictum of philosopher C. S. Lewis offers some guidance for present purposes:

> "there are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them."[73]

It is suggested that a Christian development worldview which is uninformed about this topic will be delinquent in taking its work seriously, but a worldview overly pre-occupied with it will be of little earthly good. Those seeking to become more informed might refer to Chapter 7 of the book *God of the Empty Handed* written by Indian theologian and development practitioner Jayakumar Christian.[74]

5. An unshakable commitment to personal transformation

The Christian hope is for "the reign of God in the whole created order, *including ourselves*."[75]The human heart can represent perhaps the most stubborn development challenge. The work of the Christian development agency recognizes that sustainable change is simply not possible without changing the way

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[68] Bosch, referencing Josuttis, at 354

[69] Myers, 91

[70] Myers, 15

[71] Myers, 69. See also Jayakumar Christian *God of the empty handed: poverty, power and the Kingdom of God* (Marc Publishers, Monrovia, 1999) at Chapter 7 for a fuller explanation of the powers and principalities against which development work must contend.

[72] Myers, 99 And see Peter Batchelor, *People in rural development*, (Pasternoster Press, Carlisle, 1993), 85

[73] Preface, C S Lewis *The Screwtape Letters* 1942

[74] Jayakumar Christian (1999) God of the empty handed: poverty, power and the Kingdom of God Monrovia, Marc Publishers

[75] Flett, 54

power is exercised in human relationships, and in this world. An internal transfiguring is required of the most profound kind. God's Spirit needs to teach humans how to exercise power in godly ways, to uphold the dignity of all humans as his precious children, and to give and receive forgiveness where there is error. In short, humans need to be taught how to live as God intended. According to Brueggemann "The gospel is the news that distorted patterns of power have been broken: the reception of the gospel is the embrace of radically transformed patterns of social relationships."[76] Conversion is never about shallow pietism or formulaic responses. It requires a fundamental change in patterns of living and relating.

Groody declares that: "Sometimes personal liberation involves helping the poor to change the way they think about themselves, especially when they see their conditions as fate, or worse, as divinely ordained."[77] In a similar vein, Paulo Freire speaks in terms of the 'conscientization of the poor' by which he refers to the fact that "if the poor do not change their self-perception, they will never be free."[78] Jayakumar Christian also speaks of transcending the "marred identity" of the poor. A conversion on this level means "rediscovering the original design of creation in which people are called to be free, dignified, and loving human beings." [79]

While conversion in all its dimensions is the desire of Christian faith, it can never support proselytism[80] of any kind. The Christian gospel is one of grace. As Pope Benedict warns: "Charity, furthermore, cannot be used as a means of engaging in what is nowadays considered proselytism. Love is free; it is not practised as a way of achieving other ends."[81] It is impossible to coerce or manipulate people into the Christian faith, and deeply offensive to try. To do so would produce a harvest of insincerity, and would constitute a repugnant betrayal of a worldview which rests on unconditional love. Boff queries whether the violent compulsion used to spread Christian faith in Latin America constituted any form of good news at all. He deplores the wholesale disregard for human dignity which resulted in the "destruction of otherness."[82] He asks poignantly, "Can we say that there was an evangelism here?" [83]

There is much to be learned. Christians engaged in development work must hope and pray for the conversion of others, but also adopt a posture which is welcoming and invitational in doing so. They will desire deeply that others would know the profound love they have experienced in Jesus Christ, and not some caricature of it. The mature Christian has an acute understanding that their faith is an embodied faith, and that their personal actions speak volumes about what they truly believe. Christians, ideally,

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[76] Walter Brueggemann Biblical perspectives on evangelism: Living in a three-storied universe (Nashville, Abingdon, 1993) 34

[77] Groody, 185

[78] Groody, 185

[79] Groody, 186

[80] It is not correct to define "Proselytism" as meaning any activity which may lead to conversion. It refers to violence, coercion, manipulation, or incentives being provided to induce someone to change their faith position.

[81] Papal Encyclical *Dues Caritas Est* paragraph 31

[82] Boff, 14

[83] Boff, 17

will always be willing to give an account of the hope they cherish within them[84], in a spirit of respect and love, and will pray for opportunities to be used by God in this way.

The fundamental point to emerge for Christian development organizations is that while teaching good values is of use, it is an insufficient substitute for faith in the living God.[85] Good values need to be brought to life in changed patterns of behavior. This happens when the relational claims of the Creator God are taken personally and seriously.

Values, such as generosity and sharing, are commendable, but it is the living God who requires these as true worship. Teaching about the dignity of all humans is laudable, but it is the Divine Parent of All who demands unconditional love as an act of service. Peace and reconciliation are noble concepts, but it is the God who forgives us who insists that we forgive others. Human empathy will help us to be mindful of those who suffer, but it is the God of suffering who goes ahead of us, and bids us come. Selfishness, greed and violence are deplorable, but it is the work of God's Spirit to regenerate the human heart.

The point is that Christian development is based on more than socializing a set of good values. For the Christian, it is the relational claims of God that brings them to life, and when this happens, lasting change is the outcome.

6.   A prayer soaked life

Every Christian development organization is born out of prayerful response to needs in this world and, for as long as it claims the adjective *Christian*, will continue in a prayerful mode. The bottom line is stated by Barth: "Only as God justifies it, does mission continue to exist."[86] What the Christian development organization offers is a dependent obedience founded in prayer.[87]

 Jesus' own life of prayer sets the example for his followers. There is something very compelling about the Son of God's own need to pray. The Apostle Paul implores the followers of Jesus Christ to: "Rejoice always, pray continually, and give thanks in all circumstances; for that is God's will…" [88] The prayer soaked life means the Christian development agency will over time nurture a Godly dependence. It will also lead to greater organizational learning and empowerment in its work.

There are many different forms of prayer, but one of special relevance to the Christian development agency is *intercession.* This type of prayer brings the needs of others to the heart of God, seeking divine intervention. But prayer is not just about asking. True prayer is a more dynamic process in which space is created to attentively discern what God is saying. The act of prayer therefore quickens the responsiveness, insight and initiative of those praying, and exposes the human heart to change. It is

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[84] 1 Peter 3:15 is an important text here.

[85] John Perkins, at 80, puts it this way: "What separates Christian community development from other forms of social change is that we believe that changing a life or changing a community is ultimately a spiritual issue."

[86] Barth, quoted in Flett, at 107

[87] James, notes: "Prayer expresses a human dependence on God." at 14

[88] 1 Thess 5:16-18

inconceivable for a Christian development organization to minister alongside God's poor without bringing their needs, and its own, to God in an open and honest way.

Another particularly relevant type of prayer is *invocation* whereby the Spirit of God is invited into our development work. This kind of prayer empowers, emboldens and transforms. It is never an afterthought, but a primary and continuing response in which God's power and presence is welcomed into every aspect of the organisation's work, from the most straightforward intervention to the most complex. Prayers can cover every undertaking, and fill the interstices of even the most carefully designed and executed development plan. We misunderstand prayer if we see it as a magic spell, divine guarantee or insurance policy. It should be seen primarily as an act of obedience by God's followers in which He is invited to invade the present in hope and expectation. It would be wrong, however, to presumptuously demand that God act in particular ways that conform to our will. To do so would speak not of faith, but faithlessness.

There are many other kinds of prayer, and space allows mention of just two more. Prayers of *thanksgiving* are offered to acknowledge and celebrate the responsiveness of God. These prayers are essential in building deeper faith and trust. And *contemplative* prayers are extraordinarily helpful in building a culture which is both discerning and reflective about its work practices.

There are also a variety of spiritual disciplines which should permeate Christian development practice, including Bible study, theological reflection, fasting, meditation and discernment. There is a danger of neglect or perhaps even embarrassment about these kinds of practices as organisations strive, in an uncritical way, for greater professionalism. This kind of separation of sacred and secular is unwarranted and unbiblical. Myers observes "Few development workers understand prayer and fasting as tools for human transformation or for working for justice."[89] Moreover, "God and God's revelation are banished from our social analysis…"[90] The Christian development organization will develop a culture where the disciplines of Christian spiritual life are an indispensible part of its praxis, and not a curiosity, an afterthought, a veneer or an exception.

7. A special relationship with the church

A Christian theology of change recognizes the special place of the Church as God's lasting community of hope. It is not for the Christian development agency to usurp its role.

An accountable relationship between the Church and the Christian development organisation will recognize the responsibilities they bear to each other. The Church strengthens its apostolic character when it engages deeply with organisations which have the capacity and gifts to deliver international development ministry.[91] In this sense, the Christian development organization has a ministry which stands in continuity with the Church. Likewise, the development agency maintains its commitment to evangelism and discipleship by encouraging and supporting the local church. Holistic ministry is

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[89] Myers, 11
[90] Myers, 11
[91] Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (London, SCM Press, 1975) 83-85ff.

strengthened by recognising the different parts of the body, providing mutual encouragement, and holding those parts to account.

Deeper partnerships are required between churches and Christian development organizations with a growing sensitivity to the issues of poverty, social justice, and the challenges of particular development contexts. Many churches still fail to appreciate God's unfailing solidarity with the poor. Some have been seduced by a different kind of gospel. Rah insists: "The Western white captivity of the church means that capitalism can be revered as the system closest to God and the consequent rampant materialism and consumerism of the capitalist system become acceptable vices."[92] And Koyama cautions sharply: "Man is supposed to eat bread. But what if bread eats man?"[93] The Christian development organization must help the Western churches (and their constituencies) to address their own complicity in the poverty of the poor. For while the world's poor are generally not seen as our problem in the West, we certainly remain theirs.[94]

It is important to note that greed and corruption exist as evils in all societies, not just Western societies or the Western church. There are wealthy churches in the global South who also need to discover anew God's abiding concern for the poor.

In a local area development context, local churches know their community better than the Christian development organization. Churches are an important part of the social infrastructure of many communities, and will remain in those communities as a witness to the holistic changes God desires long after the development organisation has moved on. The leadership and moral authority of local churches are vital in encouraging both development and theological understandings. The Christian development agency will have a natural bond with existing churches because of shared understandings and a desire for mutual fellowship and encouragement. That connection will set the Christian development organization apart from many other agencies.

In some places there are very few, if any, churches. In these contexts, the responsibility of the Christian development organization may be to explore how it can best strengthen nascent faith communities for the longer term. It will, of course, work without any hesitation with other religious communities in ways which are welcoming, respectful and co-operative towards those faiths. The respect for those faiths, and its own, prevents the Christian development organization attempting to assimilate all manner of beliefs. The resulting blancmange is never appetizing to anyone.

Part II: Outlining some of the main theories of change in the international development sector

In the first instance, a Christian development organization's practice will be informed by it theology. At the same time, a commitment to evidence based programming means it is also critical to articulate and

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[92] Rah, 50

[93] Cited in Myers, 89

[94] Based on a comment attributed to Jim Wallis, in Hughes, 6. Perkins, at 130, helpfully observes: "If the issue of how our wealth is linked to others' poverty makes us defensive we will find it hard to do Christian community development. What is encouraging, however, is that if our own wealth can be a source of the problem, it can also be a solution to the problem."

examine various theories of change. Empirical enquiry is important both for learning purposes and as part of accountability to donors and supporters. The second part of this paper outlines three meta-theories of change which form the basis of practice for many organizations in the development sector. They are – a scientific rationalist or technocratic perspective; empowerment theories that emphasizes power relations and contestation as key drivers of change; and a final perspective that conceives of change as an emergent, complex, multi-disciplinary process that requires development organizations and practitioners to be 'searchers' with communities, rather than 'planners', given the difficulty to control or manage the change process.[95] The following sections of this paper explore how our theology of change relates to these meta-theories of change.

1. Theories that emphasize rationality, science, knowledge and technology as drivers of change

The first group of theories may be broadly labeled scientific or technical approaches. These insist on careful analysis of the development context using scientific principles. Methodologies from both the pure sciences and the social sciences can be called upon. The proposed solutions to development problems will involve the application of particular technologies or scientific methods so that predicted effects can be overcome. Careful measurement, planning and controls are necessary, and there is a strong emphasis on measurement and evaluation to validate results.

It is trite to observe that modern science has done much to help humankind. Achievements in public health, medical science, water and sanitation, and agricultural production have all been very significant. The Christian development organization will see great value in scientific approaches because all Christians are commanded to love God will all their heart, soul, and *mind.*[96]Scientific approaches help the Christian development organization to serve God and their neighbor well. It is hardly possible to love God with the whole human mind while approaching science with suspicion or anti-intellectualism.

For this reason:

> "Any Christian understanding of transformational development must have space for the good that science and technology offer. Yet, to be Christian, this science and technology cannot be its own story..."[97]

Science is a tool. Science does not serve itself; it is valuable only in the service of God and His world. To replace God with science is idolatry, and this danger remains real. This was symbolized prophetically from the earliest days of the Enlightenment with the enthronement of the Statue of Reason in Notre Dame Cathedral.[98]

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[95] Lucia Boxelaar, Liz Mackinlay, and Tim Dearborn, (2010) Articulating our theory of change – Discussion paper prepared for World Vision International.
[96] Matthew 22:37
[97] Samuels, quoted in Myers, 55
[98] This occurred in 1793. The symbolism remains highly relevant.

The Enlightenment gave people a new plausibility structure supposedly based on objective science[99]. The public policy which attended this development had no space for God. Religion quickly lost its claim to govern the right use of power.[100] The Enlightenment contended (spuriously) that scientific knowledge was factual, value-free, and neutral. Monsma, referencing the work of Thomas Kuhn, Michael Polanyi, and Fritjof Capra critiques this position:

> "… what theories are accepted or rejected, what facts are considered relevant or irrelevant, or what studies are deemed important or ignored are dependent on one's presuppositions, perspectives and values – on one's worldview or mindset."[101]

Nonetheless,

> "Religion was assigned to this realm of values. Since it rested on subjective notions and could not be proved correct it was relegated to the private world of opinions and divorced from the public world of facts."[102]

Rationalism therefore became the creed of civil society.[103]

The claims of the Enlightenment were extravagantly self-aggrandizing. Intellectual life was viewed as having passed "through the dark ages of theological, metaphysical, and philosophical speculation, only to emerge in the triumph of the positive sciences."[104] Instead of human planning being for the glory of God, "Human planning took the place of God."[105] The Christian development organization must be vigilant in appreciating the difference.

The result of scientific approaches, viewed as a development paradigm, has been mixed and has produced widespread disillusionment. The Enlightenment fostered belief in progress, and this was reflected

> "preeminently, in the 'development programs' Western nations were undertaking in the so-called Third World. The leitmotif of all these projects was that of the Western technological development model, which found its expression primarily in categories of material possession, consumerism and economic advance."[106]

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[99] The objectivity of the scientific paradigm has been subject to much critique. Harold Brown, author of *Perception, Theory and Commitment: The New Philosophy of Science* notes: "Science consists of a series of research projects structured by accepted presuppositions which determine what observations are to be made, how they are to be interpreted, what phenomena are problematic, and how these problems are to be dealt with. When the presuppositions of a scientific discipline change, both the structure of the discipline and the scientist's picture of reality are changed."

[100] Bosch, 266 and Frame at 156ff.

[101] Monsma, 118

[102] Bosch, 266

[103] Bottomley, 10 "The relegation of faith to the sphere of personal belief also served the maintenance of the social order. Faith located in the private sphere reinforced the prevailing belief in the autonomous individual."

[104] Berstein quoted in Bosch, 266.

[105] Bosch, 271

[106] Bosch, 265

Bottomley laments:

> "The culture of modernity was highly critical of religion and increasingly secular in its assumption that by the power of scientific reason humans could conquer nature and enjoy happiness and health as if heaven was on earth."[107]

According to Bosch the reality was vastly different with repeated studies over a 25 year period revealing that this model had failed to deliver any real progress. Damningly, he concludes:

> "The Enlightenment was supposed to create a world in which all people were equal, in which the soundness of human reason would show the way to happiness and abundance for all. This did not materialize. Instead people have become victims of fear and frustrations as never before."[108]

It is incumbent on the Christian development organization to consider how to harness the substantial potential benefits of scientific and technical approaches, while seeing through the hubris.

There are many limitations of the scientific methods. The Enlightenment eliminated purpose from science, since all scientific research was 'value-free' and 'neutral'. The Christian faith, on the other hand, is always concerned with the questions of purpose and meaning. Myers summarizes: "Science helps us figure out how things work, but not why they work or what they are for."[109]Purpose must be reintroduced as a category which is as basic to human development as clean water and nutritious food. A new epistemology is needed such that technology is "confronted by a reality outside itself which does not depend on its canons of rationality and which therefore will not be subservient to its deterministic power."[110] In short, the linear application of cause and effect must be tempered by a godly worldview which includes the responsible use of power, sensitivity to culture and the human condition, and critical ethical overlays.

A major weakness is that science does not offer any self-contained moral framework. It is for this reason that universities and hospitals have ethics committees. For the Christian development agency its moral frame will be informed by Scripture, faith and theology. Not everything which is scientifically possible is good or desirable. For example, should a Christian development agency plant genetically modified crops, or promote particular reproductive technologies, or support certain high tech interventions? Scientific data can influence, but not answer these questions. While the efficiency of science may suggest one path, this may be contradicted by the "hundreds of rusting tractors and broken water pumps that give their mute testimony."[111] The Christian development organization will always take a broader view, which unashamedly looks to the values and obligations of faith. It must do so since technology is a false

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[107] Bottomley, 4
[108] Bosch, 274
[109] Myers, 54
[110] Bosch, 355
[111] Dayton, 90. Participatory approaches will help here.

god which speaks only of power, not limits or responsibilities.[112] There is no clearer recognition of this than Albert Einstein's own lament:

> "The release of atom power has changed everything except our way of thinking...the solution to this problem lies in the heart of mankind. If only I had known, I should have become a watchmaker."[113]

There are many places science simply cannot go. It cannot comprehend evil. It cannot address the unseen world, other than to dismiss or disparage the improvable. It cannot understand prayer. It remains resolutely skeptical about faith, revelation, and miracles. It cannot build hope or resilience or confidence. It cannot forgive. It cannot help a devastated community to trust and start over. It cannot believe in the kingdom to come, and balks at an afterlife or resurrection. It can help to grow food, but knows nothing of the good of sharing. It can provide health, without cherishing life, and may explain the physical world in astonishing detail, but never its meaning. For this reason science is in desperate need of a mentor, whose name is Faith. As Pope Benedict XVI says:

> "From God's standpoint, faith liberates reason from its blind spots and therefore helps it to be ever more fully itself. Faith enables reason to do its work more effectively and to see its proper object more clearly."[114]

The Christian development organization will continue to love God with all its mind, but on some occasions that love will demand that science is reproached.

2. Theories that emphasize that social change occurs through contestation and negotiation (power relations)[115]

A second theoretical perspective that is evident in World Vision's development practice emphasizes that social change occurs through contestation and negotiation (power relations). Proponents of this perspective "support changes of structures, institutions and power relations that perpetuate poverty and social injustices."[116] Change strategies employed include mostly participatory approaches that allow community members to take ownership of the change process.

The work of South American educationalist Paulo Freire has been influential in shaping empowerment approaches. Freire coined the term 'conscientisation' to describe the process whereby people become

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[112] See Myers, at 21, who references Postman. The risk goes beyond idolatry, that is, the celebration of science and technology in a way which claims human faith and worship. There is also a risk that the Christian development organisation itself will be perceived by developing communities more as the champion of that false god, and less as a fellowship of humans offering God's love with an attitude of humility and service.

[113] http://www.wagingpeace.org/menu/action/urgent-actions/einstein/

[114] Papal Encyclical *Dues Caritas Est* paragraph 28

[115] Another group of theories can be grouped under the broad umbrella of economic models. As these however tend to apply more at a government or multilateral level rather than for NGOs, a description of these theories is attached at Appendix 1.

[116] Shutt, C. (2009) 'Changing the World by Changing Ourselves: Reflections from a Bunch of BINGOs' IDS Practice Paper, Volume 2009, Number 3, Institute of Development Studies, 24

aware of and address the power relations that oppress them.[117] Freire's work caused a major shift in emphasis directed at securing far greater empowerment for local communities. One intention was to help them break free from models which produced an entrenched dependency. Hughes summarizes:

> "To be effective, the education of the poor must … be a means of empowerment as well as a simple transference of skills. Self-reliance must be the goal from the beginning. What this means for development is that much more attention is given to what the poor want rather than what they are perceived to need."[118]

Under this approach the field worker is more a catalyst than service deliverer.

It has taken a long time for development organizations to appreciate that authentic development cannot take place without a transfer of power.[119]Freire, the pioneer of this thinking saw it very much as an outworking of his Catholic faith.[120] Theologically, participatory approaches sit well with the Christian development organization. When the poor are not involved in decisions which affect them the final result is: "…eternalizing relations of dependency, and preventing the impoverished from becoming the subjects, the agents, of their own history."[121] The Christian development worker recognizes the intrinsic good of approaches which get "community members to participate more fully in all that it means to be human."[122] In a similar vein, Boff sees participatory community engagement as helping to overcome the colonial legacy of "non-recognition of the other as other."[123]

Culturally, participatory approaches are less condescending. They assume that the poor may know something about what needs to happen to secure their own longer term interests. Development agencies may proceed from the Western assumption that they know best. McLaren, speaking from a North American church context, is alert to the risks. He warns: "The US can so easily become an echo chamber. Western voices arguing with other Western voices about Western topics from a Western perspective."[124]A development pedagogy which involves the development agency and the community in a true dialogue is one where there will be significant learnings on both sides. Development agencies must move beyond the asymmetrical flow of information which has helped perpetuate an unhelpful hegemony.

Appreciative Inquiry ('AI') is one approach whereby the development worker engages with the community to try and identify those things which have worked well in the past. It is concerned with trying to identify strengths which can be built upon. This approach also resonates well with the Christian

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[117] Shutt, 2009
[118] Hughes, 13
[119] Bosch, 357
[120] Hughes, 16
[121] Boff, 80
[122] Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert *When helping hurts: How to alleviate poverty without hurting the poor* (Moody Publishers, Chicago, 2009) 146
[123] Boff, xi
[124] Brian McLaren, quoted in Rah,125

development organization. Boff celebrates that, inescapably, "in every culture there will be buds, shoots of the reign, sacraments of grace, signs of the presence of the Word, and accents of the activity of the Spirit."[125]It is bad theology for the Christian development worker to suppose that they bring God with them in their suitcase. They do not. The tool of AI enables Christians,

> "to identify the good gifts that God has placed in a community and to dream about how to use those gifts to fix what is wrong, thereby bringing greater witness to the realities of the coming kingdom."[126]

The process of inquiry also enables the Christian development organization to reflect on its own attitudes. The good things that God has already installed in other cultures can hold a mirror up to the organisation's own neglect and dereliction. Does the organization fully appreciate and leverage what God has given it? And when entering a new community the Christian development organization should willingly accept: "The first missionary is the Holy Trinity [who is] always involved in self-bestowal on creation…"[127] Looking for the good things God has already done for others may help Christians abandon their own cultural insularity, and become more thankful for the breadth of God's grace.

However, communities may be less willing to identify for themselves those things which have been unsuccessful or unhelpful. Every culture is at once the "locus of the fervent acceptance of God's self communication, as well as the refusal of the same."[128] They will reflect responses, positive, negative or ambiguous, to God's prior initiatives. There will be elements requiring respectful challenge in all cultures, including the development organisation's own. Truly participatory approaches do not mean remaining silent in order to avoid causing offence; they call for an open, honest, and at times hard dialogue.

What participatory processes can guarantee, when undertaken in a genuine way, is treating humans with dignity. For this reason participatory approaches will appeal to Christian development agencies who are seeking to emulate the unconditional love of Christ. What participatory approaches cannot guarantee, however, is success. Fikkert and Corbett wisely note that: "…participation does not have the capacity to overcome the basic corruption in the human condition. Individuals and groups make bad decisions all the time!"[129]Human freedom includes the freedom to make mistakes – mistakes made with sincerity, not just with evil self-serving.

Rights-based theories

Efforts to empower communities have often promoted communities' awareness about their universal human rights, and involved working with communities to mobilise in order to claim those rights. This

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[125] Boff, 30
[126] Corbett and Fikkert, 136
[127] Boff, 23
[128] Boff, 22
[129] Corbett and Fikkert, 147

approach was generally introduced by development organisations in the late 1990s. It posits that when human rights are understood and asserted at a local level, with a corresponding holding to account of duty-bearers, lasting change will result in a change in power dynamics. This approach has quickly gained traction. For example, The Department for International Development (DFID) in the UK has now mandated a 'rights based approach' in all its programming.

Perhaps the most powerful critique though is that a rights based approach is a largely Western construct which, despite its stated objective of empowerment, seldom takes into account the views of the Global South. As a development organisation, the views of the Global South should be at the forefront of our thinking. A Western view often sees human rights through a positivistic legal framework, reflecting personal rather than community entitlements. This can be seen as an imposition which has no regard for local frames of reference.

In summarising the responses to a rights-based approach, the International Policy Network (in a report prepared using DFID's own materials) concluded "the approach does not appear to have resulted in an improvement of the condition of the poor."[130] Elsewhere the observation has also been made that: "there is no consistent correlation between the ratification of human rights treaties and improved health or social outcomes."[131]Some think the time has come for a fundamental reassessment. As Batliwala points out,

> "there is clearly an urgent need, particularly among development assistance agencies, to broaden, deepen and nuance the understanding of rights themselves and of rights-based approaches, and particularly so at the level of action strategies. There are no magic bullets or fast tracks to social justice. It is time to move away from formulas and rhetoric."[132]

All this does not mean that human rights approaches have nothing to add. They do. It is simply to point out that there is always room for improvement and a more thoughtful and well grounded application in field contexts. This leads into what a Christian worldview says about human rights approaches. It must be acknowledged that there will be a range of opinions within Christian communities about human rights approaches, ranging from skepticism to optimistic embrace. What follows is but one reflection.

The great strength of human rights approaches is that they are directed at moving beyond charitable responses, and look toward just and lasting improvements in the life of the poor. Therefore the vision of realisation of universal human rights sits sympathetically with the vision of God's coming kingdom, a kingdom where justice, love and peace reign, where the old order of things has finally passed away for good.[133] [134]

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[130] Caroline Boin, Julian Harris, Andrea Marchesetti, 21

[131] Kumanan Rasanathan, Johanna Norenhag, and Nicole Valentine "Realizing human rights-based approaches for action on the social determinants of health" *Health and human rights* Vol 12, No 2 (2010)

[132] Srilatha Batliwala (2010) "When Rights Go Wrong –distorting the rights based approach to development." Paper Published by Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations, Harvard University, 7

[133] Revelation 21:4

The Christian development organisation will work with God in helping to build God's vision of justice through human rights. This motivation comes from a fundamentally different place from those advocating that purely secular human rights constructs be applied in social and political life, even if the latter do have some positive effects.

Christians will assert that all human rights derive from the fact that all people are made and loved by God. They are stamped with God's image[135], and this instills everyone with an intrinsic dignity. This is a crucial and indeed foundational difference between a Christian and a secular worldview. And it is this underpinning belief in a shared humanity, derived from God, which leads to a sense of mutuality and obligation. One aspect of this is that from earliest times God has reinforced the idea of upholding the rights of the vulnerable. In the Old Testament, there are repeated injunctions to God's people to respect the rights of the widow, the orphan, the alien, the debtor, the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalised, amongst others. This is reflected in express commandments in the Deuteronomic law, in the constant refrain of God's prophets, and in the proverbs, psalms and wisdom literature. It is a common theme throughout the Old Testament.

This common theme continues in the New Testament where the call to justice is renewed in the life and teaching of Jesus. There is express command to treat others the way we would like to be treated.[136] There is also the consistent example of Jesus who befriends the poor, the outcast and the leper. And importantly, a new and transcendent understanding of "who is my neighbor?" emerges from the parables.[137] This undercuts any attempt to narrowly circumscribe our own responsibility toward others. So one conclusion is reached quickly and easily: we must care about human rights because God does.

A Christian approach to the promotion of human rights will not be grounded in a secular, political agenda. It will be grounded in the life of Christ. When we examine Christ's life it reveals a steady appeal to the obligations owed by God's people. There are some instances where Jesus seems to encourage the claiming of individual rights, for example, in the parable of the persistent widow.[138] However, the weight of emphasis always falls on his followers' understanding to live justly. A Christian view of human rights is always about justice. This is echoed in the prophetic tradition of Scripture which consistently holds duty-bearers to account.

This emphasis also flows from the deeper understanding that humans are also made in the *relational* image of God. This is a central point of difference to the mainly legalistic interpretation of rights that a secular Western worldview promulgates. The Trinitarian Godhead – the very being of God - is an eternal and intimate community of self-giving and service. Biblical human rights are about fairness and right relationships. Humans are made in the image of God in order that they may serve others, and, according

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[134] It should also be noted here that the UN Declaration on Human Rights had significant Christian input and reflects the Judaeo-Christian heritage. Further information about this can be found at http://www.isaiahone.org/
[135] Genesis 1:26-27
[136] Matthew 7:12
[137] Luke 10:25-37
[138] Luke 18:1-8

to German theologian Jurgen Moltmann, participate with the Trinity in a kind of open system that extends to serving the whole world.[139]

While Christians will diligently seek the rights of others, they will never allow those rights to define or limit their own responses. Christians will also have an inherent bias toward preferring the needs of others. They are called to live sacrificially. Jesus Christ came to bring good news to the poor.[140] A biblical framework of human rights therefore is about a rescuing justice – a justice that rescues victims. Jesus lived this out himself by not asserting his human rights on the Cross. He abandoned them in the ultimate act of service for others. Christians likewise are called to die to self,[141]and to go the extra mile.[142] One of the paradoxes of Christian faith is that "in Christ...God invests human life with dignity precisely by sharing in the suffering that human beings inflict on one another."[143]

A final observation is that there is a sad and empty formalism that is sometimes associated with a more secular human rights agenda. It cannot look beyond itself. That agenda is supposed to offer the rubric for discussing, and ultimately mediating, human rights. In theory human rights will be realised by activities such as awareness raising, promotion and advocacy. In contrast, a distinctly Christian approach to human rights will also be animated and inspired by the loving Spirit of God. It will unfold in power, prayer and love, with humility yet firmness, and with a servant heart. It will also hopefully open an understanding of our ultimate human right: to know that we are each loved, valued, created, and gifted uniquely by God.

3.   Theories that conceive of change as an emergent, complex process

The third and final theoretical perspective outlined here conceives of change as:

> "an emergent, complex, multi-directional, non-linear, fragmented and discontinuous process that is difficult to control, manage, or comprehensively understand from a particular vantage point… Change strategies emphasize the need for change agents to become 'searchers' with communities, rather than 'planners' for communities."[144]

This perspective demands a more tentative approach to planning for and managing development processes. The idea that a development context can be comprehensively analyzed and understood so that we can confidently develop and implement a five year development plan is challenged. It is recognised that development issues are often 'wicked', which means that the science on how to address these is contested, and solutions to problems require the input of a very diverse range of actors that often do not have a shared view of the nature of the problem, or how to address it.

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[139] Jurgen Moltmann (1980), *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* London, SCM Press.
[140] Luke 4:18
[141] Matt. 16:24,25; Mark 8:34,35; Luke 9:23,24
[142] Matt 5:41
[143] Richard Amesbury, and George M. Newlands (2008). *Faith and human rights: Christianity and the global struggle for human dignity*. Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 110
[144] Boxelaar, Mackinlay and Dearborn, 2010

This perspective highlights that we can only ever partially understand a development context prior to acting on it, and therefore we need to learn and adapt our way through. Overall, development is recognised as a complex endeavour that demands the collective knowledge and action of a diversity of actors. Not unlike the empowerment approaches outlined above, multi-stakeholder approaches, partnering, participatory action research and action learning methods are central to approaches that are based on this perspective.

A Christian theology of change echoes the fact that there is much that is complex and multi-directional. There is a brokenness both within the world and within the human heart that impacts every aspect of life, especially our relationships. As Christian psychologist Larry Crabb says, "there is something wrong with everything."[145] We await the consummation of the whole of creation that will take place at the final renewal of all things described in Revelation. Until then, "all change is partial and incomplete—part of our journey toward God's redemption of all things."[146]

The Gospel speaks into the non-linear, complex nature of all of life by articulating a specific worldview that provides purpose and hope for the work we do. The reflection of church growth theorist Donald McGavran also resonates:

> "contrary to much superficial thinking, the greatest need of the masses is neither aid nor kindness. Their greatest need is not handouts, but a world view, a religion, which gives them a bedrock on which to stand as they battle for justice."[147]

Our response to the complexity and unpredictability of life is a worldview founded upon faith in a God of love and justice, a God who is revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is a God we can trust.

The story of God coming into the world – the Incarnation – also provides the direction to work as 'searchers' with communities, to work together with them rather than 'for' them in a way that affirms their dignity as image-bearers of a relational God. This requires an acknowledgment of humility in terms of recognising the need for outside help. Complex theories appreciate that knowledge does not rest with one group of people but that contributions may come from anywhere. We do not have all the answers. As many Christians would say, the opposite of faith is not doubt but certainty. We have faith in a God who empowers us, and the best we can do in this life is move forward with faith, hope and courage to work for the kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven.

The kingdom of God has a 'now-and-not-yet' nature to it. The 'now' has been manifested in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We see glimpses of it in the outbreaks of justice and peace throughout certain parts of the world. These glimpses provide rumours of hope. They give us faith to keep on the

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[145] Lawrence J. Crabb (1988), *Inside Out*, Navpress, Colorado Springs
[146] Boxelaar, Mackinlay and Dearborn (2010)
[147] Donald McGavran *Understanding church growth* (Grand Rapid, Eerdmans,1988) 286

journey, knowing that our efforts alone are not enough, but that with the Spirit of God empowering us, the fruits of our work will one day be seen in a world where there is justice for all. This is the 'not-yet' nature of the kingdom.

Part III: When Christian theology meets secular theory

The final reflection for this paper is the relationship between a Christian theology of change and theories of change. A table has been proposed (see below) which is a first attempt to highlight how the theories examined compare with the seven elements identified as essential for a Christian theology of change. This is offered to aid the reader in their own reflections, and is open to challenge.

The Christian development organization will, however, insist on the primacy of Christian theology. This is not a matter of dry faithfulness to an organisation's Constitution. No, it is because the narrative of a Christian theology of change is both overarching and holistic, and filled with hope and power. It provides a necessary framework where the work of the organization can be located with confidence and assurance. It embraces people and helps them to walk a path of life in its fullness.

While Christian theology can embrace the good to be found in many theories of change, the reciprocal is not true. That is because those theories are rationally based. Much of our approach to evidence based programming is intrinsically indebted to the rationalistic roots of empirical enquiry and cannot speak the language of love or spirit. That is why they are theories and not theologies or complete worldviews.

 The understandings and insights gained from these theories are best understood as tools which can be used in God's service. While the theories themselves do not explicitly honour God, God can be honoured through them. For some Christians, this may be a profound and liberating insight. A clichéd definition of Christian theology is *faith seeking understanding*.[148] This definition implies that theology is always on the lookout to better understand God's world and how it works. Like the medieval monks, Christians are looking for new occasions to give glory to God. The Christian organization will restlessly seek new ways to serve humans better and more completely. In doing so, they know this is how they will serve God.

A Christian theology of change can also help the social utility of rationalist theories, whether employed by development organizations or elsewhere, by lending to them a moral frame to help restrain their self-justifying tendencies.

Some of the nasty caricatures of Christians as flat-earth thinking anti-intellectuals need to be disabused. The opposite ought to be true. The Christian faith compels the believer to give their very best service to God. Christians can learn from others, and must make this their business. As Hughes states,

> "When we set out to bless the poor we will find ourselves shoulder to shoulder with those who also care, but who do not share our faith. We will also find that they have thought very deeply

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[148] Attributed to St Anslem

about what they are doing and that we can learn much from their wisdom. This is so even if we have to reject their overall theory of development as inadequate."[149]

Myers offers a similar plea: "We should never believe or act as if being a Christian is an excuse to be amateurish in our work. There should be no dichotomy between being Christian and being professional …"[150]

It has been observed that the 'light' in the Enlightenment was real light and should not simply be discarded.[151] Prominent missiologist Leslie Newbigin has stated:

"What is needed, rather, is to realize that the Enlightenment paradigm has served its purpose; we should now move beyond it, taking what is valuable in it –with the necessary caution and critique – along with us into a new paradigm."[152]

Mercifully the world can be released from an understanding of life as the endless application of cause and effect in steady linear fashion.

During the Enlightenment period God was pushed back to become 'God of the gaps', that is, God of those areas science was yet to penetrate and explain. This is an entirely false understanding. Yes, God is God of the gaps, but at the same time he remains God of All, both the easily seen and the unseen. No scientific explanation, whether simple or complex, will address associated questions of meaning which inevitably arise; questions of significance, human sensibility, spirituality, morality, or eternal values. These questions must be answered from somewhere, and the Christian development organization will look to the precepts of Christian faith to respond to them.

Another promising group of theories were those based on empowerment, one of which looks at empowerment in terms of the claiming of human rights. This broadly resonates with the overall justice aspect of the Gospel. Sometimes, however, these theories are promulgated through a strongly political or secular lens which is unable to look beyond itself to the wider Christian meta-narrative.

Other empowerment theories were those based on participatory models. There is a refreshing openness here in that these theories are not wedded to rationalistic ideology. They instead recognize the dignity of people in a way which sits very comfortably with the Christian faith. These empowerment theories are not just limited to implementation of participatory civil structures. True empowerment recognizes that the community may wish to explore deeper questions of faith or meaning. It would seem that the seismic shift in Christian religious affiliation going on in the developing world is pre-empting that very possibility. This speaks to a final point about the gnawing poverty of meaning in the West that calls into question our empty assertions of progress. Perhaps one clue to Western empowerment lies in learning more from those whom we purport to teach.

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[149] Hughes, 2

[150] Myers, 155 Bottomley at iv notes that "While professional knowledge has a privileged status in modernity, faith was relegated to the sphere of personal belief."

[151] Bosch, 273

[152] Newbiggin, in Bosch, 274

The complex nature of change is also affirmed by the Gospel in its recognition of the relational brokenness of life. The Christian faith addresses the multi-directional aspects of change by putting forth a specific worldview that evokes hope in a God of love and justice. Complex and emergent theories speak into the multi-dimensional and wicked nature of many development problems, and usually require searching and action/reflection within community. This could be a Spirit led enquiry.

Task and conclusions

The pundits were wrong. God has not died out.[153] On a global scale religious belief is more widespread and more intensely held than ever before. [154]The Christian faith in particular is taking hold with great vibrancy in many developing countries. Katherine Marshall of the World Bank counsels "We cannot fight poverty without tending to people's spiritual dimension in its many manifestations in religious institutions, leaders and movements."[155]The World Conference on Religion and Peace in 2001, claimed:

> "Religious communities are without question the largest and best organised civil institutions in the world today, claiming the allegiance of billions of believers and bridging the divides or race, class and nationality."[156]

It would be presumptuous to suggest that poverty can be tackled without seeking their active engagement. A World Bank study by Narayan concluded that "religious leaders and institutions were often the most trusted institutions in developing countries."[157]Faith based organisations, including Christian development organizations, are uniquely well placed to pursue that engagement. At a practical level, for one key issue alone, it is reported that "one third of all AIDS patients in the world are served under the auspices of the Catholic Church."[158]These facts all point to ever greater need to engage Christian organizations in development work, and to ensure that they undertake that work as effectively as possible.

It is incumbent on Christian organizations to reflect deeply on how they can serve God better. For many, this may involve going back to their origins and considering afresh their reason for being, and how the insights and disciplines of Christian faith can be brought to bear more intentionally and fully into their work. Equally, it may involve organizations thinking about how to bring the best the development profession has to offer into the service of God.

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[153] Clark and Jennings, cited in James, "A century on ... the predicted secularisation of modern society looks far from complete", 5

[154] The World Bank reports that between 87% - 93% of the world's population adheres to some kind of deistic spirituality and worldview – and even higher percentages in developing countries. For this reason the World Bank has established the World Faiths Development Dialogue. Michael Kelly SJ has commented "99.5% of people in Africa have some religious connection" in James, at 8.

[155] James, 6

[156] Cited in James, 7

[157] Referred to in James, 8. And see Batchelor, *People in rural development*, 42

[158] James, 8

The key points which arise from this paper are:

- Christians believe it is God who brings about change in the world.
- God's people seek out and align with God's purposes.
- There are distinctive elements of a Christian theology of change which can be proposed.
- No one secular theory of change can be regarded as complete or adequate, although there are positive and useful aspects which arise from each theory.
- Placing total confidence in any one theory would be misguided, ineffective and idolatrous.
- God calls us to love him with our whole mind, and we must therefore have a critical regard for development theories and practices, even those promulgated within secular environments.
- Aspects of the theories examined can be regarded as gifts from God which can be used in his service. We must not be disparaging about secular theories, but rather discerning of them.
- The Christian development organization can and should embrace aspects of secular theories of change having regard to the development needs of particular contexts.
- Christian development requires a case-by-case process of discernment, analysis and integration.
- Integration means actively and intentionally bring Christian faith into development work, and
- It also means the converse, namely, actively and intentionally bringing the best of development theory and practice into the service of God.

For further reflection: Some proposed features of a Christian theology of change and common theories of change

	Scientific Theories	Empowerment/ Participatory Approaches	Empowerment/ Human rights Approach	Complexity theories	Christian Theology of Development
Locus of influence	Confined to physical world, plus psycho-social disciplines	Open, as the community directs Local emphasis	Claiming personal and community rights	Becoming 'searchers' with communities rather than 'planners'	Holistic approach, Includes material, social, emotional and spiritual elements
Motivation for action	Pursuit and implementation of knowledge	Community well-being	Just ordering of society	Multi-stakeholder approaches, partnering, and participatory action research are central	Loving and serving God and humanity with heart, soul, mind and strength
Ultimate frame	Human /social progress	Self-determination	Rights are universal, often thought of in personal terms	Emergent and contingent. No ultimate frame	Kingdom of God, on earth as in heaven
Attitude to evil	Moral dimensions mostly unrecognised	May be seen in paternalism or condescension	Seen in unjust structures	None	Recognition of spiritual, structural and personal dimensions
Attitude to prayer	Not understood	A personal freedom	None	None	Essential framework for guidance and empowerment

	Scientific Theories	Empowerment/ Participatory Approaches	Empowerment/ Human rights Approach	Complexity theories	Christian Theology of Development
Attitude to personal transformation	Personal outcomes not usually considered	Expressed as personal empowerment	Empowerment expressed in claiming of personal rights	Expressed as personal empowerment

Reflexivity | Commitment to personal transformation contributing to social change |
| Special relationships in civil society | Research and higher learning institutes, universities | Participatory community structures | Judicial processes | Multi-stakeholder approaches and partnering are central | Church in context of whole community |

(Rev) Bob Mitchell, February 2011

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Appendix 1 – A brief reflection on some economic and political theories

The theories discussed below are not generally part of the daily practice of NGOs and have therefore not been considered in the paper. They have, however, informed the approach of governments, multilaterals and political actors at different times, and are included in this appendix for those who may be interested.

Another group of theories can be grouped under the broad umbrella of economic and political models. These are a disparate collection of theories which propose that sustainable development will be achieved by intentional economic reforms. These theories range from those relying on greater economic investment, to wealth creation models, to those insisting on a more equitable distribution of capital (or access to it), and even socialist or collectivist approaches. Some will object to such strange bedfellows forming a single category. There is, however, one reason for persisting: the common thread which underpins them all is the belief that sustainable development can be achieved by intentionally managed economic reforms.

Chronologically, the first of these development models were the revolutionary approaches. These contended that socialization of the means of production, distribution and exchange would ensure the poor received a more equitable share of wealth. Revolutionary approaches were often spawned in places where there was no real empowerment of local communities, and where systemic disadvantages were especially pronounced. In many poor communities the growing impatience with promised "trickle-down effects" has fueled these types of movements.

There are some biblical references to property being held in common or redistributed on a periodic basis for the common good. For example, Acts 2:44 and 4:32 refers to the Lord's followers sharing everything they had as there was need. In the Old Testament, Leviticus 25 describes the Year of Jubilee in which land would be returned to its original clan owners every 50 years, so that there could be no excessive accumulation or permanent disenfranchisement within society. It is important to understand that these expressions of common ownership occurred in the context of existing communities of faith. In these instances there was a mutual commitment to use property according to a shared understanding of God's will.

Attempts to produce a socialist utopia by coercive or revolutionary means have been spectacularly unsuccessful. A revolution in the human heart is also needed. Without a godly use of power and resources, there is a tendency to replace one form of human exploitation with another. Hughes warns: "…the efforts of those who have risen up against social or economic injustice and neglected to attend to the problems within themselves end up in ruins. The oppressed soon become the oppressors."[159]

Myers points to the imperative of inner change whereby people "discovered their true identity as children of God and … recovered their true vocation as faithful and productive stewards of gifts from God for the well-being of all."[160] Revolutionary approaches have not acknowledged the need for inner change. On the contrary, they have sometimes been wedded to an ideological frame which is militantly

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[159] Hughes, 127
[160] Myers, 116

atheistic or amoral. The truth is that lasting change comes only by more comprehensive renewal. Groody reiterates: "Justice and liberation are not simply about reordering the economy, but about reordering the hearts of peoples."[161]

Having said that, there is no doubt that God can work in and through political processes. Richard Shaull is one prominent example of a theologian who, in his earlier writings, emphasized the horizontal dimension of salvation. For him, salvation meant "liberation, which could only be achieved by overthrowing the existing order". [162] Again, Harvey Cox, at an earlier stage stressed that "God is first of all present in political events, in revolutions, upheavals, invasions and defeats" since "it is the world, the political world … which is the arena of God's renewing and liberating activity."[163] While God is undoubtedly at work in the world, there are obvious problems of precise attribution, particularly in the political sphere. A loud warning needs to be sounded. The central point for a Christian theology of change is that the *internal* revolution of God's Spirit must accompany every external reform.

A prominent example of an investment driven theory of change was the Marshall Plan. This was undertaken in the decades after World War II to kick-start flagging economies in Europe. Unfortunately, it led to the false view that industrialization would lead to the betterment of all. The execution of the Marshall Plan, underwritten by substantial American investment,

> "meant that the economies of some countries were rapidly industrialized with the result that the living standards were dramatically raised. This seemed to prove that economies could be modernized very quickly with the resultant benefit to all."[164]

So development came to mean investment in modern industrial technology.

In the 1960s, economist Gunnar Myrdal developed his "cumulative causation" theory to achieve modernization in the developing world. One of the canons of his approach was *rationality*. This "essentially meant accepting a Western scientific view of the world."[165] Myrdal's theory was an economic approach to development, emphasizing multiplier and "backwash" effects. It was predicated on the belief that certain strategic investments would lead to a self-sustaining level of demand, lifting the general level of economic prosperity in the community.

The 1980s saw international financial institutions such as the World Bank and IMF introduce 'structural adjustment', "the objective of which was to encourage governments of poor countries to adopt sound monetary and fiscal policies."[166] These policies however have largely resulted in increased debt in developing countries, resulting in increased poverty.

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[161] Groody, 29
[162] Bosch, 396, and see also 442
[163] Quoted in Flett, 54
[164] Hughes, 7
[165] Hughes, 9
[166] Caroline Boin, Julian Harris, Andrea Marchesetti (2009) "Fake Aid: How foreign aid is being used to support the self-serving political activities of NGOs" Paper published by the International Policy Network, London, 6

Since the 1980s micro-finance has been an important tool in giving the poor access to start-up capital for small enterprises. This is a welcome initiative. Unfortunately, most of the evidence about the success of this approach remains anecdotal. Micro-finance has struck a responsive chord in Western donor countries which see a particular resonance with their entrepreneurial spirit or capitalist systems.

How does a Christian theology of change respond to these types of initiatives? The primary critique is that they lack holism. Myers notes that: "…capitalism reduces people to economic beings driven by utilitarian self-interest toward the goal of accumulation of wealth."[167] It is queried whether any approach which focuses *only* on material well-being is truly a theory of human dev elopement, or is a theory of human abasement.[168] While a level of wealth is necessary to provide for basic human needs, it is myopic to equate the acquisition of wealth with human development. Christian theology is far more focused on the responsible use of wealth *for the common good*, and in seeing the expression of our humanity in *a broader range of social and cultural criteria*. The richness of human life is expressed, amongst other things, through art, leisure activities, familial and social relations, in exercising creativity and ingenuity, in literature, sport, story-telling, and in our diverse customs.

It is also the case that unless there is a change in the human heart little good can be achieved on any level. What good is it if a poor woman uses a micro loan to establish a new business, when her abusive husband steals the money or profits and gambles them away? What good comes from a larger business if the profits are kept for a few, and its workers are exploited? What good is achieved if corruption diverts profits away from the community? And what good can flow if Western trade subsidies deny access to markets? In each case there is a *moral* dimension which also needs to be addressed.

A final warning is that viewing development from the prism of Western economic success can lead to a blinding condescension. A truly Christian theology of change will value more than material success, and will reflect a mutuality and openness to learn from others. Speaking broadly about the American church, Rah captures this danger well:

> "It is the assumption that the 'haves' have much to offer while the 'have-nots' have little to offer. The cultural captivity of American evangelicalism has produced a belief that material success reflects God's true blessing. Power and privilege entitle certain groups to exercise an authority over those who are without power and privilege – with the underlying assumption of superiority."[169]

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[167] Myers, 22 Bishop John Harrower notes: "A positive Christian perspective on capitalism advocates the moral basis on which it must sit if it is to properly achieve its goals of wealth creation and wealth distribution."
[168] Rick James reiterates: "Religions broaden our understanding of development, bringing the focus back to human development, not merely income, GDP and economic development. Religion brings in questions of values and meaning." At 8-9.
[169] Rah, 144-145