ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As this project has been in process for many years, there are many individuals and organizations without whose support its completion would not have been possible. This work would not have been possible without the financial support of Vanderbilt University's Center for the Study of Religion and Culture, Vanderbilt's University Graduate Fellowship, and a Vanderbilt Center for the Americas Graduate Fellowship.

The research interests in this study originated before my time at Vanderbilt, and I would like to express my appreciation for those that have encouraged me along the way, including professors and friends at Yale Divinity School and Duke University, as well as a number of colleagues with whom I have worked professionally in the non-profit sector. I would like to thank especially the many people that have shown me hospitality and welcomed me into their lives in Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude for the guidance and wisdom of those professors and friends who have encouraged the pursuit of these interests at Vanderbilt University. I am especially indebted to Dr. Victor Anderson, Dr. Ted Smith, Dr. Melissa Snarr, and Dr. Fernando Segovia. These teachers encouraged me to pursue in far greater depth the questions that sparked this project. I learned much about how to think and write through their guidance.

Finally, I am especially grateful for the patient and loving support of my family throughout this endeavor. My parents, Norman and Linda Simmons, lovingly encouraged and supported my academic interests from my earliest years. My wife, Noelle, has been especially patient and loving throughout my years of graduate school.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCING CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENT

Development as a framework for Christian mission has failed to resolve the crisis in U.S Protestant foreign missions from which it emerged. Development promised an alternative foreign missionary practice for Christians in a world marked by the end of the colonial age. Instead of escaping the colonial legacy of Christianity, however, Christian development has repeated the errors of earlier colonial models of mission by corresponding too closely to the assumptions, practices, and logic of the contemporary global political economy. In so doing, Christian development has compromised prophetic Christian witness in an effort to be relevant to the dominant social and economic paradigms of today. Rather than offer a fundamental critique of the excesses, inequalities, and destructiveness at play in the contemporary global political economy, Christian mission as development has sought to extend the values and institutions of this political economy to "underdeveloped" communities around the world. This failure of Christian mission as development points to a deeper crisis in the theology of Christian mission. Drawing on an ethic of Christian love, Christian development has sought to transform communities around the world and mold them according to the cultures and political economies of the "developed" world, exchanging the universalism of Christian salvation for the universalism of Western development. Therefore, Christians must not only untangle their missionary identity from development, they must reflect critically on

the theologies, institutions, and practices that have enabled this expression of Christian mission.

Christian Development: An Overview

Ramon Castillo lives with his wife and two sons in the small village of El Progreso in the hills above the coast in the western part of El Salvador.[1] Ramon and his family live in a modest house on small piece of land in their village. They have a small farm further up in the hills. Most visitors from the United States would consider the family to be quite poor, although they are not among the poorest members in their community. Like most families, the Castillo family aspires to a higher standard of living. Therefore, when they learned of the opportunities being offered by a Christian development organization to improve their quality of life, they eagerly attended the community meetings and workshops to learn more.

The Christian development organization administered a micro-enterprise program that provided small loans and training to those interested in starting or expanding a business. This idea appealed to the Castillo family, and they took out an initial loan for about one hundred dollars, with which they began to raise chickens. This loan and the training that accompanied it allowed the family to construct a small, fenced area for the chickens behind their house. The family purchased chickens, which within a year numbered more than fifty. They used the eggs from these chickens both to supplement the family's diet and to provide extra income through the sell of eggs in their community.

[1] Although the names have been changed, this story is based on a visit the author made to a rural Salvadoran community with representatives of a Christian development organization.

They paid the loan back on time, and, inspired by this early success, they sought an additional loan for a second venture in micro-enterprise. Ramon and his family decided to convert the front room of their small house into a store for the village. They needed the loan to purchase the initial inventory for this store, as well as to make a few structural changes to the room and buy some furnishings to make the room look more like a store. Like many such stores, they stocked some of the basics for rural El Salvador: soup mixes, spices, some canned goods, pain relievers, etc. They were also able to sell their eggs from this store. Otherwise, no fresh produce or meats were sold at this store. At the time of the author's visit, the family was optimistic that the store would continue to grow and supplement the family's income.

For advocates of micro-enterprise and micro-credit, the Castillo family offers a powerful testimony to the success of these types of development intervention. Such stories as these are common in the world of Christian development, and they are repeated with much enthusiasm to demonstrate how these organizations extend the love of Christ to the neighbor. Similar stories – told through a great number of Christian development organizations' publications, websites, videos, and even television commercials – reinforce Christian enthusiasm for the potential of their missionary endeavors to transform lives around the world.

The micro-enterprise program that aided the Castillo family is one of many program areas in which Christian development organizations are engaged. While the practices and understandings of development have shifted over the past fifty or so years, Christian development has often included programs in education, agricultural assistance, public health, and micro-enterprise. Some of these, such as education and the provision

of health care, have long been part of Christian foreign missions. In the age of Christian development, however, the aim and practices of these programs have shifted to reflect the new assumptions of community transformation.

These programs have historically been carried out primarily through Christian development organizations. Many of these organizations formed in the years surrounding the end of World War II as relief organizations, which broadened their mission in subsequent decades to include development interventions as part of their mission. These organizations include both denominational and non-denominational organizations. For instance, Episcopal Relief and Development is an agency of the Episcopal Church in the United States. Lutheran World Relief represents a broad coalition of Lutheran churches, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS). Other Christian development organizations, such as Church World Service and World Relief, represent multiple denominations (National Council of Churches and National Association of Evangelicals, respectively). Many Christian development organizations, however, are not affiliated with any particular denomination. These include such organizations as World Vision, Opportunity International, Samaritan's Purse, and Food for the Hungry.

As central as the work of Christian development organizations has been in the emergence and maturation of Christian development, however, the practices and theologies of Christian development cannot be limited to the activities of these organizations. Rather, Christian development approaches to foreign mission have influenced the activities of individual missionaries as well as churches and dioceses

engaged in foreign mission efforts. As such, Christian development embraces a diverse group of participants and missionary practices.

Within the great diversity of organizational structures, however, there is a unity of purpose in Christian development, which consists of an intention to share the knowledge, institutions, and values of the developed world with those living in poverty so that they might "catch up" to the developed countries without undergoing the long and painful historical processes that facilitated development elsewhere. For the purposes of this study, therefore, *Christian development refers to those beliefs, institutions, and practices of U.S. Christians since the end of World War II as they have intervened in "underdeveloped" societies in order to encourage in those societies the technical knowledge, institutions, and cultural values that have characterized and seemingly facilitated the ascendancy of the North Atlantic countries in social, political, and economic terms.* By defining development in such a particular way, this study limits its focus to the moral implications of Christian participation in development processes in the latter part of the twentieth century as part of their self-understanding of Christian foreign mission.

Defining development in this way is intended to limit some of the confusion that surrounds development discourse. The many difficulties in arriving at a definition of development may very well have served to increase widespread endorsement of development. Development draws on the language of the natural sciences, and development advocates have generally assumed that societies follow a similar pattern. After all, societies change over time, people universally desire a better life, and the experiences of the past several hundred years seem to suggest that social change over the

long-term is positive. Yet, it is not immediately clear that what people in diverse parts of the world mean by "development" corresponds to the history addressed in this dissertation. Rather, this dissertation looks far more narrowly at the rise of Christian development as an expression of Christian foreign mission beginning in the middle of the twentieth century. In this context, development carried specific theoretical and cultural intentions that may or may not be present in some of the current global development movements. Specifically, the development rhetoric and practices examined by this dissertation assumed that the future "development" of other societies would follow that of the "developed" countries of the West. Development was interpreted from the beginning according to the history, culture, and values of the "developed" countries of Europe and the United States.

The critique offered by this dissertation is not aimed at movements that seek any form of positive social change. Rather, this dissertation targets the assumption that positive social change over time must necessarily follow in the pattern set by the "developed" countries of the West. This dissertation does not address global movements that employ the language of development while seeking to direct social change away from the sorts of cultural values and economic practices of the "developed" world.

Development Reconsidered: The Specter of Colonialism

Amidst such successes as that of the Castillo family, the justification for Christian participation in these practices of development may seem obvious. Christians have widely embraced development as an expression of Christian mission, appealing to a range of Biblical and theological themes that emphasize the love of the neighbor, concern

for the "least of these," and the social significance of the Gospel message. These theological claims motivate development cause as a response to the life and teachings of Jesus. Christians have intended their development interventions to remedy the impoverished living conditions in which millions of people in the "underdeveloped" world live and which are theologically unjustified in a world with resources to help them. For Christians, development has been a moral response to the existence of global poverty and need.

Increasingly, however, after more than fifty years of development experience, many of the core assumptions that have fueled Christian enthusiasm for development no longer seem defensible. Rather than break with colonial and neo-colonial logics, development now appears to have continued many of the assumptions of European colonialism. In this light, development's aim to transform communities and cultures around the world according to the political economies and values of the developed world has failed to question the desirability, applicability, or sustainability of the developed world. As the "developed" world appears increasingly fragile, the failures of development to take seriously alternative visions of culture and political economy are becoming clear. Instead, development has repeated the tendency to devalue and judge as inferior cultural, political, and economic differences and has served as a means of reinforcing and strengthening the hegemony of the developed world.

Development has long had its critics. Beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s, dependency theory began to challenge some of the basic premises of development. Many of these critics, including liberation theologians such Gustavo Gutierrez, claimed that the economic ascendancy of the developed world had been contingent on the

"underdevelopment" of the rest. While these critics brought necessary attention to the global and historical dynamics of underdevelopment, they were largely dismissed for their socialist preferences and their failures to account for other causes of poverty.

The waning of support for dependency theory, however, did not entail the end of development's critics. Rather, more recent critics have sought to go beyond dependency theory in order to look at some of the more basic assumptions of development thought. Post-development thinkers, such as Wolfgang Sachs and Arturo Escobar, direct attention to a range of other failures in development thought and practice. Whereas dependency theorists (and liberation theologians) accepted the categories of development and underdevelopment, post-development thinkers have begun to challenge these basic categories. These categories originated in the worldview of a global elite looking down on the rest of the world, evaluating and judging them according to standards of value that had emerged within a particular historical and cultural context. Ignoring the particularity of these valuations, development sought to reshape the lives of the "underdeveloped" according to culture and values of the North Atlantic. Development lumped diverse peoples together on a single continuum of social development. Much as "civilization" had provided a conceptual framework and moral justification for European colonial expansion, "development" performed a similar function. Rather than drawing "underdeveloped" peoples into traditional colonial relationships, however, development drew these peoples into a global political economy that disrupts local economies, values, and institutions in favor of those of the "developed" world. The great failure of development has been to disregard alternative conceptions of goods and values that should not be measured by the economic choices and values of one particular culture.

For post-development thinkers, these core assumptions of development thinking have become particularly pressing given the current state of development. The realities of development – or the lack of development – for much of the world is now becoming ever more realized. As disturbing as the failures of development have been, the successes of development may prove more worrisome, as the growing demand for fuel and food by those who have achieved some measure of development success reveal the inherent flaw of basing development on the consumption patterns of the "developed" world. The model by which other societies have been judged and according to which their economic and cultural lives have been altered no longer appears to be such a good model. In fact, it now appears unsustainable, and development's efforts to transform the values, institutions, and practices of communities to mirror that model now appear misguided.

The global economic crisis that began in 2008 has brought additional attention to the failures of the economic and environmental assumptions of the contemporary political economy. Even mainstream columnists and news organizations have begun to take notice of concerns that have been expressed by marginal voices for decades. In his March 07, 2009, column in *The New York Times*, Thomas Friedman suggestively asked whether this crisis might represent "something much more fundamental than a deep recession" while wondering if "the whole growth model we created over the last 50 years is simply unsustainable economically and ecologically and that 2008 was when we hit the wall – when Mother Nature and the market both said: 'No more.'"[2]

[2] Friedman, "The Inflection is Near?"

Colonialism Defined

The current constellation of development interventions and the increasing cultural penetration of development initiatives recall the colonial models of Christian mission that accompanied the territorial expansion of Europe. To assert, however, that development continues the assumptions of colonialism requires a brief explanation of how colonialism is being used. One might define colonialism as the establishment of settlements in foreign territories and the ensuing political and economic relationships in which colonies are territories under the direct political and economic administration of a colonial power. By way of example, this definition would apply to the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the "New World" beginning at the end of the 15th century and continuing until the first quarter of the 19th century (at least in most of Latin America). Or, one might consider British rule in India to be another classic example. By the standards of this rather narrow definition, applying this term to the case of development would be a stretch, insofar as there is no foreign territory under the direct political and economic control of a colonial power.

As the Latin American context occupies a primary focus of this analysis, one may rightly note that most countries of Latin America have been independent since the early 1800s and that talk of colonial and post-colonial societies often pertains more to the countries of Africa and Asia that attained their independence in the middle of the twentieth century. Even in the context of Latin American independence, however, the political economies of many Latin American countries have been dominated by foreign powers. Into the void left by the end of Spanish colonialism, a new form of colonialism began to take root during the course of the nineteenth century. Whereas Spanish

colonialism entailed direct administration of the colonies by the colonial power, neo-colonialism brought a less direct form of colonial relationship. Increasingly, the economic powers of the industrialized nations – first Great Britain and later the United States – began to assert their economic and political dominance in Latin America. For these rising economic powers, neo-colonialism offered many of the benefits of colonialism without the concomitant costs of colonial administration. These benefits included access to raw materials to fuel industrial growth, favorable terms of trade, etc. For many Latin Americans, the export of raw materials to the industrialized nations created quick wealth for some, while others sought the promises of progress and modernization of Latin America. For those who had borne the brunt of colonial control, however, independence meant little. Internally, the Creole elites generally kept in place the social and political hierarchies in which indigenous populations remained oppressed.

Neo-colonialism, as the name suggests, represented a new model of colonialism in which political and economic influence were maintained indirectly. Neo-colonialism avoided the burdens of colonial administration while reaping many of the same benefits through investments, trade, and occasional military intervention. Direct administration by Spain and Portugal gave way to less direct forms of economic and political intervention by England, France, and, later, the United States.

Similarly, Walter Mignolo makes a distinction between colonialism and coloniality. For Mignolo, coloniality "refers to the logical structure of colonial domination underlying the Spanish, Dutch, British, and US control of the Atlantic economy and politics, and from there the control and management of almost the entire

planet."[3] This distinction allows colonialism to retain its narrow definition while introducing a neologism to account for the logic of the political and economic relationship that carries through in later paradigms. Although Mignolo's distinction is informative for this study, I have chosen to retain the lengthier formulation of colonial logic or colonial assumptions.

These underlying assumptions of colonialism and neo-colonialism could also be described by the term "imperialism," insofar as the practices of colonialism serve the interests of empire building. Edward Said points out the relationship between these terms, in which imperialism describes the "practices, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory" in contrast to colonialism, which is "the implanting of settlements on distant territory."[4] Imperialism, for Said, carries the broader meaning, while colonialism remains a more narrow practice. This helpful distinction accords well with the recent interests in describing the contemporary global political economy as *empire*, as in title of the influential work by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. The extension of empire to refer to the contemporary political economy has certain advantages insofar as, it seems to me, empire is easier to disassociate from traditional understandings of colonialism that are tied to particular territories. With these important distinctions in mind, however, I will prefer to retain the language of colonial legacy and colonial models of mission based on my focus on Christian mission. Christian development, I argue, emerged as response to the crisis of colonialism, which is why I prefer to analyze it as a continuation of the colonial models of mission.

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[3] Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, 7.
[4] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 9.

Crisis in Christian Mission

During the first half of the twentieth century, the links between colonialism and Christian mission created a crisis for U.S Protestant foreign missions, and it is in response to this crisis that Christian development emerged. As this dissertation argues, however, Christian development failed to resolve the crisis in Christian mission that prompted its emergence. Christian mission as development has reduced Christian missionary theology and practice to a limited range of theological and practical options. Christian development has embraced a practical theology that emphasizes such Biblical ideals as love of neighbor in order to motivate the development cause and its donors. Beyond this dimension of Christian development, Christian theology has historically deferred to the expertise of development professionals. Contemporary Christian development organizations celebrate the fact that they promote development among non-Christians. Such celebration may be appropriate for relief work, which further underscores the significance of the transition from Christian relief to Christian relief and development. For Christian development, however, such practices only makes sense if Christians assume that Christian beliefs, practices, and community have no bearing on the ways in which one engages the economy, politics, questions of health, and even social aspects of life.[5] Development, therefore, has restricted Christian ethics and mission too much by reducing it to the task of motivating a development vision that is derived from secular experts and development professionals for whom theological and ecclesial alternatives to contemporary political and economic life have little or no significance.

[5] The other plausible interpretation would be that this policy represents a degree of covert evangelism, where there is recognition of the difference it makes to be Christian. While this may happen occasionally, the professionalization of Christian development and the degree of similarity in program design and implementation between Christian and non-Christian development organizations favors my interpretation.

Theologically, Christian development framed foreign missions as a response to the "Great Commandment." Yet, as the history of Christian development has made clear, the "Great Commandment" provides no surer foundation than the "Great Commission" that it gradually replaced or supplemented. Each of these options, or even a dual focus on them both, tempts Christian to an inadequate theology of mission that reduces those living in the host countries to recipients of Christian baptism, Christian love, or both. These others – the savages, the uncivilized, and the underdeveloped – remain the passive recipient of Christian mission, whereas U.S. Christians have retained the privilege of speaking and acting. As the Good Samaritan or the commissioned disciple, U.S. Christians have constructed theological narratives in which the other lies in waiting for their mission and the salvation – whether in terms of faith in Christ or technology and political economy – that is brought by the foreign missionaries. Mission, in this case, impels the Christian first to act upon others rather than to be spoken to or acted upon by either the Gospel message or those they seek to missionize.

This tendency of U.S. Christians to understand mission foremost as an intervention in the lives of others has negative consequences for all Christians. While those colonized, civilized, and developed in the name of Christian foreign missions bear the most obvious marks of colonial relationships, the missionaries supporting and carrying out these systems are also failed by this relationship and this missionary logic. The Christians that send, help, and love others without openness to relationships marked by reciprocity deprive themselves of the fullness of Christian mission, which issues a call for repentance for all Christians. In this way, Christian mission as development has lost the prophetic calls for repentance that lies at the heart of the Gospel message.

In the current political economy, this call for repentance must invite U.S. Protestants to a more critical examination of the failures of their own social, cultural, political, and economic values and practices. Such an examination reveals the arbitrariness of the theological narratives that historically motivated U.S. Christians. No longer can U.S. Christians assume the role of the Good Samaritan or the commissioned disciples, as they increasingly appear more like the "rich fool" or the "rich ruler."[6] Christian mission, especially for U.S. Christians, stands in need of the kind of radical critique that will call into question many of the basic assumptions regarding mission, economy, and the relationship between these two.

Method

This dissertation argues that development has failed in fulfilling one of the primary tasks that it set for itself as an expression of Christian mission. Christian development failed to resolve the crisis in U.S. Protestant foreign missions that emerged in the first half of the twentieth century as Christians became increasingly concerned with the colonial legacy of Christianity. By offering a critical history of the emergence and maturation of Christian development, this dissertation traces the attempts to resolve this crisis in Christian mission and shows how these attempts went astray as development increasingly involved Christians in precisely those sorts of missionary activities that constituted the original crisis. Yet, Christians were right to identify a crisis in Christian mission that stems from the colonial legacy of Christian mission and this insight should retain its critical function in the current expression of Christian mission as development. Today, in light of the more than fifty years of development experience, the failures of

[6] Luke 12:13-21, 18:1-8.

Christian development to resolve this crisis can help to clarify a deeper crisis in Christian foreign missions.

To make this argument, the following chapters offer a critical history of Christian mission that narrates how Christians came to understand development as missionary practice. This history is told with an eye to those persons, ideas, practices, and moments in history that have contributed to the contemporary crisis of Christian mission. With this in mind, the history that is told is necessarily selective. A breadth of history is covered, and the way that some things appear in greater or lesser relief certainly would not do justice to these histories from a historian's perspective. Yet, that is not the intent of the project at hand, which is to understand and critique contemporary Christian mission expressed in development practices, institutions, and ideas.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Two begins with an examination of the crisis in Christian foreign mission that provided the context for the emergence of Christian development. This crisis in Christian mission entailed declining support for foreign missions among Protestant Christians in the United States, particularly among mainline denominations. With the end of World War II, the colonial era came to the end. European nations – in the face of national liberation movements and the costs of colonial administration – jettisoned their colonies and broke the colonial ties that facilitated Christian missions. With the rising nationalism among former colonies, Christian missions found entry into many countries difficult, as Christianity had been associated with the colonialism of Europe. Christians in the United States increasingly expressed their rejection of the imperialism of Germany

and, later, the Soviet Union. U.S. Christians read their own national history as ongoing protest against colonialism and imperialism, seeing in that history a vindication of U.S. supremacy in the post-war era. The relationship between the "older" and "younger" churches also came under increasing scrutiny, as a measure of "religious imperialism" was recognized within the church. As the "younger" churches increasingly asserted their autonomy, "foreign missions" needed increasing justification. This need was amplified by the growing recognition of the challenges posed by secularism and materialism. Unlike non-Christian religions, however, secularism and materialism were thriving at "home," issuing an even greater challenge to the rationale for sending foreign missions. Theologically, mainline Christians increasingly expressed openness to cooperation and dialogue with other faiths. As Christian theology increasingly emphasized the centrality of ethics, dialogue with the moral visions of other religious traditions opened new possibilities. In short, many Christians became open to the possibility that non-Christians might not face eternal damnation. This removed the urgency of foreign missions. The multiple challenges facing Christians created a crisis in which the future of foreign missions seemed in doubt.

Chapter Three narrates the emergence of Christian development as one response to this crisis in Christian mission. Development emerged from the organizations formed as relief responses to World War II. In time, their mission broadened to areas of the world suffering from needs caused by underdevelopment rather than war. Development promised to diverge from colonial models by reversing the flow of resources. Whereas colonial powers had extracted resources from colonial subjects, development sought to infuse underdeveloped nations with technology and education from the developed world

in order to enable those nations to develop. By drawing primarily on the Social Gospel as an alternate foundation for Christian foreign mission, Christian development shifted the missionary focus from an emphasis on conversion to an ethical focus on social change. In so doing, Christian mission minimized "speculative" matters of theology in favor of "practical" concerns for human need and suffering. As matters of eternal salvation receded in favor of social salvation, Christian development emerged as a foreign missionary model that could better navigate a post-colonial world. Underdeveloped nations could often accept development where efforts to proselytize (as in Latin America) or convert were viewed with greater resistance. Foreign missions found new life in Christian development.

Chapter Four turns to the maturation of Christian development and its ongoing attempts to clarify its mission in light of early failures. Christian development's early efforts to break free of a colonial legacy resulted in a new form of paternalism. Development efforts failed as the technologies and education of the developed world were imposed on underdeveloped peoples without regard for their desires and needs. The emerging wisdom argued that development could not be imposed externally on underdeveloped peoples. Rather, development's success required participation on the part of the underdeveloped. Theologically, voices from evangelical and liberation theologians began to critique development and the theologies of development. Both liberation and evangelical theologies began to recognize the increasing significance of Christians in the underdeveloped world and began to give a greater place for their voices in global conversations on Christian mission. This encouraged evangelicals to take more seriously questions of social sin, which broadened their understanding of Christian

mission following decades of reaction to the Social Gospel. At the same time, evangelicals maintained the primacy of evangelism in Christian mission, retaining a dual missionary emphasis on the Great Commandment and Great Commission. Both liberation and evangelical theologians sought to include in their critiques of political economy a concern for the over-consumption of the developed world. Whereas development had initially presumed that all societies should consume like the developed world, evangelicals began to call that assumption into question and to offer a call to repentance on the part of Christians living in the developed world.

Chapter Five offers a critical perspective on the emergence of Christian development and its maturation and offers reasons why the otherwise penetrating criticisms of evangelical and liberation theologians failed to correct the recognized limitations of Christian development. These criticisms were absorbed into Christian development as innovations in development thinking rather than fundamental criticisms of development's assumptions. Both evangelical and liberation theologians framed their perspectives in the context of the Cold War, and limited their vision for Christian political and economic witness to a moral endorsement of one of the competing global systems of political economy. Yet, both capitalism and communism shared a common perception of the need for poorer countries to be developed; the dispute pertained to which system would better facilitate that development. This rendered Christian theological claims unable to escape the basic assumptions of development. Moreover, Christian development, as it matured, invited greater penetration into the social, cultural, and ethical dimensions of underdeveloped societies. As development professionals recognized that the complexity of the problems of underdevelopment required more than

the simple transferal of science and technology, development broadened its scope of intervention into the cultural sphere. Underdeveloped peoples needed to adapt their ethics, culture, and institutions to accommodate the demands of the global economy. In this way, the Christian theological alternatives of liberation and transformation provided precisely the theological rationale for intervention in all spheres of life among the underdeveloped. In its maturation, therefore, Christian development returned to precisely the types of cultural penetration that had created the crisis in Christian mission in the first part of the twentieth century. As missionaries had civilized the savages during colonial expansion, Christian mission was now developing the underdeveloped. In this way, Christian mission as development became precisely what it had hoped to avoid by repeating the exclusivist claims of previous Christian missions and their role in supporting the interests of colonial powers. As development, Christian mission replaced the exclusivist claims of Christian salvation with exclusive claims about universally valid cultural values and the interests of colonial powers with a global political and economic elite.

Chapter Six concludes the argument by suggesting the deeper failures of Christian mission to adequately respond to the crisis in Christian mission. Christian development failed to offer a resolution to the crisis in mission because it retained the basic assumptions of colonial mission theology. The primary point of divergence – the substitution of the "Great Commandment" for the "Great Commission" – did not address the fundamental flaws with colonial models of mission. In seeking to address the universalism of Christian salvation in the colonial model of missions, Christian mission made the universalism of Christian love the foundation of its foreign missions and

coupled this ethical foundation for mission with universal claims regarding economic and social development. This universalism failed to account for alternative political and economic possibilities that might complement or subvert the excesses and inequalities of the contemporary political economy. Ethics, when reduced to abstract conceptions of Christian love, proved too dependent on cultural assumptions regarding political economy to offer a prophetic Christian witness. Instead, by shifting missionary attention from conversion to expressions of Christian love, Christian development furthered weakened the prophetic possibilities of Christian mission.

Scope of the Project

This dissertation is limited by a number of considerations. I have chosen to focus primarily on the theologies and practices of U.S. Protestant Christians. This choice is not intended to ignore the development theologies and practices emerging from Roman Catholic Christians or those Christians living outside the United States, whether in "developed" or "underdeveloped" countries. While the practices – and at times theologies – of these diverse groups of Christians frequently overlap, my intention has been to trace a narrow slice of that history as it concerns Protestant Christians living in the United States. The missionary history of U.S. Protestants differs significantly from that of the Roman Catholic Church for many reasons. Most notably, the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church and the global reach of ecclesial structures in the Roman Catholic Church meant that U.S. Roman Catholics, in my opinion, did not face the same crisis in Christian missions that U.S. Protestants were facing. The end of the colonial era, the rising of national liberation movements, and the closing of borders to foreign

missions affected predominantly Protestant countries in a distinct way. Aside from French territories, the American colonies of the great Roman Catholic colonial powers of Spain and Portugal had attained independence in the 19th century and had remained predominantly Roman Catholic. Even after World War II, however, these former Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the Americas still needed missionaries from Europe and the United States. As predominantly Roman Catholic countries, U.S. Roman Catholic missionaries to Latin America did not face the same accusations of proselytism that accompanied Protestant foreign missions in the same countries. U.S. Protestants, on the other hand, had far more limited opportunities for foreign missions when the missionary frontiers in Africa and Asia began to close following World War II.

The differences in challenges facing Roman Catholics and U.S. Protestants is clearly seen in what is a second limitation, or focus, of this dissertation. Many of the examples, as well as the professional experience and field research of the author, concern the Latin American context. More specifically, the author has lived, worked, traveled, and researched in the Central American countries of Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. Central America, I would argue, offers a compelling case study when examining U.S. Protestant foreign missions and the turn to development. Christian development created opportunities for foreign missions in Central America, which had seen only limited Protestant missionary activity in the years prior to World War II. While some Pentecostals and evangelical denominations viewed Central America as a missionary priority, most U.S. Protestants had not focused their missionary efforts on Central America. The concerns of proselytism that had kept most U.S. Protestants less engaged with Central America subsided when foreign missions became development.

Moreover, the geopolitical considerations of development according to democratic capitalism made Central America a top missionary priority, given its proximity to the United States. Central America, therefore, provides an excellent study in the transition of foreign missions to development from the perspective of U.S. Protestants. At the same time, however, while the implementation of development interventions differ somewhat *on the ground* between Central American countries and countries of Africa or Asia, the missionary intention that underlies these interventions is largely consistent. Therefore, I do not believe that my selection of examples and material from Central America necessarily limits the applicability of the larger argument.

This selection does, however, point to a final limitation of the scope of this dissertation, insofar as I am primarily interested in the missionary theology, rhetoric, and intention of U.S. Protestants. For those practitioners in the field, development reality often looks far more complex than the sketch provided here. My own professional work and research has made me sensitive to those complexities. Nonetheless, those complexities (and ambiguities) are precisely the aspects of Christian development that are omitted in the theologies and rhetoric of development as presented to Christians living in the United States. Therefore, my intention is not to determine whether or not what development organizations and their advocates say about development is what is *really* happening in Central America. Such an analysis, while interesting in its own right, would be a separate project. Rather, this dissertation is concerned with what Christian development organizations and their advocates say about development because these messages about development have an impact on the way Christians in the United States view the world and their relationship to the people of Central America. So long as that

way of understanding the world is mediated by a certain message, this dissertation takes seriously what Christian development organizations and advocates have to say about development. In this sense, the important differences on the ground between Honduras and Nicaragua (much less between Honduras and Zimbabwe) become minimal in the rhetoric and theologies of Christian development. Rather, for the U.S. Protestant audience, any generic "underdeveloped" country can often be substituted for another, as the theology, narratives, and development projects are uniform across these distinctions.

CHAPTER II

U.S. PROTESTANT MISSIONS IN CRISIS

By the end of World War II, European colonial powers were greatly weakened, and with them the colonial model as a whole. The maintenance of colonies proved too costly for these nation-states, especially in the wake of the war's destruction. At the same time, national liberation movements throughout the former colonies began to demand the right to self-determination. The global balance of power also began to shift, as the United States and the Soviet Union emerged from World War II as the two global superpowers. Although the United States ascended as a global superpower, the United States rejected following in the footsteps of European colonial powers, instead asserting a new way of dealing with weaker nations. In the churches, the ecclesial and theological justifications for foreign missions were increasingly coming under scrutiny, as national churches in former mission destinations began to assert their autonomy and as Christians began expressing greater tolerance of non-Christian religious traditions. The meetings of the International Missionary Council (IMC) at Edinburgh, 1910, Jerusalem, 1928, Tambaram, 1938, Whitby, 1947, Willingen, 1952, 1958 Achimota, and New Delhi, 1961, set the framework for ecumenical discussions of Christian mission for the first six decades of the twentieth century until 1961, when the International Missionary Council became part of the World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism.[7] These meetings reflected a growing awareness of the crisis facing Christian mission and pointed the way to possible resolutions of that crisis. Increasingly,

[7] www.oikoumene.org

ethics and human needs began to draw the attention of Christian theologians and missionaries.

Disavowal of the Imperialist Option

Imperialism figured prominently in the moral reflections of U.S. Christians throughout the first half of the twentieth century. As U.S. Christians tried to make sense of the increasing role of the United States in global affairs, the question of imperialism presented itself as a defining issue. In the years surrounding World War I, Walter Rauschenbusch identified colonialism as one of the collective sins in which humanity was implicated.[8] Social sins extended to the actions of one nation in relation to others, and, in international relations, colonialism constituted one such sin. In even more harsh terms, Shailer Mathews explicitly rejected the "menace of German imperialism."[9] As Christians sought theological justification for the intervention of the United States in the World Wars, accusations of imperialism figured prominently in this justification.

For Rauschenbusch, the alternative to the imperialist option in international relations was a call to Christianize relations between nations. He writes,

> All whose Christianity has not been ditched by the catastrophe are demanding a Christianizing of international relations. The demand for disarmament and permanent peace, for the rights of small nations against the imperialistic and colonizing powers, for freedom of the seas and of trade routes, for orderly settlement of grievances, - these are demands for social righteousness and fraternity on the largest scale.[10]

The Christianization of international relations rejected the colonial option. Instead, it demanded the rights of small nations and for the rule of law to be recognized. The future

[8] Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, 54.
[9] Mathews, *Patriotism and Religion*, "Preface."
[10] Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel,* 4.

relationships between nations could not be one marked by colonialism. Rather, the international order demanded a Christianization. It was for this Christianizing of the international order that the United States had intervened in the World Wars, and it was Christianization that the new world order demanded. As Mathews reasoned, "The greatest problem which faces the world at the present time is not as to whether the Western civilization will conquer the world – that is settled. Its victory is inevitable. The real problem is whether Christianity will conquer civilization."[11]

For Mathews, the spread of Western civilization was already a historical fact. The moral and theological question was whether or not Christianity could influence that civilization in a way that promoted Christian ideals. The moral and theological question, therefore, became whether the future would be characterized by the militaristic imperialism of Germany or the benevolence of the United States. Whereas Germany's patriotism called for war and domination, the "patriotism of democracy" called for a defense of rights of "less organized peoples over whom its power has extended."[12] In Christian reflections on international relations, democracy became synonymous with Christian values and antithetical to imperialism. As warrant for global intervention, the protection of the ideals of democracy and self-determination demanded a new foreign policy that renounced the old imperialisms.

Shailer Mathews, for instance, attempted to come to terms with the undeniable colonial actions of Great Britain in India and the United States following the 1898 war with Spain. He sought to dismiss these actions in a rather curious and unconvincing fashion:

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[11] Mathews, *The Individual and Social Gospel*, 67.
[12] Mathews, *Patriotism and Religion*, 65.

> Such Anglo-American civilization has never been enforced by military power. In India the British have been particularly sensitive to the prejudices of the natives, and in the Philippines, where the United States has established itself by military power, the people have been encouraged and permitted to take over an increasing control of political affairs.[13]

Mathews, it seems, wanted to assert that the United States and Britain had never forced their civilization on others by military means, except when they had. He described the 1898 Spanish-American war by which the United States acquired the Philippines as a "war fought with Spain that Cuba might be free. And when we came into possession of the Philippines we not only paid an indemnity for our victory but deliberately undertook to educate the Filipinos in the ways of democracy and self-government."[14] In those cases, however, the colonial powers were benevolent administrators who carried the richness of Western civilization. In this sense, the foreign relations of the United States and Christian foreign missions had been a "self-sacrificing effort of Western civilization to carry to the world the ideals upon which it is avowedly based and which it must continue to embody if it is to be a blessing rather than a curse to the population of the globe."[15] While the attempts to reconcile the colonial history of Britain and even the United States with his anti-imperial rhetoric are largely unconvincing, that Mathews felt the need to reinterpret history in such a way testifies to the growing distaste for colonialism.

In the following years, the imperialist threat resurfaced first with Nazi Germany and, later, with the Soviet Union. Although differing from Rauschenbusch and Mathews on many points, Reinhold Niebuhr echoed their disavowal of imperialism in favor of democratic alternatives for international relations. Niebuhr, as Mathews had earlier,

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[13] Mathews, *Patriotism and Religion*, 73.
[14] Mathews, *Patriotism and Religion*, 75.
[15] Mathews *The Individual and Social Gospel*, 66.

tempered his criticism of imperialism with an acknowledgment of its ambiguity.[16] In one sense, Niebuhr believed that imperialism was inevitable for strong nations. In this sense, to the extent that the United States had been and was tempted to become an imperial power, it had done so reluctantly. Niebuhr also offered a positive appraisal of specific instances of imperialism. Imperialism, for Niebuhr, participated in the ambiguity that characterized all political relations.[17]

From the perspective of Christian missions, however, the colonial legacy undermined the legitimacy and efficacy of Christian mission. For many, the moral problems with colonialism expressed by Christian theologians were far less pressing than the practical implications of the tie between Western expansion and Christian mission. In the words of R. Pierce Beaver, "Christianity had expanded and won acceptance in association with the domination of Europe over the rest of the earth."[18] Yet, for Beaver as for many Christians, this association was morally ambiguous. Christians had not always supported colonial interests and had subverted those interests on occasion, a view echoed by Willis Church Lamott.[19] This ambiguity, however, meant little in the contemporary reality of Christian missions. The historical fact that Christianity had expanded with colonial interests created problems for contemporary Christian missions insofar as the rising nationalisms associated Christianity with their former colonial rulers.[20] As R. Pierce Beaver observed,

> The former involvement of missions in imperialism and colonialism is now a grave handicap to our faith. The patriots in the still dependent lands and the politicians who brought the newly independent nations to autonomy find that the

[16] Niebuhr, *The Structure of Nations and Empires*, 24-25.
[17] Niebuhr, *The Structure of Nations and Empires*, 25.
[18] Beaver, *From Missions to Mission*, 13.
[19] Beaver, *From Missions to Mission*, 37; Lamott, *Revolution in Missions*, 117-118.
[20] Beaver, *From Missions to Mission*, 37.

> common hatred of imperialism and colonialism provide emotional power for their purposes and programs. The missions are said to have been the agents of colonial domination, and it is frequently charged that they are still primarily instruments of foreign influence, and even of subversion.[21]

The unavoidable association of Christianity with colonialism made Christianity the object of distrust and opposition among former colonies. As the twentieth century progressed and Europe's hold on its colonies began to give way, nationalist movements began to reject all aspects of the colonial power's civilization, including religion. This encouraged the "resurgence of the native religions" as protest against both Christianity and colonization.[22] Christian mission demanded a new model that eschewed this colonial legacy. Without accepting full responsibility for the colonial expansion of the West, Christians recognized the association of their missions with that expansion created difficulties in a new geo-political context when those colonial powers were in retreat.

A Changing Ecclesial Context

The end of the colonial era marked a transition in the relationship between Christian churches and their missions. The relationship between colonial powers and their colonies had been paralleled in the relationship between Christian churches and their missions. The "sending" churches of colonial powers had historically maintained a high degree of control over their missions. As Lamott observed, "Mission work during the period was carried on in much the same way as colonies were conducted."[23] Both in relation to other religions and in relation to "younger churches," Christian mission had assumed an authoritarian posture that increasingly came under scrutiny.

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[21] Beaver, *From Missions to Mission*, 14.
[22] Beaver, *From Missions to Mission*, 16, 37.
[23] Lamott, *Revolution in Missions*, 30.

The Jerusalem meeting of the IMC recognized that the tie between missions and colonialism was not strictly a geopolitical problem for the church but entailed a form of religious imperialism as well:

> Going deeper, on our part we would repudiate any symptoms of a religious imperialism that would desire to impose beliefs and practices on others in order to manage their souls in their supposed interests. We obey a God who respects our wills and we desire to respect those of others.[24]

Religious imperialism entailed the imposition of religious beliefs and practices in a way analogous to the imposition of political, social, and economic control under the colonial administrative model. The new emphasis on respect for the "wills" of others was accompanied by an increased appreciation for the intellect of those hearing the Gospel. As William Hocking observed, "On the religious field, the missionary is under necessity of presenting his case with much fuller mental equipment. He has to address minds sophisticated in regard to religion, not amenable any longer to the authoritative mode of approach."[25] In rejecting the "authoritative mode of approach," Hocking acknowledged the need for a missionary model willing to engage in dialogue and partnership.

The repudiation of "religious imperialism" stemmed, in part, from the growing participation of the "younger churches" – those churches that had been founded by missionary activity – in the meetings of the IMC. In the Jerusalem meeting of the IMC, there were 50 countries represented.[26] This growing recognition of religious imperialism demanded a new relationship between the "older" and "younger" churches. Therefore, instead of "fixed ecclesial structures" the IMC advocated that "younger churches should express the Gospel through their own genius and through forms suitable to their racial

[24] IMC, *The World Mission of Christianity*, 10.
[25] Hocking, *Re-Thinking Missions*, 21.
[26] John Mott, "Preface," *The World Mission of Christianity*.

heritage."[27] Part of these "fixed ecclesial structures" included the denominational boundaries and tensions that were filtering into the mission field. The IMC recognized the desire among the younger churches, "to eliminate the complexity of the missionary enterprise and to remove the discredit to the Christian name, due to the great numbers of denominations and the diversity and even competition of the missionary agencies now at work in some countries."[28] The denominational divisions that had characterized Christianity in the "sending" countries made little sense in the mission field, where those divisions and the competition between them undermined the message of the Gospel. As the Willingen meeting of the IMC recognized, "Division in the church distorts its witness, frustrates its mission, and contradicts its own nature."[29]

Whereas this new recognition encouraged unity among the sending churches, it also encouraged partnerships between the "younger" and "older" churches. This was the theme at the IMC meeting in Whitby, Ontario.[30] The new emphasis on partnership began to grant a measure of autonomy to the "younger" churches. This challenged the previous missionary models, leading Willis Church Lamott to claim, "It is not too much to state that the age of foreign missions has passed."[31] Foreign missions assumed that a church sent missionaries into the foreign mission field. This understanding was increasingly giving way to an understanding of the global mission of the church, a recognition that past missionary efforts had succeeded in establishing Christian churches capable of expressing their own sense of mission. As Beaver summarized,

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[27] IMC, *The World Mission of Christianity*, 10.
[28] IMC, *The World Mission of Christianity*, 37.
[29] Goodall, *Missions under the Cross*, 193.
[30] IMC, *The Witness of a Revolutionary Church*, 6, 23.
[31] Lamott, *Revolution in Missions*, 1.

> The development of autonomous young churches in Asia, the Pacific, Africa, and Latin America, along with the decline of religion in the West, has transformed the Protestant Christian mission from a unilateral Western sending operation into a missionary enterprise with a world-wide base and world-wide field of operation.[32]

As Christianity became increasingly spread across the world, "foreign" began to lose its sense of importance. The "foreign" mission field for Christians in the "older" churches had become "home" to thriving churches.

Theological Challenges to Mission

In addition to the growing external pressures on Christian mission, theological reflections on mission also contributed to the crisis in Christian mission. These reflections challenged the individualism and the message of past missionary efforts, emphasizing instead a moral account of Christianity. The increased importance of ethics in Christian theological reflection formed, in part, the common ground on which dialogue between faiths could take place while minimizing the speculative dimensions of theology that created divisions both among Christians and between Christians and non-Christians.

Walter Rauschenbusch directed harsh words to the individualism of mission theologies that addressed their primary concern for the salvation of individual souls. In his critique of mission theology, Rauschenbusch claimed, "[I]ndividualistic evangelicalism, while rich in men of piety and evangelistic fervor, has been singularly poor in the prophetic gift."[33] The focus on individual matters of faith, belief, and eternal salvation involve Christians in excessive speculation and the endorsement of "rigid" doctrine. Rauschenbusch wrote, "[W]herever doctrine becomes rigid and is the pre-eminent thing in religion, 'faith' means submission of the mind to the affirmations of

[32] Beaver, *From Missions to Mission*, 39.
[33] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 338.

dogma and theology, and, in particular, acceptance of the plan of salvation and trust in the vicarious atonement of Christ."[34] The failure of this mission theology was a moral failure. Mission theology that focused on individual salvation invited individuals to a greater degree of selfishness that was at odds with the Gospel message: "To be afraid of hell or purgatory and desirous of a life without pain or trouble in heaven was not in itself Christian. It was self-interest on a higher level."[35] William Hocking made clear the implications of such reflections for Christian mission:

> Western Christianity has in the main shifted its stress from the negative to the affirmative side of its message; it is less a religion of fear and more a religion of beneficence…Whatever its present conception of the future life, there is little disposition to believe that sincere and aspiring seekers after God in other religions are to be damned: it has become less concerned in any land to save men from eternal punishment than from the danger of losing the supreme good.[36]

Hocking delivered a sharp message to those Christians seeking the conversion of "sincere and aspiring seekers after God in other religions." The grounds for that conversion were based on conceptions of a future life that Hocking seems to believe are less sure than once believed. As the emphasis in Christian theology shifted from the "speculative" concerns of "rigid" doctrine to the matters of ethics, the premise of Christian foreign mission likewise required a rethinking. It is not so much the truthfulness of Christian beliefs and eternal salvation but the way in which religion creates a moral and just society. Ethics became a basis for comparison across religious traditions, providing the common ground that doctrine could not. When submitted to the test of ethics, the failures of western civilization challenged the superiority of the Gospel. As Rauschenbusch

[34] Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, 101.
[35] Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, 108.
[36] Hocking, *Re-Thinking Missions*, 19.

reasoned, "The social wrongs which we permit at home contradict our gospel abroad and debilitate our missionary enthusiasm at home."[37] He continued,

> [T]he non-Christian peoples are getting intimate information about Christianity as it works in its own home…They see our poverty and our vice, our wealth and our heartlessness, and they like their own forms of misery rather better. 'By their fruits ye shall know them,' when applied to religions, reads, 'By their civilizations ye shall know them.' The moral prestige of Christian civilization ought to be the most valuable stock in trade for the foreign representatives of Christianity; instead of that it is forcing missionaries into an apologetic attitude.[38]

For Rauschenbusch, once Christian theology refocused its attention from speculative theology to matters of ethics, foreign missions was forced to reconcile the Gospel with the immorality of Christian civilization. The failures of Christian civilization when coupled with a lack of confidence in the doctrines of eternal damnation for non-Christians created a theological crisis for justifying mission. The urgency of saving souls gave way to doubt and self-critical reflections on the state of Christian civilization.

This self-criticism was made all the more evident as Christians recognized the growing threats of secularism and materialism. Whereas the primary concern during the colonial era had been the conversion of adherents to non-Christian religions, Christians during the twentieth century increasingly recognized the primary challenges were not other religions but the rise of secularism and materialism. These challenges were particularly worrisome for Christians since they had arisen in the heart of Christian Europe and the United States. This "internal" threat from within the heart of Christendom shook the confidence of foreign missions and drew attention to the need for global mission insofar as the center of the Christian world found itself also in need of mission. As Hocking stated, Christianity's "further argument, we judge, is to be less with

[37] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 317-318.
[38] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 318.

Islam or Hinduism or Buddhism than with materialism, secularism, naturalism."[39] The threat of secularism was deemed greater than that of non-Christian religions. Rather than Christianity versus the religions, *Re-thinking Missions* suggested an alternative posture in which it was the religions versus secularism.[40]

Conclusion: Summarizing the Crisis in Christian Mission

By the middle of the twentieth century Christian foreign mission was in crisis. This crisis had geopolitical, ecclesial, and theological roots that combined to undermine the model of foreign missions that had emerged in the colonial era. Christian theologians increasingly rejected the imperialist option as the United States emerged as a global superpower following two world wars. Such imperialism had characterized German and Soviet expansionism and conflicted with the democratic values that Christian theologians embraced in the American ideal. Practically, the colonial legacy created a lasting problem for Christian missions, which had been associated with European colonialism and expansionism. In the context of nationalist revivals, Christianity was increasingly identified with the religion of the colonial oppressors. Other missionary frontiers, most notably China, were closed through communist revolutions. In short, much of Asia and Africa either no longer accepted or welcomed Christian missions, while Latin America had, since 1910, been considered a low priority for Protestant missions given the predominance of Roman Catholicism. Where missions had been successful, the "younger" churches were claiming their autonomy and rejecting the religious imperialism of the sending churches. The growing participation of Christians from the global South in

[39] Hocking, *Re-Thinking Missions*, 29.
[40] Hocking, *Re-Thinking Missions*, 29.

the international ecumenical movement challenged the missionary fervor of Christians from the North. When viewed in the context of rising materialism and secularism in the countries of the "older" churches, the basic model of Christian missions that had emerged in the colonial era began to falter. What was the alternative?

A possible resolution to this crisis was already present in nascent form during the first half of the twentieth century. The increasing participation of the "younger" churches and the growing emphasis on ethics drew missionary attention to the questions of human need and created a foreign missionary niche for the "older" churches. As early as the Jerusalem meeting of the IMC, one of the missionary options for the "older" churches consisted in practices that anticipated later Christian development "in the development of social service especially in rural communities and new industrial centers."[41] The Jerusalem statement continued, "Educators, scientists, technical experts, and others with rich experience in Christian life and thought will be called upon to help the younger churches to solve their diverse and pressing problems."[42] As political and religious imperialism were rejected, the provision of social services and the technical expertise of the "older" churches presented itself as viable option for mission. By the Willingen meeting of the IMC, support of "programs of technical assistance for underdeveloped countries" was addressed in the following statement: "

> Believing that the extreme inequalities of wealth between different areas constitute a challenge to the Christian conscience, we consider that it is the duty of Christians everywhere to encourage and assist the governments concerned in programmes for raising the standard of living of the hungry and underprivileged regions of the world.[43]

[41] IMC, *The World Mission of Christianity*, 33.
[42] IMC, *The World Mission of Christianity*, 34; see also IMC, *The World Mission of Christianity*, 49, 58.
[43] Goodall, *Missions under the Cross*, 225.

While evangelism remained the primary focus of missions, the attention to questions of hunger and need offered new possibilities for Christians.[44] Willis Lamott justified this increasing missionary focus by appealing to the experiences of "younger" churches, "Forms of Christian work touching the economic and social order no longer need to be justified in the eyes of Christians. They may have begun as secondary or subsidiary activities, but with the growth of the Younger Churches they appear as an indissoluble part of the total approach to the non-Christian populations of the world."[45] In the midst of the crisis of Christian mission, the self-doubt regarding the foreign mission enterprise and the soundness of theological claims was already finding new hope and confidence in the social work of Christian mission.

[44] Goodall, *Missions under the Cross*, 226.
[45] Lamott, *Revolution in Missions*, 72-73.

CHAPTER III

TO TEACH A MAN TO FISH: THE PROMISE OF CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENT

As the colonial era came to an end in the years following World War II, development emerged as a new form of national and ecclesial mission that appeared to escape the legacy of colonialism and to offer a solution to the crisis facing Christian foreign missions. Rooted initially in relief responses to World War II, development promised a new way of engaging less powerful nations and cultures by offering them assistance on their road to development. The basis of this relationship seemed to evade the extractive flow of resources from colonies to colonial powers by creating a flow of resources and technology from the developed to the underdeveloped world. For Christians, the apparent suffering of the poor in the underdeveloped regions appealed deeply to the growing emphasis on love and social action as a basis for Christian mission and the concomitant reticence for many Christians to emphasize evangelism and conversion. The theological foundations for development drew largely on the Social Gospel theologies of the early decades of the century, while tempering the more evangelical and radical dimensions of these theologies. The emergent vision for foreign missions as development emphasized a practical theology rooted in appeals to Christian love in order to motivate support of social action carried out by development professionals.

Roots in Relief

Christian development has its roots in Christian responses to the needs of World War II. The devastation wrought by World War II made a moral demand on Protestant churches in the United States and provided a cause around which U.S. Christians could rally. In so doing, Christians engaged in the kinds of social service that had traditionally accompanied Christian mission, yet these ministries were divorced from the traditional emphasis on evangelism and were directed toward the heart of Christian Europe. The immediate needs of food, shelter, and medicine demonstrated tangible needs to which U.S. Christians were able to respond. Europe was heavily dependent on foreign assistance, as national infrastructures, finances, and production capabilities were severely damaged if not altogether destroyed in the war. The nation-states of Europe were left too weak to respond to the needs of their citizens and the large numbers of refugees and displaced people that flooded many of the countries of Europe.

While the particular types of needs generated by WWII were within the traditional range of Christian foreign missions, the scale and logistics of response involved created new demands. In order to respond to these, Christians formed relief organizations that could coordinate the collection and shipping of aid. In this context, the histories of many Christian development organizations begin with remarkably similar accounts of response to World War II. The organization that would later become Episcopal Relief and Development was established in 1940 with the mission "to assist refugees fleeing Europe during World War II."[46] Likewise, World Relief began in 1944 as a ministry of the National Association of Evangelicals focused on sending food and clothing to the victims

[46] Episcopal Relief and Development, "History," *Episcopal Relief and Development*.

of World War II.[47] Church World Service, a ministry of the National Council of Churches, began with a similar mission by providing in 1946-1947 "more than 11 million pounds of food, clothing, and medical supplies to war-torn Europe."[48] As Lutheran World Relief describes, "Hungry refugees all over Europe cried out for help. Service to all suffering people became a vital part of Christian witness."[49] The devastation in Europe appealed deeply to Christian compassion and the need for a moral response to the sufferings caused by war.[50]

These organizations brought together on a massive scale like-minded people to support the relief cause. In this way, the social service dimension of Christian mission became concentrated in specialized organizations devoted to the single cause of relief response. Intended as temporary organizations, these new avenues for Christian mission offered a more efficient institutional framework for exercising Christian response to relief needs. The relatively narrow focus of these organizations diverged from past missionary models in which the provision of such assistance had accompanied more traditional missionary activity. In the formation of Christian relief organizations, the components of Christian mission that addressed issues of hunger and health care were freed from the traditional emphasis on evangelism.

From Relief to Development

As the relief efforts of World War II drew to a close, however, Christians and

[47] World Relief, "History."
[48] Church World Service, "History."
[49] Lutheran World Relief, "History."
[50] World Vision emerged slightly after this first wave of Christian relief organizations, prompted not by the Second World War but by the Korean War. For World Vision, their initial focus concentrated on the children orphaned by the Korean War.

Christian relief organizations began to envision their mission and their cause in broader terms. Christian mission had been irrevocably altered in the response to the war. U.S. Christians had engaged the world on an impressive scale, and their successes in this effort energized Christians at home. In order to maintain this success and in order to thrive in the long-term, however, Christian relief organizations recognized the need to mature. Maturation, for many of these organizations, entailed broadening their mission from one exclusively focused on relief needs. While many organizations retained relief work as a part of their mission, they also began to question the reasons for limiting their focus to needs caused by war and natural disaster.[51] In so doing, Christians began to see the limitations of disaster relief as they recognized the widespread needs of the poor that were not caused by disaster.[52]

Disaster relief, as these organizations learned, suffered from at least two serious problems. First, disaster response was often too slow to come and too quick to end. Second, some disasters could be averted altogether or their effects mitigated with more sustained work. Lutheran World Relief described both of these limitations well:

> [LWR] has learned that disaster can sometimes be prevented or withstood by effective development programs and that, when disasters do occur, LWR partners may be on the spot well before the world notices and still needed long after the crisis no longer commands front-page headlines.[53]

If communities are trained and prepared in advance, disasters may not occur at all, or, if they do, their impact may be lessened through advanced training. Limiting one's response

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[51] Some, such as the United Methodist Committee on Relief, remained primarily relief and recovery organizations. While Christian development has nonetheless influenced the work of United Methodist missionaries, this impact has been through more traditional ecclesial structures.

[52] It is worth noting that even those national Christian development organizations in Central America such as Christian Commission for Development and CEPAD (Council of Protestant Churches if Nicaragua) emerged initially in response to a particular crisis: the refugee crisis in Honduras occasioned by war in neighboring El Salvador, and the 1972 earthquake in Nicaragua.

[53] Lutheran World Relief, "Our History;" see also Bachman, *Together in Hope*, 62-63.

to post-disaster assistance may result in greater needs. Echoing this sentiment, World Relief has claimed, "We began to understand the limitations of only providing emergency relief in response to disasters – and realized the need to foster long-term development to prevent tragedies and to empower the poor."[54] Working in communities before disasters happen might create communities strong enough to withstand or prevent disasters. As the logic went, if responding to needs caused by disaster was a part of Christian mission, then surely preventing such disasters from occurring in the first place must also be a part of Christian mission. Applying the well-known saying that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," Christian relief organizations envisioned the possibilities of disaster-aversion through development. Development, in this sense, could be imagined as pre-emptive relief. By reducing levels of poverty by improving agricultural production, education, health care, and so forth, impoverished communities would be less susceptible to the impacts of a natural or human-made disaster

Moreover, as these organizations began to learn, support for relief efforts could be enthusiastic for a short period of time. Generating that enthusiasm can create a lag time before the organization responds, and such enthusiasm is difficult to sustain for the duration of the need. By committing to communities on a more long-term basis, Christian relief agencies could both anticipate needs as well as see through the fulfillment of those needs, even after the occasioning disaster had ceased receiving media attention. What was needed, as LWR recognized, was a long-term presence working in vulnerable communities that could address both of these concerns.

At the same time, Christian relief organizations began to realize that the emphasis on relief was a somewhat artificial construction. As Christians became more involved in

[54] World Relief, "History."

responding to needs around the world, separating "disaster relief" needs from the need and suffering that were present without a "disaster" no longer seemed morally tenable. The sufferings caused by endemic poverty were just as real and painful as those caused by war, and the exclusive focus on relief seemed an arbitrary and increasingly indefensible position. The same foreign missions that had urged Christians to global action brought back stories of poverty-related needs in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. From a Christian point of view, these needs could not be ignored once Christians began to direct their energy and resources to global humanitarian response. World Relief reflected this shift in focus as their name changed from "War Relief" to "World Relief" in 1950.[55] Christian relief organizations broadened both the countries in which they worked and their interventions in order to respond to global humanitarian needs. Much like World Relief, Church World Service, in the 1950s and 1960s, "expanded its ministry of compassion and relief to Asia, Africa, and Latin America. As the '60s dawned, the focus changed from a band-aid approach to one of giving a helping hand up."[56] As Christians began to reason, there was nothing that made the needs of post-war Europe more worthy of Christian response than the needs of the poor around the world.

Theories and Practice of Early Development

As development emerged as a response to these needs, new theories and practices were necessary to guide and interpret this new sense of national and Christian mission. Central to the basic mission of development was the assumption that the United States had achieved a level of civilization that surpassed all others previously known to

[55] World Relief, "History."
[56] Church World Service, "Where We Came From."

humankind and that, through the correct interventions in underdeveloped societies, those societies could progress toward the levels of developed achieved by the United States.

In his inaugural address of 1949, President Truman had signaled optimism regarding the possibilities for overcoming global poverty. He claimed, "For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and skill to relieve the suffering of these people." Truman expressed the widely held belief that through scientific and technological advancement, the suffering of the underdeveloped peoples of the world would be eliminated. This knowledge would "help them realize their aspirations for a better life," by helping them to "produce more food, more clothing, more materials for housing, and more mechanical power to lighten their burdens." [57] The interventions that Truman proposed were primarily those of technical skill and knowledge. Truman urged the developed nations to share "the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress" as a way for the poorer nations to overcome their poverty.

More than a decade after Truman's address, the theoretical foundation for development took shape in the work of W.W. Rostow. Rostow identified five stages of economic growth that held across cultures and economies: traditional economies, preconditions for take-off, take-off, drive to maturity, and high mass consumption.[58] This theory, as one might imagine, provided a compelling narrative lens through which "underdeveloped" peoples and their economies might be interpreted. Development, it was therefore imagined, could help "underdeveloped economies" by providing the technology and structures necessary to help them move ahead in economic stages.

[57] Truman, "1949 Inaugural Address."
[58] Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth*.

In the years after Rostow formulated his theory, President John F. Kennedy claimed, "For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life."[59] Kennedy, echoing Truman's faith in the powers of science and technology, believed that the problem of poverty was not the inability to solve the problem but an unwillingness to do so. The possibility for eliminating poverty had come into sight. What was lacking was the moral will to engage in the types of activities – development – that could bring about this end of poverty.

In this spirit, the transferal of technology, skills, and knowledge became the focus of much development work. For Christians as well as government agencies, older models of providing charity quickly gave way to new practices. In LWR's 1962 Annual Report, Ove Nielson claimed that in addition to the provision of food, clothing and medical supplies, "The time has come when Lutheran World Relief should … also address more of its attention to the basic factors which underlie the problems of hunger, inadequate shelter and disease. Feeding, clothing and giving medical supplies become more meaningful if at the same time people are helped to provide for their future needs."[60] While not rejecting relief efforts, LWR and other organizations began to seek ways to anticipate future needs by improving the economies of poorer societies. The specific types of projects included such things as " the creation of small irrigation systems, the construction of community centers and roads, the establishment of cooperatives, and education for changes in crop patters and dietary habits."[61] Likewise, World Relief began broadening their interventions as they "designed a variety of ministries, ranging from economic development to setting up TB clinics, from supporting

[59] Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961."
[60] Bachmn, *Together in Hope*, 59.
[61] Bachman, *Together in Hope*, 59

orphanages to land reclamation projects."[62] Through these types of interventions, Christians could share the knowledge of the developed world in the service of poorer communities by altering their economic, political, and social organization in favor of more productive arrangements.

Confidence in the ability of science and technology to spur the kinds of economic and social development achieved in the United States invited widespread adoption of the "teach a man to fish" approach to development. As Bachman notes in his history of LWR, "An oriental proverb became a guiding principle: 'You can give a man a fish and feed him for a day; you can teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime."[63] This proverb, more than any other theory or mode of analysis, informed the selection of practices for development interventions. As the 2006 World Vision Annual Report boldly claimed, "Most people know the old proverb, 'Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish and he eats for a lifetime.' It is the simple proven theory behind community development."[64] As one United Methodist missionary recounted, this insight was quite radical when first introduced.[65] This approach echoed the prevailing wisdom that under-developed stemmed primarily from lack of technical knowledge. With Rostow's theories and this proverb in mind, Christian development organizations gained a clear mission to send technical professionals primarily in the capacity to train local agricultural workers, health care professionals, and community organizers.

The infusion of technological advance into the societies at lower stages of development was intended to help them to catch up. In this way, early development

[62] World Relief, "History."
[63] Bachman, *Together in Hope*, 59.
[64] World Vision, Annual Review, 2006, 12.
[65] Interview with a UMC missionary in Costa Rica, summer 2007.

focused on this transferal of knowledge that would help underdeveloped societies learn to employ the kinds of skills and scientific knowledge that had allowed the ascendancy of the United States in terms of political, economic, and social advancement. For Christians, this meant that missionary practices became increasingly oriented to those sorts of trainings that focused on public health, agriculture, and education.

Theologies of Development: Mission in Service to a Universal Ethic

From a theological perspective, Christian development seemed to resolve the crisis in Christian mission that had been brewing since the first decades of the twentieth century. Christian development offered Christians an alternative possibility for foreign missions that seemed to evade the questions of religious exclusivism and imperialism of colonial missions by grounding foreign missions in ethics. In the early decades of the twentieth century, Social Gospel theologians such as Walter Rauschenbusch and Shailer Mathews had furnished a universal vision for Christian mission that shifted missionary focus toward questions of ethics and social regeneration. This vision broadened mission beyond the church and de-emphasized the role of "speculative" theology in favor of a practical theology that responded to concerns of justice. This moral vision encouraged a sense of mission that extended beyond ecclesial institutions and embraced partnerships with the nation as an expression of a shared sense of mission. By extending the Social Gospel to the field of foreign missions while tempering the more radical elements of the Social Gospel, Christian development offered a compelling vision for foreign missions that emphasized the ethical and practical questions of human needs and social change. In addition, the more evangelical notes of the Social Gospel receded for many – though not

all – Christian development organizations. What emerged in theologies of Christian development, therefore, was a synthesis of the Social Gospel emphasis on social ethics and practical theology coupled with a mildly reformist program in political economy. This vision appealed to universal moral standards as the foundation for Christian foreign mission.

At the center of Social Gospel ethics was a focus on the moral significance of the Kingdom of God and the related emphasis on love as the cornerstone of Christian ethics. For Walter Rauschenbusch, Christians had deviated from the teachings of Jesus and the prophets, for whom "moral righteousness" was the "true domain of religion."[66] Religion, for Rauschenbusch was fundamentally a question of ethics. The remaining aspects of religion – church, speculative theology, mysticism, and worship – were to be subordinate to the ethical, as "religious morality is the only thing God cares about."[67] The question of ethics pertained not solely to individuals but extended as well to the public and social dimensions of human existence.[68] In his "Introduction" to *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, Rauschenbusch forcefully stated, "[T]he essential purpose of Christianity was to transform human society into the kingdom of God by regenerating all human relations and reconstituting them in accordance with the will of God."[69] The transformation of society into the kingdom of God provided the moral direction for Social Gospel ethics.

According to Shailer Mathews, the kingdom of God was "*an ideal* (though progressively approximated) *social order in which the relation of men to God is that of*

[66] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 41, 53; see also, Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, 14-15.
[67] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 6.
[68] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 8.
[69] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, xxxvii.

sons, and (therefore) *to each other, that of brothers.*"[70] The kingdom of God creates demands on human history insofar as it can be "approximated." As a social ideal, the kingdom of God challenges individualistic understandings of salvation. Salvation, for Mathews, required bringing God "into increasing control of the politics, the industry, the domestic life of the world.[71] Salvation required social regeneration. For Mathews and Rauschenbusch, the individual was so thoroughly influenced by society that one could not speak about the wellbeing of an individual apart from his or her social context. More importantly, the moral demands of kingdom of God called for the transformation of social institutions according to the ideals of love and brotherhood.

Mathews and Rauschenbusch both emphasized progress toward the ideals of the kingdom of God. The "approximation" of these ideals challenged traditional apocalyptic theologies by emphasizing a process of organic development. According to Rauschenbusch,

> As to the way in which the Christian ideal of society is to come, we must shift from catastrophe to development…By insisting on organic development we shall follow the lead of Jesus when, in his parables of the sower and of the seed growing secretly, he tried to educate his disciples away from catastrophes to an understanding of organic growth.[72]

The kingdom of God, for Rauschenbusch, was not something that would comes into being following the eschaton. Rather, the kingdom of God would be approached incrementally through a process of organic development. Humanity would progress toward the kingdom through history.[73] For Rauschenbusch, "[W]e are on the march toward the Kingdom of God, and getting our reward by every fractional realization of it

[70] Mathews, *The Social Teachings of Jesus*, 54.
[71] Mathews, *The Social Gospel*, 21.
[72] Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, 225. See also, *Christianity and Crisis*, 59.
[73] See also, Mathews, *The Social Teachings of Jesus*, 204-205.

which makes us hungry for more. A stationary humanity would be a dead humanity. The life of the race is in its growth."[74] For Rauschenbusch, "Jesus had the scientific insight" that anticipated modern sociological analysis.[75] The kingdom of God, for Rauschenbusch, corresponded to the late 19th and early 20th century conceptions of social progress through incremental change over time.

Although it would be anachronistic to equate Rauschenbusch's account of organic development with later development discourse, the emergence of development discourse and practice drew on the same emergence of the social sciences that captivated Rauschenbusch. Rauschenbusch celebrated this emergent insight:

> We are only now coming to realize that within certain limits human society is plastic, constantly changing its forms, and that the present system of social organization, as it superseded others, may itself be displaced by something better. Without such a conception of the evolution of social institutions any larger idea of social regeneration could hardly enter the minds of men. The modern socialist movement is really the first intelligent, concerted, and continuous effort to reshape society in accordance with the laws of social development.[76]

For Rauschenbusch, the Social Gospel depended on an understanding of the changing nature of society and the ability of intentional human effort to direct that change for the better. The lasting impact of this insight that would become characteristic of Christian development would be the increasing reliance on social scientific insights to guide Christian moral action. Rauschenbusch credited the modern socialist movement as a predecessor to the Social Gospel based on its "effort to reshape society in accordance with the laws of social development." Rauschenbusch praised sociology and sought the wisdom of the nascent social sciences in order to direct Christian moral action. For Rauschenbusch, social transformation required scientific insight into the causes of

[74] Rauschenbusch, *A Theology of the Social Gospel*, 227.
[75] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 59.
[76] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 195.

poverty and inequality, including an examination of the production process. For later Christian development, development became the social scientific framework for understanding the poorer nations, and it became the process to get from their current state to one that more closely approximates the kingdom of God.

The social scientific insights that Rauschenbusch praised challenged traditional understandings of Christian charity. In this light, Rauschenbusch once again anticipated Christian development discourse. Drawing on the parable of the Good Samaritan, Rauschenbusch offered a new reading that reflected his emphasis on society and social institutions. If, he suggested, the case were a hundred good Samaritans confronting thousands of beaten men, charity must give way to social efforts aimed at preventing such attacks from occurring.[77] Likewise, Mathews emphasized the way in which the Social Gospel went beyond Christian charity, drawing a similar message from the Good Samaritan,

> It certainly would not be a social gospel to urge people merely to become Good Samaritans. That would imply that there would be always robbers on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho…It is not difficult to see why radical socialists come to despise the word charity. Christians should have something of the same attitude. The gospel cannot be content to ignore the sources of evil while ministering to the results of evil.[78]

Christian moral response and mission become broadened by this take on charity. Love of neighbor could not be limited to addressing needs that arise but must be extended to the prevention of circumstances that give rise to those needs. This would be precisely the reasoning that Christian development organizations recognized in the need to extend their efforts from relief to development. Relief efforts belonged to the realm of charity in

[77] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 305.
[78] Matehws, *The Individual and the Social Gospel*, 3.

which Christian love responds to evil and suffering. Christian development, on the other hand, sought to intervene in society in order to eliminate those evils altogether.

While the Social Gospel focused primarily on the plight of the urban working class in industrial society, Rauschenbusch seemed to anticipate the globalization or internationalization of the Social Gospel. The moral demands and vision articulated by the Social Gospel offered a foundation for Christian foreign mission that was no less universal than the earlier calls for conversion and evangelization that drew on the Great Commission. Rauschenbusch emphasized the universal implications of Christian ethics and righteousness. The righteousness demanded by the Old Testament prophets reached beyond nationalism to a universal ethic in conformity with God's will. This universalism created a moral demand that judges all nations.[79] As Rauschenbusch stated, the religion of the prophets "became international in its horizon and more profoundly ethical."[80] Likewise, the announcement of the Kingdom of God in the teachings of Jesus extended Jewish ideals to all humanity. In Jesus, religion became based on "human needs and capacities," which made the kingdom of God "universal in scope, an affair of all humanity."[81] By shifting missionary theology from the Great Commission to the Great Commandment, the focus on ethical ideals of love, justice, and equality created a new demand on Christians and a new purpose for foreign missions. Whereas earlier foreign missions had emphasized the universal message of personal salvation through Jesus Christ, Christian development emphasized the universal message of Christian love. The mission to share Christian love lifted foreign missions above the exclusivist truth claims

[79] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 25.
[80] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 26.
[81] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 62, see also Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, 161.

of eternal salvation through Christ, a conversation that many ecumenical and liberal Christians seemed eager to leave behind. The emphasis on love, as a moral norm, was one that was far more tolerable for non-Christian populations and could even be the foundation for further dialogue.

By focusing Christian mission on a universal ethic, the Social Gospel offered a missionary vision that extended beyond ecclesial structures.[82] The church no longer had a monopoly on Christian mission, as the church itself was to be judged by the Christian moral vision. In fact, Rauschenbusch frequently directed harsh criticisms toward the church. For Rauschenbusch, the church had failed to fulfill its social mission.[83] Christian mission was not to be driven by the church but by the Kingdom of God. As Rauschenbusch claimed, "The saving power of the Church does not rest on its institutional character, on its continuity, its ordination, its ministry, or its doctrine. It rests on the presence of the Kingdom of God within her."[84] For Rauschenbusch, the fulfillment of Christian mission was not to be limited to the church. Rather, Christian mission was to be broadened to encompass all those efforts to improve society according to the moral ideals of the Kingdom of God. In so doing, Rauschenbusch gave a missionary purpose to all professions:

> If now we could have faith enough to believe that all human life can be filled with divine purpose; that God saves not only the soul, but the whole of human life; that anything which serves to make men healthy, intelligent, happy, and good is a service to the Father of men; that the kingdom of God is not bounded by the Church, but includes all human relations – then all professions would be hallowed and receive religious dignity.[85]

Rauschensbusch celebrated the diffusion of Christian mission to all professions and all

[82] Mathews, *Patriotism and Religion*, 133.
[83] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 180.
[84] Rauschenbusch, *A Theology of the Social Gospel*, 129.
[85] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 355.

Christians. While the church would still play a part in encouraging the spirit that permeates society, the ministry and mission of the church should be carried out in all professions and in all social relations. Rauschensbusch encouraged Christian leaders to rejoice in the fact that religion had moved beyond its institutional confinement and become "more a diffused force than ever."[86] For Rauschenbusch, so long as Christian mission remained confined to churches, Christianity would be less able to fill its social mission of regeneration.[87] The social mission of the church would be less the work of professional ministers and more the work of ordinary, everyday Christians that would "Christianize the everyday life."[88]

The extensions of missions beyond the church legitimated the missionary identity for the relief and development organizations that emerged after World War II and encouraged a greater professionalization of Christian mission in terms of technical experts. While these organizations drew inspiration from Christian moral ideals, they were formed as practical responses to the moral demands of global poverty. Such responses demanded the training not of professional missionaries but of technical experts who could most efficiently administer development initiatives.

Moreover, once mission became primarily a matter of ethical ideals, the rationale and the possibility for closer collaboration between Christian and national mission became justified on the grounds of these shared ethical ideals. For Mathews, both religion and patriotism became subordinated to ethical ideals.[89] The ethical ideals of the United States were worthy, however, of Christian support and worthy of global

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[86] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 206-207; see also Mathews, *The Social Gospel*, 22.
[87] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 207.
[88] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 357; see also Mathews, *Jesus on Social Institutions*, 144-145.
[89] Mathews, *Patriotism and Religion*, 36, 44, 57.

application.[90] The particular ideals and institutions of the United States were governed by a universal morality. As a corollary of this universalism, however, Mathews believed that the United States had achieved a higher stage of ethical development and thus carried the burden of extending morally superior forms of political, economic and social organization to other civilizations.[91] In this way, Social Gospel Christians found a way to support the nation on the grounds of the universal validity of the national ethical ideals. In this sense, "American interests" were not just a geopolitical claim but an appeal to a set of values that were widely believed in the United States to be universal and to be the model to which other societies should aspire. "America itself is an ideal."[92] In this way, the loyalty of U.S. Christians appeared to transcend the particular nation-state to a universal ideal of political and social organization rooted in the Christian moral vision.

While the Social Gospel provided the major theological foundations for the emergence of Christian development, Christian development diverged from many of the insights of Social Gospel. Most notably, Christian development was far more accepting of the existing political economy of the United States. Walter Rauschenbusch had been an advocate for more socialist modes of production, offering harsh criticisms of the existing capitalist economy. For Rauschenbusch, capitalism and Christianity were "antagonistic," as he warned, "If the Church cannot Christianize commerce, commerce will commercialize the Church."[93] For Rauschenbusch, capitalism and Christianity were fundamentally at odds.[94] He lamented the way in which the norms of capitalism had

[90] Mathews, *Patriotism and Religion*, 41. 161.
[91] Mathews, *Patriotism and Religion*, 41, 107; see also, Mathews, *The Validity of American Ideals*, 107.
[92] Mathews, *The Validity of American Ideals*, 177.
[93] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 314.
[94] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 274-278; Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, 129.

infiltrated the Church, and he argued for a socialist vision that emphasized more cooperative forms of production and distribution.[95] His idealistic vision of the possibilities for an alternative economy coincided with his understanding of the Kingdom of God:

> If production could be organized on a basis of cooperative fraternity; if distribution could at least approximately be determined by justice; if all men could be conscious that their labor contributed to the welfare of all and that their personal well-being was dependent on the prosperity of the Commonwealth; if predatory business and parasitic wealth ceased and all men lived only by their labor; if the luxury of unearned wealth no longer made us all feverish with covetousness and a simpler life became the fashion; if our time and strength were not used up either in getting a bare living or in amassing unusable wealth and we had more leisure for the higher pursuits of the mind and the soul – then there might be a chance to life such a life of gentleness and brotherly kindness and tranquility of heart as Jesus desired for men.[96]

In Rauschenbusch's vision, cooperative production and distribution would provide for the kind of equality demanded by Christian ethics. Perhaps more importantly, cooperative production would encourage a simple lifestyle not driven by greed and covetousness. A simpler life would grant more time to "higher pursuits" of mental and spiritual development.

By the time Christian development emerged, however, socialism no longer appealed to most Christians in the United States. The optimism of the early Social Gospel had begun to wane by the 1930s following World War I and the Great Depression. Theologians such as Reinhold Niebuhr and John C. Bennett offered differing assessments of the possibilities for the social order. Niebuhr fiercely attacked the idealism of the Social Gospel by offering a powerful account of human sin, and his "realist conception of human nature" tempered enthusiasm for the possibilities of human

[95] Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, 111.
[96] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 341.

progress.[97] In his earlier writings, Niebuhr challenged the Social Gospel enthusiasm by provocatively claiming, "Our western society is obviously in the process of disintegration."[98] Rather than gradual approximations and organic growth of the kingdom of God in history, Niebuhr saw crisis and disintegration. For Bennett, the "clarity and confidence" found in the Social Gospel had "disappeared."[99] Instead of a "Christian social order," Bennett argued, "The best we can hope to achieve in this world will involve a compromise with the ideals of Jesus."[100] The realism of Niebuhr and Bennett tempered the Social Gospel enthusiasm for "Christianizing" the social order by placing greater emphasis on the ways in which human sinfulness created limitations for all social achievements.

In time, however, Niebuhr's appraisal of western civilization would change in decisive ways for later Christian mission. Niebuhr's early critiques of western civilization borrowed extensively from Marxist criticisms of capitalism.[101] Through the 1930s, however, these sympathies with communism yielded to the successes of Roosevelt's New Deal and the realities of Stalin's repression. From the 1940s onward, Niebuhr's realism – as did that of Bennett – favored American democracy.[102] By the 1950s and 1960s, Niebuhr's realism extolled the virtues of democracy in the United States and the call for democratic nations to formulate "polices which are favorable to the gradual disintegration of the Soviet Empire."[103] Godless communism, the threat of nuclear annihilation, and the horrors of the Holocaust may well have tempered some of

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[97] Niebuhr, *Man's Nature and His Communities,* 24-25.
[98] Niebuhr, *Reflections on the End of an Era*, 23.
[99] Bennett, *Social Salvation*, 69.
[100] Bennett, *Social Salvation*, 81.
[101] See Niebuhr, *Reflections on the End of an Era* and *Moral Man and Immoral Society*.
[102] Bennett, *Christian Realism*, 64-65.
[103] Niebuhr, *The Structure of Nations and Empires,* 249; see also, Niebuhr and Sigmund, *The Democratic Experience*, 4

the idealistic belief in progress. Nonetheless, these horrors called for even greater vigilance and intervention by Christians in the global social and political order.

Whereas Niebuhr and Bennett may have differed from Rauschenbusch and Mathews on the trajectory of history, neither disavowed the social mission of Christianity. For Niebuhr, "[T]he taint of sin upon all historical achievements does not destroy the possibility of such achievements nor the obligation to realize truth and goodness in history."[104] Even in the midst of criticisms of idealistic accounts of human progress, Niebuhr believed that his "realist conception of human nature should be made the servant of an ethic of progressive justice."[105]

Niebuhr maintained the need for extending justice internationally: "The economic interdependence of the world places us under the obligation, and gives us the possibility of enlarging the human community so that the principle of order and justice will govern the international as well as the national community."[106] While taking care not to fall into idealism, Niebuhr nonetheless argued that U.S. Christians had an increasingly global mission to "overcome the anarchy in which nations live," a task that "represents the positive side of historical development and reveals the indeterminate possibilities of good in history."[107] The difference, for Niebuhr, was that the actions by which U.S. Christians would engage the world should take more seriously the realities of sin and power in the establishment of some measure of justice. While Niebuhr's realism seemed to have little impact on the optimism of early Christian development, it reinforced the global mission of U.S. Christians in the sphere of political economy by

[104] Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man,* Vol 2, 213.
[105] Niebuhr, *Man's Nature and His Communities,* 24-25.
[106] Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man,* Vol 2, 285.
[107] Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man,* Vol 2, 285.

raising awareness of the threats of Soviet Communism while maintaining the relative justice of the North Atlantic political economies.

Likewise, for Bennett, the Social Gospel had not been wrong in its basic emphasis on the social mission of Christianity. As Bennett noted, "The Social Gospel is an inevitable development of the teachings of Jesus. If we are to have his concern for the real welfare of persons we must take whatever measures are necessary to overcome the evils which crush persons now. Jesus was deeply interested in the problems of bread and its distribution."[108] For Bennett, the obligation to engage in "social responsibility" did not depend on how much progress in possible. In this sense, the optimism of the Social Gospel was wrong but also irrelevant to a certain degree. According to Bennett, "The primary basis for social responsibility is no such calculation concerning the ultimate prospects for society. Rather, the basis for such responsibility is obedience to the will of God."[109]

By the late 1960s, Bennett turned his attention explicitly to the question of development. The 1969 SODEPAX conference in Cartigny, Switzerland, sought to bring together Christian theologians to reflect on the question of development. In his opening address, Bennett sought to take seriously the realities of human sin that must be considered in theological reflections on development.[110] He acknowledged "the persistence of sin" and the "ambiguous" effects of technology. He asserted the persistence of pride and "egocentricity" that overly optimistic application of the language

[108] Bennett, *Social Salvation*, 90; see also *Social Salvation*, 91,
[109] Bennett, *Christian Realism*, 70.
[110] The Holy See and the World Council of Churches established the Committee on Society, Development and Peace (SODEPAX), which called together 29 Protestant and Catholic theologians for a conference in Cartigny, Switzerland in November, 1969. The meeting in Cartigny, Switzerland, offered a range of scholarly reflections that attempted to interpret the narrative of development in light of Christian theology.

of Kingdom risked losing. As he stated, "I still think that our expectations for human history are precarious." This cautionary, and perhaps prophetic, note was nearly lost, however, in Bennett's overall enthusiastic appraisal of development:

> I believe that theologians today should state their view of God's sovereignty in such a way that there can be no misunderstanding of the responsibility of men for the nature of their societies, for social planning, and for political action favorable to development.[111]

Development, as ambiguous as its results may be, remained a moral demand upon Christians. Bennett based this demand in the debt owed by rich nations that have exploited the poorer nations as well as the sheer level of inequality in a world where billions are hungry.[112]

As Bennett summarized, the "theological issue" with development, ""is how we ground this obligation" to develop.[113] By emphasizing ethics and the practical theological questions that pertain to the realities of human need, Bennett followed in the Social Gospel tradition and offered a missionary theology that primarily motivated the work of Christian development. Mission theology became a practical theology grounded in the ethical obligation to transform society.[114] Mission theology receded to the role of providing the moral obligation for social action. This theological move becomes intelligible in light of Bennett's assertion of the goodness of creation and the promises of secular experts. Although aware of the realities of human sin, Bennett remained confident in the possibilities for development's success. Theologically framed in terms of the "essential goodness of creation," Bennett asserted "openness to secular expertise in

[111] Bennett, "Opening Address," 4.
[112] Bennett, "Opening Address," 9.
[113] Bennett, "Opening Address," 9.
[114] On the practical emphasis in the Social Gospel, see Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, 40, 150-151.

science, of secular vocations at every point in the process of development, of secular politics as the necessary process of decision-making."[115] As he boldly claimed, "Theology, however it understands the ambiguity of man's use of creation, should not put a damper on the inventiveness of man as he seeks to find new ways to deliver peoples from economic poverty and from rigid human traditions which stand in the way of development."[116] Using theological claims of the goodness of creation to seek the wisdom of secular experts and secular politics, Bennett anticipated a prevailing characteristic of Christian development in the subsequent decades in relegating theology to the task of motivating development.

The promises of science and technology made the eradication of poverty through development seem like a historical possibility. It was a possibility that would be carried out by professionals trained in the application of science and technology. This possibility, however, required the moral will to motivate the cause. Motivating development became the primary function of theologies of development.

Conclusion

In the years following World War II, development emerged as the application of Christian love of neighbor on a global scale. Christians began to interpret both national and Christian mission in terms of a response to the needs caused initially by warfare and subsequently by the lack of development. The needs of Europe during and after the war had been well known. The war disrupted food production and limited clothing and

[115] Bennett, "Opening Address," 6. This perspective continued in the tradition of Rauschenbusch's enthusiasm for the promises of the social sciences. See Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 194-195.
[116] Bennett, "Opening Address," 6.

medicine. Relief could therefore aim at providing for these needs until Europe was back on its feet. For the majority of the world's poor, however, how to respond to their needs was far less clear, for it was not simply a question of meeting basic needs in the interim until those countries were back on their feet. Rather, poorer countries suffered from a different kind of poverty, and Christians – along with the rest of the nation – were slowly learning how to address these needs. Development provided a theory and practice to move poorer nations along the path to wealth. The vision of development promised a future for the poorer nations that looked like that of the richer nations of the North Atlantic, in which the ideals of freedom and equality were expressed in democratic forms of governance and in which the advances in education, science, and health would be shared globally. Unlike the extractive colonial models, development promised to reverse the flow of goods and services. Rather than taking resources from colonial subjects, development promised to supply the poorer nations with the resources they lacked: the technology and knowledge that would help to jumpstart their path to development.

Christian development extended many of the insights and practices of the Social Gospel to the field of foreign missions: the emphasis on a universal ethic as the center of Christian mission, the conviction that Christian ethics had a social mission to transform society in accordance with the ideals of the kingdom of God, a desire to broaden Christian mission beyond the confines of the church and professional ministers, and an emphasis on practical theology. For Christian development, these theological foundations merged with an increasing realism that would be held in tension through the formative years of Christian development. Whereas the Social Gospel had emphasized the promises of human progress, Reinhold Niebuhr and the horrors of World War II

tempered this enthusiasm. At the same time, however, Niebuhr's rejection of the Social Gospel contained an even more resolute embrace of the United States of America and its ideals. Motivated more by fear of Soviet Communism and the threat of more unjust forms of political economy than the Social Gospel's desire for all nations to participate in the universal ideals of the Kingdom of God, the difference in practice amounted to little. Christians in the United States retained a moral obligation to intervene globally to ward off the imperialism of the Soviet Union and to offer assistance to poorer nations.

Foreign missions, which had been in a state of crisis, found new life and purpose in Christian development. Ethics, as a foundation for Christian mission, evaded the more controversial aspects of mission as evangelism that focused on proclamation and conversion. Whether in relation to non-Christian peoples or, as in the case of Latin America, predominantly Roman Catholic peoples, ethics offered a rationale for foreign missions that did not directly attack the questions of belief and faith of host populations. The universalism of the ethical ideals of U.S. Christians could be shared by Roman Catholics and non-Christians, while avoiding the allegations of "religious imperialism" in regard to non-Christian as well as national churches. Development claimed universality based not in the speculative doctrines of religion but in the historical progression of the human race. As representatives of the most developed country in the world, U.S. Christians found new authority in matters of science and technology, an authority that appeared beyond doubt. In matters of politics, economics, and society, the United States was the most advanced in terms of development.

These matters of social intervention exceeded the wisdom of those in the professional ministry. As the missionary ideal of Christianity shifted to ethics, however,

mission theology became a theology oriented toward practical concerns of human needs that sought to motivate the social interventions deemed appropriate by development professionals trained in the appropriate sciences (agriculture, public health, education, government, etc.). This transition was aided by the decreasing authority given to the church, which stood under the same ethical universalism as all sectors of society. Since these ethical ideals should permeate all professions, the value of professional ministers in the mission field diminished for Christian relief and development organizations, while the technical expertise of development professionals ascended in importance.

CHAPTER IV

A HAND UP NOT A HAND OUT: THE MATURATION OF CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENT

By the end of the 1960s, the colonial legacy that Christians had hoped to leave behind began to return in development, and development's ability to offer an alternative foreign missionary presence for U.S. Christians seemed in doubt. As national mission, development had been a failure. As Christian mission, development began to face challenges from liberation and evangelical theologians. As professional organizations, development matured in response to internal and external criticisms. In this process of maturation, Christian development recognized that the emphasis on teaching and the transferal of technology that characterized early development practice proved insufficient to meet the challenges of poorer communities. Development's success, it was believed, required greater incorporation of target communities into the development process. Acknowledging that development could not be imposed externally, Christian development increasingly emphasized the participation of underdeveloped communities in the development process and returned greater responsibility for development to the underdeveloped communities themselves.

At the same time, Christian development increasingly embraced a greater degree of realism regarding development's possibilities, conceding much of the idealism that had characterized early development enthusiasm. This greater realism emphasized opportunities and possibilities for poorer individuals and communities that could find success in an increasingly global market through the "hand up" provided by the Christian

development organization. Micro-enterprise and fair trade production increasingly ascended in importance. Education, in this context, required broader training in how to orient oneself for the global economy in order to make good on the opportunities provided by development initiatives. This aspect of development created a niche for Christian development organizations, which possessed the financial and personnel resources to work at the local levels encouraging such changes.

Theological reflections on development also broadened as development matured. Liberation and evangelical theologians began to engage in conversations on development that challenged some of the earlier theologies that had been inspired by the Social Gospel. Attuned increasingly to Christians living in the "underdeveloped" world, liberation and evangelical theologies began a much more fundamental shift in mission theology that invited Christians in the U.S. to listen to the reflections and experiences of an increasingly global Christianity. These theologies also began to challenge the standards of living of U.S. Christians and to issue calls for living simply and rejecting the materialism of U.S. life. In so doing, these theological voices issued theological challenges toward a historically paternalistic sending church that should have radically challenged some of the foundations of development. At the very least, these criticisms called into question the extent to which development had been successful at leaving behind the colonial imprint of Christian foreign missions.

The Failures of Early Development

By the end of the 1960s, the early promises of development had already given way to impressive failures. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress failed to convince the elite

in Latin America to yield some of their privilege and wealth to make development work at the levels of government and national policy, and local initiatives by development organizations fared little better. Development professionals gradually recognized that early initiatives had retained too much paternalism in trying to dictate the changes necessary for development's success.

At the national and international levels, the prominent role that government had assumed under Keynesian economics for the provision of social services began to give way to market-based solutions. Government, it was argued, had failed miserably when it had tried to intervene in the economy and coordinate growth. Through the course of the 1970s and 1980s, the idealism of Kennedy's Alliance for Progress yielded to a greater faith in market mechanisms to bring about social and economic progress. Success in the global political economy depended on one's ability to adapt to the demands of the market. Perhaps best encapsulated in the "trade not aid" slogan, the prevailing logic began to assume that less assistance and less government involvement is best. Those who truly care about the poor will help by ensuring the efficient functioning of the market, which means eliminating protectionist measures, limiting labor and environmental regulations, decreasing government oversight of public utilities, and reducing government expenditure on social services. These trends have shifted responsibility for providing the social, political, and economic services necessary for success in the market to private philanthropic organizations. Christian development organizations have accepted this role and have focused their development practices in a way that accords well with these trends.

At the local level, similar shifts in logic and practice have also occurred. Development interventions at the local level mirrored the paternalism of governments at the international levels. As foreign development experts intervened in local economies, they largely ignored the desires, knowledge, and social systems of those societies. This attitude resulted in countless small failures, well illustrated in the following story:

> Development experts entered a rural community and saw the need for latrines to improve public health. With no latrines the community members were polluting their water sources and spreading diseases. In response to this need, development professionals constructed very nice latrines for the community. When they returned after a significant amount of time, they were surprised that the latrines they had constructed were still like new. As it turned out, the community had been using them not for their intended purpose but for storage.[117]

The obvious moral of the story was that without community participation, the intervention had failed. Community members did not need – or at least did not believe that they needed – latrines; they needed storage buildings. The building of latrines had failed to involve the community in the development process, so that the community did not understand why they needed latrines; likewise, the development agency did not understand the community's need for storage. This story illustrates anecdotally how the development field became aware of the failures of development models that excluded project beneficiaries from the planning and implementation of development projects. Without the support of the intended beneficiaries, these projects often met with unintended if not disastrous consequences, or at least the waste of a tremendous amount of resources.

[117] This story was told to me a number of years ago when I worked for a Christian development organization in Honduras. I confess that I am not sure if this falls into the category of common lore, an actual account witnessed by the teller, or if this story originally appeared in another published work. It was told to me in the manner of a proverb, and, as most organizations probably have similar stories to tell, I will consider it along the lines of a proverb, since no citation is possible.

The failure of the development professionals in this story had been the lack of involvement of local project beneficiaries in the development process. The simple provision of a needed technology was insufficient if local beneficiaries did not understand or desire the technology in the first place. The emerging wisdom claimed that a development initiative was far more likely to succeed if the beneficiaries of the project desired the intervention and were committed to seeing it through. The voices of project beneficiaries needed to be acknowledged and incorporated into the development process.

The Turn to Participation

The turn to participation in development discourse and practice attempted to overcome the paternalism that had characterized earlier development interventions. The failure of those types of interventions – such as the latrines used as storage facilities – suggested the need for alternative strategies for working in underdeveloped communities. The poor, it was thought, needed to be better educated in their needs for new technologies and they needed to claim ownership of those technologies. Participation, therefore, became a more general approach to development as well as a set of practices in the development process that aimed both to overcome paternalism and to incorporate more fully the project beneficiaries into the development process.

Development projects that did not bring the project beneficiaries into the process simply did not work. As Wayne Bragg noted, "The best-laid plans of 'developers' have been wrecked by a top-down approach rather than participation by those involved. Local initiative and control from the beginning of any project are essential for people to 'own'

the programme and carry it forward."[118] Participation of the project beneficiaries would help development organizations avert the missteps of top-down approaches by encouraging a sense of ownership in the project at the community level. Most Christian development organizations embraced such an approach to development, or at least have used similar language to characterize their work. While the specific practices vary, ranging from planning and decision-making tools used in the field to models of partnership at the organizational level, the language invoked to characterize their work has been remarkably consistent. World Vision's Bryant Myers, in one of the more influential recent books on Christian development, attested to the importance of community participation. As he claimed,

> If the development story belongs to the community, then local participation is demanded as an acknowledgement of this fact. If poverty is in part a reflection of the marred identity of the poor, then participation is essential to any effort to restore their identity. If we agree that there are already resources within the community, then participation is the logical means by which this knowledge can be discovered and can become part of the development process. If we have the humility to know that we do not know enough to do someone else's development for them, the seeking local participation is the only safeguard against our doing unwitting damage. By any measure, local participation is a critical success factor for transformational development.[119]

Myers weaved together both the moral and strategic rationale for the turn to participation. The failure of early development to include the poor themselves in the development process signaled not only a moral failure but a practical failure for development interventions. Myers commendably noted the need for humility and recognizes the resources and wisdom in communities. These virtues had been notably absent from earlier development initiatives that relied exclusively on the technical knowledge of development experts. The involvement of the poor in the development process became,

[118] Bragg, "Beyond Development to Transformation," 162.
[119] Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 147.

as he stated, a "critical success factor." By focusing more attention on the gifts, resources, and desires of local communities and individuals, participation seemed to offer an alternative to the paternalism that characterized earlier interventions and raised concerns that Christian development agencies were "playing God" in the lives of impoverished communities and keeping them dependent on foreign handouts.

The turn to participation also reflected a growing realism regarding the possibility for development's success. With early Christian development, the possibility of eradicating poverty seemed genuinely possible. In many ways, this early enthusiasm recalled the earlier evangelical optimism of "the evangelization of the world in this generation." In place of "evangelization," Christian development seemed to initially believe that the "development of the world in this generation" was possible. The failures to do so created a new crisis in Christian mission and development. Early development had remained too paternalistic, believing that powerful governments working alongside non-governmental organizations could enforce development on the world's poor. Just as evangelization had long since realized that conversion was not the responsibility of the evangelist but was a matter between the individual and God, development slowly began to make a similar realization.

The burden for development's success could not fall entirely on those governments and organizations that were implementing development projects throughout the underdeveloped world. Rather, the poor themselves needed to become active participants in the development process. The responsibility for development's success gradually shifted from the developed world to a shared responsibility between the developed and underdeveloped world. What the developed world and its organizations

could provide were the skills and the opportunities for development success to take place. For their part, the poor were asked to participate in the development process and to take advantage of the opportunities for success. Development required initiative and effort on the part of those who were poor.

The global economy, for the rich and for the poor, was envisioned to be a place of opportunity where those with the entrepreneurial talent and necessary resources could succeed. The poor needed ultimately to figure out how to achieve success, and the failure to do so would reflect unfavorably not on the model of development, the failure of the state, or the global economy, but the failure of the individuals and communities to take advantage of the opportunities that they had been generously given. Christian development organizations, therefore, began to intervene in the lives of the poor by providing the training and institutions that complemented the contemporary political economy. Whether in the form of financing, computer classrooms, or market access, individuals – and occasionally communities – have been given opportunities to help themselves. As World Relief boldly proclaimed, "It's the difference between a hand up and a handout."[120] Freely giving to the poor not only would reward their lack of virtue – whether in terms of entrepreneurial talent or work ethic – it would prevent them from cultivating the necessary virtues to thrive in the long term. This logic extended "teach a man to fish" to encompass the moral hazards of giving a man a fish. It was not just that "a man" is fed for one day only, but that he also loses the capacity to survive on his own.

The most that could be hoped for development was an opportunity for success in the global economy. This realism encouraged a shift in development practices that oriented development interventions to the realities of the global economy. Micro-

[120] World Relief, "Microfinance."

enterprise and micro-credit initiatives created new options for entrepreneurs unable to attain financing in traditional banking institutions. Through small loans and business training, Christian development encouraged small business owners in such enterprises as tortilla making, garment work, fruit juice stands, a day care center, and small restaurants. Other development interventions have followed a parallel course to that of micro-credit. At times related to micro-enterprise, fair trade initiatives began to encourage production of artisan goods and agricultural products, such as coffee, tea, and cocoa. Fair trade initiatives sought to create a market for goods in which the producers are paid a fair wage in contrast to the low wages traditionally paid. Even more traditional missionary and development practices, such as the support of education, have shifted in recognition of the need to educate students to be competitive in a global labor market.

Theologies of Development: Liberation and Evangelical Perspectives

The previous chapter focused on the emergence of Christian theologies of development out of the more liberal Social Gospel tradition in U.S. Protestantism. In the late 1960s and 1970s, however, other theological voices began to offer competing perspectives on Christian development. Liberation theology challenged some of the fundamental assumptions of development and contributed to the growing recognition of development's paternalism, while evangelical theologians increasingly recognized the importance of social action for their theologies of mission.

At the conference on development during which John C. Bennett offered the opening address, critical theological voices already began to point to the flaws of development from a Christian perspective. In fact, the 1969 SODEPAX conference is

generally remembered far more for these critical voices than the theologies of development that were offered. At this conference, two papers – by Gustavo Gutierrez and Rubem Alves – called for liberation rather than development. Gutierrez's paper was a draft of the main arguments of *A Theology of Liberation*. Gutierrez contributed several important insights toward theological reflection on development and generated the first sustained theological critique of development rooted in a structural analysis of the global economy. By offering liberation as an alternative to development, Gutierrez claimed that development was marked by a reformist agenda in the midst of a political economy that needed a more radical reorganization of society. Theologically, liberation was able to encompass social, cultural, and spiritual considerations in a way that development language was unable to do.

For Gutierrez and many other liberation theologians, the poverty in Latin America was not due to their pre-capitalist economy that needed to become more like that of the developed world. Rather, Latin American poverty had been actively caused by the development of Europe and the United States. The development of some countries had come at the expense of others. Gutierrez, in *A Theology of Liberation*, wrote,

> The underdevelopment of the poor countries, as an overall social fact, appears in its true light: as the historical by-product of the development of other countries. The dynamics of the capitalist economy lead to the establishment of a center and a periphery, simultaneously generating progress and growing wealth for the few and social imbalances, political tensions, and poverty for the many.[121]

In the logic of early liberation writings, a preferential option for the poor necessarily meant a rejection of the capitalist system that actively created and sustained that poverty. As the Boff brothers claimed, "[T]oday, in most cases, widespread poverty is maintained by the capitalist system that derives cheap labor from it; this prevents a region or people

[121] Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 51.

from being developed, excluding them from minimal human advancement."[122] Early writings in liberation theology could assume that the theological articulations of a "preferential option for the poor" constituted a serious indictment of the capitalist system.

Gutierrez argued that liberation and development were opposing goals. Development attempts did not reach the depths of injustice. Instead, development efforts were attempts proposed by elites to serve primarily for their own interests. He wrote, "Development should attack the causes of our plight, and among the central ones is the economic, social, political, and cultural dependence of some peoples on others. The word liberation therefore, is more accurate and conveys better the human side of the problem."[123] He reiterated this position in *A Theology of Liberation,* where he wrote, "Liberation in fact expresses the inescapable moment of radical change which is foreign to the ordinary use of the term *development."*[124] Gutierrez claimed that the development models of the West reinforced the very system that causes the poverty in Latin America. Relying on dependency theory, the alternative of liberation *from* the capitalist system was proposed against development *within* the capitalist system. Development models were at best reformist.

These criticisms of capitalism – as well as the emphasis on the Kingdom of God – resonated strongly with some of the writings of the Social Gospel, especially those of Walter Rauschenbusch. However, as noted in the previous chapter, the more radical criticisms of Rauschenbusch had been tempered by Niebuhrian realism and widespread fears of Soviet communism. As with the Social Gospel, liberation theology succeeded in directing theological attention to questions of poverty. Moreover, the emphasis on praxis

[122] Boff and Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology,* 47. Markyknoll: Orbis Books, 1986. page47.
[123] Gutierrez, "Notes for a Theology of Liberation," 247.
[124] Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 17.

as a starting point for theological reflection accorded well with the practical theological vision of the Social Gospel. For theologians such as Gutierrez, theology could not be done apart from engagement in the struggle against injustice and poverty.

At the same time, however, Gutierrez and other liberation theologians drew attention to the poor as theological subjects, not just objects of theological reflection or Christian practices of charity. This new emphasis on the agency of the poor challenged Christian missionary models that had viewed the poor primarily as recipients of Christian instruction and charity. Resonating with the earlier emphasis on the autonomy of "younger churches," liberation theology sought to create space for the theological insights of the poor. For Christian development, the agency of the poor demanded the kind of changed method for engaging the poor promised by more participatory models of development.

The social analytical tools used by many liberation theologians frequently drew on the Marxist tradition, drawing suspicion and opposition in both Rome and among some U.S. theologians. Over time, the social scientific theories – especially dependency theory – that inspired liberation theology's political economy began to lose credibility. Socialism began to look increasingly less viable in Latin America such that by the time of the fall of the Soviet Union, liberation as a politico-economic option seemed increasingly less plausible.

Liberation theology had succeeded in raising the profile of questions of poverty from a global perspective, and this success demanded a response from theologians living in the so-called developed world. Even as the social option desired by liberation theologians became seemingly less viable, the theological claims regarding the centrality

of poverty in the Old and New Testaments found much broader acceptance. As socialism ceased to be a seemingly viable historical alternative, theologies of development found renewed inspiration in the theological insights of liberation theology. Initially challenged by liberation theology's focus on the poor, theologians in the wealthier countries began to claim this focus for their own political and economic systems. With the apparent failure of Marxism, development modeled on the success of Western capitalism emerged as the sole option for the poor.

By and large, evangelicals had been slow to take up the causes of social change and social action. Although evangelicals had been at the forefront of Christian development from the beginning, they lacked widespread endorsement and theological reflection on this expression of Christian mission.[125] Evangelicals generally explained their lack of attention to social action in terms of an over-reaction to the excesses, "heresy," and "perversion" of the Social Gospel. In an attempt to distance themselves from the liberalism of the Social Gospel, evangelicals denied the centrality of social action for Christian mission.[126] For evangelicals, the Social Gospel had replaced eschatology and salvation with a temporal humanism that located salvation in the here and now while losing sight of the matters of personal faith and conversion in relation to a God beyond the material realm.[127] From the 1970s onward, however, the concern for the

[125] World Relief began as War Relief in 1944. World Vision was founded in 1953, Compassion International was founded in 1952, and Opportunity International was founded in 1971.
[126] International Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility, "Lausanne Occasional Paper 21: Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment," paragraph 15; see also Wagner, "A Missiological View of Christian Relief and Development." Wagner writes, "We [evangelicals] were battling against liberalism, against postmillennialism, against evolution, against Freudian psychology, against naturalism, against humanism – all of which could be more or less summed up in the tern 'the social gospel.'"
[127] See Linda Smith, "Recent Historical Perspective of the Evangelical Tradition," 25. She writes, "As a backlash against liberalism, the inheritors of the evangelical tradition went into a period of retreat and separatism which had a profound impact on their social concern. It resulted in what has been called the

poor and the quest for development were taken up in significant and lasting ways by evangelical Christians in both the United States and abroad. Evangelicals reclaimed the importance of social action while maintaining their disapproval of the Social Gospel and theological liberalism.

The return of social action to the missionary theologies of evangelicals came, at least in part, through the increased participation of global evangelicals in the dialogue on world mission. Perhaps the most significant event in the evolution of evangelical theologies of development was the 1974 International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne.[128] In preparatory papers for this meeting, Rene Padilla and Samuel Escobar offered perspectives on evangelical mission that raised forcefully the relationship between evangelism and social change from a global perspective.[129] One of the most remarkable aspects of Lausanne was the extent of global representation, which gave greater voice to those countries that had historically hosted foreign missions. In many ways, Lausanne represented the growing recognition of the independence of national churches and paralleled moves made by the ecumenical IMC decades earlier. As such, it created a forum in which evangelicals living in societies marked by great inequality could articulate an evangelical social ethic. In moving beyond the paternalism of foreign missions, Lausanne became the forum for a reevaluation of evangelical mission theology

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'Great Reversal'." Wayne Bragg and Peter Wagner echo this sentiment. Bragg writes, "The dichotomy between evangelism and social action has characterized America's evangelical church since the liberal-fundamentalist split at the turn of the century, and only recently has there been a rapport between evangelism and social concern resulting from serious reflection" (Bragg, "Theological Reflections on Assisting the Vulnerable," 71).

[128] Linda Smith, Peter Wagner, Edgar Elliston, Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden all point to the significance of the Lausanne Conference: Smith, "Recent Historical Perspectives of the Evangelical Tradition;" Wagner, "A Missiological View of Christian Relief and Development;" and Sugden and Samuel, "Toward a Theology of Social Change." See also, Bryant Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 13.

[129] Padilla, "Evangelism and the World;" Escobar, Samuel Escobar, "Evangelism and Man's Search for Freedom, Justice and Fulfillment;" see also Samuel and Sugden, "Theology of Development: A Guide to the Debate."

that created a greater space for social action and development as integral to Christian mission. Global evangelicals moved beyond the antagonism with the Social Gospel that concerned U.S. evangelicals and retrieved the importance of social action for faithful Christian mission. In his paper, Padilla maintained an emphasis on individual salvation that had been characteristic of evangelical theology. As he argued, however, this individual salvation could not be understood in isolation, particularly with regard to sin. He reasoned, "The individualistic concept of redemption is the logical consequence of an individualistic concept of sin." Rejecting such a concept of sin, Padilla stated, "[M]an's problem in the world is not simply that he commits isolated sins or gives in to the temptation of particular vices. It is, rather, that he is imprisoned within a closed system of rebellion against God."[130] Escobar wrote along similar lines,

> The sinfulness of man is visible in the way every dimension of his life has been distorted from the original design of the Creator. Oppression and injustice, as they become visible in the structures of community life and nations, are the results of disobedience to God and idolatry. When men turn to God and are transformed by the Spirit, their individual lives as well as the structures in which they live are affected.[131]

In this way, Padilla and Escobar both retained traditional evangelical concern for man's sinfulness, yet rejected understandings of sinfulness that did not account for the social sins of injustice and oppression. Just as these were sinful structures, repentance would also have a bearing on these structures. Repentance, understood in the biblical sense, must bear "fruit."[132]

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[130] Padilla, "Evangelism and the World," page 120.
[131] Escobar, "Evangelism and Man's Search for Freedom, Justice, and Fulfillment," page 309.
[132] Escobar, "Evangelism and Man's Search for Freedom, Justice, and Fulfillment," page 310: "The temptation for evangelicals today is to reduce the Gospel, to mutilate it, to eliminate any demands for the fruit of repentance and any demands for the fruit of repentance and any aspect that would make it unpalatable to a nominally Christian society, even any demands that would make it unpalatable to an idolatrous society." See also Padilla, "Evangelism and the World," pages 127-129, where he outlines the relationship between "evangelism and repentance ethics."

In recognition of human sinfulness, however, Padilla and Escobar both attended to the limitations for the fruit of repentance. The church must wait "for the consummation of God's plan to place all things under the rule of Christ."[133] Acknowledging past failures and rejecting utopian visions, Escobar claimed that Christians will live in expectation of "the new earth and new heaven that Christ will bring in a definitive way when he comes again." Triumph over sinfulness remained an eschatological hope rather than a historical possibility for humans. He continued, "Consequently, though faithfulness to Christ demands from Christian individuals and churches service and involvement in the good of other fellow human beings, Christians know that perfection never comes completely before Christ's return."[134] Maintaining this emphasis on human sinfulness and a realistic appraisal of historical possibilities balanced the call to social action and guarded against overly optimistic appraisals of that action and the possibilities of humans to see it through.

These tentative steps into the broadening of evangelical mission into the sphere of social sin would continue to be refined in the coming decades. Rene Padilla and Samuel Escobar were but two of the many participants in the International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne. Their views as well as those of many others were taken into consideration in drafting the Lausanne Covenant. In this document, the emphasis on social responsibility was retained and given a lasting formulation that would guide subsequent conversations on evangelism and social action. The fifth paragraph of the Lausanne Covenant was entitled "Christian Social Responsibility." It read as follows:

> We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all men. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society

[133] Padilla, "Evangelism and the World," page 132.
[134] Escobar, "Evangelism and Man's Search for Freedom, Justice, and Fulfillment," page 313.

> and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression. Because men and women are made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, colour, culture, class, sex or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ they are born again unto his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead.[135]

This paragraph reaffirmed the evangelical call to social action, rooting it at the outset in a theological affirmation of God as both Creator and Judge. The language paralleled some of the key phrases of the theologies of liberation still being discussed at this time, as the Lausanne Covenant called for the "liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression" and pronounced "judgment upon every form of alienation." Liberation and alienation were particularly charged words, given the formulation of Gutierrez in offering liberation as an alternative to development. Employing these terms signaled the arrival of a competing theology of social action rooted in an evangelical theology of missions that claimed freedom from the ideological biases of liberation theologies. This choice of terms also conceded a measure of sympathy toward liberation theologians by evangelicals. Even amidst the harsh criticism of the socialism preferred by many liberation theologians, most evangelicals seemed to genuinely applaud the focus on the poor and the attention to the Bible by liberation theologians. As radical as the social

[135] International Congress on World Evangelization. "The Lausanne Covenant."

views of liberation theologians were, their use of scripture had been quite traditional. Focus on the biblical admonitions to pursue justice and righteousness, warnings to the rich, and God's concern for the poor – expressed most profoundly in the Incarnation – were hardly matters that evangelicals could dispute.

At the same time, however, this paragraph already demonstrated caution in assuring that the social action of evangelicals would not usurp the call for evangelism and reconciliation with God. In this way, evangelicals clearly renounced the separation of social action from a broader sense of Christian mission. The primacy of evangelism remained, as the following paragraph made clear: "In the Church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary."[136] The Lausanne Covenant challenged those Christians who believed that social action could be equated fully with Christian mission. Articulating the relationship between mission theology and a theology of social action would be the trademark of subsequent evangelical theologies of development. The most original and influential way that this would be done was already anticipated in paragraph five of the Lausanne Covenant: "The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities." By the mid-1980s, the language of transformation that was anticipated here became central to evangelical theologies of development.

After the 1974 Lausanne Congress, a number of significant publications and meetings followed. In 1977, Ron Sider published his highly influential *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*. Sider echoed Padilla and Escobar in their attention to structural sins. [137] Sider offered a compelling account of the biblical significance of poverty and

[136] International Congress on World Evangelization. "The Lausanne Covenant."
[137] Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, 108.

wealth, as well as an analysis of poverty and wealth in the contemporary global context. Sider maintained an emphasis on God's concern for the poor that echoed earlier liberation theologies:

> God, however, is not neutral. His freedom from bias does not mean that he maintains neutrality in the struggle for justice. The Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches that God is at work in history and exalting the poor and casting down the rich who got that way by oppressing or neglecting the poor. In that sense, God is on the side of the poor. He has a special concern for them because of their vulnerability.[138]

Sider drew attention to the Biblical significance of poverty and the relationship between God and the poor. In so doing, he followed in the footsteps of Gutierrez and others, emphasizing that God is "on the side of the poor" and that God has a "special concern" for the poor.

Sider, in writing primarily to an audience in the U.S., made a significant advance to ongoing conversations on poverty and development that was evident in the title of the book itself. By drawing attention to "rich Christians," Sider diverged from theologies of development that had focused almost exclusively on the question of poverty. Echoing the concerns of liberation theology, Sider drew attention to "evil social structures" and "structural injustice" and challenged "rich Christians" from a biblical perspective that drew attention to the ethics of over-consumption.[139] Evangelical concern, for Sider, entailed a radical critique of consumption patterns among the wealthy. As he stated,

> It is idolatrous nonsense to suggest that human fulfillment comes from an ever-increasing supply of material things. Genuine, lasting joy comes from a right relationship with God, neighbor, self, and the earth. As body-soul beings created for community, we do need significant material resources. But looking for

[138] Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, 60.
[139] Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, 108. Sider's concerns had been anticipated at the Sodepax conference. Charles Elliot, in his "An Esoteric Critique of Cartigny" wrote "one of the principal tasks facing not only theologians and sociologists but all thinking men is to develop an adequate framework for a critique of the mass consumption society based on various forms of capitalism."

> happiness in ever-expanding material wealth is both theologically heretical and environmentally destructive. It also hardens our hearts to the cries of the poor.[140]

Sider directed attention to the questions of human fulfillment and joy that were assumed to flow from increased material wealth. Without denying the need for some measure of material resources, Sider challenged the notion that increased material goods would lead to greater human fulfillment. This challenge was rooted in Christian theological commitments to right relationships. Increased wealth told nothing of the way one relates, or the quality of those relationships, with God, one's neighbor, oneself, or the world. For Christians, the good life must include an account of these relationships that may look very different from accounts given by the non-Christian world.

Sider's work on these issues would continue as a participant in the 1980 International Consultation on Simple Life-style, sponsored by the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization's Theology and Education Working Group and the World Evangelical Fellowship's Theological Commission's Unit on Ethics and Society. The paper that emerged from this meeting followed through on earlier critiques of mass consumption in Western societies. In so doing, this paper addressed both the concerns for the environment as well as the moral lives of Christians in the Western world.[141] As it stated,

> The least we should agree to is a serious curtailment or redirection of growth in the Western World, which is in any case choking the West with a surfeit of goods, services and waste. What will be the results of unfaithful stewardship? If we fail because of our unlimited exploitation to conserve the earth's finite resources; if we fail to develop them fully in underdeveloped countries to enable to them the enjoy the goods and services we have enjoyed for generations; and if we fail to

[140] Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, 238.
[141] International Consultation on Simple Life-style. "Lausanne Occasional Paper 20: An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Life-style." "Instead, Western Christians should be asking radical question from the viewpoint of less developed countries…Will accelerated economic growth place an intolerable burden on the earth's entire ecosystem and cause irreversible damage to the entire human environment?"[141]

> distribute justly our over-supply; then we will fall under the same judgment as the nations in the early chapters of Amos.[142]

While the call for development remained clear, it was couched between a critique of the over-consumption of developed countries and a concern for distribution. Development would only become a moral act for Christians when undertaken as a broader mission of simple living and just distribution.

The emphasis on simple living drew on biblical teachings as well as understandings of the Incarnation, in which God chose to become incarnate among the poor, rather than as one rich and powerful.[143] Particularly when examined in the context of global poverty, the consumption patterns of the developed world invited accusations of greed and materialism that risked idolatry. This emphasis on idolatry echoed Sider's earlier work and placed evangelicals on a parallel theological track as liberation theology in the 1980s.[144]

In addition to challenging the consumption patterns of those in the developed world, the paper "Evangelical Commitment to Simple Life-Style" also addressed the question of international development, praising the transition that had taken place from aid to development: "We therefore applaud the growing emphasis of Christian agencies on development rather than aid. For the transfer of personnel and appropriate technology can enable people to make good use of their own resources, while at the same time respecting their dignity."[145] Development, it was suggested, represented a move away from paternalistic interventions and allowed recipients of development assistance to

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[142] International Consultation on Simple Life-style. "Lausanne Occasional Paper 20: An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Life-style."
[143] International Consultation on Simple Life-style. "Lausanne Occasional Paper 20: An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Life-style."
[144] As, for instance, in the works of Pablo Richard and Franz Hinkelammert.
[145] "International Consultation on Simple Life-style. "Lausanne Occasional Paper 20: An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Life-style."

preserve their dignity. This sentiment was echoed and elaborated in the 1982 International Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility held in Grand Rapids Michigan. The report stated, "It is very welcome that many welfare agencies have expanded their emphasis in recent years from aid to development… It is important, therefore, to ensure that self-help programmes genuinely enable people to stand on their own feet and are not devious paternalistic ploys to reinforce dependence, even subservience."[146] Again, the concern for paternalism remained strong, as does the quest for a foreign missionary presence that escapes this legacy.

By the 1980s, evangelical reflections on social action began to focus more specifically on questions of development. In1983, Wayne Bragg first introduced the language of transformation as an alternative to development.[147] Transformation became the preferred language of evangelicals for reflecting on development. The language of transformation was employed to separate the work of Christians from the types of development interventions of governments, the World Bank, USAID, and other such institutions.[148] For Bragg, all competing theories of development contained something of value, yet they were all also distorted.[149] Bragg believed that the term development was too loaded and that it needed to be replaced by a term that evaded the negative aspects of the term development and that offered an alternative more "adequate to a Christian

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[146] International Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility. "Lausanne Occasional Paper 21: Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment."
[147] By "introduced" I mean for evangelical theologies of development. The term "transformation" had been used in both the Social Gospel and in Roman Catholicism. Yet, for evangelicals, transformation became much more of a catchphrase for describing their alternative vision of development. For a review of Bragg's initial paper at a 1983 conference at Wheaton College ("A Christian in Response to Human Need"), see Bryant Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, page 95.
[148] Elliston, Edgar. "Christian Social Transformation Distinctives," 167.
[149] Bragg, "Beyond Development to Transformation."

perspective."[150] "Transformation," Bragg argued, "is a particularly Christian concept – to take the existing reality and give it a higher dimension or purpose."[151] He continued,

> It is the change from a level of human existence that is less than that envisioned by our creator, to one in which a person is fully human and free to move to a state of wholeness in harmony with God and with every aspect of his/her environment…The human being as predator is transformed into the human being as co-creator, as steward. Social and economic relationships are changed to conform with the kingdom principles of peace, justice, and love, manifested in the people of God as community.[152]

As Bragg made clear, transformation related to Christian theological commitments regarding the nature of God and humanity. The transformation described by Bragg included social and economic relationships, but this transformation would also be ontological, as human beings become something new. The end of transformation is that state of existence envisioned by God, in which humans live in harmony with one another and with the environment. For Bragg, this transformation affects both individuals and social structures.[153]

Bragg succeeded in articulating an alternative to development that was radically dependent on theological understandings of Creation, eschatology, theological anthropology, and salvation. In many ways, Bragg's alternative reformulated the theologies of liberation without their social analysis. He correctly perceived the errors in liberation theology's reliance on dependency theories and Marxism, and, by avoiding those dangers, paved the way for a more fundamental critique of development rooted in theological commitments. By offering such a complete re-thinking of development,

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[150] Bragg, "Beyond Development to Transformation," 156.
[151] Bragg, "Beyond Development to Transformation," 157.
[152] Bragg, "Beyond Development to Transformation," 157.
[153] Bragg, "Beyond Development to Transformation," 158. "Transformation is central to the kingdom of God in which the individual transformation of people is linked with the transformation of social structures that oppress people and keep them in poverty."

Bragg simultaneously challenged some of the core assumptions of development practice. He observed, "Whereas development is a process applied to the third world, transformation is equally applicable to the western and underdeveloped worlds."[154] When compared to the theological vision of transformation that he articulates, the so-called developed societies of the West still fell short. Bragg specifically expressed concern for the levels of over-consumption in the United States.[155] While the superiority of developed countries in areas of technology and economic progress could not be questioned, Bragg directed attention to the social ills of materialism and lack of equity that permeated developed societies. He expressed openness to learning from other so-called underdeveloped societies:

> No one is self-sufficient, and certainly no society is. However, when it comes to social change and amelioration, the temptation has been for the industrial, modernized countries to assume that they have the key to success and will use it to help the world 'develop.' It is easy to forget that they can learn from the poorer countries, poorer materially but richer perhaps culturally.[156]

Bragg called into question the assumption that social and cultural development had correlated with economic and technological progress. This perspective was incomprehensible to the modernization theories that guided early development thought and practice. Rostow had no stage comparable to the transformation envisioned by Bragg. Early development assumed a far more integral view of development; as the economy develops, so do the moral, cultural, and political aspects of a civilization.

Bragg's focus on transformation would be widely embraced by Christian, particularly evangelical, development organizations. One of the more popular and influential books written in recent years about Christian development has been Bryant

[154] Bragg, "Beyond Development to Transformation," 157.
[155] Bragg, "Beyond Development to Transformation," 159.
[156] Bragg, "Beyond Development to Transformation," 162.

Myers' *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*, influenced greatly by Myers' work with World Vision.[157] Myers offered a sustained criticism of other models of development, which, he argued, too often implied a concern with material change and too often implied Westernization.[158] In contrast, for Myers, "Transformation must be about restoring relationships, just and right relationships with God, with self, with community, with the 'other,' and with the environment."[159]

Although Myers remained committed to Christian development, his book delivered some of the more incisive criticisms of development from a theological perspective rooted in experiences on the ground. Myers pointed out the missteps of earlier development practices, and, in so doing, offered a critique of development ideology from an evangelical position. While this continued the trends of evangelical theologies of development, Myers offered a particularly pointed critique of the presumptions of development experts:

> [T]he Incarnation provides a highly instructive model for how we must be willing to practice transformational development. God emptied himself of his prerogatives. Are we willing to empty ourselves of ours? Jesus did not come as a conquering, problem-solving Christ…Jesus was the God who was not able to save himself, and so he was able to save others. There are lessons here for development professionals, full of technical skill and confident of their 'good news' for the poor. Any practice of transformational development must be framed by the cross and the broken Christ.[160]

The humility that Myers emphasized radically challenges the pretensions of Christian development practice. Myers faulted Christian development for the arrogance of Christian development. By returning reflection on development to the Incarnation, in which Christ did not arrive according to Messianic expectations of a great earthly King,

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[157] Myers, Bryant. *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development.*
[158] Myers, *Walking with the Poor,* 3.
[159] Myers, *Walking with the Poor,* 36.
[160] Myers *Walking with the Poor*, 46.

Myers raised theological concerns for the expressions of power and expectations for success endemic to Christian development. Myers, much like Reinhold Niebuhr had done decades earlier, relied on Christian understandings of sin to critique human pretension directed to both the poor and the non-poor.[161] He attended to the ways in which one's class (poor or non-poor) influences worldview and issues in different types of "god-complexes." Myers critiqued the non-poor for when they "play god in the lives of other people."

The criticisms of development – lack of humility, failure to be self-critical, confidence in science and western technology, failure to incorporate the knowledge and experiences of "underdeveloped" peoples, etc. – called attention back to the crisis in mission that development had initially sought to resolve. The colonial model of mission had committed precisely these same errors in the way that Christians from the colonial centers approached those living in the colonies.

Conclusion

As development matured, criticisms of earlier development models began to acknowledge the failures of Christian mission to move fully beyond the colonial models of mission. Development had remained too paternalistic, believing too quickly in the ability of governments and development organizations to "develop" poorer communities and countries. In this paternalism, Christian development had failed to incorporate the

[161] Myers, *Walking with the Poor* , 77-89. This insight had been voiced earlier by Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden in "Toward a Theology of Social Change," 48. They write, "The church today is called to demonstrate this true power of God by learning the powerlessness and servanthood of Jesus. She should renounce worldly models of growth and success, and take the side of the socially oppressed, the poor and those who have no place in their own society. She should build relationships and structures in her own life and practice which challenge the prevailing injustices in the society around her. The church should also be engaged in promoting those structures in society which attempt to bring just relationships, and should be engaged in evangelism to share Jesus Christ as the one who makes them possible."

"underdeveloped" into the development process. The underdeveloped remained passive recipients of the technology and knowledge of the development experts. The emerging development wisdom sought to correct this paternalism through an emphasis on participation. Participation accorded well with the newfound realism of Christian development's possibilities, as participation began to shift the burden of development to the "underdeveloped." As part of the development process, participation came to have both moral and practical significance. It invited individuals, communities, and their experiences into the development process. As such, participation acknowledged some measure of humility on the part of development experts. Practically, participation invited individuals and communities to take greater ownership of the development process, thereby aiding in the success of development interventions.

In addition to its moral and practical significance, participation came to have both economic and theological connotations. Economically, participation reflected the way in which individuals and communities were invited to participate in an increasingly global economy. Through development initiatives that encouraged production for the global economy – whether in the form of micro-enterprise, fair trade production of handcrafts or agriculture, or education aimed toward competition in a global labor market – development meant participation in global systems of production and consumption.

Theologically, participation reflected the increasingly global nature of the church and the growing recognition for the autonomy of national churches in former colonial territories. Liberation and evangelical theologians from the "underdeveloped" countries began to assert their theological voices in ways that challenged the missiological assumptions of European and U.S. Christians.

Liberation theologians called attention to poverty and the poor in ways that challenged deeply the assumptions of Christian mission. By offering the poor a seat at the table of theological reflection, liberation theology called to account missionary models that viewed the poor as passive recipients of mission, whether in terms of theological or technological instruction. While the critiques of capitalism failed to garner widespread support, liberation theology renewed commitment to the issues of poverty in the underdeveloped countries of the world.

Evangelicals challenged the reduction of Christian mission to social action, while also directing attention to the idolatry and greed of materialism in the United States. In this way, the Gospel message of Christian mission had implications for those Christians living in the so-called "developed" world. If development had initially taken the Social Gospel globally, evangelical and liberation theologies called it back home. Once the concern for ethics and political economy found its way into Christian mission, evangelicals and liberationist recognized the implications could not be limited to the "foreign" mission field.

In the writings of Myers, Sider, and Bragg, evangelicals offered an incisive critique of Christian development and the ways that development had failed to deliver on its solution to the crisis in Christian mission. By emphasizing the pervasiveness of human sin, evangelicals – much like Christian realists – challenged the arrogance of Western civilization. Whereas early development theories celebrated the achievements of the United States, evangelicals brought materialism, greed, confidence in technology, and other assumptions of life in the United States under theological scrutiny. The awareness of human sin and the increasingly global sense of mission also directed

missionary attention back toward the United States. Evangelicals found in the language of transformation a universal missionary calling with truly global implications. In its earliest days, development had retained the foreign mission paradigm as the missionary actions of Christians in foreign lands. Evangelicals helped to bring this model under scrutiny by emphasizing (1) the global nature of evangelicalism, and (2) the global failure to live according to God's will.

The pervasiveness of human sin also tempered the prospects for development's success; there was no utopia on the other side of Christian development. The increasing recognition of the realities of human sin meant that there was no utopia on the other side of development. Only some would succeed. The ones who would succeed in a fallen world would be the ones able to take advantage of a "hand up." Those were the ones to whom Christian development should turn its attention. Christian development as mission could promote the opportunity for social salvation to all living in the underdeveloped world, but only those who were willing to participate and demonstrate the entrepreneurial talent to succeed would find this salvation. Whereas development emerged as alternative to colonial models of mission, early development believed that this alternative required assuming the burden for the development of poorer communities. As this proved to be practically impossible, development increasingly came to believe that this alternative continued the paternalism of colonial mission. A truer resolution of the crisis of Christian mission required creating the opportunities for development.

CHAPTER V

LOVE FOR THE POOR, LOVE FOR DEVELOPMENT: THE THEOLOGICAL CRISIS OF CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENT

The critical voices examined in the previous chapter sought to redirect Christian development in light of its initial economic, social, and theological failures. As penetrating as some of the criticisms offered by theologians such as Gutierrez, Bragg, Sider, and Myers may have been, Christian development emerged from this time of maturation relatively unscathed, as these criticisms were absorbed into Christian development as innovations in development thinking. The practices and theories that were intended to correct the paternalism and failures of early Christian development achieved precisely the opposite by involving Christian development in greater levels of cultural penetration. In so doing, Christian mission moved farther from the concerns of colonialism and imperialism that had initially prompted – at least in part – Christian development as an alternative foreign missionary practice. Rather, the shifting emphases in Christian development paralleled shifting dynamics in the global political economy marked by an increasing faith in the workings of the market to spur the kind of development initially sought through government intervention. The intention of Christian development to encourage adaptation to the global economy revealed the persistent biases of colonial missionary paradigms.

The theological criticisms of development also suffered from their own shortcomings. With the emergence of liberation and evangelical theologies of development, the significance of Christian mission for society frequently became reduced

to weighing in on the global Cold War between capitalism and communism and offering a moral assessment of these competing systems of political economy. In this discursive framework, the most prophetic insights of liberation and evangelical theologians were muted or absorbed within development discourse and practice. Equally as significant, the practical theological model that had been useful in motivating response to the demonstrable human needs caused by war became increasingly less suitable to sustaining a missionary identity. A theology of mission that motivated the work to be carried out by development professionals restricted theology too much in the midst of complex needs and the diversity of possible interventions to respond to those needs.

Christian development demonstrated a remarkable capacity to absorb the critical voices levied against earlier models of Christian development and to emerge from these criticisms with an even greater assurance of its global mission. Christians today continue to direct an enormous amount of resources toward the development cause impacting communities across the globe as well as communities of Christians in the United States. In 2007, World Vision, the largest of Christian development organizations, received $957 million in revenue, and spent $977 million.[162] Samaritan's Purse spent over $250 million; Church World Service more than $77 million; Lutheran World Relief more than $34 million; and Episcopal Relief and Development more than $29 million.[163] These seven organizations – a fraction of the organizations involved in development – spent nearly $1.5 billion in the years 2006-2007. According to the United States Agency for International Development, Private Voluntary Organizations (which includes both

[162] World Vision, "Financial Accountability."
[163]Samaritan's Purse, "2007 Consolidated Financial Statements;" Church World Service, "Annual Report 2007;" Lutheran World Relief, "2006 Annual Report;"
Episcopal Relief and Development, "Annual Summary, 2007."

Christian and non-Christians organizations) spent more than $20 billion in FY 2005, with more than $12 billion expended on overseas programs.[164] These figures indicate the vast amount of resources that are flowing from the United States to other societies in an effort to bring about development.

Development Absorbs Critique

Two of the most potent Christian criticisms of development – liberation and transformation – became incorporated into development discourse and practice. The critical function of these Christian responses to development became constructive of new innovations in development. Liberation theology, once divorced from its critique of capitalism and the relationship between wealth and poverty, served development as a theology motivating action toward the poor. Evangelical alternatives, such as Wayne Bragg's understanding of transformation, became descriptive of new trends in Christian development rather than alternatives to thinking about development. For instance, Bryant Myers, while retaining much of Bragg's criticism, also reframed transformation as a type of development. In *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*, Myers embraced the language of transformation, but he used this language to describe a particular way of doing development.[165] Transformation, rather than standing on its own, became reabsorbed by the practices and discourse of development.

Part of the failure of these criticisms of development can be attributed to some of the basic assumptions at the heart of Christian development. In a sense, Christian development began on a series of principles that seemed to make it immune to the kind of

[164] United States Agency for International Development, "2007 VOLAG."
[165] Myers, *Walking with the Poor*.

theological criticisms of liberation and evangelical theologians. At its origin, Christian development was fundamentally practical in its orientation, as a practical response to demonstrable human needs. In the beginning, these needs were considered to be readily apparent, and Christians widely believed that development professionals could best ascertain the appropriate Christian response. Once relegated to motivating development, it proved difficult for theology to reassume a more prominent role, as the voices of liberation and evangelical theologians likely failed to reach those whose training was primarily in matters of public health, development economics, agriculture, global education, etc. "Speculative" theology had long been disavowed in favor of more practical matters. Of course, liberation theology had emerged as a "critical reflection on praxis," yet the context of this praxis differed markedly from that of professional schools and professional development organizations in the United States. At the same time, however, there were also theological failures in the formulation of these critiques that limited their effectiveness and contributed to this auxiliary role for theology in Christian development. In part, this incorporation of development critique can be attributed to the failure of these theologies to address the fundamental assumptions of development.

Both liberation and evangelical theologies framed their responses to questions of development and underdevelopment in the context of Cold War debates on the relative merits of capitalism and communism. By tying Christian theology too closely to these competing systems of political economy, liberation and evangelical theologians failed to address many of the core assumptions of development.

As Gustavo Esteva has argued, even dependency theorists' seemingly harsh criticisms of development – on which many liberation theologians relied – ultimately

remained firmly within a development mentality.[166] They acknowledged the depiction of Latin America as an underdeveloped region of the world, challenging only the capacity of Latin America to develop given its structural location in the global economy. The desire for liberation from the global capitalist system was not a rejection of development, but a claim that development was not possible within that system. They assumed, Esteva claimed, a North Atlantic perspective on life in Latin America, protesting only the possibilities for capitalism to lead to development.[167]

The more radical insights of liberation theologians thus became muted in the overarching assumptions of development thinking. This included the emphasis on poverty that theologians such as Gutierrez initially intended as an indictment of the capitalist system. Christian theologians in the developed world embraced only part of the missiological emphasis of liberation theology, reducing liberation theology to precisely the kind of theology that motivates action on behalf of the poor. While retaining liberation theology's claim that poverty is "a scandalous condition," theologies of development lost the concomitant critique of wealth accumulation and extravagance in the developed world. Once theologies of development dispensed with the socialist preferences of Gutierrez and other liberation theologians, the theological emphasis on the poor could be assumed into a capitalist vision that required no critique of excess in the developed world. Under capitalist assumptions, wealth in the developed world was not connected to poverty in the underdeveloped world. In this way, liberation theology's

[166] Gustavo Esteva, "Development," 11.
[167] See Bragg, "Beyond Development to Transformation," 155: "In its negative reaction to modernization, dependency still seeks progress and modernization, but on the basis of a socialist revolution…Development is still top-down with stronger state controls. The development proposed is just as unidimensional and materialistic as modernization; human beings are seen as producers and consumers with the state or collectivity as the supreme value."

preferential option for the poor became widely accepted in both the global North and South. To the dismay of liberation theologians, however, much of the substantive claims of liberation theology were invoked to justify precisely the economic and political projects that liberation theologians themselves rejected. Poverty became no longer understood as intimately and causally tied to wealth. By divorcing theologies of the poor from understandings of poverty that necessarily entailed a critique of wealth, theologies of development allowed moral attention to focus on what *we* – the wealthy – are doing to help *them* – the impoverished. As a central premise of early liberation emphases on poverty – that the demonstrable poverty of Latin America was a product of an exploitative capitalist system – increasingly floundered in the absence of a compelling alternative, theologies less hostile to the capitalist economy began to articulate how capitalist economic development would be the best option for the poor.[168]

Liberation theology intended their focus on poverty to address precisely the relationship between rich and poor. In so doing, the emphasis on poverty was initially a radical correction to theological reflections dominated by European and U.S. theologians writing from a relatively privileged social location. For liberation theologians, the poverty in Latin America had been caused by centuries of colonial and capitalist exploitation of the people and resources of Latin America. Drawing on this framework, liberation theologians expressed the way in which the lives of the rich and the poor were intertwined in the quest for liberation. The rich no less than the poor needed liberation from the injustice of the prevailing social order. Their possible error, however, was in

[168] See, for instance, Franz Hinkelammert, "Liberation Theology in the Economic and Social Context of Latin America," 40; see also Sigmund, *Liberation Theology at the Crossroad,* 187: "If the socialism that the liberation theologians espouse leads to a collapse in the economy, are they in fact exercising 'the preferential option for the poor'?"

interpreting this relationship according to Marxist social analysis. Their error was not, however, drawing attention to the relationship between wealth and poverty.

Christian theologies of development have offered very little reflection on this relationship, except to encourage more donations on the part of the wealthy. Aside from the evangelical reflections discussed in the previous chapter, there has been very little reflection on the grotesque levels of consumption of the wealthy. So long as relatively wealthy Christians emphasize the need for the poor to become more like *us*, the "like us" had retained a normative thrust that reproduces elite expectations for unattainable and unsustainable levels of consumption. As long as the consumption patterns of the wealthy and the cultural values that accompany those patterns of consumption remain the measuring stick for evaluating development and underdevelopment, wealth and poverty, living well and living inadequately, Christians allow themselves to believe in a future of wealth and unrestrained consumption for all that does not presently seem possible given the limitations of the world. Even if it were possible, it is not clear that it would be desirable.

Liberation theology's indictment of the capitalist system was not lost, however, on the evangelical theologians who entered the conversations about social action in the 1970s and 1980s. Evangelical theologians allowed their emerging interest in questions of poverty to be coupled with an equally passionate rejection of the socialist visions articulated by liberation theology. In works such as *Liberation Theology*, edited by Ronald Nash, evangelicals and conservative theologians exhaustively examined the perils of socialism and the failures of liberation theologians to see the dangers of identifying with socialist ideology. To their credit, these theologians rightly criticized liberation

theology on important points, including liberation theology's reliance on dependency theory and the resulting lack of emphasis on the internal factors of economic development. Unfortunately, their vehement rejection of socialism led many evangelicals to an enthusiastic embrace of capitalism that risked the same dangers they found in liberation theology.

In defending capitalism, evangelicals effectively and efficiently turned liberation theology on its head. They granted the emphasis on social action and the need to work against poverty. As Nash states, " I happen to believe that Christians ought to be politically active for the poor and oppressed…The poor and oppressed peoples of the world need the help of committed Christians who will become involved in social and political action."[169] Concern for the poor and the need for political action are both endorsed by evangelical theologies. However, as Nash continued,

> But what [the poor] really need is a *new* liberation theology that will recognize the irrelevance and falseness of socialist attacks on capitalism, that will unmask the threats that socialism poses to liberty and economic recovery, and that will act to move existing economic institutions and practices closer to the principles of a free market system that alone offers the hope of economic progress.[170]

For Nash and others, liberation theology was correct to draw attention to the biblical emphasis on the poor and to the theological and moral demand to act on behalf of the poor. While common ground may be found regarding concern for the poor, Nash sought to replace liberation theology with a "*new* liberation theology" that sought to move economies closer to the "principles of a free market system." In a similar vein, Max Stackhouse and Dennis McCann embraced capitalism as a moral duty to alleviate the suffering of the poor through capital investment. Perhaps no clearer theological defense

[169] Nash, "The Christian Choice," 49.
[170] Nash, "The Christian Choice," 49.

of development institutions can be found than in their "A Postcommunist Manifesto." Stackhouse and McCann wrote,

> Indeed, a new form of Christian mission today emerges precisely at this point. Converting hearts to God through the grace of Christ is paramount, of course. But outward and material signs of this grace are required. If we care for people's material conditions, the churches should send out to the poorer regions people who can teach others how to develop their own resources – how to form corporations and manage them, how to find markets, how to develop technology, how to work with employees, and how to make profits for the common good.[171]

The new missionaries were no longer the priests but the CEOs. Christian service was to be carried out by the manager, and conversion would be not only o the Christian faith but to the market system as well. The "failure to capitalize means not only economic stagnation but environmental destruction, unemployment, wider hunger and further homelessness."[172] Michael Novak, although exhibiting a measure of realist caution, reached the same conclusion by asking the following questions: "What is the most effective, practical way of raising the wealth of nations? What causes wealth?"[173] Novak argued that the creation of wealth is possible only within the system of democratic capitalism. As he wrote,

> Democratic capitalism is neither the Kingdom of God nor without sin. Yet all other known systems of political economy are worse. Such hope as we have for alleviating poverty and for removing oppressive tyranny – perhaps our last, best hope – lies in this much despised system.[174]

Novak's realism prevented his praising capitalism too highly, recognizing the flaws in the system. In Novak, one can see an argument that is highly reminiscent of Reinhold Niebuhr. Nonetheless, this caution matters little in practice. The problem, as these theologians suggest, has been that in opting for socialist alternatives to capitalism,

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[171] Stackhouse and McCann, "Public Theology," 46.
[172] Stackhouse and McCann, "Public Theology," 46.
[173] Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, 26.
[174] Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, 28.

liberation theologians denied the solution to the very problem they sought to address. As Ronald Sider triumphantly proclaimed, "Communism's state ownership and central planning have proved not to work; they are inefficient and totalitarian. Market economies, on the other hand, have produced enormous wealth."[175] Heralding the fall of the Soviet Union as historical proof that socialism in practice created only greater poverty, democratic capitalism emerged as the sole hope for the salvation of the poor. At the close of his essay, Nash described the political call of liberation theologians as "tragic because they have rejected the one system that offers real economic hope for the masses they wish to assist."[176] The solution to poverty could only be found in the very system liberation theologians critique, as that is the only system that produces enough wealth for poverty to be eliminated.[177] Nash seemed to suggest that there is not enough wealth at present to eliminate poverty. Rather, the choice for Christians becomes what system produces the greatest amount of wealth.

This reactionary move by more conservative theologians, however, should not be understood as a correction of liberation theology. Rather, responding in this fashion allowed the missteps of earlier theological attempts to set the terms of the debate for evangelical theologians. Liberation theologians had posited liberation and socialism as alternatives to dependency and capitalism; likewise, many of the evangelical authors of Nash's volume were content to follow suit and agreed upon the choice at hand. This choice was clearly articulated in the title of Nash's contribution to the volume, "The Christian Choice between Capitalism and Socialism." That Christians must choose between capitalism and socialism was not called into question. Whether by faith in

[175] Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, xiii, preface to the 5th ed.
[176] Nash, "The Christian Choice," 66.
[177] Nash, "Conclusion," 245. See also Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, page 15-16.

democratic capitalism or, as in Novak's case, by default, Christian theologians of development have assumed that Christian social action required weighing in on the ideological debate of the Cold War. They maintained the need to select among tried global systems of political economy the one that could deliver on its promises for increased economic growth and greater industrialization.

Just as evangelicals had reacted to the Social Gospel by denying the importance of social action, they responded to liberation theology by embracing capitalism. Once again, they let the terms of the discourse and the possibilities for Christian mission to be determined by theological voices they rejected. In so doing, much of the wonderfully creative possibilities for the evangelical retrieval of a missionary faith joined to social action became too closely tied to a pro-capitalist economic vision that had no less ideological influence on theology than the socialism of liberation theology.

Allowing Christian theological discourse on political economy to be tied too closely to the debates of the Cold War prevented theologians – whether liberal, evangelical, or liberation – from recognizing the ways in which capitalism and communism shared certain assumptions regarding development and from imagining alternatives to the promises of science, technology, unrestrained growth, and, for the most recent innovations in development practice, the contemporary structure of the global political economy. In fact, the debate between communism and capitalism frequently appealed to development as the measure for judging one against the other. In other words, theologians sought to defend the system that promised the greatest success in development, the greatest ability to produce wealth, and the greatest capacity to industrialize. In the history of ideas and political economy, capitalism and communism

are actually much closer than participants in the ideological Cold War ever admitted. Both aimed for progress through increased industrialization and greater economic production. Although there were significant differences regarding the relative emphasis on freedom and equality, much of their substantive difference pertained to the means (market versus state) by which development could be achieved. Christian theological responses to the processes of development contented themselves to remain within this ideological framework, whether arguing *against* capitalist development as did the liberationist or *for* capitalist development as did most Christians in the United States. Framing development as such a choice primarily obscured rather than clarified the central issues facing Christian theology.

Theology, therefore, has consistently failed to free itself sufficiently from the basic assumptions of development. Whether in weighing in on questions of global political economy or in the practical theology of Christian development organizations, an unquestioned faith in development has permeated theological discourse. The more substantial theological reflections of Christians seem, therefore, to confirm the rather thin theological vision operative in Christian development organizations: Christian theology demands development. Just as Christian development organizations have deferred to development professionals to understand what that means on the ground, Christian theologians have deferred to socialist or capitalist theories of political economy. In both instances not only have Christians yielded too much ground, they have also assumed the basic assumptions of development thought.

Cultural Intervention and the Colonial Legacy

As Christian development emerged from the period of growth and maturation, the criticisms of liberation and evangelical theologians emboldened Christian development by creating a new range of approaches designed to facilitate developments' success. Moving beyond the transferal of technology, Christian development began to recognize the complexity of social and cultural issues involved in "underdevelopment." This complexity invited a broader range of development interventions in order to facilitate the development process. Increasingly, Christian development began to address social and cultural factors in the development process. These avenues created particular opportunities for Christians, as these interventions opened the development field to attempts to change the ethics and character of individuals and communities. Christian development ascended in importance as these cultural dynamics have been widely recognized to be influential in the development process, granting Christians a newfound respect among global development professionals, as ecclesial networks and personnel resources have provided Christian development with a historical precedent and missionary legacy of such cultural intervention. Unfortunately, this legacy is precisely the legacy of colonial Christianity that aimed to "civilize" the savage through Christian instruction. The task of Christian development's cultural interventions entailed a reversion back to precisely those types of missionary presence that development initially hoped to escape.

The failures of early Christian development combined with a persistent confidence in the mission of development required new theories and practices of development. Increasingly, development's success required aligning the individual and

communal values and institutions to the demands of the global economy. As capitalism increasingly emerged as the victor of the Cold War, confidence grew in capitalism's ability to create growth and facilitate development. Global capitalism began to appear as the natural order of things, obeying certain immutable laws pertaining to desires, rationality, the nature of money, the laws of efficiency, and the quest for profit. Faith in this particular political economy denied its contingency on a particular culture. Once these laws were recognized as immutable, the cultures of the underdeveloped became perceived as unnatural and out of sync with the trajectory of human progress. Cultures that were out of sync with these natural laws gave rise to the extreme levels of poverty in the underdeveloped world.

Development intervention, therefore, must take place at the level of culture so that the "underdeveloped" may alter their values and social structures to adapt to the demands of the unalterable global economy.[178] The emphasis on culture's relation to economic advance was not a new theory. The best-known expression of this hypothesis was articulated in Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* and was revisited in Edward Banfield's *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (1958). In the context of development, and particularly with regard to Latin America, this theory was articulated forcefully by Lawrence Harrison in his *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind: The Latin America Case*. Harrison's work is particularly noteworthy, as it was written in 1985 after working for USAID in Latin America from 1962 to 1982. His account, therefore, was one of first-hand disillusionment with the promises of the Alliance for

[178] By connecting cultural theories of poverty with the turn to participation, I do not mean to suggest that all Christian development organizations that emphasize participation adhere to this theory or category of theories. Rather, by understanding the cultural arguments for poverty, I believe that we can better understand how an emphasis on participation entails a set of assumptions that we may wish to call into question.

Progress. Rather than the failures of technology or structural location within a global economy, Harrison made the case that culture accounts for the lack of development in Latin America. He wrote,

> I have been increasingly persuaded that, more than any other of the numerous factors that influence the development of countries, it is culture that principally explains, in most cases, why some countries develop more rapidly and equitable than others. By 'culture' I mean the values and attitudes a society inculcates in its people through various socializing mechanisms, e.g., the home, the school, the church.[179]

Harrison acknowledged that there are other factors, but he insisted that culture remains the foremost cause for divergences in development and equity within societies. Harrison's definition of culture focused on values and attitudes, but he acknowledged the social institutions that help shape the values and attitudes of a people. To Harrison's credit, he made his argument drawing not just on his personal experiences but also on the writings of Latin Americans themselves. Why exactly, therefore, has development not come to Latin America? As Harrison reasoned, "What makes development happen is our ability to imagine, theorize, conceptualize, experiment, invent, articulate, organize, manage, solve problems, and do a hundred other things with our minds and hands that contribute to the progress of the individual and of humankind."[180] This creative and entrepreneurial capacity, he suggested, is missing in Latin America, and this lack can be traced to the shared Spanish culture of Latin America, with its "high degree of authoritarianism" and "the low value" given to work. These aspects of Spanish culture, have "probably suppressed the entrepreneurial instinct and performance of the Spaniards."[181] As Harrison continued, "In the case of Latin America, we see a cultural

[179] Harrison, *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind*, xvi.
[180] Harrison, *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind*, 2.
[181] Harrison, *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind*, 148.

pattern, derivative of traditional Hispanic culture, that is anti-democratic, anti-social, anti-progress, anti-entrepreneurial, and, at least among the elite, anti-work."[182]

Harrison was not alone in his assessment of Latin America. Michael Novak has expressed a similar appraisal in his "A Theology of Development for Latin America." Novak chided liberation theology for endorsing a sour grapes attitude toward the developed world. He laid the blame for Latin American's underdevelopment squarely on the people of Latin America themselves and proceeded to fault them for their present resentment of "North American" success. He rightly pointed to the wealth of natural resources in Latin America and then asked, "Why, then, didn't Latin America become the richer of the two continents of the New World? The answer appears to lie in the quite different nature of the Latin American political system, economic system, and moral-cultural system. The last is probably decisive."[183] Novak argued that Latin America had their chance to succeed but missed it on their own accord. As he succinctly stated, "Latin America is responsible for its own condition."[184]

The positive note, at least for Harrison, is to be found in the possibility that cultures can be changed: "There is nothing intrinsic or immutable about culture."[185] If culture is the problem and culture can be changed, it should come as no surprise that Harrison suggested precisely this course of action. Among several means of changing culture (leadership, education and training, the media, development projects, management practices, and child-rearing practices), one stands out for the argument at

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[182] Harrison, *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind*, 165.
[183] Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, 24. It is worth mentioning Novak's apparent confusion regarding the continents, as he continually contrasts Latin America and North America as if they were geographical descriptions. This confusion is all the more ironic given his indignation at the North-South framework for thinking about global poverty, since China and India are both in the Northern hemisphere.
[184] Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, 30.
[185] Harrison, *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind*, 166.

hand: religious reform.[186] Harrison specifically targeted Haitian religion and the Catholic Church, echoing Weber's earlier argument.

Cultural arguments such as Harrison's have never dominated academic reflections on development, but they have continued to inform public perceptions of the poor and, unfortunately, the work of some Christian development organizations. Darrow Miller, who has served in senior management positions at Food for the Hungry, International, embraced whole-heartedly a crude version of the culture argument.[187] Miller traced the causes of poverty to the culture of a given people. He dismissed larger structural, historical, political, and institutional accounts of poverty and showed a remarkable disinterest in the environment. He stated bluntly, "A culture's religious and philosophic underpinnings give birth to its successful development. The minds and hearts of its people play a larger role in a nation's development than its circumstances or natural resources."[188] While this repetition of the culture argument may seem benign at first glance, Miller's elaboration of his position offered striking passages. Miller triumphantly declared that people are to have dominion over nature, boldly proclaiming,

> Underdevelopment is spawned by the mind-set that nature has dominion over people. A person's goal is merely to survive. But to live in harmony with nature is to live in harmony with death. The development ethic, on the other hand, begins with the assumption that humankind is to have dominion over nature and that hunger, disease, and death are abnormalities that are to be conquered.[189]

Although one may presume that Miller was talking about premature death, his optimism in human potential through ingenuity and hard work remains striking. The corollary, that premature death and poverty are the result of a lack of hard work and talent, is even more

[186] Harrison, *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind*, 169.
[187] Miller, "The Development Ethic: Hope for a Culture of Poverty."
[188] Miller, "The Development Ethic: Hope for a Culture of Poverty," 93.
[189] Miller, "The Development Ethic: Hope for a Culture of Poverty," 100.

disturbing. Miller's attack on cultures that believe in seeking harmony with nature stands in stark contrast to the emerging criticisms of development's environmental destruction wrought by the kinds of technological triumphs that Miller celebrates, such as the wonders of air conditioning that tamed the Arizona desert.[190] Echoing Harrison, Miller's proposal should come as no surprise: "The task before us at the end of the twentieth century is to *intentionally* share the values and ideals of this development ethic with those caught in cycles of poverty."[191]

Intervention at the level of culture offers Christians a compelling rationale and logic. The values, relationships, desires, attitudes, and all of those other aspects of a people that have been targeted by cultural theories are the very areas in which Christians feel they have something to offer. How people ought to relate to God, one another, themselves, and the world around them are the very things that Christians feel they should be able to do not only well but better than secular professionals. Christians like Miller can offer a narrative of development that suggests not only the virtue of wealth but the sinfulness of underdevelopment.[192] By attending to the cultures of poverty, the church could emerge as a key partner to the myriad institutions that already have a seat at the table of relevant actors in the global political economy.

The international community has increasingly recognized the importance of Christian participation in this global push for development. In 2005, the World Bank, under the leadership of James Wolfensohn, published a volume entitled *Finding Global*

[190] Miller, "The Development Ethic: Hope for a Culture of Poverty," 100.
[191] Miller, "The Development Ethic: Hope for a Culture of Poverty," 97. Miller includes in his argument even more embarrassing claims about the superiority of Judeo-Christian culture exemplified by how Palestine was wasted under Arab leadership and how Phoenix, AZ has become a wonderful oasis through modern technological inventions such as air conditioning.
[192] See also Bornstein, *The Spirit of Development*, on changing perceptions of wealth.

Balance: Common Ground between the Worlds of Development and Faith. The World Bank also initiated in 2000 the Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics with the intention of "cultivating and maintaining relationships with faith leaders, institutions, and communities active in global development that both affect Bank policies and that are often key constituents of development financing."[193] In the push by world leaders and development organizations to fight global poverty, the strategic value of partnering with Christians and Christian development organizations has come to the fore. An increasingly prevalent sentiment seems to be emerging that churches and religious institutions may be *useful* to the development world in the pursuit of their development initiatives. Christians offer financial and personnel resources that oftentimes dwarf those of governmental and other non-governmental organizations. Moreover, Christians bring certain qualitative resources that help to facilitate the acceptance of development interventions on the ground.

In addition to the financial resources at the disposal of Christian development organizations, Christians have also maintained an impressive international missionary presence that supports development programs. As Mark Amstutz observes, "The international presence of American missionaries and religious NGO personnel is significant, involving a work force that is larger than the total civilian staff working for the U.S. government abroad. In 1997 nearly 45,000 Americans were serving as Protestant or Catholic missionaries or as relief and development workers."[194] Although this figure aggregated different types of missionaries, this Christian missionary presence has created opportunities unavailable to other governmental and non-governmental

[193] Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics, "About Us."
[194] Amstutz, "Faith-Based NGOs and U.S. Foreign Policy," 180.

organizations to enable the kind of cultural changes necessary to adapt individuals and communities to the values of the global economy. This presence on the ground in terms of sheer numbers has provided Christian development organizations with impressive resources for gaining a better understanding than government of what is taking place on the ground.[195] Development work is hard work, and, as Stephen Monsma notes, "Faith-based international aid agencies are largely doing work that no one else is eager to do. Working under difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions with some of the poorest of the poor in little-known areas of the world does not lead to a great deal of competition from other societal groups or government agencies."[196] In this sense, the numerical advantages of Christian development organizations arise from the sheer willingness to do work that no one else wants to do.

The quantitative advantages of Christian development organizations may not, however, be as important as the qualitative advantages. Christian development organizations, drawing on shared faith commitments, have been able to achieve greater levels of trust that enable greater knowledge of conditions on the ground and greater success in implementing development interventions. Religious organizations "maintain closer associations with the people they are serving; they frequently work through churches and religious communities that can reinforce accountability; and they promote moral values – such as fidelity, integrity, thrift, and personal responsibility – that contribute both to human dignity and human enterprise."[197] Ecclesial networks generated

[195] Amstutz, "Faith-Based NGOs and U.S. Foreign Policy," 183.
[196] Monsma, "Faith-Based NGOs" and the Government Embrace," 212.
[197] Amstutz, 184. In her insightful ethnography of World Vision's work in Zimbabwe, Erica Bornstein observes how prior to development interventions, success was frowned upon. Central to development's success was the need to make wealth "more respectable" and the need to change moral perceptions of becoming wealthy, by equating poverty with laziness. See Bornstein, *The Spirit of Development,* 156-157.

through prior missionary activity have provided access and penetration into "underdeveloped" areas. Moreover, Christians have in many contexts– though counterexamples abound – acquired the trust and moral legitimacy of potential project beneficiaries to facilitate development interventions. By interpreting development in terms of the faith commitments of local communities, Christian development organizations could place development interventions and the changes in values and social relationships demanded by these interventions in ways accessible to local communities.

The long-term contact with local communities that Christian organizations and churches could sustain offer the broader development community insight into the desires, structures, and cultures of local communities. As James Wolfensohn wrote regarding faith communities broadly understood during his tenure as president of the World Bank,

> The world of faith leaders and communities brings keen insight into the daily lives of poor people: faith leaders are often the most trusted people in their communities, in many cases providing social services, not only to the people who espouse their same beliefs but also to the community as a whole. Faith leaders have longstanding and consistent on-the-ground experience, often working steadfastly despite extreme conditions. They thus have a deep and complex perspective to offer. In many cases, they can help bring the voices of the poor to the table in powerful ways. Listening and learning from faith communities through the world has helped me –and has great potential to help the World Bank as a whole – appreciate that material development must be complemented by other less-tangible aspects of development: community cohesion, choice and opportunity to reach one's potential, and core values that define the moral and spiritual underpinnings of individual and community welfare. Truly translating the mission of the World Bank – to help bring about a world free of poverty – into successful and sustainable improvements in people's lives requires taking these aspects into account.[198]

Communities of faith, as Wolfensohn made clear, could bring levels of trust and commitment to the development process. Faith leaders are embedded in local communities and could walk between the worlds of these communities and the

[198] Wolfensohn, "Forward," x.

aspirations of the broader development community, serving as interpreters of the needs of these communities. At the same time, these faith leaders could translate for the local community the goals of development and nurture the less tangible aspects of community development. Faith communities could address those complementary aspects of development that include the range of spiritual, moral, and community "cohesion" that the broader development community has been unable or unwilling to fund. Wolfensohn points, therefore, to the strategic importance of partnering with faith communities and organizations to work toward mutual goals of poverty reduction.

Whereas the language of transformation – as well as the alternatives of "holistic" or "integral" development – sought to repudiate the materialism of primarily economic models of development, these criticisms increasingly legitimated a broader range of intervention in community dynamics and the "less-tangible" aspects of development. While the more-tangible aspects of development remained based in presumptions of economic growth and market-based solutions to the causes of poverty, Christian development could direct additional resources to bring other aspects of individual and community life in line with these tangible dimensions.

In this light, participation as the corrective to development's early paternalism has contained a pedagogical function that, in addition to creating a possible forum for community input in the development process, creates an opportunity for individuals and communities to learn to think, believe, and value according to development assumptions. The core assumptions of development – represented by the development experts that visit the underdeveloped communities – remain beyond challenge. Participation emerged as an approach to development because there existed a cultural disconnect between the

proposed development interventions and the knowledge, values, and expectations of underdeveloped communities. The transfer of technology was not enough. The poor needed to understand why they needed latrines, but, perhaps more significantly, they had to want latrines. Participation became, therefore, a set of practices that is itself constitutive of the development process. By bringing the poor into the decision-making and planning process, the practices of participation aim towards the transformation of the ideals and aspirations of local communities to align with development mentalities. In her ethnography of World Vision in Zimbabwe, Erica Bornstein described how participation had been institutionalized in a practice, Participatory Rural Appraisal, which can be described as follows:

> [A]set of tools and techniques helped to involve community members in assessing their own situation, developing their own plans through data collection methodologies that facilitated the articulation of their own problems, and eventually arriving at solutions…Through exercises that included mapping, wealth ranking, geographic and resource allocation charts, seasonal and historical diagramming, and narrative historical reconstruction, the anticipation of development was extracted from communities.[199]

These tools used in the field are designed to help underdeveloped communities begin to assess their social and economic realities and to make plans for development. According to Bornstein, these tools aimed to gain community support and acceptance of development. As Bornstein described, "the anticipation of development was extracted from communities." Although the underdeveloped communities are brought into dialogue and "participation," the answer to the community's problems is usually already known in advance by the Christian development organization. Similar tools are used throughout the underdeveloped world to bring the poor into the development process. Christian development organizations display a remarkable amount of technical

[199] Bornstein, *The Spirit of Development*, 129.

knowledge and resources that can create an imbalance of power in participatory processes. And, of course, Christian development organizations always retain a veto power in the willingness to fund or not fund a community's project. These factors surely account, at least in part, for the remarkable uniformity in development projects across the entire underdeveloped world.

Participation, in this sense, can help underdeveloped peoples to see the world according to the values and ideals of a developed world that has already reached its verdict on the status of their community. To the extent that it does so, participation has been about changing the "values and attitudes a society inculcates in its people."[200] In other words, participation is a not just a set of particular practices, but it is also an approach that permeates a range of other contemporary development practices. Participation as a frame for thinking through the changes in development approaches may therefore mask the fundamental ways in which the new emphasis on the individual and the culture of underdeveloped peoples reflects a broader consensus regarding the nature of the global economy.

As with the emphasis on participation, the range of development interventions sought to adapt the culture and character of individuals and communities. The values praised are precisely those that allow for success within a particular political economy without any consideration of alternative conceptions of human flourishing. Micro-credit, as one of the more recent innovations in Christian development, demonstrates well this emphasis on cultural transformation through development practice. Success for micro-credit and micro-enterprise, as with all development practices, is largely measured in terms of creating sustainable development practices that do not require permanent

[200] Harrison, *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind*, xvi.

support, or ongoing subsidies, from Christian development organizations. In this light, the following questions become problems for Christian micro-credit programs: How much interest should Christians charge? How do Christian development organizations deal with default on loans?

Interest rates on micro-loans can frequently range between 20% and 30% for borrowers.[201] While this may appear usurious, David Bussau and Russell Mask have defended this practice by in their book *Christian Microenterprise Development* by explicitly appealing to the nature of the political economy and the need for cultures to adapt to this economy.[202] They wrote,

> The topic of interest rates can be controversial among evangelical Christians. Some proponents interpret Old Testament passages of precluding charging interest to other Israelites as directly applicable for not charging interest in the 21st century. This position does not appreciate the current context of capitalist cash-based economies, which are totally different from the land-based agrarian economy of the Old Testament. *The authors of this handbook believe that evangelical Christians can charge interest without violating scriptural guidelines.*[203]

Charging interest is permissible, therefore, because the historical political and economic context has shifted in ways that the scriptural admonitions are no longer applicable. Scripture must conform to the reality of the contemporary political economy. They continued by explaining, "Theoretically, interest is simply the price of capital; this is no different than the expenses of equipment, land, or working capital in a business. Charging rent for a house, car, or office space is theoretically the same as charging

[201]Malkin, "Microfinance Success Sets Off a Debate in Mexico," puts the average at 25-45%. I have lowered that somewhat based on my experiences with Christian development organizations in Central America.
[202] Bussau and Mask. *Christian Microenterprise Development.*
[203] Bussau and Mask, *Christian Microenterprise Development,* 49.

interest to borrow capital."[204] Interest, therefore, is the price needed to cover the expense of borrowing money, including the cost of "employees, office, travel, supplies, equipment…losses from clients who default…raising capital for the loan portfolio…interest payments where a program holds people's savings … cost of borrowing money."[205] Making loans available to the poor requires costs beyond the actual amount of the loan. In order for a program to be sustainable, it must at least be able to cover these costs. Kenneth Graber and Robert Grailey have agreed, claiming, "Sound practices at a minimum include charging rates of interest commensurate with the types of investment being financed."[206]

The risk of not charging interest is closely tied to that of allowing high rates of loan default. Graber and Grailey explain the risks of not charging interest and allowing high rates of loan default as they practices "can create 'unhealthy competition,' characterized by unsustainable services being offered for just a short period of time (at the most a few years). These organizations often call their products 'loans' but never fully expect or care if the loans are paid back."[207] As they noted, this is a "shortsighted" approach that cannot be sustained over the long term and creates expectations within community that hurts other micro-lenders who try to be sustainable. Bussau and Mask echoed this concern, "Uncontrolled and rampant default must be ruthlessly arrested because it will spread like a virus if clients detect a tolerance for it in the program."[208]

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[204] Bussau and Mask, *Christian Microenterprise Development,* 49-50.
[205] Bussau and Mask, *Christian Microenterprise Development*, 50.
[206] Graber and Grailey, "Sustainability in Microfinance," 66.
[207] Graber and Grailey, "Sustainability in Microfinance," 66.
[208] Bussau and Mask, *Christian Microenterprise Development.*, 40.

Subsidizing micro-credit programs through charity prevents establishing long-term solutions to credit access in communities and can "damage the credit culture."[209]

The fear of damaging the credit culture of underdeveloped societies makes explicit how the concern for sustainability in micro-credit has been, fundamentally, part of a larger intentional effort to transform the attitudes and values – the culture – of underdeveloped societies so that they may adapt to the practices of the global economy. Charging interest and preventing default are pedagogical practices that introduce the poor into the realities of the contemporary political economy. For advocates of micro-credit, charging interest rates and preventing default become morally justified by Christian concern for the long-term viability of the credit cultures of underdeveloped communities. It is a tough love solution that demands discipline according to the nature of capital in the contemporary political economy. While generosity exhibited through artificially low interest rates or through loan forgiveness may seem to be appropriate expressions of Christian love, defenders of micro-credit argue that the broader implications of such practices entail a risk of long-term damage. For development to work, poor persons must be conditioned to the harsh realities of a credit culture that, by its nature, demands market interest rates and strict recuperation of loans. These programs invite participants into the sometimes harsh world of modern day practices of borrowing and lending.

Changing cultures became a development option once Christians embraced a global political economy that emphasizes market-based solutions to questions of poverty. The global political economy has achieved, for most Christians in the United States, a status as the natural order of things that obeys certain immutable laws pertaining to desires, rationality, the nature of money, the laws of efficiency, and the quest for profit.

[209] Bussau and Mask, *Christian Microenterprise Development,* 46.

Faith in this particular political economy denies its contingency on a particular culture. Once these laws were recognized as immutable, the cultures of the underdeveloped – as well as Scriptural passages that suggest otherwise – were perceived as unnatural, out of sync with the eternal. The success of nations, communities, and individuals therefore depends on how well they can adapt to the demands of a global political economy, which is widely judged to be immutable.

The Continuation of a Colonial Legacy

With the ascendance of development interventions aimed to adapt individuals and communities to the global political economy and a broadening of the sphere of cultural intervention, Christian mission resumed its historically familiar role of extending the institutions, ideologies, and practices of a system with the pretensions of universality. In the form of development, however, Christian mission shifted from service to a particular colonial power to a more diffuse global elite comprised of individuals and corporations that thrive in the contemporary global political economy.

A prophetic vision for what Christian mission could be in the context of the contemporary political economy demands that Christian theology subject these basic assumptions of development thinking to a sustained critical analysis. What if the problem with the theological narrative as told by Christian development organizations is a more fundamental problem with the narrative of development itself? What if it is also a more fundamental problem with Christian understandings of mission? These questions have been raised in profound ways by those critical of the basic assumptions of

development and underdevelopment that have provided the rationale for the entire development enterprise.

Christians living in the United States have generally taken for granted public discourse regarding development and underdevelopment. For most, those who are underdeveloped (or in more politically correct usage today, those who are "developing") are generally those who live in what used to be called the Third World. In general, they have shorter life expectancies, higher infant mortality rates, lower levels of literacy, and a host of other social, economic, and political shortcomings when compared to those living in the United States. They are, in other words, the people depicted in the narratives supplied by Christian development organizations.

Christian development organizations rely on telling stories of immense poverty and stories of poverty overcome to justify and interpret their work for Christians in the United States. These stories become part of a larger narrative of development, in which the practices of Christian development organizations become the means through which Christian individuals and churches can put their love into action. Christian development organizations spread this message by maintaining impressive communications systems that consist of websites, newsletters, magazines, gift catalogues, guest speakers, bulletin inserts, videos, and various other media to attract support for and explain their work. Among the diversity of media employed by Christian development organizations, the images of the underdeveloped presented are remarkably consistent: they are wretchedly poor. At times, this poverty is illustrated in accounts of individuals and families living in precarious circumstances, as the following ERD narrative illustrates.

> *Maria and her family of five live in El Salvador – in a small house with scavenged tin walls and a hard, dirt floor. At night, the family sleeps in hammocks to avoid*

> *the rainwater that often floods their home. Maria's family used to cook over an open fire under their leaning roof to keep the fire from going out in the rain… Thanks to gifts from donors like you, ERD helped build smokeless stoves in Maria's community. Today, Maria's children are safe – their eyes no longer sting, and their lungs are clear. They are now a healthy family with a brighter future ahead*.[210]

This short story of Maria and her family seems, at first glance, to represent accurately the condition of many in El Salvador (and Central America more broadly). Many people in Central America face the threat of rainwater entering homes at night, and ERD's story accurately portrays the inadequate housing and risk of flooding in many of areas of Central America. Smokeless stoves can significantly improve the health of families. In short, ERD's story about Maria and her children describes the kind of development practices implemented on the ground in Central America.

The truthfulness of the story does not alter its rhetorical function as a piece of communication between the Christian development organization and its base of potential donors. The story both reassures the donor and encourages further contributions, showing how seemingly trivial technological improvements could radically change the health and wellbeing of a family in Central America. By describing their work in this short description, the distant work of Christian development is made more personal. Christians reading these stories feel more connected to individuals and communities than had ERD simply offered the numerical facts about their work.

These stories of individuals and families suffering from poverty stand for entire communities and nations. El Salvador, in other words, becomes a country full of Marias, as these in-depth accounts of one family's struggles are offered alongside the statistics and descriptions of entire communities and countries:

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[210] Episcopal Relief and Development, *ERD NOW*.

> *Life is difficult in the poverty-stricken village of Las Morenas. Many of the people are subsistence farmers, struggling to grow enough to feed their families. Others work in factories or in manual labor in the capital of San Salvador, 30 miles away via rocky roads.*[211]
>
> *One of the poorest and least developed countries in the Western Hemisphere, Honduras faces an extremely unequal distribution of wealth, high unemployment, and widespread drug and gang-related crime.*[212]
>
> *[T]he country remains the second poorest in the Western Hemisphere, with a per capita GDP of $817. Nearly one-half of the population lives on less that $1 a day, while one-third of children suffer from severe malnutrition and other chronic health problems. In addition, the national education system ranks weakest in Central America. The majority of adults do not have stable formal employment, with many generations sharing one family home.*[213]
>
> *In the western hemisphere, Nicaragua is at the bottom of the poverty ladder, second only to Haiti. Many Nicaraguans eke out a living on small, family-run farms. These households are utterly dependent on their annual crop, and hunger is common when harvests are poor.*[214]

Like the personal narratives, these descriptions paint vivid pictures of the seemingly wretched lives of Central Americans. Central America is comprised of entire villages that are "poverty-stricken," isolated from jobs in the city and relying on subsistence farming. The entire country of Honduras remains "one of the poorest and least developed countries in the Western hemisphere," where in Nicaragua families "eke out a living," "hunger is common when harvests are poor," and "one-third of children suffer from severe malnutrition and other chronic health problems." As Christian development organizations narrate these stories over and over again, often accompanied by heart-wrenching images of dirty children with their ribs showing clearly from malnutrition, they confirm common perceptions of Central America as deeply impoverished.

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[211] Samaritan's Purse, "My God is Great."
[212] Lutheran World Relief, "Honduras."
[213] Food for the Hungry, "Nicaragua."
[214] World Relief, "Nicaragua."

These stories establish the unquestioned poverty and wretchedness of life in Central America and fix the identities of the participants in the development narrative. The people of Central America are the poor, waiting on the salvation possible through the actions of U.S. Christians. As recent critics have noted, however, these identities are themselves possible only within a framework of development thinking, and the repetition of these stories limit the possibility for alternative representations of the people of Central America. Gustavo Esteva targets President Truman's announcement regarding the mission of the West to the "underdeveloped" peoples of the world as the day that "two billion people became underdeveloped."[215] Esteva focuses on this date as the moment in which the designation of underdeveloped was applied to the vast majority of the world's population who may or may not have understood themselves according to the standards of development in the North Atlantic. This identity as underdeveloped was not one that they chose for themselves but one imposed on them according to the standards and valuations of those who understood themselves as developed.[216]

On the one hand, this distinction regarding how one labels the people of Central America and elsewhere may seem rather unimportant. The term "underdeveloped" did not immediately change the actual living conditions of the people of Central America for the worse. In the end, the statistics remain the same, and they point to some very harsh realties facing the "underdeveloped." On the other hand, Esteva is correct to raise questions about categorizing the vast majority of the world's population according to the self-perceptions of the world's elite. Once labeled, understood, and self-understood as

[215] Esteva, "Development," 7. For a brief summary of the use of the term development, see Rist, *The History of Development*. Rist draws on previous work by Peter Praxmarer.
[216] See also, Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, 35. Mignolo argues that the "universalism of Western culture" means "It is from the West that the rest of the world is described, conceptualized, and ranked."

underdeveloped, those people, according to Esteva, lost their uniqueness, their diversity, and much of their own self-understandings in order to be identified according to the standards of the North Atlantic.[217]

In this way, development becomes a way of categorizing peoples of the world according to a scale in which the political economy and culture of the U.S. is the highest value on the scale. Development becomes a way of thinking about and judging the experiences and cultures of "underdeveloped" peoples that relates them according to a desired way of human existence that has already been achieved by some. What is lost in this way of viewing the world is what Douglas Lummis calls "the effective equality of incommensurables."[218] According to Lummis, there may be "indigenous notions of prosperity" that could retain their independence from an imposed valuation of a colonial power.[219] Definitions of prosperity and of living well could vary among different cultures. By creating one scale by which all peoples are judged, however, development discourse fails to appreciate these differences.[220]

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[217] Esteva, "Development," 7.
[218] Lummis, "Equality," 48.
[219] Lummis, "Equality," 48. The irony, of course, is that most Christian development professionals have themselves ordered their lives according to an alternative standard of wealth from more mainstream U.S. notions of prosperity, yet they have not been willing to see the possibility for such alternatives in the lives of communities in Central America.
[220] See Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, "Preface, 4." Mignolo makes a similar observation to the much broader case of modernity: "You can tell the story of the world in as many ways as you wish, from the perspective of modernity, and never pay any attention to the perspective from coloniality…To illustrate, consider that a Christian and a Marxist analysis of a given event, say the 'discovery of America,' would offer us different interpretations; but *both would be from the perspective of modernity*. That is, the 'discovery of America' would be seen in both cases *from the perspective of Europe*. A Fanonian perspective on 'the discovery of America,' however, would introduce a non-European perspective, the perspective grounded on the memory of slave-trade and slave-labor exploitation, and its psychological, historical, ethical, and theoretical consequences." He continues, "The geo-political configuration of scales that measured the nature of human beings in terms of an idea of history that Western Christians assumed to be the total and true one for every inhabitant of the planet led to the establishment of a colonial matrix of power, to leave certain people out of history in order to justify violence in the name of Christianization, civilization, and, more recently, development and market democracy. Such a geo-political configuration created a divide between a minority of people who dwell in and embrace the Christian, civilizing, or developing missions and a majority who are the outcasts and become the targets of those missions."

Does this mean that the people of Central America are not poor? If the United States and other developed countries would abandon their desire to develop others, would the people of Central America value the life they have and be content? The poverties of relatively short lives and high incidences of death from preventable disease would certainly remain. Moreover, as Majid Rahnema writes, "Destitution, or imposed poverty, no doubt hurts, degrades and drives people into desperation. In many places, hunger and misery cry out to heaven."[221] On the other hand, as Rahnema paradoxically continues, "poverty is also a myth, a construct and the invention of a particular civilization."[222] Christian development organizations – and most U.S. Christians – assume that they know what poverty is, yet without realizing that these understandings of poverty are conditioned by a particular cultural, economic, and historical context. They identify wealth in terms of the presence or absence of certain material goods, levels of income, social relationships, community structures, etc. From a U.S. perspective, all that they see – or at least portray – in the lives of Central Americans are destitution and deprivation. This perspective shapes and distorts both the first hand encounters of U.S. Christians with Central Americans and the choice of what statistics are relevant and how they are to be measured. Even the seemingly objective or factual claims remain biased toward these same values.

If thinkers like Lummis, Esteva, and Rahnema are correct, development risks approaching the peoples of Central America in ways anticipated by the conquistadors before them. Today, it is generally recognized the extent to which earlier missionaries failed to do justice to the Indians in their representations and filled those descriptions

[221] Rahnema, "Poverty," 158.
[222] Rahnema, "Poverty," 158.

with judgments and prejudices derived from their European mindset. When the conquistadores saw sacrifice, cannibalism, and scant clothing, they pronounced that the people of the New World had no religion and that what was required was the civilizing presence of the Spanish. Just because the Indians could not or chose not to grow beards, Ortiz pronounced that they had no culture. Columbus had pronounced they had no religion, because his was a particular European understanding of religion. The representations of the "savage," the Indian, and the natives found in the writings of Christian missionaries achieved significance as they were woven into narratives of civilization and salvation that demanded the colonization of the "New World" as an appropriate moral response. With Indians that are "more stupid than assess," "have no respect either for love or for virginity," "are incapable of learning," "eat human flesh," "go naked," and so forth, the need for compassionate moral action to civilize seemed obvious.[223] The impoverished community and individual and countless others living impoverished and wretched lives – like the "noble savages" and "dirty dogs" before them – await the salvation that the Christian development organization can provide. Such tales of desperation and hopelessness are necessary to motivate the generosity and philanthropy of donors that sustain the work of the organization. Just as these depictions of the Indians were used to theologically justify the conquest, Christian development organizations use depictions of poverty to justify the cause of development. In so doing, U.S. Christians demonstrate a failure to encounter the other in a spirit of creativity, humility, and self-criticism.[224]

[223] Tzevatan Todorov provides an excellent survey of the ways in which Europeans portrayed the indigenous peoples of the Americas in his *The Conquest of America.*
[224] Again, see Todorov, *The Conquest of America*, for an excellent treatment of this failure to encounter the other.

The fear of repeating the mistakes of colonial Christianity's collusion with European imperial designs is not the only concern at issue in this failure of humility and self-criticism. Rather, there may be important reasons why U.S. Christians may have something to learn from those whose cultures, politics, and economies Christian development organizations are intentionally seeking to change. Development began with the basic assumption that the future of underdeveloped societies would be like that of the developed countries of the world. Increasingly, however, the levels of development and consumption that have been attained in the North Atlantic appear less like a goal for all societies and more like an exception.

As the world realizes the environmental costs of development, the stage of "high mass consumption" begins to reveal limitations for which development theory and practice have not accounted. The environmental damage already wrought by the consumption of the developed world invites one to imagine how bad things would be if the rest of the world, the majority, consumed at the levels of the developed countries. As Wolfgang Sachs observes, "If all countries 'successfully' followed the industrial example, five or six planets would be needed to serve as mines and waste dumps. It is thus obvious that the 'advanced' societies are no model; rather they are most likely to be seen in the end as an aberration in the course of history."[225] While most observers lament the failures of development, the success of development could be an even more frightening possibility. The levels of production and consumption of the North Atlantic cannot serve as the basis for Christian understandings of what societies should become. If so, the future is indeed a terrifying thought. As Oswaldo de Rivero asks, "What would happen if the same consumer-based prosperity were achieved in the underdeveloped

[225] Wolfgang Sachs, "Introduction," 2.

countries? If globalization were to succeed, would it be possible to recycle the additional rubbish produced by 4 billion new consumers? Or would we have to start changing our consumer patterns?"[226] News reports in 2008 have begun to confirm this possibility. As an article from *The New York Times* suggests, rising demand in the developing world is creating a global crisis. The patterns of consumption of the developed world are revealing themselves to be unsustainable.[227] Meat and dairy production require too much land to meet the growing demand for these commodities as some in China and elsewhere are becoming richer. Increasing access to cars in the developing world is creating extra demands on oil production.[228] Increasing development is straining the environment and revealing the extent to which the levels of consumption in the developed world were a misplaced goal for the entirety of humanity.

As development increasingly aims to change the cultures, values, and behaviors of those deemed underdeveloped, the question presents itself ever more clearly: *what if development is encouraging adaptation to a system that is unsustainable in the long run?* A follow-up question is suggested by de Rivero: *what if those "rigid human traditions" that get in the way of development have the resources needed to imagine creative alternatives to the consumer patterns that need to give way?* After all, if the experiment with societies of "high mass consumption" turns out to be a failure and abnormality in the course of human history, those "rigid human traditions" might have something to teach the "developed" world.

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[226] De Rivero, The Myth of Development, 87.
[227] Reuters, Russell Blinch, Brian Love, with additional reporting by Ayesha Rascoe, Missy Ryan, Alistair Thomson, Ho Binh Minh; edited by Eddie Evans. "Tensions Rise as World Faces Short Rations," New York Times, March 30, 2008.
[228] As, for instance, in the case of India's Tata Motors, which now produces a car that costs just over $2,000.

What is required is much more careful balance between the poverties that Central Americans identify as real and in need of alleviation and the resources and wealth that is simultaneously present in Central America. Such an appraisal, however, requires that Christians in the United States let go of the assumption that the "rigid human traditions" of underdeveloped peoples belong to an inferior stage in the progress of the human race. Without denying the poverties that exist, Christians in the U.S. must resist categorizing the people of Central America as *underdeveloped*. Upon closer examination, U.S. Christians may realize that exporting "developed" ways of thinking may well be encouraging the kind of patterns of consumption and production for the global economy that has fueled the environmental crisis.

Conclusion

Christian development, therefore, has continued in precisely the kinds of cultural interventions and penetration into other societies that created the crisis in foreign missions during the first half of the twentieth century. While mission theologies were seeking to move beyond foreign missions to a global mission of the worldwide church, Christian development evaded this crisis by continuing foreign missions in a new geo-political context and with a new theological rationale. This new geo-political context appealed to a greater universalism than the interests of particular nation-states in the colonial era. Development according to the standards defined by countries of the North Atlantic looked to the trajectory of human history and pronounced a universally valid model and process according to which all societies should conform. Development, therefore, marked the passage of traditional colonialism to a new global system

dominated not by the competition between European nation-states but by the interests, initially, of two global superpowers and, subsequently, of a single global market. The concerns for the self-determination and rights of weaker nations that figured prominently in the theologies advocating a Christianization of international relations and respect for the nationalisms and younger churches were not resolved. Rather, these concerns remain subordinate to the workings of a global political economy and an emergent global elite that benefit from that economy. Instead of encouraging creative alternatives to an unsustainable demand for growth, development insisted on incorporating weaker nations and communities into a single geo-political and cultural system. Initially, development had emerged as a far more limited enterprise aimed at the transferal of technology. As this proved insufficient, development involved Christians in ever more penetrating degrees of intervention in the cultures and values of the "underdeveloped.

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTIANS AFTER DEVELOPMENT

The preceding chapters traced the emergence, maturation, and failure of Christian development to respond to a crisis in Christian mission in a new global political and theological context in which the assumptions and practices of colonial models of mission no longer seemed defensible. I have argued that Christian development seemed to offer an alternative to the legacy of mission in the colonial and neocolonial eras, which had been tied too closely to the imperial expansion of the countries of the North Atlantic. The assumption that Christian development represented a moral advance over the previous forms of mission, however, was only possible in a context that fundamentally misunderstood both the legacy of colonial models of missions and the changing nature of global geopolitical and economic power. In light of this context, Christian development actually funneled care for the poor into a logic that corresponded too neatly to the emergent geopolitical interests of Western liberal democracies and the accompanying social, cultural, and economic practices of the "developed" world.

The relief efforts of World War II provided the context for Christians to form new organizations directed toward global humanitarian needs. The mission of these organizations evolved over the course of the subsequent decades as these organizations became increasingly focused on long-term development interventions. Through the 1950s and 1960s, the optimism in the promises of science and technology accompanied a Keynesian political economy that sought both the industrial advancement of

"developing" societies and government intervention in the economy to limit the abuses of raw forms of capitalism. Such a perspective was required to temper the potential enthusiasm for communism in the context of a global Cold War. As capitalism shifted its appearance, logic, and institutions in the 1970s, development organizations paralleled these shifts in an ever-increasing emphasis on participation, opportunity for individuals, and market-based solutions to the problems of underdevelopment. Even with the end of the Cold War, the ideological battle retained its force, aggregating to the victors even more faith and confidence that Western liberal democratic capitalism was the undisputable choice for achieving social and economic development.

Christian theology largely facilitated this expression of Christian mission. On the one hand, Christian development organizations have emphasized a theological vision in which the primary purpose of theology is to motivate the work of development by emphasizing Christian love and the "Great Commandment." In so doing, theology's critical perspectives have been limited in deference to the expertise of development professionals. On the other hand, attempts at more sustained theological reflections have largely failed, as these theologies have often been bound by the ideological context of the Cold War. For Christian theology, the choice between capitalism and communism has been a false choice that has failed to acknowledge the way in which communism and capitalism shared a common goal of development and views toward the poor.

Christian development offered new possibilities for a foreign missionary presence for Christians. While hospitals and schools had historically accompanied Christian missions, the types of long-term social change intended by development changed the nature of Christian foreign missions. Not only were these practices new, but the primacy

given these forms of social action represented a shift in Christian missionary thinking. In the past, the primary goal had been evangelism. With Christian development, social action became valued on its own terms, regardless of whether or not it facilitated conversions.

For all of the significant differences between Christian development and previous missionary models, this dissertation has argued that the colonial legacy persisted under the new missionary model. If this is the case, then these differences with previous missions must be overshadowed by a greater degree of continuity with earlier missions. This chapter, therefore, seeks to demonstrate this level of continuity and to argue that the differences between Christian development and earlier missionary theologies turned out to be precisely those innovations in Christian mission necessary to continue the colonial legacy in a new global political economy.

The Missiological Limits of Love

For Christian development, the emphasis on love as a foundation for Christian mission appears to represent a significant departure from the earlier emphasis on conversion. With conversion the primary goal of Christian mission, participation in colonial expansion could be justified by the greater good of saving souls. When combined with a theology that emphasized eternal salvation in contrast to social responsibility and change, the way in which the "Great Commission" could result in the perpetuation of colonial interests seems straightforward. After all, Christian missions could easily turn a blind eye to the activities of colonial powers that facilitated their missionary activities. Missionary concern, after all, was relegated primarily to the eternal

status of the soul. A missionary focus on love has increasingly appealed to the "Great Commandment" in contrast to (or in addition to) the "Great Commission." Through its emphasis on love of neighbor, the Great Commandment has provided the biblical justification for mission as social change. In this theological move, it would seem that Christians would be find the theological resources necessary to critique the political and economic inequalities created by colonial relationships.

The history of Christian development, however, tempers enthusiasm for the belief that love of neighbor and the "Great Commandment" provide a theology of mission that enables such critical reflection. The primary failures of this foundation for mission theology are two. First, the emphasis on love has been accompanied by deference to the expertise of development professionals to guide and implement Christian love, which has weakened mission theology by relegating theology to motivating a particular practice. Second, the "Great Commandment" and the "Great Commission" share a logic that is primarily interventionist in the lives of others – the non-Christian, the "underdeveloped." This reduction of Christian mission prevents self-criticism in light of the Gospel message by presuming a universalism of one's particular beliefs and culture.

Christian development organizations have widely embraced a theology of mission that emerged from the shifting of mission focus to ethics and social responsibility. To ground their obligation to develop, Christian development organizations have emphasized the way in which their work is motivated by Christian theology and scripture. As World Vision claims, "Motivated by our faith in Jesus Christ, we serve alongside the poor and oppressed as a demonstration of God's unconditional love for all people."[229] Samaritan's Purse, as their name suggests, draws on the story of the Good Samaritan, which "gives a

[229] World Vision, "Who We Are."

clear picture of God's desire for us to help those in desperate need wherever we find them," taking seriously Jesus' command to "go and do likewise." Framed simultaneously as a response to Jesus' command and inspired by the teachings of a parable, Samaritan's Purse situates their work as a living out of the Biblical message. According to Opportunity International, their "commitment is motivated by Jesus Christ's call to serve the poor," specifically referencing Matthew 5:42 and Matthew 25. Christian development organizations, therefore, appeal to their Christian motivation as an explanation of why they are engaged in the work that they do.

As Samaritan's Purse and Opportunity International exemplify, Christian development organizations frequently support their claims through appeals to the Bible. Since development thought and practice have matured only recently, this effort to find in the Bible passages that support development is a difficult task. Christian development organizations, therefore, generally engage the Bible through what I would call a *development hermeneutic*, which consists of subtle shifts in interpreting the Bible according to development assumptions. Because most Christians living in the United States share these assumptions, this mode of biblical interpretation remains generally unquestioned. As such, the Bible appears to agree with the latest in development thinking and urges Christians to share in the mission of development.

In their 2005 *Annual Summary*, Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD) demonstrates this approach to biblical interpretation. On the first page of their *Annual Summary*, ERD identifies their mandate the following passage from Matthew 25:37-40:

> Then the righteous will answer 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' 'Truly I tell you,

> just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me'.[230]

In Matthew 25 Jesus identified "the least of these" as members of his family such that Christian response to their need is a response to Jesus. The annual report continues, "ERD is focused on fulfilling our primary goal – to eradicate hunger, disease and poverty…ERD is committed to fulfilling our mission and mandate found in Matthew 25:37-40 – to help people live self-sufficient, healthy and productive lives." Equating the ministries identified in Matthew 25 with the goal of eradicating hunger, disease and poverty" nearly completes the theological narrative of ERD. As they continue to clarify their goal, however, the meanings shift such that the goal becomes helping "people live self-sufficient, healthy, and productive lives." At this point, the biblical hermeneutics becomes clearer as Matthew 25 becomes interpreted in terms of self-sufficiency. ERD becomes more explicit, however, in a subsequent heading, entitled "Helping Families Feed Themselves." Matthew 25:37 is repeated beneath this heading, yet giving a hungry person food is very different from teaching him or her farming methods, providing small loans for the purchase of fertilizers, and providing direction on what crops to plant. ERD quotes the passage from Matthew 25, but they read this passage in terms of "Give a man a fish. Feed him for today. Teach a man to fish. Feed him for a lifetime."

Moreover, ERD's appeals to language of the "least of these" may be misleading when examined in the context of development practice. Development interventions such as micro-credit do not target the least of these. They explicitly focus on more stable individuals and families. For the "least of these" and "the poorest of the poor" that often appear in the rhetoric of Christian development, immediate consumption needs remain

[230] Episcopal Relief and Development, "Annual Summary, 2005," boldface in original.

too great for investment in future production and consumption. Moreover, the least of these are often the ones without the education, social connections, and a range of other resources to make effective use of small loans. Nonetheless, the biblical "least of these" becomes interpreted as the project beneficiaries of Christian development organizations.

Christian theology offers biblical admonitions to love and to care for the neighbor, but the practical implications of these admonitions result in deference to the assumptions of development thought and practice. Development provides the framework in which Christian scriptures are understood and by which Christians are called to live out their love for the neighbor and their care for the poor. Love for the poor becomes love for development. The least of these are the project beneficiaries, while the Christian development organization becomes the Good Samaritan. By so doing, Christian development organizations retell the Gospel narrative in the form of a narrative of development, where characters and practices that correspond to the life and teachings of Jesus are framed according to the development agenda. This way of reading the Gospel narrative provides powerful theological justification for the work of Christian development organizations, and it serves to motivate not only the organizations themselves but also the millions of Christians in the United States who support their work.

The theological narrative in which U.S. Christians are asked to identify with the actions of the Good Samaritan reveals the shared assumptions of a mission theology rooted in the Great Commission and Great Commandment.[231] In each of these missionary theologies, Christian mission is understood in structurally similar terms. The

[231] For a critique of the command-obedience use of the Great Commission, see George Hunsberger, "Is There Biblical Warrant for Evangelism?"

missionary calling of Christians requires an intervention in the lives of others. In the one case, this intervention is primarily spiritual. In the other, it encompasses a broader range of social, political, and economic considerations. Either way, mission remains exclusively about intervening in the lives of others in order to change those lives according to one's own beliefs and values. The recipients of Christian mission remain passive recipients of either proclamation or love. In this way, while evangelicals were right to point to the flaws of exclusively emphasizing social change, their restoration of a dual focus on the Great Commission and Great Commandment offered no real corrective.[232]

The missionary logic that focuses on intervention in the lives of others creates problems for the missionaries as well as the missionized. Whether in terms of proclamation or love through development, Christian mission loses its demand for repentance on Christians "at home." While Christian mission should not lose its mission to the world, exclusively interventionist attitudes facilitate a missionary understanding in which mission remains what is done outside of the local church in the lives of others. Mission becomes divorced from the life of a particular community. This, it seems to me, is precisely the great insight of the evangelical calls for Christians in the "developed" world to live more simply. They recognized the implications of injustice and over-consumptions for the moral lives of Christians in the "developed" world.

In his history of Christianity in the U.S., Sydney Ahlstrom provocatively suggests that the revitalizing impact of mission on sending churches has been the "most important aspect of the entire foreign missions impulse?"[233] Development, as with mission more

[232] As articulated in the "Lausanne Covenant".
[233] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History*, 865.

generally, is not solely about what Christians from *here* are doing for people *over there*. Not only do missions impact individuals and communities that host mission, but they also shape individuals and communities at home. Representations of the wretchedness of life in underdeveloped countries reinforce the desirability of life in the United States in ways that are harmful to Christians living in the United States.

This risk is magnified when one considers the following observation from Andrew Natsios: "A sizable number of Americans probably get their most trusted news about the Third World not from *Time* or *Newsweek* or *The New York Times* but from their favorite FNGO publication."[234] While Natsios may very well exaggerate the matter, he is nonetheless right to suggest the very large numbers of Christians who learn about people in the "developing" world through such publications. In addition, many more Christians learn from the first-hand accounts in sermons of guest preachers testifying to the work of the development. Likewise, countless others read the bulletin inserts on mission Sundays and receive gift catalogues that raise money through fair trade gift sales to support development projects. Development depends on involving Christians in the United States in the development story. In order for Christians to believe that development is an authentic expression of Christian mission, Christians in local churches must be trained to see the world in certain way, view the poor in a certain way, and see themselves in a certain way.[235]

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[234] Natsios, "Faith-Based NGOs and U.S. Foreign Policy," 195. "FNGO" refers to faith-based non-governmental organization, which would include Christian development organizations.

[235] I do not mean to suggest that Christian development organizations are being intentionally manipulative or that they bear the sole responsibility for this training. Development, as a way of perceiving and engaging the world, is broadly assumed throughout the United States, as I have tried to argue throughout this project.

The story of development is very clear about how Christians in the United States ought to view themselves. According to development logic, the standards of wealth and consumption among the middle-class in the United States have become the standard, a stage of growth that others will eventually attain. In other words, the stage of high mass consumption by Christians in the United States becomes what is normal and natural. The harsh truths explored in the previous chapter, however, reveal the environmental and economic limitations of consumption patterns in the "developed" world. The message of Christian development does not address these limits of development. Unfortunately, so long as U.S. Christians can believe that the rest of the world is on its way to consuming at the levels of Christians in the United States, U.S. Christians are offered few reasons to alter those patterns of consumption. If the standards of wealth and levels of consumption in the United States are the natural progress of human civilization toward which all peoples are moving as development theory has assumed, then U.S. consumption patterns are affirmed through development practice. Development, in this sense, has the "reflex effect" of legitimizing the consumption patterns of North Atlantic Christians by making these the standard of what is the natural state of consumption once the barriers to development have been overcome. Development becomes a way to explain and normalize economic disparity and "high mass consumption," and it offers a way in which the rich can feel good about their own wealth and their philanthropic efforts toward the poor. Development thought and practice have deleterious impacts not only on those who receive development interventions but also on those that come to believe in this ideology who do not receive such aid. In their public relations and fundraising material, Christian

development advocates reinforce among Christians (and others) a false sense of accomplishment, progress, and confidence.

Appeals to love of neighbor and the Great Commandment reduce the possibilities for Christian mission to a set of vague moral ideals left to be defined by experts in the field. When interpreted in terms of development thinking, the effect of a missionary ethic rooted in neighbor love is that one universalism substitutes for another. Whereas the universal message of salvation through Jesus Christ provided the theological rationale for earlier missionaries, the universal message of development through Western culture, values, and institutions becomes the foundational assumption of Christian mission.

The Christian Development Organization and the Missionary Society

The reduction of Christian theologies of mission to an ethical norm such as love of neighbor has its institutional counterpart in the form of the Christian development organization. The relief and development organizations that formed as an institutional expression of Christian love in the foreign mission field followed in the footsteps of the missionary societies that had been formed to live out the "Great Commission" in the nineteenth century. The missionary societies allowed Christians – laity and clergy – to organize around a specific purpose, oftentimes outside of traditional ecclesial frameworks. This legacy paved the way for the Christian relief and development organizations that organized initially around the relief efforts of World War II and subsequently around global development.

The emergence of such organizations, oftentimes referred to as voluntary societies, enabled Christians to address specific issues of concerns.[236] By forming such organizations, Christians focused their missionary efforts on limited goals. According to Andrew Walls, "The principle of the voluntary society is: identify the task to be done; find appropriate means of carrying it out; unite and organize a group of like-minded people for the purpose."[237] In this way, the issue of concern – whether foreign missions, orphanages, poverty, etc. – became the primary driving force behind the organization. Shared commitment to this issue brought diverse Christians – both laity and clergy – together in order to seek the most effective way to address the identified problem. Yet, as I have suggested in the previous section, it is precisely this limitation of Christian mission that has facilitated its collaboration with colonial interests.

As with the missionary societies, Christian development organizations frequently operate outside traditional church structures and, in many ways, challenge those structures. As Walls observes, "Voluntary societies flourish through the atomization of the church, the decentralization and dispersal of its organization."[238] On the one hand, this decoupling of mission from traditional church structures created opportunities for more Christians to become active in society in new ways. Laypersons – including women – were able to assume greater leadership roles in Christian mission, and they were able to direct the church's attention to social issues that had not concerned traditional church leadership. On the other hand, there were certain risks in opening Christian mission to those without theological training and to the narrow focus on specific issues of concern. For instance, Walls cites the growing use of business tactics

[236] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History*, 423; see also Bosch, *Transforming Mission,* 280.
[237] Walls, *The Missionary Movement*, 229.
[238] Walls, *The Missionary Movement*, 225.

and business wealth in the field of missions as business professionals became leaders and supporters of these voluntary societies.[239] With a focus on the efficient response to a particular issue, mission increasingly drew from non-theological and non-ecclesial resources. Contemporary Christian development organizations followed in this legacy by drawing on the wealth of U.S. Christians to fund the work of primarily lay development professionals.

Since Christian commitments simply supply the motivation for such development work, Christian development professionals can frequently offer assurances that they work with anyone in need, whether they are Christian or not. This is usually a requirement for coveted U.S. government (and other foundation) grants as well as permission to work in some countries. Some Christian development organizations may also announce this in order to assure the world that they have broken clearly with their missionary heritage and no longer have as central to their identity a desire to convert others, while other organizations are open about their hopes that through such work beneficiaries will "come to Christ." For the relief work in which these organizations engage, this willingness to assist non-Christians is praiseworthy. For the development work, however, this willingness raises some difficult questions for Christian mission. This mode of working seems to assume that how Christians live out their economic, social, and cultural lives together is no different from how non-Christians live their lives. Membership in a church is irrelevant to the economic, political, and social choices that one makes. Non-Christians are welcome to participate in Christian development programs because, at the end of the day, there is very little Christian about them.

[239] Walls, *The Missionary Movement*, 230.

In its enthusiasm to break from colonial missions and to become relevant to the contemporary world, Christian mission as development reduced Christian mission to too little. Once Christian theology has been freed from its sole task of motivating development, Christians may find that theology has some interesting, creative, and important things to say about how we might live together in a world of poverties. That is, theology might offer insights not just for *why* we ought to care for the poor but also about *how* we are all called to live with one another. Christian theology does, after all, have much to say about the good life, economy, politics, community, the environment, the church, and many other aspects of life that impact the question of development. Relegated to providing the motivation for the development work of professional organizations, however, these insights are lost along with the possibility for a Christian critique of development practice. The ethics that remains after this minimalist theological commitment cannot be one that is derived from faith commitments.

Unfortunately, as this dissertation has suggested, Christian teachings in the theologies of evangelical and liberation theologians contained precisely the kinds of critical voices regarding the consumption of the "developed" world as well as the environmental limitations of development. By embracing such vague moral ideals as love to be put in practice by skilled professionals, the radical and prophetic possibilities for Christian mission to challenge the assumptions of consumption and development were muted by a missionary presence that reinforced those assumptions. Christian mission once again became subservient to the interests of a global elite intent on spreading and extending their cultural and economic influence among those deemed less developed by their standards.

Conclusion: Christian Mission after Development

Christian development has contributed much to the history of Christian mission. The work of Christian development organizations and the reflections of theologians as diverse as Ron Sider, Gustavo Gutierrez, John C. Bennett, and countless others have brought into the sphere of Christian mission concerns for questions of justice and inequality in global perspective. The early enthusiasm for relief and development was a remarkable movement in Christian mission, even if it ultimately fell prey to the ideologies of development and the geopolitical contests of the Cold War. Engaging in development brought U.S. Christians into the heart of important conversations regarding the global political economy and how involvement in that global political economy should be central to Christian understandings of mission. In so doing, Christian development has performed an invaluable service to the Christian churches in the United States, and it is only because of their work and their impact – both abroad and at home – that Christians can now enter into a more critical appraisal of the ways in which Christian mission relates to the global political economy. My challenge is not that broadening Christian mission was wrong but that Christians have repeated the missteps of the past by tying these concerns to development thought and practice. The challenge moving forward for Christian mission is to retain the commitment that faithful witness encompasses all dimensions of life while divorcing this commitment from the assumptions of development.

In the years since Christian development's prophetic voice in the middle of the twentieth century, the organizations of Christian development have lost much of their

fervor. As with many such movements, including that of the early church itself, the movement to extend Christian mission to the terrain of the global political economy eventually became institutionalized. As David Bosch eloquently describes the failures of the early church to sustain the movement it began,

> Our main point of censure should therefore not be that the movement became an institution but that, when this happened, it also lost much of its verve. Its white-hot convictions, poured into the hearts of the first adherents, cooled down and became crystallized codes, solidified institutions, and petrified dogmas. The prophet became a priest of the establishment, charisma became office, and love became routine.[240]

Bosch's powerful imagery in which "love became routine"' captures in many respects the state of Christian development as mission today. The urgent call and movement to care for the poor has been institutionalized in Christian development organizations. As Christian development organizations seek to become even more professional, they risk distancing themselves even further from the "white-hot convictions" that galvanized the founders of the movement, and they risk purging remaining Christian influences from their development practices.

Christians face a difficult task in living out their missionary faith in the context of cultural assumptions that shape the way in which Christians understand and live out the Gospel. As misguided as the efforts of colonial missionaries now seems, Christians are still faced with the humbling knowledge that many of these missionaries were devout, intelligent, and courageous Christians that were willing to give their lives for the propagation of the Gospel, which was thought necessary to prevent the eternal damnation of those who had not yet heard the Gospel narrative. The failures of the majority of those Christians to offer a prophetic criticism of the colonial expansion of their nations invites

[240] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 53.

Christians today to analyze ever more carefully the cultural assumptions through which they interpret and live out the Gospel. As George Tinker powerfully summarizes the missionary efforts among Native Americans,

> Each of these missionaries arrived with a genuine interest in the well-being of Indian people and an announced commitment to bring them the gospel message of salvation. At the same time, all came with implicit, largely unspoken commitments to their own cultural values and social structures. In the final analysis, these latter commitments proved to be the stronger and more pervasive…[T]he cultural commitments of the missionary leave even those with the best of intentions complicit in the European conquest of Indian people and complicit in the destruction of Indian societies, economies, and self-determining freedom. Their own Euroamerican cultural blindness and self-righteous sense of cultural superiority meant that all missionaries inevitably assumed this posture. This inevitability, however, cannot excuse them from the devastation and death they caused. Perhaps the most fearful aspect of this missionary history of conquest and genocide is the extent to which it is a history of good intentions. None of the missionaries discussed here listed cultural genocide among his goals, yet the genocidal results are patently obvious in retrospect.[241]

In one sense, colonial expansion in the Americas has long since come to an end, and accounts such as that by Tinker remind Christians of a lamentable past in which they eagerly participated in the eradication of entire peoples. The task of this dissertation has been to invite Christians not to let the lessons of that history remain in the distant past but to examine Christian foreign mission today in light of that history and the continuities between contemporary missions and the colonial missions that Christians would rather forget.

To be sure, Christian development certainly does not seem, at least for this author, to achieve the same level of atrocity and violence that marred colonial missions. At the same time, however, the long-term implications of the extension of a global political economy that is increasingly proving to be environmentally destructive and unsustainable are yet to be seen. At this point, it would seem a relatively modest moral assessment of

[241] Tinker, George. *Missionary Conquest*, 112.

the current political economy that U.S. Christians must recognize the limitations of their own levels of consumption and the reality that such levels are not sustainable for the world's population. The "myth of development" can no longer provide comfort to a complacent U.S. church. While this author believes that U.S. Christians should continue to make common cause with Christians around the world to find ways to transform social, economic, and political systems, such efforts cannot be dictated by the assumption that transformation requires the rest of the world to embrace the social, economic, and political systems that have evolved in the "developed" world. On the contrary, U.S. Christians must be open to the possibility that a more faithful organization of life together requires lessons to be learned from those whom they would develop. Christians in the first half of the twentieth century were right to recognize a crisis in foreign missions, and Christian theologians – both liberation and evangelical – have continued to raise similar concerns. Development, however, ultimately failed to resolve this crisis. Instead, development evaded the central issues by continuing foreign missions under an alternative ideological framework. This ideological framework of development proved no better than the antecedent colonial paradigm for Christian mission.

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