

# THEOLOGY AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

POVERTY

By Dr Paula Clifford, head of Theology  
with an introduction by the Bishop of Oxford

A Christian Aid report  
April 2010



Poverty is an outrage against humanity.  
It robs people of dignity, freedom and hope,  
of power over their own lives.

Christian Aid has a vision – an end to  
poverty – and we believe that vision can  
become a reality. We urge you to join us.

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Front-cover photo: a shallow, hand-pump  
well built by Christian Aid partner EOC-  
DICAC as part of its Kedida Gamela project,  
which is aimed at improving health and  
livelihoods in rural parts of Ethiopia

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper, which is the result of extensive consultation with church leaders, Christian Aid supporters and staff in Britain and Ireland, consolidates Christian Aid's recent theological thinking on critical issues in its international development work. It is hoped that a subsequent report will explore theological responses from churches, ecumenical groups and partners in the global South, and offer their further perspectives on working with other faith groups.

In positing a theological framework for international development, the paper first looks at our understanding of poverty and human rights. It argues for a consideration of a 'capabilities' approach to poverty and discusses how working with rights is consistent with biblical teaching on justice.

It then presents some aspects of relational theology, derived from the work of the Swiss theologian Karl Barth, and demonstrates how the major issues of development, such as HIV and AIDS, climate change, taxation and the food crisis, can be formulated in terms of broken relationships between rich and poor, women and men, people and the environment and so on. In this framework, sin lies in this fracturing of relationships and the failure to mend them.

Other theologies are briefly considered, either to be rejected, as in the case of the so-called 'prosperity gospel', or to be reviewed subsequently, as with various contextual theologies.

The remaining chapters deal first with how Christians and the churches respond to the challenges of international development, with a clear emphasis on the importance of advocacy and campaigning. The paper then looks at how relational theology might underlie our organisational structures, providing a theological underpinning for accountability and transparency and for the relationships between the organisation, its partners and beneficiaries, and its supporters.

Finally, the last chapter addresses the need – which is set out in Christian Aid's *Poverty Over* report – to change the structures that keep poor people poor. The hope offered by relational theology is that the flawed structures that are indicative of broken relationships can be mended. Thus the work of a Christian development agency is based on exposing where that brokenness lies, and in demonstrating by all the means available to it how those relationships may be healed.

# PREFACE

Christian Aid Week comes around again and hundreds of thousands of Christian Aid supporters nobly set out into the nation's streets to demonstrate the practical reality of their faith. They are motivated by compassion, rooted, they instinctively know, in the life of Jesus Christ.

But at a deeper level, how are these compassionate actions to be grounded in a coherent theological framework? How is international development justified, theologically? How do human rights fit into authentic Christian thinking, and how can Christian Aid and other organisations demonstrate their legitimacy?

These are some of the questions that Christian Aid's head of Theology Paula Clifford addresses in this absorbing paper. She pilots us through the underdeveloped theological hinterland of our charitable endeavours, and, helpfully, focuses our attention on a relational theology rooted in the Trinity.

God has entered into a relationship with human beings, embodying his nature of both love and justice. God expects that human beings will reflect those qualities of relationship in their dealings with each other, and these relationships can be properly framed in terms of human rights and responsibilities.

The paper helps us to place this relational theology of development alongside both liberation theology and contextual theology, while dealing with proper severity with forms of theology and biblical interpretation that demean both God and God's people.

There are still those who think God sent the Haiti earthquake to punish people for their heretical beliefs. And selective reading of scripture still enables some to justify the destructive exploitation of the earth's resources, and to believe it is somehow acceptable to have the poor with us always because Jesus said they would be.

This broad relational model helps illuminate the contemporary issues that Christian Aid and other development agencies tackle. Dysfunctional relationships give rise to injustice in relation to HIV/AIDS, climate change and poverty. Rights are denied or abused because God's image is not recognised in other people.

Christian responses will range from immediate compassion to prophetic advocacy and campaigning, including enabling poor communities to campaign on their own account. And this work needs to be undertaken in partnership and networks – 'relational theology in action'.

At a time when Christian Aid has adopted a 'Poverty Over' slogan to hold together the diverse strands of development activity, this paper offers an essential theological

undergirding: 'the likeness of God that we share creates a reciprocal relationship between all of us'. It recognises that a Christian charitable organisation needs a theological justification for its work and needs to operate with distinctive Christian values.

This is the task Dr Clifford has so helpfully taken on. It's for both the organisation and the Church to live out of its theology and so to proclaim and enact the year of the Lord's favour.

Rt Revd John Pritchard  
Bishop of Oxford

# INTRODUCTION

Theology is in demand. That is the message that a number of Christian agencies have been receiving loud and clear as people both within and outside their organisations are showing increasing interest in the theological thinking that underlies their work. In the field of international development, much of this interest stems from the fact that our work deals with situations that classical theologians could barely have imagined, let alone incorporated into their view of God and his world.

This is not to say that Christian Aid has survived for over 60 years without any theology. Of course that is not the case. But the time now seems right to bring together previous insights and new ideas that not only reflect our current approach to development but may help support it in the future. Perhaps inevitably, the way in which these ideas are presented reflect the preferences of the author, but this is, hopefully, a surface detail that should not distract us from deeper underlying issues.

Since 2004, Christian Aid has published a range of papers which are aimed at setting out the theological basis of our work in certain key areas: HIV and AIDS (produced in response to a desire for a compassionate theology articulated by churches in Africa); climate change; tax; and land issues in the occupied Palestinian territory. In one sense, then, the present paper represents a synthesis of previous work. But rather than produce separate theologies for each major issue that comes our way, it seems now much more satisfactory to set out an overarching theology of development that can incorporate all these topics and, hopefully, allow for the inclusion of new ones that arise in the future.

At much the same time as we were deciding on this new theological direction, Christian Aid was formulating a fresh approach to its campaigning and fundraising work. So since summer 2009, we have used the words 'Poverty Over' to communicate our mission to see the eradication of poverty. Contrary to what some commentators assumed, this did not represent a departure from our previous work. Christian Aid has always been driven by the desire to end poverty. This is what our former slogan 'we believe in life before death' was all about; this is what the wider movement 'Make Poverty History', in which Christian Aid played a major role, was aiming for. As with any other international development agency, our real ambition is to put ourselves out of business.

A theology of international development sounds like a subject for a doctoral thesis. But without the luxury of three years in a university library and in the field, this paper can best be regarded, like its predecessors, as a work in progress. Our hope is that it will, in due course, be replaced by other, more developed versions, with new insights from

the exciting and ever-changing world of development. And while the essence of the Christian gospel is, of course, unchanging, new interpretations and theological insights are constantly coming to the fore. These, too, will need to be taken into account in the future.

This paper is an attempt to formulate in theological terms the basis of and motivation for Christian Aid's work. Our theology dictates and supports how we work, who we work with and what kind of organisation we are. So at the same time that we are asking ourselves what kind of development we are engaged in, we need to be raising questions about the nature of our theological stance and how best to formulate it. That formulation may take a variety of forms, and while the emphasis in this paper is on developing a theology based on relationships, this should not stop us from exploring other theological approaches as well, which might lead to a deeper examination of the nature of God's kingdom, or to a revisiting of liberation theology.

## The consultation process

Two previous Christian Aid theology papers, on climate change and on tax, followed a similar evolutionary pattern. We began with a formal consultation, in the iconic surroundings of Christ Church, Oxford, between academic specialists and theologians. These sessions were a crucial part of a listening process: hearing how experts understood the issues we were concerned about; and learning how theologians approached the essentially unjust situations where excessive carbon emissions were worst affecting those people who had done least to cause them and where multi-national companies were paying a fraction of the tax owed to those poor countries whose mineral resources they were exploiting.

As these respective papers were in preparation, we continued our consultations for this report, this time with church leaders and other Christian Aid supporters around the United Kingdom. And the consultation process did not end with publication. Aware that this theology was a work in progress, we sought the views of external audiences and Christian Aid staff in Britain and Ireland and, further afield, at meetings organised by other European agencies and by the World Council of Churches.

However, the consultation process is far from finished. The next stage will be to seek the views of our partners and staff overseas in two specific areas: first, to invite their comments on how the theological approach discussed here is appropriate to their particular situations, and what details or qualifications need to be added; and, second, to incorporate their insights into ways of working with other faith communities in their region. These two topics will be

discussed in a follow-up paper to be produced between 2010 and 2012.

The discussions that have contributed to the present paper were held in two separate forums: in internal meetings for Christian Aid staff in different parts of the UK, several of which included contributions from overseas staff thanks to broadcasting technology; and public meetings, as often as not chaired by bishops or other church leaders, in different parts of Britain and Ireland. I am grateful to many of my colleagues and to countless Christian Aid supporters for their willingness to engage in this conversation and for their desire to see Christian Aid developing a distinctive theology to complement its work.

In the UK and Ireland, I am particularly grateful to a clutch of Anglican bishops who have supported us in this and other ways, among them Bishop David Atkinson, formerly of Thetford, Bishop James Bell of Knaresborough (who always gives us something new to think about), Bishop Stephen Cottrell of Reading, Bishop Richard Henderson of Tuam, Killala and Achonry in the Republic of Ireland, Bishop John Pritchard of Oxford and Bishop Martin Wharton of Newcastle. I have also benefited greatly from conversations with partners and church leaders overseas, who really are too numerous to mention. But I would like to highlight in particular members of the Theology Department at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, and Christian Aid's partners and friends in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory who gave me their time most generously in a situation where they rarely had any to spare.

Last but not least, two particular friends of Christian Aid, Dr Robert Beckford, now a member of the board of Christian Aid, and the Archbishop of Burundi, the Most Revd Bernard Ntahotouri, both helped me with their critical observations when the thinking behind this paper was at an early stage. That said, the responsibility for any errors – whether of fact or judgment – remains firmly mine.

Dr Paula Clifford  
Head of Theology, Christian Aid, London  
April 2010



# CHAPTER ONE

# POVERTY, DEVELOPMENT

# AND HUMAN RIGHTS

## Why should Christians be concerned about international development?

While many Christians hold strong views on the plight of poor people and the causes of poverty, far fewer will have much to say about international development. Some will have difficulty in distinguishing between development and mission; others will feel this is something to be left to professionals, and secular ones at that. It is, however, worth reflecting briefly on the Christian understanding of international development, as a prelude to examining Christian attitudes to key issues of poverty and human rights.

Juxtaposing the terms 'Christian' and 'development' is likely to evoke various misconceptions. One is the idea that an overtly Christian organisation exists solely for the benefit of other Christians: in other words, Christians helping other Christians. In the words of a recent Christian Aid Week slogan: 'That wouldn't be very Christian, would it?' The other is the belief that Christian development agencies exist to make converts out of those in need. This would be neither good development practice nor good evangelism. To approach people with a Bible in one hand and food in the other is to make development aid conditional on accepting Christian belief, and, conversely, risks making faith dependent on material and physical gain.

Within the mainstream churches in Britain and Ireland, though, there is a strong impulse to engage in international development, either directly or through their own agencies. The mission agencies, established under colonial rule, have moved increasingly into development work alongside their traditional role of providing education and healthcare, together with Christian teaching. And while European development agencies may reject this apparent confusion of roles, there are many people in the global South who view the separation of religion from social justice issues as artificial, a construct of the more secular global North.

It is important to remember as well that churches have a long tradition of Christian advocacy, addressing the starkest cases of legitimised injustice. The most striking examples must be the movements against slavery and, more recently, against apartheid, although it should not be forgotten that these were injustices that also found considerable support within some churches and were met with indifference by others. A contemporary counterpart is probably climate change campaigning, and again while many churches are actively involved in this, there is a significant number of people within the churches who are unmoved by, or actively contest, the very idea of anthropogenic global warming.

Any development agency that calls itself Christian has a duty to articulate its religious *raison d'être*, for the sake of both its donors and its beneficiaries. Is the agency

engaged in offering aid because it discerns an evangelistic 'opportunity' in a given situation, or because it believes it is acting in response to an underlying gospel imperative to care for poor and vulnerable people? Some donors will respond warmly to the first, others to the second. And people on the receiving end have a right to know, if they so wish, where their help is coming from.

Development agencies exist to encourage and to direct the most basic human impulse to care for one's neighbour in need that was demonstrated so movingly in the response of Mozambicans to the flooding in York (see below). However, that response has another message as well, which is to do with the model of development. Typically, the delivery of overseas aid is a one-way process – the rich give to the poor – which people will readily acknowledge risks creating a dependency culture, although it is, of course, in accordance with natural justice. More importantly, though, it leaves out of account the major players: poor communities themselves. The Mozambique example illustrates a two-way process, with support flowing between communities and each acknowledging its vulnerability to the other. While relationships will be the subject of the next chapter, it is worth noting from the outset that the partnership model of development is rooted in a fundamental human relationship that transcends cultural and geographic boundaries.

## A 'just economy'

Professor Valpy Fitzgerald has highlighted the significance in liberation theology of 'the communitarian nature of the just economy as a precursor of the Kingdom'.<sup>1</sup> In other words, Christian ethics will promote justice in a global setting, not just in a narrow local one. This is vital when we consider that, in Professor Fitzgerald's words, 'one of the key characteristics of poverty is the country in which people are born'.<sup>2</sup>

## The floods of 2000

In November 2000, Christian Aid received an envelope stuffed with Mozambique currency and with a request that the money should be forwarded to the city of York. Earlier that year, Mozambique had itself suffered a devastating cyclone that led to widespread loss of life and livelihoods, and the country was the subject of a massive international relief effort. In York, torrential rain caused water levels to rise to up to 18 feet, the worst flooding the city had seen for 400 years. In terms of human suffering the two disasters were hardly comparable, yet despite this, and despite the fact that most of the cost of the York flood was borne by insurance and the UK government, there were people in a poor country who simply out of a feeling of solidarity with their fellow human beings felt compelled to respond to their need as best they could.



## ‘The poor person is someone brimming over with capacities and possibilities...’

Gustavo Gutiérrez

In this context, development aid is ‘part of an international social safety net which reflects not only the global ethical responsibilities of the rich for the poor, but also the claim of the poor upon the rich as members of the same global community’.<sup>3</sup> The Aristotelian notion of redistributive justice, notes Fitzgerald, is usually applied to individuals within an identifiable community. So it is a question for moral philosophy as to whether the responsibility of individuals extends beyond the boundaries of the state, and also whether states can function as moral agents in an international setting. For Christians, however, the answer to both parts of this question has to be affirmative, and, as the next chapter will show, this will become an integral part of a relational theology of development.

### How do we understand poverty?

Our attitude towards poverty and poor people is determined by how we understand those terms. Probably the most common understanding of poverty in the developing world is an economic one that is expressed in such formulae as people who ‘live on less than a dollar a day’ or, more recently, less than two dollars a day. This is, self-evidently, a negative perception and one that it is hard to evaluate, given that many of the world’s poorest people will produce or obtain much of what they need for survival without recourse to any kind of currency exchange. In the developed world, the poorest people are also similarly defined, as those whose income falls below a certain level (the ‘poverty line’).<sup>4</sup>

Understanding poverty in terms of the amount of money people have (which is, in fact, to define them in terms of what they lack) commonly provokes two types of response. One is what White and Tiongco call the ‘conservative paradigm’: poverty is regrettable but unavoidable, and it is the duty of the poor to accept their place with humility and to work harder to improve their lot.<sup>5</sup> Here, the role of the rich is to behave fairly and with compassion towards the less well off. Key biblical texts underlying such a view are typically those of the Old Testament prophets which express God’s desire not for elaborate cultic ceremonies but rather for justice for the poor and disadvantaged (for example, Isaiah 1:11-17).

The other response in White and Tiongco’s system is the ‘liberal paradigm’, which, in their words, understands poverty as ‘backwardness’. This approach stresses the poverty of the individual rather than the social group, and distinguishes between the ‘deserving’ and the ‘undeserving’ poor (a distinction that has its origin in the Poor Laws of Elizabethan times). Typically, the deserving poor would be those whose circumstances, such as age or sickness, are beyond their control, while the undeserving poor are those who are viewed as having in some way chosen their

situation. So, for example, people living on the city streets are today labelled by many as undeserving poor. And while, in some parts of the world, the deserving poor may derive some hope from preachers of a prosperity gospel, the so-called undeserving poor merely attract blame for many of society’s ills.<sup>6</sup>

While Christians have often espoused one or both of these paradigms, such negative views of poor people and communities cannot be said to be in any sense Christian. The starting point of development – whether or not it is carried out by people of faith – has to be a positive view of poor people. A position paper published on behalf of a number of Christian development agencies in northern Europe puts it very starkly: people living in poverty and suffering the consequences of conflicts and disasters ‘are rights-holders, and not objects of charity’.<sup>7</sup>

For White and Tiongco, people are poor not because of any lack or fault on their part, but because the rich are rich.<sup>8</sup> The reasons for poverty lie in the relationship between poor and non-poor, the result of a system founded in injustice. This is what they term the ‘liberational paradigm’, with an obvious appeal to liberation theology and its focus on the person of Jesus as one who stands alongside the poor.

Since its origins, liberation theology has been characterised by its positive view of poor people. Gustavo Gutiérrez writes: ‘The poor person is someone brimming over with capacities and possibilities, whose culture has its own values, derived from racial background, history and language... We are talking about poor people who, despite the way they have been affected by circumstances (often seriously), resist all attempts to mutilate or manipulate their hopes for the future.’<sup>9</sup>

The recognition that poverty has to do with far more than lack of money, and, therefore, that money itself will not bring about transformational change, is associated in particular with the views of economist and philosopher Amartya Sen, which have been developed by the Anglican theologian Sabina Alkire. In Sen’s terminology, poverty is defined as ‘capability failure’<sup>10</sup> – someone’s absolute inability to perform certain key functions: for example, to escape disease, to be educated, to be able to travel, to participate in community life and to have self-respect.<sup>11</sup> And these capabilities, or freedoms, are not necessarily individually associated with lack of money. Rather, absolute poverty is seen as having both material and social dimensions and, arguably, a spiritual dimension as well. And the objective of development is to reduce poverty in a way that is more than simply handing out money to the poorest people. It needs to address this question of capabilities and enable people to achieve them.<sup>12</sup>

Sen’s capabilities approach has been criticised by, among

others, Des Gasper, who has argued that outside the field of economics it is insufficient as a theory of wellbeing, because of its obscure concepts and extreme emphasis on individual choice. Development is, he says, more than a 'process of enlarging human choices'. (He might also have pointed out that people living in extreme poverty have few choices to be enlarged.)

Gasper singles out two key aspects of Sen's approach: the stress on the fact that how people live is more important than what they earn, and the importance given to the value of freedom and people's right to make their own choices. However, he adds an important caveat: 'Freedom as the ability to achieve more and more is insufficient if others' freedom is not considered.'<sup>13</sup> In other words, poor people have duties and responsibilities towards others as well as personal rights. And this is, in fact, at least partly expressed in Sen's use of 'commitment', which is a willingness to act towards goals other than our own wellbeing.<sup>14</sup>

The capabilities approach has been developed further by Martha Nussbaum who, confusingly, uses similar terms to Sen, but with different meanings. As a literary scholar, her vision is broader than that of the economist, and she is engaged in a wider humanistic undertaking. But her work is significant because it takes an unashamedly sympathetic stance and she uses stories in which the voices of the poor are heard, as she engages with the question as to what constitutes a 'decent life'. Gasper highlights Nussbaum's 'universalistic' language which, he says, 'focuses on what we share as human beings: it aims to give respect to [that which] deserves respect, not to morally irrelevant features [such as] race, gender and, arguably, nationality'.<sup>15</sup> In Christian terms, this all adds up to recognising the image of God in other people.

Now there's an obvious similarity in wording between these discussions of capabilities and human rights. Poverty means the inability to be educated – or the denial of a person's right to an education; poverty means the inability to have food or shelter – or, equally, the denial of the right to food/clean water and the right to a home, and so on. What, then, is a Christian view of human rights that is compatible with a theological approach to international development?

## How do we understand human rights?

It is probably true to say that many Christians, as well as many non-Christians, are hostile to the whole idea of human rights. Some Christians will see them as individualistic; others, more controversially, will view them as anti-religious, a licence to behave badly (with a strong emphasis on sexual behaviour). And that view is perhaps partially understandable when considering that when we

read about human rights, it is very often in the context of trivial litigation, people seeking to create a 'right' to protect whatever they feel is under threat. The UK anti-smoking legislation produced a substantial crop of cases like this. But in situations where people's basic rights are genuinely abused, for example, Palestinians being deprived of their right to freedom of movement or their right to water, or South Africans (during the apartheid years) being denied their right to freedom from discrimination on grounds of race, human rights are very important indeed.

What is more, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) sets out values that are essentially religious. And the idea that all people possess natural rights is an ancient one. Roger Ruston, for example, examines the teaching of Thomas Aquinas (who died in 1274) for an early formulation of the idea of natural rights and also singles out the medieval concept of the 'right of self-preservation' as a precursor of our right to life. Ruston suggests: 'By about 1300, the particular rights that were being defended in terms of natural law included rights to property, rights of consent to government, rights of self-defence, rights of infidels, marriage rights, and procedural rights in a court of law.'<sup>16</sup> Theologian George Newlands singles out the 14th-century logician William of Ockham (who died in 1347) as promoting the idea that all persons possess natural rights, and emphasising the dignity of human beings as created in God's image.<sup>17</sup>

It is also the case that since their beginnings, these natural rights have been understood with respect to the community rather than the individual. As historian Brian Tierney puts it: 'The first rights theories were not derived from contemplation of the individual isolated from his fellows... but from reflection on the right ordering of human relationships in emerging societies.'<sup>18</sup>

Yet Christians seem to be uncomfortable with the notion of 'rights', preferring to emphasise instead the duties or responsibilities that go with them. But that is to distort the fundamental relationship on which rights and responsibilities are based. By acknowledging only my duty to you, I am in a sense denying you your rights because I am making you wholly dependent on the degree to which I perform my duties. Yet rights and responsibilities or duties are two sides of the same coin. If you are sick, because I see in you the image of God it is my duty to care for you or ensure that you receive treatment. Conversely, you have a right to expect that from me.

When it comes to international development, practitioners have distinguished two approaches: one is 'needs based' and the other is 'rights based', although Christian Aid has also set out an approach that works *with* rights rather than being based upon them.<sup>19</sup> In reality, the work carried

out under each approach is more or less the same. But if we respond to a person's loss of a home from a rights perspective rather than just addressing their current urgent need (or perhaps more relevantly, if a government fails to respond), then a failure to recognise a person's right to a home can be challenged through national and international law. And in extreme cases, this makes a successful outcome more likely.

In some cases, such as the HIV crisis, a rights-based approach reveals a more complex problem to be addressed than does a needs-based approach (see box below). So a response that deals specifically with gender rights, freedom from discrimination, privacy rights and so on is likely to be more effective in terms of being lasting and enforceable, than a more general approach which recognises a need for treatment and prevention.

## Human rights, community and the Bible

The concept of a charter of universal human rights emerged not from a single individual but from a community; not from a local tribal community but a trans-global one, in the days when the term 'globalisation' was yet to be coined. The outrages perpetrated by one section of this global 'community' against another, and by sub-communities of human beings within this community against another, during the Second World War were the driving force behind the UN Declaration. Yet despite that, opponents of human rights argue that they are too individualistic, encourage individualism, and have little or no role in the life of the community. This section aims to demonstrate that the reverse is true.

Philosophically and ethically, there is an almost inevitable tension between the local and the universal (except perhaps in the most remote and separate of tribal communities, although even then the universal is probably present in some form, possibly a transcendental one). But that does not mean that human beings need opt for either one or the other. As Amitai Etzioni argues:

*'One cannot maximise either individual rights (and, in their name, destroy particularistic values and the communities on which they are based) or community (thus ignoring our obligations to all human beings).'*<sup>20</sup>

In other words, we derive our value systems from a combination of individual, community and universal ethics, with the significance of each component varying according to social and religious contexts.

If we go back to basics, this is clearly set out in the foundation document of Judaeo-Christian ethics, the Ten Commandments. The first three commandments deal with the exclusive claims of God (worship directed to him alone and the honouring of his name) and the next two with God's institutions (the Sabbath and the family). The remainder all have to do with basic human and social obligations, condemning the kinds of action that wreck community life.

The American theologian Walter Harrelson sums up commandments eight to ten (stealing, bearing false witness and covetousness) as 'the regulation of life in community in such a fashion as to assure that human beings and families can maintain their place and their rights within it'.<sup>21</sup>

The form of the UN Declaration of Universal Rights and

## Human rights and HIV and AIDS

The extent of human rights violations in the developing world is well highlighted by the HIV crisis. The unequal access to medical treatment only became fully apparent in many countries as the virus spread. Violations of women's rights fuelled the epidemic and the denial of treatment exacerbated its impact. Epidemics among certain groups (for example, the gay community) revealed that those most affected were those whose rights were already undermined. And HIV itself led to further rights

violations, for example, in the introduction of laws discriminating against homosexuals and in mandatory HIV testing in some countries which resulted in privacy violations.

In this instance, a rights-based approach to HIV advocates voluntary rather than compulsory testing, and demands equal access to treatment. Upholding the rights of women enables them to protect themselves against the virus, while protecting the right to

education secures people's access to information on HIV.

Yet given the fact that the vast majority of HIV cases are in sub-Saharan Africa and that human rights are viewed by Christians in the South as allied to Western behaviour, consideration for such rights has to be part of a wider approach that also takes account of local perspectives. For example, the Islamic belief is that human rights are God-given and in the case of sickness, three rights are applicable: the right to

care from the government (this includes not only treatment but privacy, information and so on); the right to care from one's family; and the right to care for oneself (managing the illness and seeking appropriate help).

Material taken from a discussion panel (Joseph O'Reilly, Philip Dayle, Rachel Carnegie and Wafaa Sadek) 'Does a human rights-based approach strengthen our work on HIV?', Christian Aid, World AIDS Day 2009.

Freedoms encapsulates the duality of individual and community (whether local or global). Freedom from racial or religious discrimination, for example, applies as much to my behaviour towards my Hindu neighbour in the house next door or at the school gate as it does to a UK town or city's relationship with a distinctive immigrant community in its midst, or to Cambodia's dealings with Vietnamese refugees.

A Nigerian theologian expresses a similar idea, arguing that individual rights are determined in relation to the community:

*'The autonomy and rights of the individual subject are enjoyed in relationship, in communication. Indeed, the "freedom" of the individual is "for" the construction of a better community.'*<sup>22</sup>

Christians in post-modern, developed nations that have taken individualism to an extreme should beware of denigrating human rights on the basis of that particular, transitory world-view. It should rather be a matter for hope that as the 'me first' culture declines, community-centred human rights continue to flourish. And it is entirely appropriate that a Christian development agency should have an underlying theology in which human rights have an integral part. Furthermore, enabling people to know their own rights and to defend them is an essential part of the work of accountable governance, which is discussed briefly in the next chapter.

However, it can be the case that community rights are given precedence over the rights of the individual, and this may need to be challenged. One extreme example has to do with the right to water in South Africa, where there is a water policy in place that allows some basic free access, although there has been a considerable delay in rolling this out to people in poor urban and rural areas. Yet as a result of growing environmental awareness, the environment is considered to be a consumer of water in its own right. As a result, this can take precedence over the delivery of water to poor people and communities.

## **Conclusion**

The theology that follows assumes a number of basic principles that emerge from the topics covered in this chapter. First, it recognises an approach to development that is grounded in the Christian gospel but that is also distinct from Christian mission. While many people involved in international development may well be motivated by their personal faith, that faith is shown most clearly in the actions they undertake to serve the poorest people, and not in their transmitting their beliefs directly to the people they help.

In the absence of a better model, it still seems most satisfactory to distinguish two distinct ways of 'preaching the gospel to all peoples': one, through literally preaching and communicating the faith in other ways; the other, through action, where faith remains an underlying, yet indispensable, motivational element. The second principle has to do with how we who are rich treat the poor, that is, in positive terms, as fellow human beings with the same capabilities that we have; people with whom we enter into a partnership relationship. Finally, human rights are incorporated into our theology in order to strengthen the ties that bind human beings and, most significantly, human communities together.

# CHAPTER TWO

# THEOLOGY AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

How do we set about formulating a theology of development that bears on some very contemporary issues that for the most part have not yet been the subject matter of systematic theological analysis or reflection?

The relational theology described below centres on the nature of the relationships between people and God and, by extension, relationships between human beings themselves. So it seems logical to begin by indicating the nature of our understanding of these key players: God and his people.

## God and justice

The model of development on page 13 has at its centre the absence of justice. Injustice in various areas of human behaviour leads to poverty, and the Christian impulse to correct this stems from a certain conviction as to the nature of God himself as a God of justice.

This is not to downplay other characteristics of God. In both the Old and the New Testaments, qualities of love and peace are also ascribed to God, and these, too, are an integral part of our relationship with him and with one another. However, the absence of either or both of these in our human relationships is also likely to be a source of injustice, which is why justice is given priority here.

While the Old Testament writers, in particular, frequently use legal justice as a rich source of metaphor, 'justice' in the Bible is more commonly used outside the context of a court of law, to refer to how we behave towards one another. In contrast to human beings, God himself not only acts justly but he is characterised as inherently just by nature. For example, the Song of Moses describes God as a rock, whose 'work is perfect and all his ways are just. A faithful God, without deceit, just and upright is he' (Deuteronomy 32:4).

Consequently, in the Old Testament, the prophetic books and the Psalms are full of invocations to behave as a God of justice requires: 'What does the Lord require of you', asks Micah, 'but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?' (Micah 6:8). Just behaviour is an essential part of the make-up of a righteous person, with a marked emphasis on the way we behave towards people who are particularly needy: 'Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked' (Psalm 82:3-4). And the prophet Amos has a wonderfully poetic vision of what life could be like if we follow these precepts: 'let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream' (Amos 5:24).

New Testament teaching moves us on from the somewhat general concern about justice for people who are poor or in

comparable need (typically, they are widows, orphans and foreigners – the asylum-seekers of ancient Israel) to spell out what it means to 'do justice' in the light of the gospel. In behaving 'justly' towards one another we are not only following the example of Jesus but we are seeing Jesus in 'the other': "'I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me... 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'" (Matthew 25:35, 40).

For the writer of 1 John, it is not possible to follow Jesus and, at the same time, reject those in need: 'We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us – and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?' (1 John 3:16-17). And the Epistle to the Hebrews urges not just help for those in trouble but identification with them: 'Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured' (Hebrews 13:3). This is clearly behaving after the manner of Jesus, who 'emptied himself, taking the form of a slave' (Philippians 2:7), fully identifying himself with sinful humanity.

Archbishop Rowan Williams has described the consequences of this self-identification with those in need; people who are being treated unjustly:

*'People like William Wilberforce and Henry Thornton felt they were made less human than they should be by the appalling injustice of the slave trade. They felt a hunger for justice – a sense of being spiritually impoverished – "undernourished" because of slavery.'*<sup>23</sup>

So when we are in the presence of injustice we are not unaffected ourselves: consciously or unconsciously, we are diminished by it. And our 'hunger for justice' lies in a desire to redress the balance, to enable our fellow human beings to recover their human dignity, the same dignity that we enjoy ourselves.

In his encyclical of July 2009, *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI also argues for the centrality of justice, declaring that while love (charity) goes beyond justice, justice is nonetheless inseparable from and intrinsic to love: 'justice is the primary way of charity or, in Paul VI's words, "the minimum measure" of it'.<sup>24</sup> Set that alongside Rowan Williams' recognition that we are impoverished by injustice, and it is evident that restoring justice is an imperative for both those who inflict and those who experience injustice. And since God is himself just, combating injustice is a necessary response to the command to love God and love our neighbour.



## Made in the image of God

The belief that God is inherently just provides a first answer to some basic questions about international development. These might take such forms as: what understanding of God motivates us to speak out about contemporary issues? What understanding of God makes us angry or upset at the injustice in our world?

We now have to pose some questions about ourselves. What understanding of our fellow human beings, alongside our understanding of God, drives our 'hunger for justice' not only for ourselves but for people we may never have met?

The starting point for theologians and philosophers who have grappled with the concepts of human rights and responsibilities has traditionally been Genesis 1:

*'God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."*

*'So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them' (Genesis 1:26-27).*

Now there is, of course, much debate about what this means. What is the quality in us that reflects God and, incidentally, differentiates us from the animals, which is arguably what 'having dominion' is all about? We need to ask the question because if, as noted in chapter one, I am, somehow, in God's image, and you are, too, then surely that affects how we behave towards one another. So we have here the beginning of an idea that because human beings have God's image in us, it affects how we treat one another.

The idea that the human image of God is one of being (*imago entis*) seems by definition to be untenable, unless it is understood to be a very partial image. An alternative view is that this is an 'image of relationship': that what is unique to human beings, as opposed to the animal world, is God's relationship with them. If that is the case, two things follow.

- From creation, there has been a special relationship between God and humans; and this relational aspect of God (shown in his covenant relationship with people in the Old Testament, and in a new relationship through Jesus Christ in the New Testament) in turn, determines *how we behave to one another*. As people in relationship with God, we are called into similar relationships with one another.
- And from our relationship with one another, as people made in God's image, flow the rights and responsibilities

we call human rights. So, for example, because we share God's image, I have a responsibility and a duty not to mistreat you because of your race, gender, age, religion and so on, and, conversely, you have a right to expect from me that non-discriminatory behaviour – again, because we share God's image. Dietrich Bonhoeffer saw the image of God in terms of freedom: we are like our creator because we are free. And he suggested that freedom is not something you possess for yourself, it is a relational thing: since freedom originates from God, it becomes, in turn, a relationship between human beings.<sup>25</sup> And freedoms are closely aligned with human rights.

Looking at the Bible, as a whole, and beyond it to the development of Christian doctrine, relationship is modeled in the nature of God as Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The very essence of God is relationship. And the good news of the New Testament is that human beings are drawn into that relationship (John 17).

So the theological model outlined on page 13 has all of these components. First, it is based on our understanding of God, who is characterised by entering into relationship with human beings and by his inherent nature, which includes both love and justice. And, of course, God himself is essentially relational – as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Second, our understanding of God as one who enters into a special relationship with human beings demands that they reflect that relationship in their dealings with one another. And third, that relationship between human beings can be stated in terms of human rights and responsibilities.

## Karl Barth's covenantal theology

The doctrine of the Trinity is the starting point for *Church Dogmatics*, the influential work of the 20th-century Swiss theologian Karl Barth. The volumes that are particularly relevant in considering a theological framework for international development are those relating to the themes of creation and covenant.

Barth's understanding of covenant is not limited to the well-known cycle of covenant breaking and covenant renewal that is familiar to us from the stories of the Old Testament patriarchs. He sees covenantal relationships as going back to the moment of creation – when the eternal relationship between God and humanity begins. So, he argues, at the very beginning, God created humankind and established a special covenantal relationship with them and with the created world.

God identifies with humankind through his Son, and for Barth it is important that all three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – were present at creation. In summary, in Barth's



## ‘No praise of God is serious, or can be taken seriously, if it is apart from or in addition to the commandment: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”’

Karl Barth

writing, creation and covenant – God’s eternal relationship with humankind – are inextricably linked. Creation has prepared the covenant and become the unique sign of it. So Barth brings together the Old Testament teaching on creation and covenant and the New Testament revelation of Jesus Christ and the church’s doctrine of the Trinity.

This broad theological canvas is a particularly helpful framework for the discussion of the major issues of our time. It places contemporary human relationships with God in an eternally existing pattern that is rooted in creation itself. So God is revealed as being always involved in his world and eternally committed to his people, whatever befalls them. And, in turn, it offers a model for the relationships between human beings as well as our relationship with God and with the created world.

Such relationships find their expression in community. Barth’s view of the Christian community is presented in volume one of *Church Dogmatics*. Barth understands human life as made up of *being* (its inward aspects) and *doing* (its outward aspects in fellowship with others). So ‘community’ is equated with action, which unites believers. This is what it means to praise God, says Barth: ‘No praise of God is serious, or can be taken seriously, if it is apart from or in addition to the commandment: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”. Praise of God must always be understood as obedience to this commandment.’<sup>26</sup> Therefore, loving our neighbour is not an optional extra: it is the basis for community and the true expression of Christian unity.

So Barth defines a community by its commitment to take action, and the Christian community by its willingness to undertake a specific type of action rooted in the command

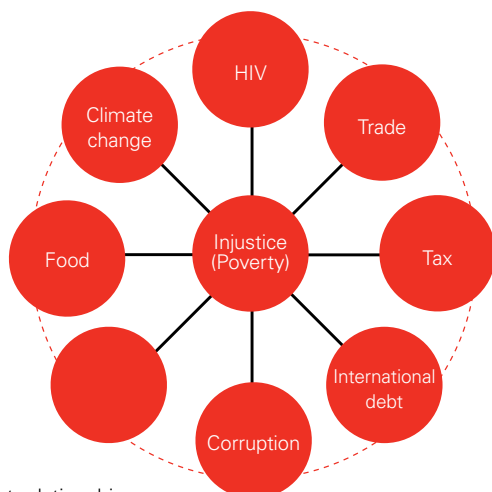
to love our neighbour. This is helpful in defining the characteristics of our disparate communities today and in bringing them together. For while all the mini communities that are somehow included in the idea of church may not see themselves as the deeply united whole that the Pauline idea of the body of Christ demands,<sup>27</sup> they are, nonetheless, brought together in action.

International development issues have to do with wider relationships between communities as well as intra-community ones. Unjust behaviour by one community to another or within a community results in the breakdown of relationships, which it may become the task of international development agencies, and Christian ones in particular, to help restore.

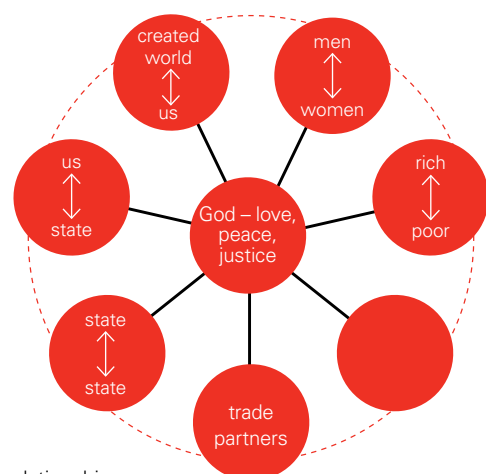
### Patterns of relationships

The very basic model of development relationships below sets out some of the key factors that result from injustice and that lead to poverty. However, life is not always that simple and the links between the outer circles indicate that injustice can have many causes and, therefore, many remedies. So, for example, the injustice and poverty that underlie the HIV epidemic may be exacerbated by unjust trade relationships; the unjust effects of climate change on the poorest communities have implications for people in those communities already disadvantaged by HIV. The key point, though, is that a concern to right the wrongs of injustice that lead to poverty is what drives international development agencies to work in all the areas represented by the satellite circles, and more besides, as represented by the empty circle.<sup>28</sup>

The same pattern can be used to represent the theological



Development relationships



Theological relationships

Figure 1: Patterns of relationships

relationships that are brought into play in international development. The central relationship is between God and human beings and is characterised by God's justice (and love). Christians, whether individuals or communities (churches or organisations), will strive to keep that central relationship in good repair, while recognising their repeated shortcomings.

The satellite circles now represent the kinds of relationships in which human beings engage, and the major obstacles to international development are, characteristically, caused by flaws in one or more of these relationships. In every case, the justice that is meant to be characteristic of the relationship between God and people is replaced by unjust behaviour by human beings towards one another, in turn giving rise to some of the problems depicted in the model of development relationships.

As before, several types of relationship may contribute to overall injustice. In the case of HIV, for example, the unjust treatment of women by men is a key cause of the spread of infection; but so, too, is the injustice done to poorer people by the rich within the community, either in denying them treatment or by increasing their vulnerability (where, for example, poverty means that people living with HIV cannot afford the nourishing food that they need). At a global level, the unjust relationship between human beings and the created world has led to climate change. But again the relationship between rich and poor is a factor, as the disproportionate levels of carbon emissions from rich countries have a particularly adverse effect on the lives of people in poor countries.

Some types of relationship may be difficult to conceptualise, in particular those involving an entity as large as a nation state. Yet the effects of injustice are clear enough, when, say, a developed nation refuses debt relief to a poor one. And the matter of taxation can also be seen in terms of relationships: that between individuals and the state (where tax dodging deprives the state of some of the income it needs to provide basic social services); and also that between a corporate entity and a state (where companies avoid paying a fair rate of tax on the natural resources they extract, say, from poor countries, depriving them of income that could bring them out of poverty).

These relationships are far from straightforward. Taxpayers, for example, may feel justified in opting out of their obligations to the state by engaging in tax dodging, out of a genuine belief that they can put the money to better philanthropic use themselves. Yet while it may seem laudable to build a school or hospital with the proceeds of tax dodging, it is, ultimately, disempowering, as a donor's choices remain above challenge in the way that a government's do not. And in the case of a multinational's

negotiations with a poor state, there is also an unequal power relationship involved. International companies tend to have some of the best legal minds at their disposal, while negotiators from developing countries may not be aware of the value of the resources they are selling. And while some corporate players may behave perfectly properly and ethically, such asymmetry is easily open to abuse.

Nonetheless, the work of international development is to contribute to mending unjust relationships, however complex, by all the means at its disposal, including advocacy and campaigning. And with that goes a responsibility to monitor healthy relationships to ensure they continue to function effectively. So development organisations are rightly concerned with themes such as gender, or about any form of discrimination, both within their own structures and in those with which they work.

### Addressing the issues

This broad theological model can be applied to the major issues in international development by asking two questions: first, what are the rights that are being denied or abused that result in a failure to recognise God's image in other people? And, second, what are the relationships that are affected by this?

So, for example, in the case of HIV/AIDS, the rights affected include at least:

- the right to life and to health (for example, access to treatment and to nutritious food)
- the right to education (for example, access to information about prevention)
- the right to freedom from discrimination (for example, no stigmatisation).

Broken relationships include those between men and women (where women have no choice about engaging in unprotected sex) and between rich and poor (where poor people have little or no access to prevention and treatment). Additionally, relationships within communities are affected, where people living with HIV and AIDS are stigmatised by those who are not infected. And, arguably, where stigmatisation is found within the church community, the relationship between people and God is affected, as some members are failing to recognise God's image in others.

It is at this point that biblical reflection comes to the fore, as preachers and others seek support from the Bible to advocate the restoration of rights and relationships.

The injustice of climate change may be approached in a similar way. The rights affected include at least:

- the right to life and health (such as protection from

extreme weather and its effects, as well as protection of food crops)

- the right to clean water (for example, protection from pollution)
- the right to a home (for example, being provided with secure housing or rehoused after a natural disaster).

Relationships that are pertinent here are those between humans and the environment, and between rich and poor (given that aspects relating to the lifestyle of the wealthy, such as rich countries' carbon emissions, have had most impact on poor communities). A further relationship to take into account is that between men and women, since it has been established that the consequences of global warming are having a greater impact on women in poor communities than on men.<sup>29</sup>

The direction of biblical reflection will depend on the rights and relationships that are identified as relevant in each case. In that of climate change, the rights and relationships identified justify a primary focus on texts relating to injustice rather than on passages relating, say, to natural beauty.

### What about sin?

Barth describes the church as a 'church of sinners' because, he says, it 'has no knowledge of the original relations between God and man except as broken relationships, broken in the cleavage between God and man'.<sup>30</sup> If the broken relationship between people and God constitutes sin, it should follow that the fractured relationships between people are also to be equated with sin. From an explicitly human rights perspective, Newlands argues that what he calls the 'enemies' of human rights, that is, violence and torture, exemplify 'the actuality of sin'.<sup>31</sup> In other words, sin lies in the failure to recognise the image of God in the other.

But sin doesn't lie simply in the relationships between individuals. There are much bigger forces at work as well, which find expression in the idea of 'structural sin'. This concept is particularly relevant when looking at such areas as taxation or the global economic crisis. Structural sin is the wrong behaviour that most of us engage in without necessarily admitting that it's wrong: we act in a certain way because everyone else does. When we cease to question whether it's right to fiddle our tax returns, whether it's right for big companies to move offshore, we are still dealing with relationships, but much bigger ones: those between us and the state, or between a multinational corporation and a state. Is this an extension of our failure to see the image of God in others? Maybe it is, since tax dodging inevitably hampers the work that we, as tax payers, entrust to the government: that of providing for the poor

and disadvantaged people in our society and elsewhere. Somewhere along the line that runs between states, governments, and companies, there will be real people in whom we have failed to recognise God's image.

### Accountable governance

The theological model outlined above, together with the factor of structural sin, means that accountable governance work is particularly important. This helps communities to learn about their rights and how to claim them and governments to serve their people effectively. Once people understand their rights, the unjust relationships that have caused them to be abused are exposed. And some of those abuses will be down to structural sin: wrong behaviour that has been allowed to continue unquestioned. One example might be discrimination against Dalit, Adivasi and Muslim minorities in India, which contributes directly to their poverty and vulnerability. As Christian Aid has noted, caste and religion-based discrimination in India is entrenched, and has led to a failure to share the rewards of rapid economic growth equally.<sup>32</sup> In-country accountable governance programmes enable this structural sin to be challenged and the broken relationships between people of different castes and religions to be exposed and addressed.

# CHAPTER THREE

## OTHER THEOLOGIES

Relational theology is just one way of articulating a theology of international development, and there will certainly be other equally valid ways of doing this. Two alternative approaches – liberation theology and contextual theology – are discussed briefly below, and some of their insights are incorporated into the relational model already described. On the other hand, some theologies will undermine development rather than support it. Two key areas where theology can be seen to be doing more harm than good relate, first, to how some people have understood the nature of God, and, second, to some specific interpretations of the Bible.

### What kind of God?

Underlying several approaches to theology that clearly have detrimental effects is the idea that God intervenes in human history or with the workings of creation in order to punish his people. While this reflects the view of some of the Old Testament writers who seek explanations for the inexplicable (extreme forces of nature, incurable illness and so on) it fails to take account of either God's promise to Noah, 'I will never again curse the ground because of humankind' (Genesis 8:21) or the gradual revelation of God's nature through his Son and through the Holy Spirit. Nor does it reflect the New Testament view of God, who is revealed through Jesus:

*'Love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful' (Luke 6:35-36).*

The idea of God inflicting punishment was prevalent back in the 1980s, when HIV was widely associated with sexual behaviours of which the church disapproves. Its identification, in western Europe and North America, with homosexual men and, elsewhere, with female sex workers led to a swift response from many churches: AIDS was a punishment from God, akin to the plagues inflicted on disobedient communities in Old Testament times.

As is now well known, this attitude was disastrous and fueled the fires of the epidemic. Fearing the wrath of their priests and rejection by their congregations, Christians who became infected with HIV simply kept quiet. The silence surrounding the virus deepened and stigmatisation of the people affected became more deeply rooted. With people's ignorance of how it spread left unaddressed, HIV reached epidemic proportions all the more quickly.

Things changed rapidly once the churches understood that HIV was in their midst and affecting so-called 'innocent'

people: faithful married women, babies and children. But by the time the churches had changed their message from the idea of a God who punishes to one who loves, much damage had been done. The then Archbishop of Cape Town, Njongonkulu Ndungane, said in 2004, 'the church is to blame for the stigma and the spread of HIV/AIDS' because a destructive theology linked sex with sin, guilt and punishment.<sup>33</sup>

When it comes to the effects of climate change, it may appear that the link with human sinfulness is harder to make. While there is plenty to be said about the nature of human sin that has led to the destruction attributable to unrestrained carbon emissions, theologians have not, generally, linked that sin to other kinds of human behaviour. Not so in Bangladesh, where the poorest communities are suffering flooding and loss of lives and livelihoods as a result of increasingly frequent and ferocious cyclones. In rural areas, some Christian pastors are telling people that this is entirely their fault, the result of their (generally, sexual) sin.

While clearly wrong, this teaching about a God who uses nature to punish his people may not seem as damaging as it was in the case of HIV. There is, however, a serious outcome. If God is inflicting punishment, then people see no point in strengthening their houses and taking other measures to protect themselves against future disasters. In other words, theology is able to undo at a stroke all the progress made hitherto in the area of disaster risk reduction.

### Interpreting the Bible

#### Rejecting the Old Testament

Marcionism was a second-century heresy that rejected the Old Testament as a stumbling block to Christianity, along with passages in the New Testament that reflected the Jewish Scriptures. Unsurprisingly, not much of the Bible remained: just an edited form of St Luke's Gospel and 10 Pauline epistles. The result, in Marcion's view, was a 'pure' New Testament church.

There is now a modern-day Marcionism to be found increasingly in the occupied Palestinian territory that similarly seeks to reject the Old Testament, but for rather different reasons from those of the original Marcion, who argued that the God of the Old Testament was secondary to the God of the New. Instead, it has its origins in Israel's use of Scripture to justify its policy of seizing Palestinian land, and despite the best efforts of church leaders and academics, the message that the Old Testament must be read in its totality and in the light of the New Testament is one that some Palestinian Christians and theology students find very difficult to accept.

A Marcionite tendency is also creeping into some Palestinian churches which can be, seen, for example, in the avoidance of the traditional reading of the story of the Exodus on Easter Saturday.

In a much less formal way, parts of the Old Testament are, at the very least, a source of pain (and, therefore, again to be avoided) because of modern associations – for example, those that mention Shiloh, which is revered because of God’s appearances there, particularly, his call to Samuel (1 Samuel 3:21). Today, Shiloh is associated with very aggressive Israeli settlers. In the words of a leading Roman Catholic theologian at Bethlehem University, Fr Jamal Khader: ‘They are stealing our religious heritage.’<sup>34</sup>

The former Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Patriarch Michel Sabbah, who retired from office in 2008, was an important advocate for peace and justice in his native Holy Land. He addressed the problem of the misinterpretation of Scripture (which is how the wholesale rejection of the Old Testament must be viewed) in his fourth Pastoral Letter, dated November 1993, entitled *Reading the Bible in the Land of the Bible*.<sup>35</sup>

In emphasising God’s progressive revelation throughout the Bible, the Patriarch simultaneously confronted the rejection of the Old Testament by some Palestinian Christians and the land claims of modern Israelis, reminding them of the particular status of the land in the Bible, that it belongs to God (see, for example, Leviticus 25:23). ‘Israel... could not become the absolute owner of the land: it was only God’s guest. The worst possible thing that could befall Israel would be to forget this truth, to settle this land, and to substitute it for God in its worship and values system.’<sup>36</sup>

Clearly, there is much more to be said on the justice issues that beset Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. Theologically, though, the relationships that are challenged by the situation today are not only those between people in conflict, but between people and God. It might well be argued that a biblical theology that rejects Old Testament revelation on the one hand and that appeals to a particular understanding of the land on the other, is affecting the relationship of two distinct peoples and their God.

What does this have to do with development? At a minimum, these conflicting (and unorthodox) attitudes to Scripture create a stumbling block for dialogue between different faith communities. At worst, they have led to violence and de-development.

### **Selective readings of Scripture**

The situation of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory appears to be unique in development terms in that in this, the Bible itself creates conflict, as well as being used to

justify it. More commonly, it is the selective use of certain passages in the Bible that has led to increased suffering rather than the relief of suffering. In one sense, this selectivity is inevitable. The most intractable problems that affect international development today do not feature in the Bible, so people tend to look for biblical passages that they think deal with the nearest equivalent. Yet the HIV/AIDS epidemic – when considering its causes and effects – is very different from the kind of maladies that were the subject of Jesus’s healing miracles; and the causes and effects of climate change are much more wide-reaching than the consequences of not following the deuteronomic precepts about caring for the earth.

Using the Bible in this way, without the safeguard of a wider theological approach, is both poor exegesis – the original context is all too often disregarded in a desire to make a passage ‘relevant’ to contemporary concerns – and, potentially, extremely damaging. Here are two examples.

### **‘Dominion’ over the earth**

In the early days of the climate change debate, one argument that was particularly associated with conservative evangelicals in the United States was derived from Genesis, in which God creates human beings and says ‘let them have dominion... over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth’ (1:26). This is followed by a further instruction: ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it’ (1:28). The argument that is derived from this is that nature is ours to control and exploit for our own benefit – whether this is in the unrestrained exploitation of minerals, the cutting down of trees, or any other activities that increase the greenhouse gas emissions that result in devastating climate change in poor countries.

This interpretation of Scripture is not an academic point. These verses in Genesis are used to justify a way of life that some industrialists have no intention of changing. They have also been quoted in conjunction with verses from Revelation such as 8:7 (‘a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up’), the implication being that the effects of climate change are a sign of the end times, and are, therefore, to be encouraged.

Many theologians concerned with the ecological crisis have challenged the reading of Genesis 1:26-28 as legitimising aggressive human domination of the earth. Yet it cannot be explained away as ‘really meaning’ stewardship. As David Horrell says, in his review of *The Green Bible*, ‘the language of Gen 1.26-28 (which does not mention stewardship, as such) cannot be so easily softened and redeemed’, which makes it all the more important that these biblical verses should be examined in their original context, and not ripped



out of it in order to satisfy a particular theology and to justify a particular lifestyle.<sup>37</sup>

### **‘The poor are always with you’**

Although poverty eradication has long been the objective of Christian Aid and other organisations, talking about poverty being over can provoke adverse comment from some Christians. The first is the suggestion that Jesus himself ruled out the very possibility.

Three of the gospels tell the story of Jesus being anointed with expensive ointment, possibly by Mary of Bethany. When her actions are criticised on the grounds that the money would have been better spent on the poor, Jesus replies: ‘You always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me’ (Matthew 26:11). The contextual meaning is clear: with Jesus’s death imminent nothing else matters. There will be plenty of opportunities to care for the poor later. So rather than understand Jesus’s words as a resigned statement of defeat, we should see them instead as an encouragement to eradicate poverty in his kingdom on earth. To see a permanent division between rich and poor as somehow being God’s will is not a Christian option.

This argument is countered by a further objection from those who believe that poverty will not be ended until the end of the present age, and this has to do with our understanding of ‘kingdom’.

Without going into the details of controversies around millennialism, it is worth reiterating the belief that the coming of the kingdom of God began with Jesus Christ, and is continued by his followers. Challenging the structures that cause poverty is part of that ongoing work, as are the mending of relationships and the monitoring of them once they are restored. While we cannot hope to replicate in this life the unimaginable blessings of the life to come, that is no reason not to do all that we can to put an end to the poverty that afflicts so many of the world’s population by tackling its very human causes.

### **The ‘prosperity’ gospel**

Finally, a word on the so-called ‘prosperity’ gospel, also known as the ‘health and wealth’ gospel. This teaching, which is more of a heresy than a theology, holds that believers have a right to material prosperity. It could be seen as stemming from the ancient Jewish belief that riches are a sign of God’s favour, but it has been developed through the selection of a few verses from the New Testament, such as John 10:10 (‘I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly’) or 3 John 2 (‘I pray... that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul’). Some of this thinking is also surprisingly insidious within popular western Christian discourse with good fortune unhelpfully linked to God’s blessing.

Much of the objection to this teaching, which has its origins in North American Pentecostalism, is focused on how it has led to financial excesses on the part of some church leaders and the corresponding exploitation of their congregations. In developing countries, though, where the thinking has been exported, there is the risk that people will see their poverty as a result of God’s displeasure, and will be unwilling to engage with efforts to improve their situation.

Selective reading of Scripture can be dangerously misleading and, in the context of development, it may even be life-threatening, as exemplified by the arguments of those who see their immoderate exploitation of the earth’s resources as conforming to God’s will, and those who take the view that poverty eradication is impossible and somehow contrary to what God intends. These are extreme examples, but anyone who seeks to justify an argument, however worthy, with the unsystematic, even random, use of scriptural quotations risks seeing it undermined.

## **Liberation theologies**

*‘A theology of liberation... is a theology which does not stop with reflecting on the world, but rather tries to be part of the process through which the world is transformed.’*  
Gustavo Gutiérrez<sup>38</sup>

While the emergence of liberation theology is associated first and foremost with the great Latin American theologians of the 1970s and 1980s, there is today a proliferation of liberation theologies, some of which relate to religions other than Christianity. What they all have in common, though, is the concept of a ‘preferential option’ for (or bias towards) the poor, and it is this that motivates much of the work of Christian development organisations and grass-roots groups in the global South.

Liberation theology springs from some very practical concerns and some hard questions: how can we talk about God as love to people who are caught up in poverty and oppression? How can we believe in a just God in a situation where people are dying unjustly? And what does the Bible have to say to poor and marginalised people?

Almost by definition, liberation theology is context dependent, and so appears unsystematic. One of its major contributions has been to encourage poor communities to read the Bible from their own perspective. For poor women to understand Mary, the mother of Jesus, not as a remote figure but as someone sharing their own situation is immensely ‘liberating’ – setting them free, in a sense, to read and understand the biblical story in their own way and to apply its meaning to themselves. Different contexts therefore produce different insights. One of the most imaginative



## 'Much of what passes as contextual African theology is hardly contextual for much of Africa at all'

Steve de Gruchy

readings of Old Testament history comes from Haiti where local communities read it through the lens of Haitian history, with its own captivity and its own 'exodus' to independence.

Does this mean that liberation theology is incompatible with relational theology? Gutiérrez describes a way of theologising that has the same starting point: love for God and our neighbour:

*'Liberation theology argues that in order to speak of God, one must first contemplate God's love and then put into practice the commandment to love our neighbours. Together, worship and commitment to others comprise the first act, the praxis. After, and only after, praxis are we able to theologize. This is the second act, the reflection on praxis in the light of the word of God.'*<sup>39</sup>

In relational theology, the extended covenantal relationship between God and human beings impels us to translate our love for our neighbour into action. Liberation theology reverses this: from showing active love for our neighbour we may reflect on the nature of God and our relationship with him.

Because the relational model, as depicted graphically in the previous chapter, is descriptive rather than historical, this difference in order of these relationships appears immaterial. What it does not take account of, though, is the bias towards the poor in those relationships that features in liberation theology and the model could well be redrawn to reflect this emphasis. And the outcome should be the same: only with restored relationships can there be true liberation of the poor.

### Contextual theology

Liberation theology is, itself, an example of contextual theology. As the name suggests, contextual theology demands a thoroughgoing analysis of people's situation, and one question that arises from this is whether such an analysis – cultural, historical, psycho-social and so on – is, in fact, possible at all and will almost inevitably be subjective to some degree. There is also a question as to the extent of the context in which theologising takes place. The late Professor Steve de Gruchy was probably South Africa's leading theologian in this area and some of his work reflects this concern.

*'What is clear from the perspective of rural Africa is that much of what passes as "contextual" African theology is hardly contextual for much of Africa at all. By this I mean that theology is taught in urban contexts, the larger churches are in urban areas... and it is to be expected that the brighter and more articulate theologians and clergy will move to the cities. Here they will endeavour to do contextual theology*

*– but in its very claim to speak on behalf of Africa it has assumed a universality that is just not true.*

*'If theology in Africa is to be done contextually, then it also has to be done rurally... and the experience of life in the rural areas has to shape theological reflection.'*<sup>40</sup>

At the other end of the scale, there are some concerns about the role of contextual theology when it is applied internationally:

*'Some Third World theologians claim that in light of the global nature of contemporary challenges to life, contextual theologies, no matter how well developed and essential for the context, are inadequate to inspire liberative action that must also be global.'*<sup>41</sup>

Nonetheless, in relational theology, context is important in that it specifies which relationships are in need of attention and how they may be appropriately addressed, whether that context is national or local.

### Conclusion

Formulating a theological underpinning for international development does more than simply justify the work of a Christian organisation. It allows us to evaluate competing theologies. So while liberation theology and contextual theology remain viable alternatives to the relational theology outlined in chapter two, any theology that insists that God uses nature or sickness to punish humankind is invalidated, in that it damages more relationships (between God and humans and the natural world) than it restores.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# THE ROLE OF CHRISTIANS

# AND THE CHURCH

Since biblical teaching and Christian theology support the view that caring for the poor is an integral part of individual Christian behaviour, what is the role of the Christian church in caring for poor people in the developing world? As communities of Christian individuals, it follows that churches should similarly be concerned with international development, not least because communities are more effective than individuals. But is there an additional role for the churches? Should the Christian church because of its very nature as an institution (rather than just a collection of individuals) be particularly involved in international development? And if so, how?

The structural model of relational theology as described in chapter two can also be seen as a model of the church itself. As the World Council of Churches' *Costly Unity* report put it:

*'The Trinity is experienced as an image for human community and the basis for social doctrine and ecclesial reality... The church not only has, but is, a social ethic...'*<sup>42</sup>

In other words, the church is not simply engaged with the relationships between human beings and communities (as an international development agency might be): it is equally – and uniquely – involved in the relationships between those communities and God. So the church bears an additional responsibility when it comes to challenging and restoring human relationships. Alkire and Newell sum up the church's calling like this:

*'to participate with God in mending the brokenness of creation and healing the rift between humanity, nature and God'*.<sup>43</sup>

But these authors are quick to point out that despite this role of sharing with God in the mission of reconciliation, redemption and salvation, the church does not necessarily have exclusive rights to such participation: cooperation with people of other faiths may also be a factor. Furthermore, we cannot escape the fact that the church of God is a church of sinners. As already noted in chapter two, Barth suggested that the church knows only broken relationships. Yet hope for the redemption of the church lies in the ways in which 'the church must make God's goodness, his friendship for men, visible to itself and to the world',<sup>44</sup> that is, in restoring and renewing these broken and imperfect relationships.

## The church and the world

*'The Church of Jesus Christ is not called to be a bastion of caution and moderation. The Church should challenge, inspire and motivate people.'*  
*The Kairos document*<sup>45</sup>

So how does the church engage in these relationships? And how does its work relate to international development? What, for example, is the appropriate response of Christian communities to the injustice of climate change? At a local level, how do church communities relate to other communities? And at a national and international level, how does 'the church' (itself a collection of communities) relate to other national and international bodies, to secular communities and other faith communities, and to the created world?

Part of the answer lies in how we regard the church with respect to the world. Essentially, the church is a community that enters into a relationship with other communities, whether internationally or locally. John's gospel teaches us that Christians, and therefore the church, are in, but not of, the world (John 15:18-19) but this does not mean that we are to hold ourselves aloof from the world. It is by the nature of our relationships with the world that we are to be judged. This assumes that the church is a distinct entity: if it were not – if, for example, it allowed ethical differences to become blurred – it would begin to merge into the world and be incapable of a clearly definable relationship with it.

Stanley Hauerwas sees the relationship between church and world as a mutually dependent one: 'the world has no way of knowing that it is world without the church pointing to the reality of God's kingdom'. So he describes the church and the world as 'relational concepts – neither is intelligible without the other. They are companions on a journey that makes it impossible for one to survive without the other, though each constantly seeks to do so'. Hauerwas bases this assertion on the belief that God has redeemed the world even if the world refuses to acknowledge its redemption. So the church cannot abandon the world to hopelessness on account of its rejection of God. The world has the freedom 'not yet to believe'.<sup>46</sup>

This means that the church is required to do more than hold the world to account: it cannot challenge the world's values and actions without stating its own values and without itself taking action. Achieving justice, say, demands that the church enters into cooperative relationships with communities outside it. Visser 't Hooft suggested (in 1968) that racism and apartheid were the 'ethical equivalent of heresy', and he argued that churches could fail as Christian churches if they did not defend human dignity in such situations.<sup>47</sup>

## Responding to suffering

Major natural disasters, such as the Asian tsunami in 2006 or the Haiti earthquake in January 2010, where there is suffering on an almost unimaginable scale, have led many

## ‘The Church of Jesus Christ is not called to be a bastion of caution and moderation’

*Kairos document*

people to question the nature and purposes of God and, indeed, the very existence of God. Less easily fixed in time, but leading to much greater loss of life and widespread suffering, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has, similarly, led some people to reflect on whether the life-giving order of creation has given way to death-dealing chaos.

In such circumstances, relational theology enables us to affirm that God’s relationship with humankind is indestructible. And while this may be of little comfort in circumstances where suffering obscures reason, the principle of God’s covenantal relationship with his people is seen in its full reality in the suffering of the crucified Jesus: ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ (Matthew 27:46). This is the point at which, paradoxically, God himself experiences that separation from God that marks the depth of human suffering.<sup>48</sup>

For Christians, therefore, the most immediate response to disasters, whatever their scale, and to other causes of suffering in the developing world, has to be an initial impulse to share that pain. The biblical tradition of lamentation is not one which is common in the mainstream churches in the global North, yet it is one which is a helpful model for acknowledging pain unreservedly and for calling on God for justice. In African and Caribbean Pentecostal traditions, lamentation is a familiar response – like fasting and prayer – that seeks the will of God in bringing relief to human suffering. This is not in order that Christians might somehow feel better about the ills of the world: it is a first step to action, to challenging the social structures that are a root cause of suffering.

This challenge is essential, even where such suffering seems, on the face of it, to be attributable to forces beyond human control. The effects of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, for example, were very much worse than they might have been because of the economic deprivation suffered by the country (which was directly attributable to a variety of human causes, such as political corruption and International Monetary Fund and US Agency for International Development conditionalities) and the consequent lack of investment in safe buildings and infrastructure. In short, poverty increases people’s vulnerability to natural disasters, as well as to HIV/AIDS, malaria and so on, and their suffering has to be closely connected to the behaviour of the rich.

In such a situation, repentance is a key part of lamentation, although this is rather different from viewing an earthquake as divine punishment. In a *New York Times* article, published right after the earthquake in Haiti, a young man is quoted as saying: ‘You can’t blame God. I blame man. God gave us nature, and we Haitians, and our governments, abused the land. You cannot get away [with this] without [suffering] consequences.’<sup>49</sup>

It is notable that where the church has been most effective in the past in challenging injustice that has led to suffering, this has begun with being part of that suffering – an example would be the response of many African churches to the HIV/AIDS epidemic – or with making a conscious effort to take on the pain of others, as surely happened with the movement to end apartheid in South Africa. In 2003, a group of theologians meeting in Namibia to discuss theology and HIV produced this statement:

*‘Lament offers us language which names the suffering, questions power structures, calls for justice and recounts to God that the human situation should be otherwise. Lament also expresses hope and trust in God’s compassion and willingness to deliver us from suffering. It is both an individual and a communal activity.’*<sup>50</sup>

### Prophetic voices

Prophecy is not an activity confined to individuals. Speaking out to challenge society and its institutions, whether local, national or global, is the calling of Christian churches and of Christian organisations. The great strength of these communities lies in their numbers and in the respect for their ethos that is shown even by those who do not share it. So what does it mean for a development organisation to speak prophetically? And what are those who respond to a call to action meant to do?

Loving one’s neighbour has to include speaking out on his or her behalf. As the writer of Proverbs puts it, ‘Speak out for those that cannot speak for the rights of all the destitute’ (Proverbs 31:8). But this is not simply a question of articulating people’s needs for them. A prophetic voice is one that reflects an understanding of what the condition of the destitute should become, and how that change is to be effected. In its simplest terms, this is the style of prophecy of Mary’s song:

*‘He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty’* (Luke 2:52-53).

What is particularly distinctive about a prophetic voice is that it is discomfiting. So while many development organisations may set out to disturb us with images of suffering, for example, a Christian organisation takes that discomfort a stage further by setting that suffering alongside a reminder of what the God of justice demands of his people. When it comes to speaking out on behalf of others, a Christian prophetic voice is one that is not afraid to challenge what has gone unchallenged, or to say things which might make people uncomfortable.

A prophetic organisation is also one that thinks creatively, without being impeded by conventional constraints. It is not afraid to advocate extreme solutions that may challenge some very basic social assumptions. The Jubilee Debt Campaign, for example, in which churches and Christian organisations played a key role, was one that many considered unworkable. People thought it inconceivable that states would give up their income from international debt, and they were proved gloriously wrong. Similarly, a prophetic organisation is not afraid to align itself with others who may not be considered to be its natural bedfellows if, together, their thinking and potential for action is able to bring about the desired result.

Having a truly prophetic voice, therefore, means more than just speaking out on a particular message. A prophetic message has to be rooted in an understanding of the causes of the problem that is being made public and a solution proposed. This is a common pattern in Old Testament prophecy. In the book of Amos, for example, God, speaking through the prophet, lists the causes of Israel's downfall:

*'they... trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth, and push the afflicted out of the way; father and son go in to the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned' (Amos 2:7).*

The prophet's response is one of lamentation ('Fallen, no more to rise, is maiden Israel', 5.1) and the way ahead is proclaimed:

*'For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel: Seek me and live; but do not seek Bethel, and do not enter into Gilgal or cross over to Beer-sheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into exile, and Bethel shall come to nothing' (Amos 5:4-5).*

So the act of being prophetic has three components: knowledge of the causes, articulation of the problem and a radical solution.

The economic crisis of 2008-9 demanded more than just hand-wringing over the inadequacy of global financial regulation: it demonstrated the need for a rethink of certain deep-rooted economic assumptions:

*'The economic crisis presents us with a unique opportunity to invest in change. To sweep away the short-term thinking that has plagued society for decades. To replace it with considered policy-making capable of addressing the enormous challenges of tackling climate change, delivering a lasting prosperity.'*<sup>51</sup>

Calling for and engaging with radical change of this nature are prophetic acts that Christians concerned with international development will need to perform if the world's poorest people are not simply to survive but to flourish.

## The importance of advocacy and campaigning

*'Campaigning... is a way of living a belief in the possibility of change.'*<sup>52</sup>

Campaigning is a formidable instrument when individual Christians and Christian communities seek to play their part in addressing relationships that they would otherwise have no means of repairing. Much of its strength lies in the fact that it brings relatively powerless individuals together into an extremely potent force that demands that injustice be rectified. Equally, campaigning transcends geographical and political boundaries. So a local or national church is enabled to rediscover its identity as part of the worldwide church and communities that have become isolated from one other may be brought together in a common quest for justice.

A report compiled by Christian Aid in 2004 for the General Synod of the Church of England highlighted the significance of campaigning for individuals and for the church:

*'Through campaigning, every person has a contribution to make and takes responsibility for bringing about [the] transformation [of the world]. It is one way in which those who are often relatively powerless can reclaim their power and dignity under God.'*<sup>53</sup>

And it went on to link campaigning action with prayer:

*'As people whose life together is driven by prayer, Christian campaigners need to follow the advice often attributed to St Ignatius of Loyola: "Pray as if everything depended on God; work as if everything depended on you." Prayer that is passionate, real and demanding will align our will with God's will and bring together the urgent needs of the world with our willingness to be God's agents for change. It will lead us to live lives that are tireless in working for justice.'*<sup>54</sup>

Consequently, campaigning is an essential part of the work of a Christian organisation seeking to eradicate poverty as well as of the churches themselves. And while secular organisations may be delivering an identical message, this does not mean that there is anything un-Christian about campaigning: Christians campaign out of a gospel-based conviction as to the justice of their cause, rather than from a concern for justice alone.

Similarly, a church or other Christian institution may, legitimately, be the object of Christian campaigning. In 2000, a successful campaign by Campaign Against Arms Trade, an organisation with a Christian wing, persuaded the Church of England's church commissioners to disinvest in a key UK arms manufacturer. In this case, an alliance of people inside and outside the church effectively encouraged the Church of



England, through its Ethical Investment Advisory Group, to formulate a tighter policy on investments in such companies.

It is in an organisation's campaigning as much as in its relief work that 'good news to the poor' (Luke 4:18) may be found. And it is in campaigning that the churches' historic call to speak prophetically may be realised.

### Enabling advocacy and campaigning to happen

It follows from this that an equally important role for a development organisation is to enable communities in the developing world to campaign on their own account. While, clearly, it is not appropriate for an overseas body to try to intervene in the business of other countries, supporting local organisations with an advocacy role is a legitimate development activity.

Where those organisations are churches or Christian groups, helping them to develop campaigning tools is nothing less than enabling them to find and use their prophetic voice. This is about more than training, important though that is. For a Christian group to know that it has the support of another part of the worldwide body of Christ in what it is doing is a vital ingredient in its success.

Churches in relationship with one another, with other lobbyists and with groups of people who are willing to share

their expertise are, therefore, to be understood as a vital force in enabling poor communities to achieve development goals.

### Partnerships and networks

It follows from the above that while Christians partnering with other Christians in order to achieve change is important and significant, it is not necessarily sufficient. This may be a hard lesson to learn for churches that have a call to speak prophetically to the world. But the reality is that their prophetic voice is more effective when it is based on knowledge and experience of other interested parties and when it works in cooperation with other campaigning bodies.

In short, networking activities between groups, whether these involve Christian communities and organisations, secular groups or other faith-based communities, is relational theology in action. And the effectiveness of such networking has to be measured in terms of its positive impact on the various impaired relationships that are causing injustice and poverty.

The distinctive character of the church is in no way compromised by such partnerships. If it is, then these must be reviewed. On the contrary, a call to the church to set aside its tendency towards individualism and to join with others to achieve a common goal may be exactly the prophetic message that it needs to hear.

## Campaigning for just taxes in Zambia

Suzanne Matala, general secretary of the Council of Churches in Zambia, explains how Zambian churches became involved with a campaign calling for the renegotiation of government deals with overseas investors so that the Zambian people could benefit from just mining taxes:

*'The price of copper hit the roof. We got interested because we are aware that copper is a resource that belongs to us in Zambia. And if anyone was going to make money, we had to share in the proceeds and revenues.'*

*'It was important for us to get together and lobby the*

*government for change in the agreements. Because we knew and we understood that they were making a lot of money that was being externalised, that was not coming back to Zambia to help Zambians lead a decent life and help our social services. It was incumbent on those of us who have platforms to advocate, to start to agitate for a change in policy.'*

*'We're not interested in stifling the operation of the mines. We're only saying, let's share what's due to us and what we're entitled to.'*

With the success of the campaign came a concern that tax revenues should

be used appropriately. Matala continues:

*'One worry that we have is that I don't believe this money forms part of the budget that we have now. So how are these taxes going to be utilised? It is incumbent on the government to explain to the nation how this money is going to be utilised, how they are going to ensure it flows into health and education. There are very high levels of poverty here. And the people on the ground must benefit – it's their money. And the church will always stand with the poor, the marginalised, the discriminated against. These are the people we stand for. So the challenge is how*

*the money will be channelled into services, where more Zambians can benefit.'*

All this is seen by Matala as being fully in keeping with the Christian gospel: 'As a Christian, I believe that God has put these resources there to enable us to live an abundant life like the Scriptures tell us.'

Crucially, though, the support of others is vital. 'We, as church and as civil society, would never be able to do what we are doing without the financial and moral support of our partners overseas, in Europe, in the West,' she concludes.

## **The eucharistic community**

For most Christians, our relationship with God and with one another finds its focus in a shared meal, the Eucharist. Yet the symbolism of this meal should not be treated as taking its meaning solely from the spiritual actions and beliefs of those participating. The bread and the wine are the fruit of human interaction with nature and human creative processes and they are offered to rich and poor alike. This is particularly poignant in light of the worsening global food crisis. The Jesuit theologian Gustave Martelet observes that: 'As the bread and wine bring to the table the symbolic loading of the world's culture, so we must accept that they evoke, too, the world's distress.'<sup>55</sup>

In other words, at the heart of the church's life there is not only a reminder that rich and poor are united in the sacrament, but also an implied imperative to ensure that the inequity between us is removed. When we set this alongside Barth's view that the Christian community is defined by its willingness to act out of love for one's neighbour, we have a potent mix.



# CHAPTER FIVE

# THEOLOGY AND

# THE ORGANISATION

## Introduction

The frequently stated ambition of Christian Aid's staff is to put themselves out of business. That is what lies behind Poverty Over: the desire that a time will come when Christian Aid will have achieved its ambition to eradicate poverty. There will surely be a role for a future organisation to ensure that structures continue to function well, and to hold to account those who are responsible for their functioning, but that will not be international development as we know it now.

Yet the ambition to eradicate poverty is far from being one-sided. If we believe that we enjoy our rights through being in good relationship with others, it is important that this relationship should not be considered solely in those places where the abuse of rights is all too evident. We need to look at our own (rights-based) relationships with other communities with whom we work, including supporters, overseas partners and the communities within which they work, churches and other faith communities, as well as bodies that are objects of our campaigning. And, crucially, we need to look at our relationships within the organisation. We have to look at ourselves, not least in order that we may address the issue of trust: supporters need to be able to trust us with their money; churches need to be able to trust us to carry out work on their behalf; overseas partners need to be able to trust us to respect their knowledge and needs; other faiths (and, indeed, other international organisations) need to be able to trust us not to trespass on their territory.

Christian Aid's choice to work through partners rather than to be directly operational reflects the importance of relationships. It is based on a belief that relationships with communities of poor and marginalised people are best established through local organisations, which are best placed to respond appropriately to those people's needs and help them claim their rights.

As already suggested in chapter two, a clearly articulated accountable governance strategy is key to this. It recognises the need to enable overseas partners to build their policy knowledge and advocacy skills in order to hold their own governments and civil society organisations to account. And there is a necessary commitment 'to addressing accountable governance from the perspectives of gender analysis, diversity and group inequality'.<sup>56</sup> But we cannot ask others to change in order that we ourselves can remain the same; and we need to examine carefully our own working community if we are to maintain our integrity when we engage with people whose rights and freedoms have been compromised.

For a Christian organisation, it is important to be explicit about the theological imperative that underlies this corporate ideal, recognising that we are all made in the

image of God. This is the base line: the likeness of God that we share creates a reciprocal relationship between all of us. And it is a permanent relationship: it is not one that we can opt in and out of as we choose. In this view, discrimination makes no sense. The differences between us (gender, age, race and so on) which can be met with various forms of discrimination are trivial by comparison with what we share. So reciprocity becomes key in issues of governance. It is right and proper that we should be answerable to outside bodies. But we are also answerable to one another, which is inseparable from being also accountable to God.

## Rights-based relationships within the organisation

Just as the theological model of development outlined in chapter two can serve as a model for the church itself, it may also model the structure of a Christian organisation. There is the same imperative to love God and love our neighbour, although, as with the church, just relationships within the organisation are vital. These include personal relationships that are free from discrimination, as well as relationships that have to do with corporate governance, such as employment rights and so on.

This does not mean, though, that a development organisation is, in every respect, a mini-church. In order to build up and maintain trust with its donors, supporters and beneficiaries it needs to operate to the highest professional standards recognised by its non-Christian counterparts. Following good management practice is not an insidious form of secularisation. Loving one's neighbour in both a global and a corporate context is far more complex than those familiar words might suggest, and an organisation's willingness to accept the challenges of management is in itself a measure of its Christian credentials and its seriousness in combating poverty. This will be reflected in how staff are treated and enabled to flourish, through such things as fair pay structures and investment in training.<sup>57</sup>

In fact, the church and the Christian development organisation are complementary. It is the work of the church, and not primarily of a development agency, to help and support its members in learning to love God. Conversely, though, a Christian development agency is well placed to draw the attention of the church to its global neighbours and the context in which they live, as well as to demonstrate new ways of showing love to those neighbours in need.

## Building trust

The last decade or so has seen an increasing emphasis on the need for NGOs, both big and small, to self-regulate,<sup>58</sup>

as well as the growth of self-appointed charity watchdogs. And although one of the stated aims of the UK government in adopting the Charities Act 2006 was 'to develop greater accountability and transparency to build public trust and confidence', there remain some issues of trust that go beyond legal compliance.

Central to the debate on NGO governance and accountability is the concept of legitimacy. For example, in the case of environmental organisation Friends of the Earth, legitimacy has been defined as its ability to demonstrate three things: that it lives by its ideals through not accepting money from the corporations whose power it challenges; that there is a groundswell of people (not just the experts) who want change; and that its governance structure makes leaders accountable to their membership.<sup>59</sup>

For a Christian development agency, living by its ideals is crucial in establishing its legitimacy and, therefore, in building trust with supporters. This may be a matter of policy. For example, in campaigning on climate change, it is important that the organisation should demonstrate how it is, itself, making significant cuts in its carbon emissions. And, more generally, good stewardship of resources, whether in the form of gifts from the public or grants from government, is vital.

When it comes to claiming a gospel basis for our work, we need to ensure that this is clearly and consistently set out. And while opinions may differ as to how this is best done, we need to be clear that it should be done systematically. It is too easy to throw into a discussion or publication a couple of apparently apposite biblical verses, and allow it to be assumed that this proves our Christian credentials. It does not, any more than the choice of perhaps equally suitable quotations from the Qu'ran would make us acceptable to a Muslim audience. If we are to honour the trust placed in us by the churches to act on their behalf in development matters, it is imperative that the Christian basis for our work is in place and appropriately applied.

When trust between an organisation and its supporters breaks down, the unwelcome monetary consequences are obvious. But besides being financially desirable, it is theologically necessary that this relationship is constantly reviewed and seen to be in a healthy state if the organisation is to enable other relationships, such as those between rich and poor, to be established or improved (that is, undertaking work on behalf of its supporters). While the legitimacy of a secular organisation is called into question if it fails to maintain the trust of its supporters, Christian organisations need to go further. Their legitimacy is also questionable if they cannot offer a theological justification for their work or operate in accordance with their distinctive Christian values. And it is the duty of their supporters to call them to account

if those values are neither explicit nor apparent in their work. The label 'Christian' (or the label 'church', for that matter) is not sufficient to confer legitimacy, and it should not be above challenge.

### **Accountability and transparency**

Accountability is to do with maintaining trust. The UK Charity Commission defines it as 'a charity's response to the legitimate information needs of its stakeholders'.<sup>60</sup> Again, in terms of relational theology, this means monitoring relationships. In international development, however, it is not simply a relationship between the organisation and its supporters that is at issue. At the heart of Christian Aid's relationship with its partners overseas and its other stakeholders is mutual accountability and transparency.<sup>61</sup>

### **A three-way relationship**

Trust, for an organisation such as Christian Aid, depends on three relationships. Two of them are direct relationships: that between the organisation and its supporters, where donors trust the organisation to use their money appropriately; and that between Christian Aid and its partner organisations overseas, a more complex relationship that is underpinned by various formal accountability requirements, but, nevertheless, one where trust is present.

The third relationship is an implied one, but one that is, nonetheless, crucially important: that between supporters and beneficiaries, which is mediated and nurtured by the organisation and its partners. The increasing demand by supporters for direct contact with specific projects, whether in the form of letters (or other communications) or visits, is a reflection of the reality of this relationship. This should not be seen as reflecting any lack of trust on the part of the donors but rather as a desire for closer contact with the people they are supporting. At best, moving such a relationship from the implied to the real will strengthen overall relationships between rich and poor. Arguably, a rich church, say, in Britain or Ireland, will receive much from the financially poorer church overseas, for example, insights into different forms of spirituality or ways of worshipping. This, then, stands alongside the material support that the poor church receives from its rich neighbour.

Such relationships do need to be monitored to ensure that they do not become ones of dependency or intimacy masquerading as development. Direct relationships between donors and communities too often lack the capacity to move beyond lower-level interventions into poverty and injustice. The organisation's involvement adds the capacity for scale, genuine sustainability and financial and policy leverage rarely achievable by individuals or churches acting alone.

## ‘We will use our resources wisely ensuring everything we do is grounded in our essential purpose of eradicating poverty and social injustice’

*Christian Aid, Turning Hope into Action*

### Evidencing change

Evidencing change has to do with showing links between work undertaken and the change that this was hoped or intended to bring about. It is important for two reasons: to demonstrate the effective stewardship of the organisation’s resources, and to indicate where improvements must be made. The change in question may be at a relatively high ‘impact’ level, and the organisation may be only one of many contributors to this. At a lower level, this change will relate to the results of specific projects. For overseas projects, such evaluation will be done either locally or across a whole region, or in relation to a specific theme or sector. In all cases, the organisation should be scrupulous in examining the efficiency and effectiveness of its work if it is to be sustainable and improved.

In working for sustainable change, we are progressing towards that vision of restored relationships that is expressed in Revelation as ‘a new earth’ where ‘mourning and crying and pain will be no more’ (Revelation 21:1-4). And since we envisage this change as happening in this world, not the next, the measurement and monitoring of change is an important check on the healthiness of those restored relationships and a means of improving them.<sup>62</sup>

### Individuals and communities

Biblical stories of transformation focus, above all, on the individual but with consequences for the whole community. For example, the story of Jesus healing 10 lepers (Luke 17:12-19) is about restoring them to their community. With the healing, the relationship between those individuals and others in the community is repaired. (There is, however, only one leper whose relationship with God is also healed – the one who returned to Jesus, praising God.) Other healing miracles of Jesus have a similar effect. When a widow’s dead son is brought back to life (Luke 7:12-16), the widow regains her place in society and the onlookers from her community glorify God.

Arguably, these episodes offer a measure of effective change, which lies not just in the individual but in the community’s response to his or her transformation. Similarly, since relationships are a two-way process, our response to human rights issues can never be a matter for individuals alone.

### Impacts of change

Effectiveness depends on a proportionate response to a problem. A further illustration from the miracles of Jesus might be the blind man whose healing puts an end to his precarious life as a roadside beggar (Luke 19:35ff), or the invalid by the pool of Bethzatha (John 5:5ff) whose fruitless

wait for help over 38 years is brought to an end by a more effective response from Jesus who heals him. In other words, action to mend relationships has to be proportionate to the degree of breakdown.

In development terms, Christian Aid’s climate change campaign is a case in point: a global crisis has to be addressed with a response that tackles national and international structures. Changes of behaviour by individuals at a local level may be laudable but they will not affect global warming in any material way.

In the gospel stories of the miracles of Jesus, the true impact of change is to be felt not at an individual level (although that is clearly important) but at a community level. They are all signs of a much bigger project: the spread of God’s kingdom. For the future Christian community, the evaluation of their actions in terms of continuing the work of Jesus would be crucial to their survival. The letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 are a fine example of this.

Measuring both the impact of how the organisation and its partners are working and what they have achieved fits well within a relational model that also engages with rights issues. In the miracles of Jesus, we can see evidence of the immediate effect and also the longer-term purpose of new relationships. The various writings from the early church which feature later in the New Testament also constitute very practical examples of how its internal relationships are constantly under review and its external ones monitored.

### Conclusion

Organisations that call themselves Christian will differ widely in how they put their religious beliefs into practice. There will be some who wish to see the organisation as somehow reflecting in its external appearance the spiritual life of the individual: beginning every meeting with prayer, for example, or employing only practising Christians.

What this chapter has tried to demonstrate is that an organisation’s ‘Christian behaviour’ has various components. There will be its external appearance, certainly, reflected particularly in its engagement with the life of the Christian churches and in the opportunities for Christians within the organisation to put their faith into action. In addition, though, there are crucial working practices, particularly, accountability and transparency, without which we could not claim to be behaving in a way that is compatible with our Christian beliefs. And, finally, there is the unseen: the structures and relationships that should stand up to theological scrutiny without imposing particular beliefs or faith practices on all the people who comprise the organisation.

# CHAPTER SIX

# ERADICATING POVERTY

## Must the poor be always with us?

It cannot be the case that an organisation whose ambition it is to tackle poverty should want to stop short of saying it wants to abolish it absolutely. Quite obviously, one agency can never hope to eradicate this alone. However, working together with others – not just NGOs and their partner organisations worldwide, but with churches, governments, national and international bodies – it has to be possible to remodel the social and economic structures that keep people poor.

As already mentioned (in chapter three), some people have argued that Jesus's use of the saying 'the poor are always with us' means that to aspire to ending poverty is a secular and utopian vision, because poverty will only really end with the coming of God's kingdom. Yet if we fail to address poverty on that basis while waiting for the kingdom, we are hardly being true to our Christian calling. And if and when the structures that keep people poor are changed, this is not the end of the matter, because structures have to be monitored – constantly.

It is, however, only relatively recently that the idea that poverty could be ended by undertaking specific measures within human control came to be seen as a real possibility. So it is not surprising that, in the past, theologians have no more ventured to challenge the assumption of a perpetual rich-poor divide than did the writers of the Pentateuch. Yet the more we learn about the causes of poverty, the more untenable becomes the concept of some kind of divine ordinance that divides rich and poor.

Nor should we equate material 'poverty' with spiritual 'riches', except perhaps in the case of Jesus himself. Earthly wealth (or lack of it) is a very minor consideration in comparison with the voluntary surrender of the 'riches' of kingship in heaven which is what Jesus's 'self-emptying' (Philippians 2:7) is all about. We may indeed all be greatly poverty-stricken in comparison with the riches of the kingdom, but that is no excuse for not trying to remove material poverty from people's lives in this world. We do the poor a great injustice if we assume that increasing their material prosperity will somehow reduce their spiritual wealth.

Spiritual poverty and material wealth are not coextensive. Jesus frequently challenges the ancient Jewish understanding that material riches are a sign of God's favour by highlighting cases of the spiritual poverty of the rich. So the poor are blessed, insofar as they do not have the distraction of wealth coming between them and God. But other barriers remain, as might be illustrated by the infirm man with an attitude problem at the pool of Bethzatha, whom Jesus asks 'Do you [really] want to be made well?' (John 5:6).

The rehabilitation of the poor in the 20th century, which began with the social gospel and developed into liberation theology, is, of course, to be welcomed as being very much in line with gospel teaching. But this may have come at a cost, which is the spiritual marginalisation of the non-poor. This is not the teaching of the New Testament. Jesus welcomes Zacchaeus (and there is no indication that Zacchaeus did not continue to be a tax collector, albeit no longer a corrupt one) and feels great sympathy with the rich young man (and we do not know what happened to him, either). And the apostle Paul and many other early Christians are able to pursue their ministries precisely because of their independent means. It would be interesting to see a reappraisal of the rich in the Bible without, of course, losing sight of the complications caused by wealth and the responsibilities owed to the poor. For it is precisely because of those responsibilities that we should set ourselves the formidable target of putting an end to poverty.

## Tackling corruption

In order to end poverty some big issues must be addressed. One such issue is that of corruption.

The perception that all governments in developing countries are corrupt (and the erroneous implication that somehow those in developed countries are not) is probably the most cited reason for people not giving to international development charities. Alternatively, some will argue that because of the corruption problem they only give money to churches overseas, without apparently being aware that the church itself is not immune from corruption, particularly in countries where this is a way of life.

Encouraging and equipping people in developing countries to challenge official corruption is vital if poverty is to be eradicated. Economically, corruption inhibits the development of a healthy marketplace, and is, at heart, a justice issue.

*'[Corruption] distorts economic and social development and nowhere with greater damage than in developing countries. Too often, corruption means that the world's poorest must pay for the corruption of their own officials and of companies from developed countries, although they are least able to afford its costs.'*<sup>63</sup>

The corruption of Israel's leaders described in 1 Samuel 8 was explicitly linked to injustice and led to a sea change in the nation's governance.

*'When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges [rulers] over Israel... Yet his sons did not follow in his ways, but turned aside after gain; they took bribes and perverted justice. Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and*



## 'If one member suffers, all suffer together with it' (1 Corinthians 12:26)

came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, "You are old and your sons do not follow in your ways; appoint for us, then, a king, to govern us, like other nations" (1 Samuel 8:1, 3-4).

The injustice involved in corruption suggests, then, that it cannot be treated simply as breaking the eighth commandment ('You shall not steal', Exodus 20:15) because this does not acknowledge the fact that the poorest always suffer most. In the case of petty corruption, where individuals have to pay for routine services that are theirs by right, the poorest people spend more of their income on bribes in relative terms than do the better off. If they cannot afford to do this, then poverty is perpetuated since people will not get the services they need. It is worth bearing in mind, though, that petty corruption is not all about greed. The officials who demand bribes may be doing so because they, in turn, are not being paid an adequate wage.

So-called 'grand' corruption is about exerting undue influence on decision-makers at a high level, and, at worst, will destroy nations.<sup>64</sup> It has a supply side as well as a demand side. So challenging corruption also means challenging those who facilitate it: governments in the North that fail to punish companies whose international operations involve bribery; and those companies that fail to act ethically and transparently.

Corruption is addressed most effectively through in-country advocacy. And this is justified theologically by the Christian imperative to speak out about injustice in order to put right the relationships between the powerful and the powerless, between rich and poor.

### Hope for the poorest of the world

The gospels show us that Jesus was, indeed, deeply concerned for people who were poor or in some way on the fringes of society. He associated freely and often with the marginalised – 'tax collectors and sinners' – and welcomed the company of women and children and others held in low esteem in the culture of his day. Such people were the object of many of his healing miracles, and they took their place among his followers.

The many actions of Jesus that are in themselves 'good news for the poor' are, of course, examples that the relational theology described in this paper demands that Christians follow as best they can. And the prophecy that he read in the Nazareth synagogue is an early indication of what that might mean:

*'Jesus unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:  
"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,*

*because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4:17-19 quoting Isaiah 61:1-2).*

The verses quoted from Isaiah are a central part of so-called 'Trito- (or Third) Isaiah' – chapters 56 to 65 of the Old Testament book we know simply as Isaiah – written in the years following the return of a small number of Jewish exiles from Babylon. And they are a reminder that this homecoming was not the great moment of salvation that people had hoped for.

The first returnees were a wretched bunch. All that awaited them was devastation: no infrastructure, no social, political or religious structures. Furthermore, they were disillusioned and guilt-ridden, their predicament a direct result of their forebears' unfaithfulness to the God of Israel. So the task of Third Isaiah is to address a demoralised people and to reassure them of salvation in the future. And that is the Christian calling as well: not only to care for people who are clearly suffering, physically or mentally, but also to address the underlying needs of those who, like the returning exiles, are simply disillusioned, the victims of other people's actions.

Isaiah 61 also demonstrates that the prophet himself is a mouthpiece, a mediator of God's word, bringing good news to the poor. It is not the prophet who sets the captives free and binds up the broken-hearted. That falls to the people who hear and respond to the prophetic voice. So Jesus fulfils Isaiah's prophecy in his teaching (his prophetic voice), calling his followers to serve actively those in need and follow his own unparalleled example of compassion and healing for people who are in any kind of need, whether visible or not.

### Theology in action

The message of Isaiah 61, renewed by Jesus in Luke 4, is a call to all who hear it to address suffering and oppression, and to recognise that these may take many different forms. Yet a realistic response to poverty, whether in first-century Palestine or in today's 'global village', cannot be based on an individualist, piecemeal approach. That was not the way of Jesus, who commanded his disciples to go and make disciples of the nations: not just here and there, but all nations. A realistic approach to tackling poverty is not to mask the symptoms: it depends on uncovering its causes. And, as this paper has argued, when we consider the suffering of poor people in the face of HIV and AIDS, climate change, civil war or even natural disasters, identifying and



remedying the underlying injustice is vitally important if the relationships that cause poverty are to be rebuilt effectively.

If the message of Isaiah 61 and Luke 4 is one of hope for people who have experienced stigmatisation because of HIV, loss of livelihoods, climate change, and so on, what exactly can they hope for?

Responding to suffering effectively is not an optional extra for the church. St Paul's picture in 1 Corinthians 12:26 of the church as the body of Christ brings this very close to home: 'if one member suffers, all suffer together with it'. In other words, however remote the need may appear, it is nonetheless owned by every Christian and every Christian community, and an appropriate response is demanded. Back in 2000, South African churches were distributing badges that read: 'The body of Christ has AIDS' – a painful message, and one that is still not well understood in many parts of that worldwide body. Yet hope for the poorest depends on every part of the church feeling their suffering, making that suffering their own, and responding accordingly.

Hope for the poorest people, then, lies in our taking on their suffering as if it were our own or that of those dearest to us, living out to the full the command to love our neighbour as ourselves. At the most elementary level, the work of a Christian development agency in this context is twofold: to show people just who their neighbour is, and to advocate an appropriate response to that neighbour's needs.

A Christian response to the suffering of the world's poorest people, whether as churches or as individuals, has to meet some basic criteria: it must be compassionate, proportionate and effective. Think of Jesus miraculously feeding the crowds who had gathered to listen to him. It all began because he had compassion on them after three days with nothing to eat (Mark 8:2). His response was in keeping with the size of the problem: he provided food for all of them. And it was effective – so much so that there were 12 baskets of food left over. We see the same pattern in his healing miracles: they begin with Jesus's compassion and there are no half measures in how he responds to people's needs. Furthermore, and importantly, Jesus's response was prophetic. The giving of food after three days points to the cross and resurrection: a promise of new life to come.

## Conclusion

While Barth's theology has been cited frequently in this paper, *Church Dogmatics* does not refer explicitly to poverty. Yet throughout his work it is clear that Christian belief is not to be somehow kept separate from the needs of the world.

*'Since Jesus Christ is a Servant, looking to Him cannot mean looking away from the world, from men, from life, or,*

*as is often said, from oneself. It cannot mean looking away into some distance or height...'*<sup>65</sup>

And so we need to ask ourselves: where do we look in order to look to Jesus? And where, as Barth also puts it, do we see God looking, particularly in the New Testament? Yes, he looks at the poor, but not always with unqualified approval; yes, he looks at the rich, but not always with unqualified condemnation; and, yes, he looks at how rich and poor work together in the early Christian community. Through St Paul's writings we see that God is not to be detached from political and social structures, and in working for social justice today, we cannot look away from them. Not to seek to change the structures that keep poor people in poverty – believing that a permanent division between rich and poor is God's will – is not a Christian option.

This paper has attempted to set out systematically the theological basis for Christian Aid's work in challenging those structures. As mentioned in the introduction, this is not the end of the matter. There will be other insights to take into account and other theologies to consider, as, together with our supporters, our partners and our friends in global alliances, we seek new ways of exposing the scandal of poverty and of giving prophetic expression to the biblical vision of a new earth.

**Endnotes**

- 1** Valpy Fitzgerald, 'The economics of liberation theology', in Christopher Rowland (ed.) *Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, 248-264, p262.
- 2** *Ibid.*, p260.
- 3** *Ibid.*, p260.
- 4** In the UK, the poverty line is defined as an income of 60 per cent of median UK income after housing costs have been paid. Below this line, a household is said to be 'living in income poverty'. The value of the 60 per cent threshold in £s per week varies according to the number of adults and children in the household. In 2007/2008, it was set at £115 per week for a single person and £199 for a couple, with other values varying according to the number and age of any children. Sources: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Child Poverty Action Group.
- 5** Sarah White and Romy Tiongco, *Doing Theology and Development: Meeting the Challenge of Poverty*, St Andrews Press, 1997, p37.
- 6** *Ibid.*, pp44-45.
- 7** Aprovech Rights and Development Group, 'Rights-based development from a faith-based perspective', *Joint Position Paper*, June 2008, p8.
- 8** See note 5, p63.
- 9** G. Gutiérrez, 'The task and content of liberation theology' (trans. Judith Condor) in Christopher Rowland (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, 19-38, p25.
- 10** Defined in Sabina Alkire, *Valuing Freedoms: Sen's Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction*, Oxford University Press, 2002, p156.
- 11** Capability does not here have its usual meaning of skills or abilities. Gasper defines it as 'a set of life-paths attainable for a given person'. See Des Gasper, 'Is Sen's capability approach an adequate basis for considering human development?' *Institute of Social Studies Working Paper Series*, no. 360, The Hague, February 2002, p14.
- 12** See further, *J2P: What Change?* *Doing Justice to Poverty*, Christian Aid, 2009, p5. 'The absence of important capabilities, which do often, but not always, manifest themselves in material deprivation, is the deep scar of poverty'. Paper available at [www.christianaid.org.uk/images/poverty-position-paper.pdf](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/images/poverty-position-paper.pdf)
- 13** See note 11, p28.
- 14** Des Gasper, 'Nussbaum's capabilities approach in perspective: purposes, methods and sources for an ethics of human development', *Institute of Social Studies Working Paper Series no. 379*, The Hague, July 2003, p26.
- 15** *Ibid.*, p17.
- 16** Roger Ruston, *Human Rights and the Image of God*, SCM Press, London, 2004, p43.
- 17** George Newlands, *Christ and Human Rights: the Transformative Engagement*, Ashgate, 2006, p41.
- 18** Brian Tierney, *The Idea of Natural Rights*, Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 1997, p70.
- 19** Thus *Poverty Over* (Christian Aid, July 2009, p8) stresses the importance of empowerment: 'The upholding of human dignity, the basis of human rights, means that people should have power over their lives, and be able to live free from poverty. States and individuals should respect, protect and fulfil human rights to contribute to this empowerment.'
- 20** In 'Strength in numbers', *RSA Journal*, autumn 2009, p27.
- 21** *The Ten Commandments and Human Rights*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1980, p135. The negative commandment not to bear false witness can readily be equated with the positive right to a fair trial. The other two have some similarities with the right to personal enjoyment of possessions, and so on, although they do not imply a property right, per se.
- 22** Uzukwu E. Elochukwu, 'A listening church: autonomy and communion in the African Church', quoted in Emmanuel Chukwuemeka Umeh, *The Promotion of Human Rights and Social Justice: a Call to Liberation Theology for the Church in Nigeria*, Peter Lang GmbH, Frankfurt am Main 2004, p73.
- 23** New Year message, 31 December 2006.
- 24** Encyclical Letter of His Holiness Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, available at [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/encyclicals](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals)
- 25** 'In the language of the Bible, freedom is not something man has for himself, but something he has for others... Freedom is a relationship between two persons,' *Creation and Temptation*, lectures delivered at the University of Berlin, 1932-33, London, SCM Press, 1966, p36.
- 26** Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I,2 The Doctrine of the Word of God*, trans. G.T. Thomson and Harold Knight, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1955, pp 401-402.
- 27** 1 Corinthians 12:12-26.
- 28** See *JTP*, note 12, and especially the discussion of power relationships, in the section 'Christian Aid's analysis of poverty' (pp8-10).
- 29** See, for example: ActionAid, 'We know what we need: South Asian women speak out on climate change adaptation', Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, November 2007.
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- 32** See Christian Aid, 'Accountable Peer Reviews 2008-2009' (internal paper, February 2010).
- 33** Quoted in *Church of England Newspaper*, 5 August 2004.
- 34** Private conversation, August 2009.
- 35** Reprinted in Michel Sabbah, *Faithful Witness: On Reconciliation and Peace in the Holy Land*, New York: New City Press, 2009, pp23-60.
- 36** *Ibid.*, p50.
- 37** David Horrell, 'The Green Bible: a timely idea deeply flawed', *Expository Times*, 121, 4, January 2010, p183.
- 38** Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 1971, revised version, 1988, London: SCM Press, p12.
- 39** Gustavo Gutiérrez, 'Latin American Liberation Theology', *The SCM Dictionary of Third World Theologies* (ed. Virginia Fabella and R.S. Sugirtharajah) London: SCM Press, 2003, p132.
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- 41** Virginia Fabella, 'Contextualisation', in *The SCM Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, p59.
- 42** Thomas F. Best and Wesley Granberg-Michaelson (eds) *Costly Unity – Presentations and Reports from WCC Consultation*, Geneva 1993, p87.
- 43** Sabina Alkire and Edmund Newell, *What Can One Person Do? Faith to Heal a Broken World*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005, pp51-52.
- 44** See note 30, p344.
- 45** *Challenge to the Church: a Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa (the Kairos document)*, Braamfontein, Kairos Theologians, 1985.
- 46** Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: a Primer in Christian Ethics*, University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 1983, pp100-101.
- 47** Quoted by Peter Lodberg, 'The history of ecumenical work on ecclesiology and ethics' in (eds) Thomas Best and Martin Robra, *Ecclesiology and Ethics: Costly Commitment*, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1994, p7.
- 48** This argument is developed more fully in chapter 3 of Christian Aid's report *Theology and the HIV/AIDS Epidemic*, 2004.
- 49** Deborah Sontag, 'Amid rubble, seeking a refuge in faith', *New York Times*, 18 January 2010.
- 50** 'HIV and AIDS Related Stigma:

a *Framework for Theological Reflection*', Windhoek, 2003.

**51** Tim Jackson, *Prosperity Without Growth: Economics for a Finite Planet*, London and Sterling, VA: Earthscan, 2009, p172.

**52** Christian Aid, *Trade Justice: a Christian Response to Global Poverty*, Church House Publishing, 2004, p36.

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**55** Gustave Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World* (1972) English translation, Collins, 1976, p36.

**56** Wording from an independent report on Christian Aid's accountable governance strategy, September 2009.

**57** See further, '*Listening and Responding to our Stakeholders: Christian Aid's Accountability*', November 2009, available at [www.christianaid.org.uk/aboutus/index/stakeholder-report.aspx](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/aboutus/index/stakeholder-report.aspx)

**58** For an early call for self-regulation by small development NGOs in developing countries, see Mike Moore and Sheelagh Stewart, 'Corporate governance for NGOs?' *Development in Practice*, 8, 1998, pp335-342.

**59** According to Tony Juniper, quoted in Paul Jepson, 'Governance and accountability of environmental NGOs', *Environmental Science & Policy* 41, 2005, p519.

**60** Charity Commission for England and Wales, *Transparency and Accountability* (2004) quoted in Jepson, p521.

**61** For full details see '*Listening and responding to our stakeholders: Christian Aid's accountability*' (November 2009), available at [www.christianaid.org.uk/aboutus/index/stakeholder-report.aspx](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/aboutus/index/stakeholder-report.aspx)

Since 2006, Christian Aid has been a member of the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) and we are committed to improving our accountability and quality management according to the HAP standard and actively supporting our partners in doing the same.

**62** Key principles relating to Christian Aid's role in bringing about change are set out in Charles Abugre and Paul Valentin's, '*No Small Change: Christian Aid's Understanding of how Change Happens*', Christian Aid, December 2007, pp13-14, available at [www.christianaid.org.uk/images/no-small-change.pdf](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/images/no-small-change.pdf)

**63** Jeremy Pope, *Combating Corruption – the Domestic Front. The Holistic Approach to Containing Corruption*, 1998, conference paper available at [www.21stcenturytrust.org/domestic.doc](http://www.21stcenturytrust.org/domestic.doc)

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## Acknowledgements

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**POVERTY**

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