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Religion & Development

Religion and Development

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Inaugural Editorial

A New Journal for a New Space: Introducing *Religion & Development*[1]

The global development discourse has seen fundamental reconfigurations in recent years, which bear the potential to bring about substantial paradigm shifts in the development space and which call for new and innovative approaches in the study of development. At the same time, the world is seeing a revision of the "secular discourse" (Berger 2014) and an increasing debate about the "resurgence of religion" (Thomas 2005; Wariboko 2014). Indeed, religion is displaying a continued and increasing relevance in the public spheres across the globe (Casanova 1994) and religious communities are playing a fundamental transformative role in many societies (Cox 1995; Eisenstadt 1968a). The confluence of these seminal reconfigurations constitutes the motivation for establishing a new, transdisciplinary journal focusing on the nexus of religion and development.

The rationale for *Religion & Development* is informed by three central themes presented in the first section of this editorial: the move towards *sustainable* development as the present dominant paradigm; the reinvigoration of the post-development debate; and the emerging academic, policy and practice field of religion and development. Against this background, the second section of this editorial outlines the task of the journal. The third section introduces *Religion & Development*'s disciplinary and collaborative span, while the fourth section spotlights key elements of its editorial policy. Lastly, the fifth section sets the scene for the articles to follow this editorial, which constitute the inaugural issue of *Religion & Development*.

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[1] The authors of this inaugural editorial are the founding editors of the journal. After the name of the executive editor, author names are placed in alphabetical order and as such this order does not reflect the degree of contribution.

1.   Motivation for *Religion & Development*: Three Central Themes

1.1   Contextualising Development: from Development to Sustainable Development

On 25 September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously approved the resolution "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (United Nations 2015), replacing the Millennium Development Goals as the international frame of reference in development politics with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With this change, the concept of sustainability moved to the centre stage of global development policy. The 2030 Agenda constitutes a significant conceptual reconfiguration in international cooperation. Development ceased to be an affair of so-called "developing countries" in the global South, which, in old-school development thinking, needed to develop themselves or even "be developed" to reach Western levels. It is clear that the challenges of the (post-)crisis age, such as climate change, global health, increasing inequalities, conflicts and shrinking spaces for civil society, just to name a few, are not unique to specific contexts but necessitate action across the globe. Consequently, development under the conditions of comprehensive sustainability as outlined in the 2030 Agenda refers to all countries of the world. The core assumption underpinning the SDGs is that all countries and societies must undergo profound transformations in at least part of the realms delineated in the Agenda. A fundamental implication is hence that the countries of the global North have themselves become "developing countries" (cf. Stierle 2020). While this realisation might yet be a long way from replacing the dominant paradigm in development policy, practice and scholarship, at least conceptually it constitutes a major stride away from the colonially influenced dichotomy of "developed" and "developing" countries. It thereby resonates with Dipesh Chakrabarty's call of "provincializing Europe" (Chakrabarty 2008) in that it deviates from development's earlier unidirectionality towards the Western model of economic, social and cultural evolution of global society and points towards contextual, situated and therefore different conceptual frameworks – without losing sight of normative issues of sustainability. This constitutes a significant shift and necessitates new approaches when thinking about questions of development. Essentially, this means a reconfiguration not only to what or to whom development applies and how it can be implemented but also a reconfiguration of what development means.

In light of climate change, environmental degradation and increasingly severe natural catastrophes in nearly all world regions, it has become ever more apparent that ecological sustainability is relevant across the globe and that it is highly interdependent with economic, social, cultural and political dimensions of sustainability. While recognising this, the 2030 Agenda does not resolve the inherent tension of

achieving its economic and social aims within the planetary "Limits to Growth" (Meadows et al. 1972). In fact, some of its goals and targets delineate diverging aims, making "transformation to sustainability [an] inherently … conflictual process" (Arsel 2020, 4). Fundamental socio-ecological transformations are needed to create pathways into a sustainable future and to achieve the SDGs – even more so if one takes the inherent tension between ecology and economy into account. This process necessitates not only appropriate policies but also radical paradigm shifts and fundamentally changed mindsets (Parry 2007). Religion has a fundamental relevance for such paradigm shifts, as it has the potential to form social and cultural values and to reshape worldviews. In the words of Eisenstadt (1968b, 10), it has a "transformative capacity … to legitimise, in religious or ideological terms, the development of new motivations, activities, and institutions". Religious actors can therefore be crucial stakeholders on pathways to sustainability due to their ability to act as agents of social change and to function as sources of alternative knowledge. At the same time, however, they can be influential opponents of such transformations (Taylor 2016; White 1967). In other words, precisely because of its transformative potential, religion can also de-legitimise new motivations, activities and institutions.

Against this background, it is important to note that the role of religion is largely ignored in the SDGs. There are only two minimal references to it, as religious freedom (Paragraph 19) and religious non-discrimination (Target 10.2), in the context of several other individual freedoms. Thus, the Agenda for Sustainable Development fails to adequately take into account the increasing global relevance of religion (and its fundamental importance in and influence on the lives, worldviews and actions of people across the globe) and the major work of religious organisations in the development and humanitarian sectors. This neglect of religion is a crucial point for engagement.

1.2 A Critique to Development: the Post-Development Debate

A second reconfiguration in the global development debate is the recent reinvigoration and increasing influence of postcolonial critique and the post-development debate (cf. Escobar 2012; Mbembe 2001; Mignolo 2011; Sachs 2005; Ziai 2016). The post-development debate has criticised development's modernisation-theory-influenced universalism of implying Western economic models and social structures as the normative basis and ends of the transformation of non-Western societies. It has pointed to the hierarchies created by development discourse, policy and practice: between a Western, desirably developed centre and an underdeveloped periphery (to borrow the terminology of dependency theory). Development, hence, can be seen as a highly problematic construct, which, as noted by Rist (2019), has such strong ideological dimensions that it has quasi-religious aspects and can in

some ways be considered a "global faith". The post-development debate has hence fundamentally challenged the term, the concept and the practice of development, called for its abandonment and brought to the fore alternative and pluriversal normative notions of society and economy (cf. Kothari et al. 2019). The concept of "buen vivir" emerging from the Latin American context (Acosta 2015) and the philosophy of Ubuntu in the African context (Metz 2011; Taringa 2020) are among the prominent examples of such alternative notions emerging from the margins and moving towards the centre of the discourse. Many of these notions and concepts have religious origins, religious connotations or make reference to religious worldviews, beliefs and practices. Kothari et al.'s recent post-development dictionary (Kothari et al. 2019), for example, mentions several such religious concepts in the framework of its pluriversal approach, from "Liberation Theology" and "Christian Eco-Theology" to "Islamic Ethics" and "Buddhism and Wisdom-based Compassion". Notions of development (understood in a broad sense) in religious communities or alternative normative concepts of society, economy, ecology etc. emerging from religious communities often stand in contrast to and challenge conventional development thinking's inherent secularism (cf. Bowers Du Toit 2019). There is a crucial, critical potential of religion in this respect. The notions of development and of alternatives to development brought forward by religious communities thus bear a fundamental potential to decentre and decolonise the development space and debate (cf. Öhlmann, Gräb and Frost 2020b).

1.3 Religion in Development: Moving from Ignorance towards Integration

A third significant reconfiguration is the "resurgence of religion" (Thomas 2005; Wariboko 2014), the increasing relevance of religion in the public sphere (Casanova 1994). As Laurie Zoloth pointed out in her presidential address at the American Academy of Religion in 2014,

> [w]e live in a time, we teach at a time, when religions are in center stage of history, have marched into the center stage and, in the center of the stage, enact and speak.
> (Zoloth 2016, 21)

The new relevance of religion is not unique to the development sphere but is clearly reflected in it. Until a few decades ago development policy, practice and research paid only marginal attention to religion. "Spirituality", as Kurt Ver Beek observed, was a "development taboo" (Ver Beek 2000, 31). Influenced by the remains of modernisation theory paradigms, religion was often considered a dwindling phenomenon, losing its relevance in the course of secularisation. But this has changed substantially. The development field has witnessed a "turn to religion"

(Tomalin 2020, 1) and the emergence of a new, dynamically growing research field on religion and development (Swart and Nell 2016; Bompani 2019). This turn is driven by a recognition of the important role of religious actors in the development field (cf. Marshall 2013) and the realisation that religion plays an "ambivalent" (Basedau, Gobien and Prediger 2018, 1106) yet undeniably important role regarding development. In terms of Thomsen's integrated perspective:

> [R]eligion, beliefs and ideas can promote change, but religion, beliefs and ideas can also block change … However, the fact that religion is ambiguous just proves that it is important: it can either be conducive to development or block development, but it is never irrelevant to development.
> (Thomsen 2017, 28)

Several major research initiatives have engaged in this field and a plethora of books, articles and reports have begun to explore the manifold entanglements and interdependencies of religious beliefs, religious practices and religious communities with economic, social, ecological, political and cultural dimensions of development. The interest in religion and development today cuts across the humanities and social sciences, which significantly includes the fields of theological and religious studies. In their survey of the literature, Swart and Nell conclude:

> Clearly, our bibliography gives evidence of a subject field that … extends to a broader transdisciplinary interest. This noticeably includes scholarship from a range of social science disciplines that are produced in various interdisciplinary fora for debate and modes of scholarly outlet offered by these disciplines (such as anthropology, international studies, political studies, cultural studies, environmental studies, geography and economics). Not least, however, it also involves in addition to, and as part of, this wider scholarly production a significant development in which the combined and separate fields of religious and theological studies have become spaces for pursuing the debate on religion and development.
> Swart and Nell (2016, 3)

Consequently, the field is characterised by a diversity of methodological and theoretical approaches, ranging from discourse analysis and ethnography to quantitative approaches and covering a broad range of religious actors in different contexts across the globe (see Hefferan 2015; Rakodi 2012a).

Research about religion and development is at the same time moving in a highly transdisciplinary space, in which governments, international organisations, development agencies, non-governmental organisations and religious communities and organisations engage in the generation of knowledge on the subject jointly with aca-

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demic actors. There is an increasing interest from development policy and practice actors in religion as a factor relevant to their work (Garling 2013). The foundation and continuous expansion of the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (Nitschke and Gabriel 2016) and the establishment of the United Nations Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development (United Nations 2019) are recent foremost cases in point. These initiatives were preceded by several initiatives by governments and international organisations, such as the World Bank, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the British Department for International Development and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (see Petersen 2019 and Tomalin, Haustein and Kidy 2019 for more comprehensive overviews). Another important initiative in this regard is the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities, which brings together UN agencies, governments, development agencies, religious communities and organisations, seeking to function as a bridge between research, policy and practice in religion and development (JLIFLC n.d.). Even religious development organisations ("faith-based organisations", FBOs), which are positioned within the field by definition, conceptually engage with the religion and development nexus. Examples are the Dutch Knowledge Centre Religion and Development founded by several religious development organisations (van Wensveen 2011; van der Wel 2011) and ACT Alliance's Community of Practice on Religion and Development (van Zeeland 2016; Werner and van der Ven 2016).

While religion and development is a dynamically evolving field, it so far lacks a primary periodical for the publication of research and reflections on policy and practice. Numerous excellent special issues and edited volumes have been published in relation to religion and development, for instance the issues on "Religion and Development" in *World Development* (1980) and *Development in Practice* (Rakodi 2012b), the two issues of *Gender & Development* on "Gender, Religion and Spirituality" (1999) and "Working with Faith-based Communities" (Greany 2006), *Religion's* issue on "Religions, Natural Hazards, and Disasters" (Gaillard and Texier 2010), the *Journal of Refugee Studies'* special issue "Faith-Based Humanitarianism in Contexts of Forced Displacement" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011), the *Canadian Journal of Development Studies'* issue on "Religion and International Development" (Levy 2013), the special collection in *HTS Theological Studies* on "Engaging Development: Contributions to a Critical Theological and Religious Debate" (Swart and Adogame 2016), the *Handbook of Research on Development and Religion* (Clarke 2013), the *Routledge Handbook on Religions and Global Development* (Tomalin 2015) and many important edited volumes – to just name a few, non-exhaustive (!) examples: Adogame, Adeboye and Williams 2020; Ammah, Ossom-Batsa and Gatti 2018; Belshaw, Calderisi and Sugden 2001; Carbonnier, Kartas and Silva 2013; Chitando, Gunda and Togarasei 2020; Clarke and Jennings 2008; Clarke and Tittensor 2016; Deneulin and Bano 2009; Fountain, Bush and Feener 2015; Freeman 2012; Heuser

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and Köhrsen 2020; Köhrsen and Heuser 2020; Khan and Cheema 2020; Kraft and Wilkinson 2020; Mtata 2013; Öhlmann, Gräb and Frost 2020a; Ter Haar 2011; Venter 2004). Inter alia Bompani (2019), Jones and Petersen (2011) and Swart and Nell (2016) provide excellent and more comprehensive overviews of the field. Moreover, Routledge has taken the initiative to pioneer the excellent and vibrant book series *Routledge Research in Religion and Development*. However, thus far no periodical dedicating itself to the field exists and therefore establishing a journal for this purpose constitutes a fundamental desideratum.

2. The Task of the Journal

Religion & Development positions itself within the broad realms opened up in the previous section. The journal's scope and overarching bracket is the intersection of the two broad concepts of religion and development at the micro, meso and macro levels of society from historical as well as contemporary perspectives (cf. Hefferan 2015; Rakodi 2012a). Both of these contested concepts are understood in a deliberately wide sense, with the intention to foster critical debate on each of them and their explicit and implicit relationships. In line with the approach of the Agenda for Sustainable Development implying that all countries are "developing countries", the geographical scope of the journal is not limited. Contributions can focus on the global North and South and importantly also engage in their entanglements. The following paragraphs sketch the notions of religion and of development that underpin *Religion & Development*'s scope, followed by an outline of possible directions of inquiry published in the journal.

Religion encompasses all forms of institutions, organisations, communities, networks, movements, scenes, cultures, practices and activities that can be described as religious (cf. Bergunder 2014), including those which take up the function of religion or which espouse similar normative, ideological claims. An important social function of religion is to provide meaning through the closure of ultimate indeterminacy and to affirm the purpose of life through the interpretation of contingency (Luhmann 1977). The functional notion of religion therefore includes the possibility of analysing and describing actions, organisations and movements not explicitly marked as religious by the actors involved through references to a religious discourse identifying these phenomena as religious. The concept of religion can thus refer to a cultural programme that makes it possible to recognise what is important for people in life, what a good life is for them and to what they are committed (Matthes 1992).

Importantly, the scope of the journal includes notion of "lived religion" (Gräb 2018). Relating to Geertz (1973), this approach views religion as "an integral part of culture producing a net of symbols and rituals, which articulates and embodies the

significance of worldviews, meaning production and life orientations" (Gräb 2020, 4). It conceptually serves to "understand the practices within a community with respect to the symbolic order these practices embody, the rituals people do, the social, political, cultural commitments they show" (Gräb 2020, 4). An important area is the organisational level of religious communities' and religious organisations' concrete actions. However, contributions focusing on the social level of interaction within religious contexts and the individual level of beliefs, worldviews, attitudes and behaviour are equally encouraged. *Religion & Development* thereby has a multi-religious scope. Its focus is not limited to any specific religion. On the contrary, contributions focusing on non-mainstream religious actors and new religious movements, such as Pentecostalism (Asamoah-Gyadu 2013), are particularly welcome.

Development, meanwhile, is taken as a marker for manifold processes of social, economic, ecological, political and cultural dynamics, change and transformation. Within this framework, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and all their 169 targets are one important point of reference. The marker "development" hence serves to encompass all the realms covered by the SDGs and includes contributions relating to one or more of the dimensions of the SDGs. This can, for example, include contributions with thematic foci on gender, ecology, economy, inequality, social services and any of their sub-dimensions or adjacent fields. References to development can be explicit or implicit.

As pointed out above, development is a contested term. The journal therefore invites contributions that critically engage with the ideological prerequisites and concepts of development, for example in the framework of post-development thinking and discourse and the theorising and conceptualisation of alternatives to development. This implies that the notion of development itself is not considered as a priori ideologically neutral, but can constitute a value-laden ideology itself (Ziai 2016). Lastly, development stands for a policy and practice field in which international organisations, governments, development agencies, humanitarian agencies, private enterprises, non-governmental organisations, religious communities and organisations, individuals and other actors engage in numerous practices, activities, projects, programmes and so forth. These actors, policies and practices and their respective motivations are well within the scope of the journal, both from emic and etic perspectives.

Regarding the scope of contributions published in *Religion & Development*, a strand of research will relate to the pointed questions raised in recent volumes such as *Religion: Help or Hindrance to Development?* (Mtata 2013) and *Does Religion Make a Difference?* (Heuser and Köhrsen 2020). How do religious communities contribute to processes of (sustainable) development? What is the (positive or negative) role of religion and religious communities for development in different contexts across the globe? Furthermore, following the critical approaches in the

field (e.g. Carbonnier, Kartas and Silva 2013; Deneulin and Bano 2009; Jones and Petersen 2011), the journal seeks to provide a space to move beyond instrumental or functional approaches that ask for the contribution of religious communities to pre-defined development agendas (cf. van Wensveen 2011). As these scholars have argued, religion should not be essentialised as an "added" component to development but be considered as a dimension of life that is deeply embedded everywhere all the time. *Religion & Development* accordingly intends to challenge the dominant, secular development paradigms by exploring religious notions of development and juxtaposing them with those in the mainstream development discourse. What are the notions of development or alternatives to them brought forward by religious communities? How does religion influence notions of a good life, desirable social and economic structures, a viable ecological order, gender relations and human diversity (cf. van Wyk 2019)? What is the stance of religious communities on inequalities in different realms, locally and globally? *Religion & Development* intentionally opens up a space for debating the arguments coming from a post-development perspective criticising and questioning the term, the notion, the policies and the practices of development altogether. Is development a "global faith" (Rist 2019)? What are the implications of the post-development discourse for the field of religion and development?

Moreover, the journal will serve as an important forum for the practical side of religion and development. This will include in-depth analyses of the work of religious communities and religious actors in the social, economic, ecological and political realms – covering their activities, their structures, their effectiveness and so forth. Questions will include, for instance: How do religious actors operate in the development field? In what ways are religious actors implementing development programmes with religious communities? How are religious communities involved in development cooperation? What are the tensions in the practical application of religions in development, from debates around proselytism to gender norms? What can we learn from good practices of religious engagement in development policy and practice (cf. Eggert)? The journal's *policy & practice* section will purposefully aim to contend with these practical debates and provide concise and accessible articles that will reach development practitioners.

At the time of writing this editorial, we are nine years from reaching the closing point of the Agenda for Sustainable Development. Looking ahead to the year 2030, the question naturally arises as to whether there will be a new global development agenda to replace or augment the Sustainable Development Goals and what the implications of the religion and development debate would be for such an agenda. *Religion & Development* therefore not only seeks to describe the world as it has been and currently is but to actively contribute to shaping the future of development or post-development alternatives by providing a space for discussing the implications of the religion and development debate for a possible post-2030 development

agenda on the basis of sound academic research, evidence and argument. Looking ahead, key questions are: What will be the role of religious communities for sustainable development in the future? How do religious communities contribute to shaping post-development futures? Will the 'religious turn' in development policy and cooperation last beyond 2030? Taking the impact of religious communities on sustainable development seriously, how would a new development agenda or post-development agendas need to be shaped to reflect this impact? What alternative conceptualisations could emerge from the religion and development debate, such as the concepts "Sustainable Integral Development Goals" and "Pluriversal Development Goals" recently brought forward by Obiora Ike and Lata Narayanaswamy at a deliberation on religion and development?[2]

3. Transdisciplinary and Collaborative Span

Religion & Development endeavours to establish itself as the primary periodical related to the nexus of religion and development, thereby aiming to become a key focal point of the knowledge production in this emerging field. The journal seeks to do this by publishing original, high-quality peer-reviewed research from across the social sciences and humanities as well as reflections from policy, practice and religious actors in this field.

Religion & Development has emerged from and is rooted in the collaborative structures of the International Network on Religious Communities and Sustainable Development (IN//RCSD n.d.). The IN//RCSD is a transdisciplinary network focusing on research, teaching and policy advice in the field of religion and sustainable development. As a global think-tank, it brings together scholars, policymakers, development practitioners and representatives of religious communities from various parts of the world. Originally founded by a group of scholars from Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (Germany), University of Lagos (Nigeria), University of Pretoria (South Africa), Trinity Theological Seminary Legon (Ghana) and University of the Western Cape (South Africa), the network is swiftly expanding and broadening its scope, inter alia collaborating with the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities in its research-to-practice work. As the journal of the IN//RCSD, *Religion & Development* editorial office is part of the IN//RCSD coordination office currently located at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

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2 Panel Discussion "Towards a Post-2030 Development Agenda" at the International Conference Religious Communities and Sustainable Development: Points of Departure for a Post-2030 Development Agenda", 11 June 2021. See https://youtu.be/FKACal0pQIE.

Building on the transdisciplinary profile of the IN//RCSD and its collaborative activities, *Religion & Development* aims to be a transdisciplinary journal. By transdisciplinarity, we refer to the term as outlined by Jahn, Bergmann and Keil:

> Transdisciplinarity is a critical and self-reflexive research approach that relates societal with scientific problems; it produces new knowledge by integrating different scientific and extra-scientific insights; its aim is to contribute to both societal and scientific progress; integration is the cognitive operation of establishing a novel, hitherto non-existent connection between the distinct epistemic, social–organizational, and communicative entities that make up the given problem context.
> (Jahn, Bergmann and Keil 2012, 8–9)

In relation to *Religion & Development*, this entails three major aspects: a focus on development as a major and complex societal question; cooperation across academic disciplines; and exchange between academic and other societal actors that transcends the borders of the academic space. The journal, while firmly rooted in academia, is thus not a purely academic endeavour but reaches into the trifold transdisciplinary space of academia, development policy and practice and religious communities, thereby fostering unique, equitable and highly productive channels of knowledge production and exchange. An important prerequisite for this is to ensure the immediate free accessibility of all the journal's content within and beyond academia at any place and time. The journal will hence be published in full open access.

Religion & Development strives to contribute to overcoming inadequate power structures in the academic space. This will involve international cooperation on equal footing and the promotion of diversity in the journal's structures. Particular emphasis is placed on involving early-career researchers as well as scholars from the global South by encouraging them to publish their research in the journal and to get involved in the journal's editorial processes. The journal is edited by an internationally and transdisciplinarily composed Editorial Committee determining the journal's strategic development in cooperation with an advisory Editorial Board. It is our pleasure to announce that in the run-up to the publication of this inaugural issue, a diverse group of scholars from different disciplines, countries and at different stages of their respective careers have accepted our invitation to join the journal's Board. Their readiness to contribute their time and expertise to this project is greatly appreciated.

We are delighted to be able to partner on this journal with a highly renowned and globally oriented publisher. It is a particular privilege to see *Religion & Development* published by Brill and their German subsidiary Schöningh from the outset. Special

thanks are due to Izaak de Hulster of Brill Germany, who has worked tirelessly to make this possible and with whom the collaboration has been nothing but excellent.

4. Editorial Policy

Religion & Development will publish three types of contributions: *research articles*, *policy & practice notes* and *book reviews*. *Research articles* should typically have a length of 7,000 to 8,000 words and include high-quality, state-of-the-art contributions to the academic debate advancing the research in the field. We encourage articles based on empirical research in all its forms, as well as those with conceptual or theoretical focus. With the *policy & practice notes*, a key element of the journal's transdisciplinary approach, we pursue a more flexible and innovative route. They should be shorter (2,000 to 4,000 words) and their content should be of interest to both practitioners and scholars in the field of religion and development. The nature of a *policy & practice note* is relatively flexible. Contributions in this section can, for example, include reflections on and lessons learned from specific programmes, projects or interventions, scoping studies and thorough mappings of specific themes, contributions highlighting specific needs for research or action, essays of argumentative character and perspectives of local actors, religious communities or religious leaders. Manuscripts for *research articles* and *policy & practice notes* will undergo rigorous peer review. After a first screening by the editorial office and the journal's editors regarding formalities, academic quality and suitability, each submission is sent to at least two anonymous expert reviewers for their assessment of the article (double blind). Authors will be requested to revise their contributions based on the reviewers' comments as well as remarks by the editors. Moreover, *Religion & Development* is committed to ensuring transdisciplinarity, internationality and diversity in the review process. In terms of transdisciplinarity, it is the journal's policy that the reviews of an article are carried out from different disciplinary perspectives. One of these would typically be the same as the author's discipline. For *policy & practice notes*, there should be at least one reviewer with a policymaker's or practitioner's background. To ensure internationality, the journal aims to have the contributions reviewed by experts from different contexts. In terms of diversity, we inter alia aim to include both senior and junior scholars in the review process as well as ensuring diversity in terms of gender.

Establishing a new publication endeavour such as *Religion & Development* has two essential requirements. Most important is the commitment of the people involved. As a founding editors' group, we are privileged to have been able to convene an excellent and diverse group of scholars both in the journal's Editorial Committee and Editorial Board, volunteering their time and driving the journal's further development. Moreover, we have thus far been equally privileged in being able to

count on the support of numerous colleagues in reviewing articles for the journal. This deserves our deep appreciation.

In addition to this commitment, there is a second requirement to the long-term viability of *Religion & Development*. The journal needs to be economically viable in the long-term. To ensure a professional publication, some costs are unavoidable, inter alia for copy-editing and typeset. From the outset, we considered it non-negotiable to publish the journal in open access. To cover the journal's immediate publication costs, we hence have developed a solidarity model based on article processing charges. In some parts of the world, financing for open access publication is increasingly available, be it through specific open access funds, from project budgets or through institutional support. Those scholars that have access to such funding will be required to pay article processing charges for their articles. At the same time, it is the journal's firm policy that these costs should not be a hindrance for anyone wanting to publish in the journal. For those authors that are not able to pay the full article processing charges or who are not able to finance article processing charges at all, the article processing charges can be substantially reduced or waived. We are confident that this model will ensure the free dissemination of knowledge while at the same time facilitating the long-term economic sustainability of the journal.

5.   Setting the Scene: Notes on the First Issue

Having presented the considerations guiding us in establishing *Religion & Development* as a new, transdisciplinary periodical, we now proceed to introducing: the contributions constituting the first issue. The five *research articles*, two *policy & practice notes* and two *book reviews* very much reflect the journal's transdisciplinary and diverse approach. The contributors are scholars and practitioners at different stages of their respective careers with different disciplinary backgrounds, inter alia in law, sociology and theology. We consider it an important contribution to decolonising the academic space that the majority of the contributors in this inaugural issue are early-career scholars. The issue is furthermore truly international: in terms of the authors' affiliations, there are contributions from nine countries on three different continents: Africa, Europe and Oceania.

Most of the contributions in this issue originally emerged in the context of the conference *Between Cosmology and Community: Religion and Sustainable Development* organised by the Research Programme on Religious Communities and Sustainable Development at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in July 2019. The theme *Cosmology and Community* highlights a field of tension and constitutes two important foci of the religion and development debate. On the one hand, religious communities are social entities, whose constitutive factor is the interaction among

their members and with wider society. On the other hand, a distinctive feature of many religious communities is their reference to cosmology. They are agents of worldview production, identity formation and values synthesis. With respect to sustainable development, *Community* signifies contributions by religious agents to processes of social, economic, ecological and cultural transformation. *Cosmology* refers to the ideological dimension, the impact of the formation of mind-sets, belief and knowledge systems, attitudes and behaviour on these processes of transformation. Relating to the realm of *Community*, the contributions in this volume deal with the contribution of religious communities to processes of sustainable development in different contexts. Related to the realm of *Cosmology*, the contributions deal with notions of development both of (Western) development cooperation and of religious communities and their respective ideological presuppositions. As previously mentioned, the discourse on religion and development has thus far largely been taking place within a secular framework. This is challenged by perspectives of religious actors, for whom "development is part of religion, i.e. professional and academic experts' notions of development represent only one dimension in a more comprehensive human and social transformation" (Öhlmann, Frost and Gräb 2020). Hence, under the theme of *Cosmology*, the contributions analyse notions such as Trinitarian Well-Being and Ubuntu in relation to dominant Western and secular notions of development and modernity.

In the first article, "'You Are Blessed to Be a Blessing': Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches and the Politics of Redistribution in Harare", Simbarashe Gukurume investigates the role of new Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in holistic development. The author draws on ethnographic field work conducted in Good Life Church in Harare. Relying on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field, he describes these churches as "alternative spaces of welfare provision, redistribution and social security" in a context of multiple crises. At the same time, Gukurume makes out a field of tension between inclusion and exclusion and concludes that a "specific socialised Pentecostal habitus" plays a crucial role for sustainable development in Good Life Church.

Jacqueline Service engages with ontological questions on the meaning of human well-being in the second article, "Contesting the Dynamics of Secular Development: An Ontology of Trinitarian Well-Being as Christian Rationale for Human Well-Being". Service argues that the secular framework of the Western development paradigm is to a large extent shared by religious development organisations. Taking this observation as a starting point, the author develops an ontology of Trinitarian Well-Being as a theological rationale for Christian engagement with development. She outlines implications of this concept for Christian development practice, inter alia referring to the importance of interpersonal relationality. Service's article thereby underlines the mutual interdependence of the realms of cosmology and community.

The third article engages with the theme of freedom of religion and belief. Under the title "Freedom by Regulation: A Legal Assessment of the CRL Commission's Report on the Commercialisation of Religion and Abuse of People's Belief Systems", Cosmo Mapitsa critically engages with a recent debate in the South African context on whether there should be state regulation in the religious sector in light of cases of disconcerting activities taking place in some religious communities. Mapitsa scrutinises the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities' *Report of the Hearings on the Commercialisation of Religion and Abuse of People's Belief Systems* (CRL Commission 2017) and identifies several shortcomings. He concludes that the commission should have taken a human rights approach that distinguishes "between individual rights to hold a belief and community rights to carry out religious practices", pointing out that "[t]he individual right to a belief and conviction is inviolable, while the communal right to practise one's religion is limited by other rights in the Bill of Rights".

The role of religion in general and neo-Pentecostal churches in particular with regard to sustainable development is discussed in the fourth article, "Religion and Sustainable Development in Africa: Neo-Pentecostal Economies in Perspective" by Ben-Willie Golo and Ernestina Novieto. The authors criticise the fact that religion has long been neglected in the development discourse and argue "for the centrality of religion to development." Drawing on interviews with church leaders in Ghana, Golo and Novieto investigate the important, yet not uncontroversial, contribution of neo-Pentecostal churches to economic development. Their findings show that neo-Pentecostal churches have become relevant actors in this area on different levels, offering business trainings, scholarships and employment to members (and non-members) and empowering people to become active themselves. While the authors stress the importance of these contributions to economic development, they also point to the criticism that this type of development might not be holistic with regard to environmental sustainability.

In the fifth article, "The Notion of 'Development' in Ubuntu", Raphael Sartorius turns to the African concept of Ubuntu in search of alternatives to the dominant, Western ideas of development. Taking post-colonial critique and the post-development debate as starting points, the author uses discursive analysis of key texts to carve out the normative implications Ubuntu has on notions of development, such as the primacy of human dignity over wealth, the importance of social relations and empowerment as people's ability to provide for themselves. Furthermore, Sartorius highlights the contribution of Ubuntu to the development discourses and practices in the global North, recommending a departure from universalist perspectives and the need to acknowledge the importance of situated and religious knowledge systems and their normative views on society.

Engaging with the realms of cosmology and community with a focus on gender equality, Jørgen Thomsen writes on "Religious Actors for Gender Equality – SDG 5: A Reflection on the Side by Side Faith Movement for Gender Justice". In his *policy & practice note*, the author analyses and critically reflects on the movement's practical work. He stresses the role of the religious dimension with respect to gender relations, which influences "how women and men see themselves and each other and how they thus practise gender equality – or not". The author hence highlights the necessity of continued engagement with religious actors in order to achieve the aim of gender equality.

In the second *policy & practice note* of this issue, Ezekiel Boro, Tanvi Sapra, Jean-François de Lavison, Caroline Dalabona, Vinya Ariyaratne and Agus Samsudin focus on the role of religious actors in the corona pandemic. Their article, "The Role and Impact of Faith-Based Organisations in the Management of and Response to COVID-19 in Low-Resource Settings" looks at the work of three religious organisations in different contexts: Brazil, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. It analyses each organisation's response to the pandemic and the problems faced. The article concludes by providing recommendations for global public health and development actors as well as local religious organisations, highlighting the need for increased mutual engagement and partnership.

In the *book review* section, Bjørn Hallstein Holte introduces us to the recent volume by Corrie Decker and Elisabeth McMahon *The Idea of Development in Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 2021) – a volume that "will give those caught up in the jargon of development goals and other development fads space to reflect on the configurations of knowledge and power underlying their work, the history of these configurations, and what alternatives might look like".

Finally, Paul Gifford provides a review of Séverine Deneulin's new book *Human Development and the Catholic Social Tradition: Towards an Integral Ecology* (Routledge, 2021), recommending it as "a remarkable introduction" to Amartya Sen and Catholic Social Teaching and as a "worthy contribution to reflection on the role of religion in comprehensive development".

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Research Articles

Simbarashe Gukurume

"You Are Blessed to Be a Blessing"

Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches and the Politics of Redistribution in Harare
(Research Article)

Abstract:
Drawing on ethnographic research in Zimbabwe, this article examines the ways through which a new Pentecostal-Charismatic Church (PCC), Good Life Church (GLC), engages in charity and redistributive activities in Harare. From the mid-2000s, there has been a remarkable Pentecostal explosion in Zimbabwe. This explosion coincided with a protracted socio-economic and political crisis. This crisis was marked by deepening poverty, skyrocketing unemployment, hyperinflation, and the withdrawal of state welfare. This was worsened by rapid emigration, which dismembered kinship-based social safety nets. In response, new PCCs emerged as new and alternative spaces of welfare provision, redistribution and social security. I argue that GLC's engagement in acts of charity should be understood in the broader discourse of spiritual warfare against the demons of poverty. By addressing "this-worldly" concerns, GLC makes a holistic contribution to sustainable development by attending to the spiritual and material needs of people. Indeed, a culture of giving is cultivated and habituated in everyday life and practices in the church. I assert that acts of individual and collective charity provision enable many people to navigate uncertainties and precarities wrought by the postcolonial economic crisis. This article draws on Bourdieu's theory of practice, and particularly his concepts of field, habitus and forms of anticipation to unpack the acts of charity in GLC. A specific kind of Pentecostal habitus is (re)produced through teachings, rituals, socialities and convivialities forged within the church.

1. Introduction

It's a Sunday morning and Prophet Emmanuel is preaching at his church, clad in a sharp black suit, white shirt and striped tie. He moves up and down the pulpit clutching his latest iPad. Almost half of the congregants follow the biblical message on their smartphones. In front, the biblical passages are also projected onto the two huge screens that sandwich the exquisitely decorated pulpit. Many, predominantly youthful congregants are busy writing notes. As the Prophet moves up and down the aisle, his Rolex watch glitters underneath the designer suit. He shouts to a cheering crowd:

> You should know that God did not bless you for nothing. God blessed you for a reason. He blessed you so that you can also be a blessing to someone, so if you want God to keep blessing you then you should live your purpose – you should live in the way God wants you to live. (Field notes November 2017)

In many of his services, Prophet Emmanuel preaches the word of giving (*kupa*) and helping (*kubatsira*) the less privileged. For Prophet Emmanuel, giving mediates and instrumentalises the flow of Godly blessings into one's life. In his own words, "blessed is the hand that gives, for there is more blessing in giving" (quoting from Acts 20:35, field notes May 2017). Likewise, many of my interlocutors also believed that giving was the key that unlocked opportunities. In one of the services, Prophet Emmanuel asserted that "God gave us his only son so that we could be saved from our sins, so as born-again Christians we should also live a life of giving because God prospers those who sacrifice to expand the kingdom of God" (field notes July 2018). Unlike some Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches (PCCs) which discourage charity (see van Wyk 2014), the Good Life Church (GLC) constantly encouraged members to donate. In GLC, gifts are said to simultaneously strengthen the spirits of both givers and recipients (Coleman 2006).

This article examines contemporary modalities of Pentecostal charity in Harare. It does so by examining GLC's activities and everyday rituals. It builds on a burgeoning body of work that explores how philanthropy and charity mediate and drives processes of development. It draws inspiration from Klaits (2011), who argued that through charity activities, born-again Christians engage and reconfigure the personhood of others. The article also examines the developmental nature and potential of GLC's charity activities. By examining the charity work of GLC, this article contributes to our understanding of the efforts of GLC to fill the lacuna created by the state's inability to provide welfare and alleviate poverty among its citizenry. By so doing I explore how these charity activities contribute to sustainable development.

2. Conceptualisation

The concepts that I use in this article, while falling neatly into the discursive construction of development, tend to be complex and problematic. Therefore, this section of the article attempts to conceptualise and unpack these concepts and show how they are weaved into discussions of religion and development. The concept of sustainable development is not only contested but may also not mean the same to everyone. However, there is consensus among scholars that it is an intergenerational phenomenon and has an intricate connection to three fundamental and interrelated pillars, namely the ecology/environmental pillar, the economic pillar and the socio-cultural pillar. In this article, I adopt the Brundtland Commission's 1987 definition of sustainable development as the development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the capacity or ability of the future generations to meet their own needs (WCED 1987). However, I adapt this definition based on how it is envisioned and understood at a grassroots level.

Scholars have tried to differentiate between charity and philanthropy, where the former is viewed as easing immediate suffering while the latter tends to be framed institutionally with a focus on ameliorating structural causes of social ills (Alexander 2018). Charity is framed as an act of voluntary provision of assistance or gifts in cash or kind towards the needy, vulnerable and suffering. In most cases, charity and philanthropy are used interchangeably as acts of altruism and generosity without expectation of reciprocity from the receiving party.

3. Theoretical Lens

Bourdieu's (1984) theoretical concepts of the field and habitus are productive in helping us to understand the politics of Pentecostal redistribution in Harare. Bourdieu defines the field as an arena where actors compete for influence and strategic positions to assert hegemonic dominance. Bourdieu conceived the idea of the "field" as a social space in which interactions, transactions and events take place. Likewise, the habitus is defined as an embodied way of thinking and behaving, or internalised dispositions and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways (Wacquant 2005, 316). Thus, the habitus relates to enduring patterned ways of "being" that are often transferable and reconfigured in a variety of socioeconomic and political contexts. I develop two analytical concepts from Bourdieu's work, that of the "philanthropic habitus" and the "Pentecostal field". The philanthropic habitus here denotes the altruistic dispositions, norms, practices and culture that is engendered by and through Pentecostal teachings and everyday rituals thereof. For Bourdieu one cannot fully understand the habitus independent of the field because the habitus is shaped by the field but also simultaneously shapes the field in specific

ways. As such, the habitus is the brainchild of the complex interplay between the free will of "agency" (church actors) and "structures" (church principles/doctrines). Indeed, the habitus is not merely a "structured structure", but also a "structuring structure". Thus, I use these concepts dialectically to establish not only how Pentecostals' philanthropic habitus is objectively shaped and structured, but also how it is subjectively constructed and reproduced by the actions and interactions of the very same actors embedded within this objective structure, that is the Pentecostal field. As such, I assert that the complex entanglement between the Pentecostal field and the philanthropic habitus mediates the practice of giving in GLC. Indeed, Bourdieu (1984) asserts that practice straddles habitus and field.

One of the rituals which GLC uses to cultivate and sustain a philanthropic habitus is the "bring and share" ritual regularly organised at the church. During this ritual, church members are urged to bring presents and food to share with a person they did not know before. Through this ritual new socialities are forged between church members. These socialities often develop into convivial relationships which in some cases transform the subjectivities and personhood of the members involved.

4.   The Good Life Church

GLC is a new Pentecostal church formed at the height of the socioeconomic and political crisis in 2008 (Gukurume 2015; Gukurume and Taru 2020) in Zimbabwe. It was founded and is led by the youthful and charismatic Prophet Emmanuel. This church falls under what I refer to as the fourth wave Pentecostal category and preaches the gospel of prosperity in the here and now (see Gukurume 2018b). Historically, Pentecostalism has grown in specific waves. The fourth wave is marked by a strong emphasis on the prophetic and miraculous accumulation of material wealth in the here and now rather than the afterlife. It departs from an emphasis on denominational doctrine to a prophetic and apostolic "body of Christ". Fourth wave Pentecostalism is largely initiated in Africa by youthful and charismatic prophets who deploy spectacular power in demonstrating the power of Christ. This includes the instantaneous and miraculous accumulation of wealth in the here and now, what is often called "miracle money". Indeed, fourth wave Pentecostalism foregrounds an eschatological understanding of the world as a battlefield where Christians engage in perpetual spiritual warfare. Spiritual warfare denotes the born-again Christians' battle against the work of evil forces, and prosperity is the belief that Christians are entitled to material wealth, health and success in every aspect of life (Taru and Settler 2015; Gukurume 2017; Gukurume and Taru 2020). GLC is arguably one of the fastest growing Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe and attracts thousands of congregants. What sets this church apart from other new churches is its emphasis on the twin theology of prosperity and spiritual warfare. Before establishing GLC,

Prophet Emmanuel was a pastor in the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) (Gukurume 2018b). GLC started with lunchtime interdenominational services in Harare. Due to the popularity of these prayer sessions, the congregation moved from one venue to another looking for bigger space that could accommodate the swelling numbers.

GLC finally settled at a city sports centre, a city council owned multipurpose hall which accommodates thousands of people. During fieldwork, GLC constructed a 30,000-seater church in Chitungwiza, a dormitory town close to Harare. It was also planning to construct another state-of-the-art auditorium at the church head-quarters in Mount Hampden. Over the years, GLC has grown and established itself in the country's competitive religious landscape. It has also spread its branches across national borders by establishing branches in neighbouring countries like South Africa, Botswana and Zambia. GLC has grown into a transnational religious movement. On the church's website, it is claimed that the Prophet was called to expand the kingdom of God in every corner of the world and the church will have a branch in every country.[1] This belief informs the church's aggressive and creative proselytisation activities, including the provision of charity work. GLC frames itself as a modern and upper-middle-class church. However, its membership is an eclectic mixture of the well-to-do, the working class and the poor. In the next section, I turn my attention to the ways in which GLC seeks to engender and cultivate a philanthropic habitus among its membership. The enactment of this habitus is part of the spiritual warfare deployed against the principalities and powers of evil, in which only spiritual weapons can prevail (Marshall 2016).

5.   Materials and Methods

This study took a qualitative and ethnographic approach to understanding the charity and redistributive practices of GLC. Data used in this article is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted from 2014 to 2018 with members of PCCs based in Harare. For this article, I draw largely on qualitative data collected from GLC. A total of 25 interviews were conducted with participants. In addition, ten key informant interviews were conducted with officials from GLC and church members donating gifts to the poor. Participant observation was also conducted over a period of four years in GLC and involved attending church services and other charity and related activities organised by the church. During these activities, I conducted informal conversations with church members. Participants were selected through snowballing and purposive sampling techniques. Apart from primary data, I also

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1 https://www.ufiministries.org/art_sandton.php
    https://www.thestandard.co.zw/2015/10/18/makandiwa-to-open-branch-in-sa/

used secondary data drawn from church publications, recorded videos of charity activities as well as newspaper articles on the charity work done by GLC.

6.   Creating a Pentecostal "Philanthropic Habitus"

GLC's doctrine and rituals cultivate religious subjectivities and a Pentecostal habitus that valorises acts of giving. In imparting this culture, Prophet Emmanuel and his wife lead by example. During their birthday celebrations, they make donations to children's homes, widows, prisons and invite homeless children to eat with them. Apart from this, Prophet Emmanuel's wife, Prophetess Ruth, runs the charity arm of the church called AGAPE Family Care. This department is responsible for all the church's charity work. Interestingly, charity work is deployed as a powerful prose-lytising strategy by the church. Indeed, apart from the "powerful word" preached and the energetic praise and worship choir, charity also explains the magnetic appeal of GLC. For instance, almost half of my interlocutors converted due to the material support they received from the church. For instance, Peter[2] explained in an interview:

> I was impressed by what I was hearing from people about what this church was doing in the community. I heard stories of how the church looked after widows, orphans and giving free healthcare, especially cataract services, so I just said let me go and see this church. (Interview with Peter 11/06/2017)

Peter's views were also echoed by many others who were lured to GLC by its charity work. Prophetess Ruth was honoured with an honorary doctorate by the International Institute of Philanthropy as recognition for her charity work (Karengezeka 2014).[3] Prophetess Ruth is a role model to many young women in GLC. Many admire her for the work she does in the community. As one of my interlocutors, Gladys, asserted during an interview:

> Mhamha (mother) does a lot of charity work to transform people's lives. I am one of the lucky people to have benefited from the university financial support (scholarship) that AGAPE Family Care offers to students. This scholarship has helped me a lot and now I am almost completing my degree at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ). (Interview with Gladys 14/10/2017)

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2 This is a pseudonym, and all the other names of believers are anonymised too.
3 https://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2014/07/05/prophetess-makandiwa-awarded-doctorate

Several other interlocutors shared Gladys's views about the charity work done by GLC. Gladys explained to me that when she converted to GLC her life was transformed for the better through GLC's charity work. Gladys lost her father when she was about to go to university. Her father had suffered from cancer for a long time. Gladys's mother was not formally employed and joined the informal sector (Gukurume 2018a) when her husband died. However, as a new entrant into the informal sector, business was not lucrative. Gladys noted that since her father passed on, life became difficult for the family. In fact, Gladys was on the brink of dropping out of school and knew that her mother could not afford university tuition. Thus, by supporting and funding Gladys's education, GLC is actively transforming her orientation for the future and by extension engenders self-reliance and personal development. Over time, this will translate to sustainable development as more people's lives and subjectivities are transformed. Indeed, in Zimbabwe and many African countries, education is viewed as a springboard for upward mobility.

Gladys's experience resonates with many of our participants. However, what is interesting with Gladys's story and access to financial support from GLC is the importance of social networks or Bourdieu's social capital. Social capital is conceptualised as the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to individuals or groups by virtue of their connection to a network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 119). In many cases social capital often mediated access to charity and other material benefits. Indeed, scholars have underscored how social capital enables people to navigate the precarities and uncertainties of everyday life. For instance, van de Kamp (2010) noted that access to important resources is mediated by one's positionality in a network of relations. Pentecostalism generates important social capital which drives sustainable socioeconomic development (Bompani 2010; Bompani and Frahm-Arp 2010). Similarly, Togarasei and Biri (2019) assert that Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe are promoting socioeconomic development and help to alleviate poverty through various interventions like financial literacy, entrepreneurship training and the instilling of positive thinking. In GLC, through teachings and rituals, young people are configured to believe that their personal aspirations and ambitions are achievable (Gukurume 2017). This transformation of mentality is critical in fostering self-reliance, hard work and hopefulness, which are important ingredients for sustainable development.

This scenario is in keeping with Burgess (2009), who noted that Pentecostalism promotes civic engagements. Following Putnam, Burgess framed civic engagement as people's networks and connection with the everyday life of their community, including social welfare, community development and political action. Therefore, these activities and engagements that "connect (people) with the life of their community" have strong potential to have a transformative effect on the subjectivities of the people. Pentecostalism fosters hope in difficult times but may also reproduce

the status quo by urging people to turn to God for solutions, thereby diverting attention from a state that is failing to provide basic services for its citizens (Gifford 1990; Marshall 1993).

7.   Educational Scholarships and Sustainability

GLC tries to transform individuals and the society through its educational support programmes. AGAPE Family Care offers financial support to poor students in and outside the church. Scholarships are offered at various levels from primary, secondary and tertiary level. During fieldwork, I interviewed several university students like Gladys who benefited from the AGAPE scholarships. Some students started receiving financial support from secondary school level on and continued to university level on condition of good academic grades. For instance, Amos highlighted that the financial assistance he received changed not only his personal life, but also that of his family. Amos started receiving funding from GLC when he was doing his advanced level after a recommendation from a church member. Amos passed his examinations with flying colours and enrolled for a computer science degree at the University of Zimbabwe. Amos received a laptop for being the best student in his cohort, and also received a monthly stipend for his upkeep at university. His tuition and accommodation costs were also covered by AGAPE. Amos had just completed an internship and was offered a lucrative job at one of the leading telecommunications companies through his church mentor. Like many of his colleagues, Amos was grateful to GLC for generous financial support and life-changing networks (social capital) that afforded him a job.

James, one of GLC's charity workers, asserted that:

> Our task as born-again Christians is to make sure that we minister to the social, material and spiritual needs of the people. We should strive for a holistic transformation of the people and the community, that is what God's agents should do and that is what we have been called to do through our prophet. (Interview with James 17/10/2017)

James's views were echoed by other participants who served in the church's charity department. Many of them believed that it was God's call(ing) for them to transform people's lives. Some underscored that they were instruments used by God to advance his kingdom. What is also fascinating in James's statement is the way in which GLC seeks to transform the individual personhood of members and the community at large. GLC promotes holistic ministry anchored in socioeconomic transformation. Therefore, GLC is moving beyond mere provision of charity, into community development models of social engagement and thereby contributing to

sustainable development. By engaging disenfranchised members of the church and the community, James emphasised that GLC was following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, who was sent to deliver people from poverty, illness and other social vices of this world. During church services, Prophet Emmanuel often claims emphatically that his mission is to deliver people from poverty and to make sure that there is abundant health, wealth, happiness and prosperity in every domain of people's lives. Following this, I assert that by ministering to the spiritual and material existential need of the people, GLC transforms the personhood and subjectivities of its members and contributes to their well-being and therefore to sustainable development. I have shown elsewhere how new PCCs invest in the socioeconomic empowerment of young people and availing economic opportunities which drove upward mobility (Gukurume 2018b; 2018c).

More so, GLC also engages in community infrastructural development through the transformation of urban landscapes and cityscapes. This transformation and rehabilitation of urban landscapes is informed by GLC's eschatological belief that born-again Christians should conquer every aspect of life, including secular spaces like cities, before the imminent second coming of Christ (Miller and Yamamori 2007, 213; van Wyk 2014; Gukurume 2018b). Through a programme called Operation Nehemiah, Prophet Emmanuel urges members of his church to engage in construction and real estate projects as a business. In church services, members are always told to think of themselves as landlords and not tenants and as entrepreneurs not workers. In turn, members actively work towards the attainment of these goals, while the church sometimes provides both spiritual and material technologies which fostered belief in the attainment of these goals. In the next section, I examine this in detail and show how entrepreneurship and financial literacy programmes contribute to individual and collective upward mobility.

8.   Entrepreneurship Investments and Financial Literacy

GLC promotes members' engagement in small businesses, what Maxwell (2005:11) called "petty capitalism". The church does this through initiatives such as business and entrepreneurship training, assisting members to register companies and gain financial literacy. Following this, GLC organises monthly business seminars and entrepreneurship training. They also organise annual business conferences entitled "The Billionaire's Mindset Summit" and the "Economic Empowerment Summit". Through these events, GLC cultivates an "entrepreneurial habitus" and mindset among its membership. The entrepreneurship skills taught by and through the church as well as the business networks forged during these events often enable members of the church to grow their businesses and prosper financially. Indeed, for Taru (2019) these business and entrepreneurship skills and investment knowledge

instilled in the church members help people to navigate the uncertainties and precarities that characterise the Zimbabwean postcolonial state. Prophet Emmanuel and his pastors constantly remind congregants during church services that "God did not create them so that they can be poor, but so that they can have dominion over everything including poverty, sickness and misfortune". In both my conversations and interviews with participants, many of them believed that born-again Christians are entitled to Godly material blessings. In the words of Jeremiah,

> If you are a child of God, you should prosper in every facet of your life. Our father (God) owns all the gold and silver. So, when you start a business, that business should prosper and make you rich. Born-again Christians were not born to suffer, but to enjoy. (Interview Jeremiah 22/10/2017)

Interestingly, many participants told me that life should be enjoyed in the here and now, and not in the afterlife. Some believed that it was possible for God to miraculously bless them with riches, what is often referred to as "miracle money" in the church.[4] During church services, Prophet Emmanuel often made miracle money, and congregants claimed to have received miracle money. Joseph, one of my interlocutors, told me how he started his thriving vehicle spare parts business with the miracle money he received into his mobile phone when Prophet Emmanuel made declarations for people to receive miracle money. This belief in the miraculous accumulation of wealth out of nothing is typical of fourth wave PCCs and relates to the Comaroffian (2000) "occult economies". The Comaroffs relate this to the workings of neoliberal capitalism's magical power to create value and money out of nothing (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; van de Kamp 2010). With regards to the miracle money, Joseph explained:

> It was at one of his many crusades (evening outdoor church services) that I attended. The prophet asked us to write on a small piece of paper three things that we would want God to bless them with, so I was desperately looking for a job so that is what I wrote first and then money for a business and lastly for my mother to be healed. I took the paper to the front next to the pulpit where the prophet was. He stopped me and took my paper and said to me you will receive all this today. (Interview with Joseph 19/05/2018)

Joseph noted that after everyone finished taking their pieces of papers to the front, the papers were taken and put in a small bag and the Prophet started praying, holding the small bag. Prophet Emmanuel then started making declarations that God will deliver everything people requested, and shouted loudly, "receive, receive

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4 https://www.herald.co.zw/2013-the-curious-case-of-miracle-money/

your deliverance, receive miracle money – into your pockets, into your account, into your mobile phone" (field notes 20/05/2018). To Joseph's astonishment as the prophet was shouting, he received a message alert that he had received $3,000. Joseph noted that this day marked the birth of his business. Although Joseph started small, he expanded and opened two more branches in Harare through support from church members who bought his vehicle spare parts. From the foregoing, I assert that the church should not only be seen as a socio-spiritual space, but also as a space through which business networks and economic ties are forged. Indeed, the Pentecostal "field" has become a landscape of opportunities for congregants. This finding confirms observations made by Coleman, Bourdieu and Putnam that social capital is a potential springboard for upward mobility. Thus, these ties and networks become not only a spiritual resource, but also a material resource that people can depend on in navigating socioeconomic precarities.

In a related scenario, during fieldwork, people were asked to write on small pieces of paper the financial problems that affected them. The papers were put in a small box which was later burnt in full view of the congregants. The prophet and pastors declared that as the papers were burning, so were people's problems. While the act of praying and making declarations on people's requests as was the case with Joseph's story symbolised the spiritual connection to Godly blessings, the act of burning people's problems can be viewed as an attempt to make a "complete break" or "rapture" from past problems (Meyer 1998; Engelke 2010). For my participants, this practice not only deactivated demonic misfortunes, but also upgraded the faith and the efficaciousness of their spiritual technologies in the spiritual warfare against poverty.

Interestingly, Joseph noted that although he had prioritised a job in his wish list on the paper he wrote, God had bigger plans for him which were better than employment. Indeed, during business seminars, Prophet Emmanuel always challenged members to think of themselves as employers, rather than employees. Taru (2019) reminds us that teachings in Pentecostal spaces (re)configure the ways in which Pentecostals like Joseph construct their personhood and how they imagine and position themselves in the world. In a context where prevailing socioeconomic and political conditions are eroding and killing off young people's capacity to aspire (Appadurai 2004), GLC is trying to revive young people's hope for the future and also to reconfigure their orientation to the future. I argue that GLC's entrepreneurial teachings trigger what Appadurai (2004:60) referred to as the "capacity to aspire" and shape people's aspirational subjectivities. For Appadurai (2004) the capacity to aspire relates to the future-oriented cultural capacity. Through business teachings and the impartation of entrepreneurial skills, GLC actively strengthens people's capacity to aspire. Indeed, Appadurai argues that strengthening the capacity to aspire could help people to contest and alter the conditions of their impoverishment. As such, GLC creates and sustains a culture of aspiration through the capacity-building

activities discussed above. Capacity-building interventions instrumentalise people's engagement with community development. Appadurai (2004) argues that a culture of aspiration which in this case GLC instils, should be understood as "navigational capacity" in the sense that it provides young people like Joseph with a normative map that potentially leads to future success. Similarly, through prophecy, the future is foreshortened in very specific ways (Guyer 2008). As such, through cultural and spiritual resources (prophecy, prayer, seeding), young people are able to project themselves into their imagined futures.

By foregrounding the importance of business workshops and entrepreneurship training, I do not intend to imply that all these activities always succeed. In reality, some of these fail and do so dismally. Not all the people who are helped by the church to establish small businesses succeed. In some cases, some members end up worse off or financially more insecure than they were before converting to GLC. The story and experience of a rich business couple, the Oceans, is illustrative. When the Oceans converted to GLC they started donating thousands of dollars to the church through tithing, offerings and seeding. They were hoping that through such huge financial sacrifices, their businesses were going to thrive and expand, but alas, problems mounted for them. The Oceans claimed that their huge financial sacrifices were motivated by the prosperity theology of "seeding" and promises from Prophet Emmanuel that if they sacrificed huge amounts of money their business would miraculously grow. The principle of "seed faith" encourages Christians to expect future financial returns from their generous giving.

In GLC, the concept of seeding relates to a scenario where one sacrifices money and other material things to the church with the expectation of being rewarded tenfold in the future. This practice of seeding is deeply embedded in temporalities of "faith". However, like the Oceans, not everyone who sacrificed their money to the church reaped what they sowed. Instead, some of the people who sacrificed to the church closed their businesses due to bankruptcy. The Oceans are illustrative; they ended up demanding USD $6.5 million they reportedly paid to GLC (Sunday Mail 2017[5]). The other case involved Shava, who donated/seeded a $300,000 Bentley to the church and was demanding the vehicle back.[6]

Joseph noted that he partners the church. In GLC, partners are people who commit consistent payment of certain amounts of money to the church monthly. For instance, Joseph was a "silver partner". In GLC, partners are placed in the following categories: gold partner, silver partner and bronze partner (Biri 2012; Gukurume 2018b). These categories are based on the amount of money paid to the

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5 www.sundaymail.co.zw/makandiwa-sued-for-fake-prophecies

6 www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2015/03/03/bentley-purchase-was-above-board-angel-s-brother-claims

church. Apart from being a silver partner, Joseph paid tithe[7], offerings and seeding. For many born-again Christians, tithing is particularly significant. Failure to tithe is regarded as stealing from God (van Wyk 2014; Gukurume 2017). Although financial sacrifices in church often strained Joseph's business, he was determined to continue paying. "This is the little I can do to repay what the prophet did to help me be where I am today", Joseph said in an interview. For Joseph, financial sacrifices were a strategy to protect his business from demonic attacks.

Indeed, for GLC, huge material sacrifices to the church represent a powerful weapon in the spiritual warfare against the devil and his demons. Like in other PCCs (van Wyk 2014; van de Kamp 2012, on the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in South Africa and Mozambique respectively), sacrificing money to the church helps to unblock God's material blessings into one's life (Gukurume 2020). During church services, congregants are urged to sacrifice money to secure prosperous futures and to overcome their own personal challenges like illness, unemployment or infertility. Due to its emphasis on consistent sacrifice, GLC is often criticised for swindling its congregants of their hard-earned money and becoming rich at their expense (Togarasei and Biri 2019). Similarly, other scholars assert that prosperity gospel churches like GLC provide a moral justification for individual accumulation and its tendency to divert attention from the structural causes of poverty (Gifford 1990; Smith 2001). Similarly, some newspaper articles have branded Prophet Emmanuel a "gosprenuer" using religion to make money and accumulate personal wealth while his congregants become progressively poor. Critics charge the church for engaging in "Pentecapitalism". This relates to scholarly arguments that Pentecostalism is not only a response to neoliberal capitalism, but also an extension of millennial neoliberal capitalism (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; Lewison 2011).

9.   Redistribution, and Patronage Politics

McCauley (2012) argued that Pentecostal leaders have developed into Africa's new big men. Such PCC leaders establish patron–client relationships with congregants and this relationship is mediated through forms and modalities of gift exchange. Similarly, through charity activities Prophet Emmanuel developed into one of Zimbabwe's Pentecostal "big men". Although the concept of big man was originally developed by scholars like Sahlins to denote a kinship-based relationship between patron and clients in Melanesia (McCauley 2012), in this article I use this as a

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7 Tithe is 10 per cent of one's salary or monthly income which is a mandatory payment to the church by congregants.

metaphor and as a category of analysis to unpack the complex nature of socialities forged between Prophet Emmanuel and his congregants. For McCauley (2012) the ongoing weakness in the state's ability to provide social welfare to citizens opened an avenue for charismatic movements to complement and sometimes replace the state in the provision of social welfare and social security. Scholars assert that in a context of neoliberal capitalism and its attendant austerity measures, charity becomes a viable alternative to state provisions (Osella et al. 2015). In a context where traditional family networks are weak and sometimes absent due to mobility, PCCs became alternative forms of social and "ontological security". For my interlocutors, uncertainty and insecurity is counteracted by and through membership of Pentecostal communities like GLC. In fact, church colleagues become a new spiritual family and a big network of reciprocal social support – they become a social safety net.

Interestingly, Prophet Emmanuel is imagined as a father (*Baba*), embodying the status of a patron, while church members are his "spiritual children" and material clients. As a father, he is responsible for the spiritual and material needs of his many congregants. Indeed, as recipients of the church's largess, congregants commit exclusively to their religious social network (McCauley 2012) and develop strong allegiance to the prophet. GLC successfully created pay-off structures that reproduce the interchange of resources for loyalty. This is in keeping with Mauss' (1969) observation that exchange relationships which influence people's socioeconomic opportunities are often mediated by and through kinship, real or imagined. In GLC's case, these are spiritual kinship networks. Through its web of gift-giving networks, the church (GLC) becomes a community of spiritual and material kinsmen helping to cement socialities and convivialities. Due to patrimonial networks, church members tend to be the key benefactors of the charity and development activities of GLC. This finding resonates strongly with Miller and Yamamori's (2007, 32) observation that some PCCs tend to restrict their social service provision to their own church members.

10. Conclusion

The foregoing article explored the ways in which a Pentecostal church engages in charity and development work in Harare. The article revealed that given its rapid growth, influence and involvement in community development, Pentecostalism can no longer be ignored in development discourse and practice. GLC helps congregants to start small businesses through entrepreneurship training and assistance with company registration as well as access to microcredit loans. In addition, given its membership, GLC also provides a huge market for the established businesses, as Prophet Emmanuel encourages members to buy and sell amongst themselves

and promote church members' businesses. Networks forged in GLC also provide plenty of livelihood and employment opportunities to members, while the church has also become one of the largest employers itself. I argued in the article that although GLC helps to generate social capital and opportunities which promote socioeconomic development, it also generates risks and uncertainties that may further impoverish people. Like many other PCCs in Africa, GLC has also started to play an important role in infrastructural development in Harare. By engaging in these various activities, I assert that GLC is actively enhancing the well-being of people and simultaneously promoting community development. However, I caution that not every church or community member benefits from these activities. Instead, there is a clear politics of inclusion and exclusion, a scenario where certain people, especially church members, benefit from these programmes. I assert that the practice of giving is a consequence of the socially internalised dispositions which foreground philanthropy as an important way of demonstrating God's blessings. As such, giving becomes a corporeal act and embodiment of Godly blessings. GLC actively produces and reproduces a particular habitus through everyday practices. Consequently, I make the case for the specific socialised Pentecostal habitus and argue that this habitus is critical in the attainment of sustainable development. I utilised Bourdieu's theoretical concepts to show how the ethic of charity and philanthropy is produced and reproduced in time and space and how it embeds itself in people's everyday lives and practices.

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Contesting the Dynamics of Secular Development

An Ontology of Trinitarian Well-Being as Christian Rationale for Human Well-Being
(Research Article)

Abstract:

Christianity has been instrumental in fashioning the contemporary Western paradigm of humanitarian aid and development. However, as a secular agenda increasingly defines this space, the question of what difference a religious cosmology makes to Christian faith-based development organisations (FBDOs) becomes significant. While faith convictions initiated early humanitarian efforts, Christian FBDOs have arguably acquiesced to secular pragmatic rationales for their work, rather than allow theology to have explanatory and regulatory influence. In many ways, therefore, FBDOs are devoid of the influence of "faith", or more specifically, the influence of a robust theological foundation. To address this deficit, a critique of the philosophical moorings of Western international development is mounted, with consideration given to nascent trajectories of an alternate Christian rationale and praxis. In particular, the paper argues that the ontological foundation for the dynamics of human well-being is divine well-being. Employing a Trinitarian relational ontology, the dynamic characteristic inherent to the actualisation of divine well-being is identified as a triune kenosis (self-giving). Such an ontology of divine well-being provides the context to articulate principles for actualising human well-being as a reiteration of the divine archetype. From such a perspective, the Trinitarian doctrine of God provides the pivotal foundation for a *Christian* cosmology necessary to articulate an alternative paradigm for sustainable development.

1.   Introduction

Embedded in the contemporary paradigm of Western sustainable development are implicit assumptions about what constitutes deficiency to human well-being requiring transformative action. Such altruistic rationale is likewise embedded in "religious" development agencies. Yet, as will be articulated in this paper, with the evisceration of the originating Christian cosmological rationale for Western development, secular humanism's articulation of the conditions for human well-being appears philosophically vacuous. The originating views of a divinely ordered cosmology instigating humanitarian action have, arguably, acceded to an ideologically evacuated pragmatism. Mirroring their secular sisters, this paper proposes that Christian faith-based development organisations (FBDOs) may unintentionally share such a questionably porous foundation by which to define and advance human well-being. Drawing on the growing literature in the field, it is argued that the work of Christian organisations may be shaped more by uncritical acquiescence to the pragmatic sensibilities of the secular Western development paradigm than by theological cosmology. Such a situation raises the question as to the actual influence of Christian "faith" or, more specifically, *theology* on a Christian development agenda. Addressing this issue, this paper offers a *ressourcement* of a foundational cosmological theology located in the Christian doctrine of the God. Whilst a theology of development is not new to Christian thought, a theology of development based on a divine ontology of well-being articulates a unique Christian paradigm for recognising and advancing human well-being.

2.   Christian Cosmology: The Philosophical Foundation of Contemporary Development

Contemporary Western conceptions of human progress and development owe much of their current tenor to Christian theology. Congruent with Jewish tradition, a historical nexus has long existed between Christian theology and the notion and advancement of human well-being, particularly in the arena of societal structures and care for the poor (Longenecker 2010, 135). Addressing the deficiencies of the human condition was conceived broadly by Christians and included the spiritual and eschatological alongside the material and temporal. Throughout the "Christian" West, theological criteria for defining human flourishing permeated the expression of ethics, justice, politics, law and social relations (Service 2018, 49–66). Underlying practical expression was a theological cosmology, where human well-being was understood as preconditioned by the ontological precedence of the good of God and impelled, defined and sustained by divine initiative.

During the nineteenth century, Christian praxis of theology catalysed what would become the blueprint of contemporary action to interrogate and address the structural injustice of transient and entrenched poverty and suffering (Woodberry and Shah 2004, 52; Hochschild 2006). Christians, compelled by theological conviction, advanced compassionate relief and structured campaigns, inter alia, to "end slavery, forced labour and human trafficking" (Barnett 2012, 4). Regarding the influence of religious belief on modern development, Gerard Clarke concludes that "missionary organisations associated with the mainstream Christian churches are in many respects the forerunners of modern-day development NGOs" (2006, 843). Barnett and Stein claim that "it is only a slight exaggeration to say, 'no religion, no humanitarianism'" (2012, 3).

Although the origins of Western development, and its articulation of human well-being, had a thoroughly theological dimension, after WWII, as governments became dominant funders of what is now considered the aid industry, organisations adopted the pragmatic sensibilities of religious conviction, while simultaneously ignoring its theological origins (Barnett and Stein 2012, 3–8; Hehir 2012). As such, a plundered form of Christian cosmology continues to influence the contemporary landscape of international development. Theological themes, once foundational for perceiving the constitution and enhancement of human well-being, have been reappropriated by professionalised secular Western conceptions, most notably reflected through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations General Assembly 2015) and perpetuated through national reporting to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Whilst it is difficult to identify a generic definition of "development", the contemporary secular hue is broadly conceived in terms of a process for, and goal of, the enrichment and betterment of humans. Such a construction is, however, devoid of intellectual recognition of the continuing influence of the Christian philosophical origin of "development". Universal development goals for the United Nations advocate building "a world free of poverty, hunger, disease and want, where all life can thrive" (United Nations General Assembly 2015, 3), while the OECD works to "build better policies for *better* lives. Our goal is to shape policies that foster … *well-being* for all" (2019; emphasis added). Such statements evoke the concept of a positive movement from a position of perceived human deficiency to an expansion of human well-being. Yet, in the absence of a cosmological philosophy, the determining narrative for what constitutes "human well-being" remains opaque. Key questions persist – what is the philosophical foundation for organisational rationales that advocate the thriving of "all life" or "well-being for all"? How are these statements, usually promoted as "self-evident" truths, justified? Are such statements mere reflections of a pragmatic altruism devoid of philosophical vigour?

Dislocated from its originating theological foundation, philosopher John Gray argues that the secular concept of human progress is an illusion, a mere attempt to

bring meaning beyond the fact that humans as animals "are born, seek mates, forage for food, and die" (2002, 38). The fundamental position of Gray is that "Humanism is not science, but religion – the post-Christian faith that humans can make a better world" (2002, xiii). For Gray, liberal humanism has all the qualities of religious faith, being directly linked to a Christian inspired and perpetuated mythological narrative regarding the nature and goal of humanity. He, therefore, concludes that "Humanism is a secular religion thrown together from decaying scraps of Christian myth" (Gray 2002, 31).

Gray's comments highlight the contestability regarding the rationale of contemporary development given the absence of a philosophical *grundnorm* for human progress.[1] The self-determining departure point for Western development arguably perpetuates a limited conception of human well-being, as it is narrowed to fit a pragmatic and secular logic that merely reiterates economic, material and social concepts of prosperity. Outlining the historical reasons for the absence of religion in international affairs, where "religious ideas, convictions, and institutions" were "considered more a threat than a promise" (Hehir 2012, 5), Hehir similarly concludes that the unfortunate legacy of such a marginalisation of religious cosmology has been "impoverished theorizing about world politics" (2012, 5).

3.   Theological Amnesia: Religious Acquiescence to a Secular Development Paradigm

Following WWII, while secular and religiously sceptical organisations shaped the directions of development, faith-based organisations adjusting to funding conditionality began to restrain their theological rationalisations and adopt secular humanist narratives and practices (Thacker 2017, 162; Barnett and Stein 2012, 3–8). Barnett and Stein (2012, 304) describe the changing scene of the twentieth century well:

> Once avowedly religious organizations such as World Vision International and Catholic Relief Services downplayed their religious identity. Much like the rest of the world, it seemed as if humanitarianism was succumbing to the pull and power of secularism. Religion might have been instrumental in the establishment of humanitarianism, but it passed the torch to secularism.

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1 The *grundnorm* is the ultimate norm from which all legal norms are deduced and provide its validity. As such the *grundnorm*, the highest norm, is assumed as the basic hypothesis from which all else is assumed. See Hans Kelsen, *Pure Theory of Law*, trans. M. Knight (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

The resultant situation is that, confronting the same environment and responding with similar ideology and methods, FBDOs and secular organisations "grow more alike all the time" (Barnett 2012, 3), to the point where donors now view large, professionalised FBDOs "as indistinguishable from their secular peers" (Clarke 2006, 841). Although secular imitation is not necessarily at odds with Christian theology, if "faith" is to be integral to *faith*-based development, and not mere window dressing accoutrement, the tendency to uncritically baptise dominant development paradigms requires challenge.

4. A Triune Ontology of Well-Being: Theological Rationale for Christian Aid and Development

It is at this juncture that a theological proposition for locating the context and conditions for human well-being becomes significant. However, the foundational and unique doctrine for the Christian faith, that God is triune, One in Three and Three in One – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – has had minimal explanatory influence on constructing the contours of human well-being through sustainable development. The doctrine of the Trinity is, however, as Karl Barth emphasised, that which "distinguishes the Christian doctrine of God as Christian" and is the "first word" that "gives us information on the concrete and decisive question: Who is God?" (1975, 301). It is the doctrine of the Trinity that is, therefore, foundational to Christian belief. As such, the ontology of the triune God should provide the paramount context for a Christian rationale of the conditions for human well-being. The Christian teaching regarding humanity as the image of the divine creator (*imago dei*) situates divine ontology as the definitive context for why, and the conditioning criteria of how, humans engage in actions to pursue their own, and others', well-being. Such a concept posits well-being, not originating with humanity, nor with modern conceptions of development, but as initiated and sustained by God.

The triune life of God as a reciprocal mutuality of love and all-blessedness has long been categorised by theologians through the Cappadocian concept of *perichoresis* (for more details regarding perichoresis and its historical development see Harrison 1991, 53–65). However, despite theologians identifying the structure of *perichoresis*, where the "divine dance" (LaCugna 1991, 271) of the triune relations is considered commensurate with divine *ousia* (essence), an in-depth synthesis of the "dance steps" has not been made. Although notable theologians across ecumenical lines,

in particular Sergeĭ Bulgakov (Orthodox),[2] Hans Urs von Balthasar (Catholic)[3] and Wolfhart Pannenberg (Lutheran) (Pannenberg 1991–1998, vol. 1–3), have each distinctively advanced that divine life, and therefore well-being, is *dynamically* actualised, a synthesised theological paradigm of *how* God actualises divine "all-blessedness" has not been advanced.[4] In part, such a reluctance may be due to the criticism that *perichoresis* is misused by scholars to project anthropocentric views on God. As Kilby (2000, 442) argues,

> First, a concept, *perichoresis*, is used to name what is not understood, to name whatever it is that makes the three Persons one. Secondly, the concept is filled out rather suggestively with notions borrowed from our own experience of relationships and relatedness.

Central to Kilby's criticism is a concern that *perichoresis* has been dislocated from the revelation of God contained in the Christian Scriptures. Rather than scholars "filling out" the concept of *perichoresis* from Scripture, her concern is that human conjecture underlies the relevance drawn from *perichoresis* for humanity. Although the life of God cannot be exhaustively comprehended, the concept of *perichoresis* may receive expanded content, not from mere human projection, but from an analysis of biblical and theological material regarding the relational activity of the triune Persons. Such an analysis, combined with a trinitarian methodology for perceiving divine revelation advanced by Barth – that the economic work of the Trinity, in and for creation, forms the basis for a discussion of God's immanent life (1975, 479) – makes it possible to identify an intra-trinitarian movement of gift and receipt between the divine Persons (*hypostases*) that evidences the dynamism of divine well-being. Such a theological ontology, as will be argued, holds significant implications for the conditions of the development of human and societal well-being.

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2 In 1928 Bulgakov considered the concept of the self-giving kenotic love between the Persons of the Trinity in his *Chapters on Trinitarianism* (*Glavy o Troichnosti*) (Moscow: OGI, 2001). This nascent idea was then fruitfully extended through his kenotic Christology in the first volume of his major trilogy, *The Lamb of God* (1933), and expanded in a further two volumes, *The Comforter* (1936) and *The Bride of the Lamb* (1939).

3 His major work, in a 15-volume trilogy, examines the nature of divine being through the beautiful (*The Glory of the Lord*), the good (*Theo-Drama*) and the true (*Theo-logic*).

4 Ellen Charry and Elaine Padilla have independently constructed theologies of divine happiness and divine enjoyment. Both theological constructions, however, reject divine aseity, a move that holds negative consequences for understanding divine being. See Charry 2010; Padilla 2014.

5. Kenotic-Enrichment: The "Dance Steps" of Divine Well-Being

When we apprehend that God acts in and towards creation (economic Trinity) in consistency with God's eternal self-sufficient being (immanent Trinity), the actions and speech of God in the economy provide signals to discern characteristics inherent to an ontology of divine well-being. The New Testament Scriptures depict a positive relationality between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit that provides the basis for theologians to conclude that "in God's own eternal being there is movement, life, personal relationship, and the giving and receiving of love" (Migliore 2004, 77). The New Testament is replete with evidence of tri-hypostatic activity in the form of mutual praise and thanksgiving (Mt 11:25; Jn 11:41; Rev 19:5), gift (Mt 11:27; Lk 4:1), prayer and request (Lk 6:12; Mt 14:23; Heb 5:7), intimate knowing and belonging (Mk 14:36; Rom 8:26–27; Mt 11:27; Jn 10:15), glorification (Jn 12:28; Jn 16:14–15; Jn 17:24; 2 Pt 1:16–17), blessing and honour (Jn 14:28; Jn 8:49; Rev 3:21), mutual love through affirmative speech (Mk 1:11; Mt 17:5) and action (Is 11:2; Acts 10:38). Each member of the Trinity is characterised as encouraging, upholding and sustaining one to the other in acts of enrichment. In other words, the scriptural account provides consistent depictions of God's self-communication that substantiates a dynamically construed intra-Trinitarian life. Such a dynamic relationality evidenced between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit may be perceived as a "divine self-enrichment" – the notion that *God enriches God in the perfection and fullness of God* (Service 2018, 11). In this manner, divine well-being is construed as dynamically actualised, rather than a mere static concept of perfection.

A key characteristic permeating the economic expression of the triune acts of divine well-being is kenosis (self-giving). No divine Person articulates a self-focused glorification, but rather is unified through intra-trinitarian self-emptying and other centredness. As such, the self-sufficient triune life of well-being avoids the charge of divine narcissism (Service 2019, 71). Divine well-being and kenosis are symbiotically unified in the simplicity of the Trinity.[5] Such an integral dynamic, constitutive for divine life, may be identified as an enriching-kenosis or kenotic-enrichment. In other words, divine life or the perfection of well-being is actualised through triune self-giving. Bulgakov (2002, 99) insightfully articulated such a notion, saying,

> sacrifice not only does not contradict the Divine all-blessedness but, on the contrary, is its foundation, for this all-blessedness would be empty and unreal if it were not based

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5 I am referring here to the metaphysic of divine simplicity inherent in the early Church's conceiving of the Trinity. Divine simplicity is integral to preserve the divine dynamism of Triunity, without capitulating to tritheism, and to establish a distinct divine ontology, without removing God's relationality with creation.

on authentic sacrifice … [M]utual sacrifice … cannot be separated or excluded from this bliss, for it is its hidden foundation.

Intra-trinitarian kenosis is, therefore, the constitutive factor of divine life. Utilising such a perspective, in conjunction with an interpretation of the economic Trinity, the hallmarks of kenotic-enrichment become distinguished by the following characteristics: 1) *Freely given and received; not obliged*: the divine Persons operate in free and volitional inter-related agency; such a freedom in divine self-positing is integral to the nature of divine well-being. 2) *Inter-personal communication*: the divine Persons give and receive through transparency and intimacy of knowing and being known. 3) *Speech is commensurate with act*: divine speech (both verbal and non-verbal) is purposeful and is attended by substance and materiality of act. 4) *Other-centred affirmation:* the divine Persons acknowledge the greatness and worth of the other, and the agency of each divine Person is acknowledged and honoured. 5) *Equality through mutual dependency*: there is no hierarchy within God, there is equality of gift and receipt. The Father is dependent on the Son to be the Father, and the Son on the Father, and without the mutuality of giftedness through the Spirit there is neither Son nor Father. Each divine Person is the fullness of God in the Oneness of God; thus, divinity has equality through mutual dependency (Service 2018, 222–223).

6.   Reimaging the Dynamics of Development

The intra-trinitarian relations in the economic Trinity reveal a pattern of divine life that evidences a divine ontology defined through the concept of enriching-kenosis. Such an ontological patterning may, accordingly, be discerned in the dynamic of creation and in human life. Thus, whenever human life evidences the kind of kenotic-enrichment found in the Trinity, there we see intimations of the work of God. In this sense, the archetype of divine well-being is antecedently operative in creation, where kenotic-enrichment is a condition of createdness, albeit imbued by sin and creaturely finiteness. Human beings, therefore, retain the divinely initiated orientation towards well-being, of which concepts of sustainable development express. For Christians, identifying a divine ontology of well-being provides a nascent *Christian* paradigm for sustainable development, with potential to expand rationale and praxis beyond a limited secular construction.

However, it is important to note that such a concept is not merely establishing a "model" of divine life for human imitation. Rather, consistent with views of Christian soteriology, the concept of the embeddedness of kenotic-enrichment in creation requires the redemptive movement of the Spirit of God to draw humanity

into a responsive participation with the life of God (Volf 1998, 417; Hart 2003, 177–179). Such a participation is, however, never identical with the divine, but a replication as appropriate for the finite and temporal image of God (Bulgakov 2002, 91–96). Although we recognise that humans are constituted in such a way that affinity exists between the created and the Creator, such a view must be qualified by the ontological differences between Creator and creature (Tanner 2010, 1–2).

Having made this caveat, a few preliminary implications of how a divine ontology of well-being might impact development praxis may be considered. Let us consider the characteristic of "freely given and received: not obliged" attending a triune ontology. If the nature of triune well-being is conditioned by personal agency and freedom, how would such a condition impact human well-being? Here, an interrogation is provoked as to whether the substance of a development mechanism advances, or undermines, human agency and freedom. Agencies need to be cognisant that in the design of development modalities assumptions regarding human agency exist that will either attain or restrain enrichment. Enrichment cannot be forced or obliged, it requires free participation through mutual kenosis. With this dynamic in mind, consideration needs to be made of how some development programmes require "beneficiaries" to acquiesce, or worse, operate under duress, rather than affirm free and voluntary participation.

The use of conditional cash transfers (CCTs) in social protection programming is an apt example. CCTs entail the transfer of cash on the basis that a beneficiary will meet a particular condition, usually related to a health or education investment (for more on CCTs see Grosh et al. 2008, 312–340). Although the World Bank has maintained that CCTs reduce poverty and increase human capital (Grosh et al. 2008, 319–320), there is limited evidence that the conditionality (or the coercion) positively impacts economic and human capital expansion. In fact, evidence suggests that conditions undermine and damage human well-being (Cookson 2018). Furthermore, *unconditional* cash transfers (UCTs) have been found to be equally, if not more effective than CCTs (Kidd 2018). This suggests that a nexus exists between an un-coerced development delivery mechanism (that affirms free human agency) and the increase in human well-being.

Another entrenched development paradigm open to further interrogation in light of a triune ontology is the "effectiveness" regime. Again, if an ontology of well-being is articulated through freely gifted giving, is it appropriate that Christian expression of development always be subject to "effectiveness", where "effectiveness" is measured by input (the gift) as well as the output or outcome (receipt of gift)? Although I acknowledge the desire for transparency and accountability underlying the monitoring and evaluation of development effectiveness, the parameters established to determine such "effectiveness" may actually conceal expressions of duress and non-voluntary obligation on beneficiaries. Interrogating the prior assumptions of the delivery mechanism may assist in uncovering whether there is a bias against

human agency and freedom in the effectiveness agenda. For example, where a programme outcome is not achieved, is it because the programme and evaluation design were premised on criteria for "effectiveness" that assumed recipients to respond as humans with limited agency and freedom to participate? In other words, was the "outcome" contingent on the beneficiaries behaving in an assumed manner entrenched in the design? Was this assumed beneficiary behaviour volunteered freely, or coerced? Or worse, not even sought? Effectiveness agendas need to be revised to give greater weight to the agency of the perceived "beneficiary". Regulated by a Christian rationale, an indicator of effectiveness should include a donor's ability to advance the free agency of beneficiaries in programme activities.

A final brief implication for development praxis is the concept that well-being is actualised through "interpersonal communication". As discussed, based on an interpretation of the economic Trinity, the triune Persons each know and give enrichment to the other through personal engagement and dialogue. Intimacy and recognition of the free agency of the "other" exemplifies divine relationality and, therefore, divine well-being. Yet, are these the markers of international development, or is development, especially as it is undertaken by large organisations, characterised by impersonal knowledge and disconnected from intimate self-giving? When development is severed from interpersonal engagement and dialogue, then knowledge of the "other" may arguably become a form of knowledge open to domination and manipulation, rather than authentic engagement in the mutuality of knowing and being known.

In cases where development policy is determined by large multilateral and faith-based organisations, with headquarters physically located far from those being served, the temptation is for the "face" of the other to be generalised for efficiency, to be defined through algorithm, or perceived as image rather than physical form.[6] Such generalities may be useful, but they dilute the impression of the face of the "other" and create a deformed illusion of interpersonal engagement. For example, proxy means testing (PMT), a statistical model used by the World Bank, assesses household welfare based on a survey of household assets. PMT is undertaken by algorithm; it is a mathematical formula that assesses the inclusion or exclusion of potential beneficiaries of assistance (Kidd, Gelders and Bailey-Athias 2017, 1–2). While PMT is an attempt to reduce administration costs for social assistance and increase the accurate targeting of the "poor",[7] research demonstrates that this impersonal methodology is inaccurate, excluding many poor households from

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6 Emmanuel Levinas stressed the importance of personal engagement with the other, saying: "A face imposes itself upon me without my being able to be deaf to it or to forget it, that is, without my being able to suspend my responsibility for its distress" (Levinas 1996, 54).

7 Kidd, Gelders and Bailey-Athias (2017, 16) note the neoliberal driver of this priority and claim that the World Bank has also stated in an unpublished paper: "The historical […] evidence suggests that

assistance, and undermines social cohesion (Kidd, Gelders and Bailey-Athias 2017, 18).

PMT is but one example of an impersonal methodology to deliver human enrichment. This is not to criticise the complexity of mathematics used to assist in the reduction of poverty, nor to undermine administrative efficiencies, but rather to question how they are used. Deficiencies associated with PMT have been articulated on various grounds, yet here I draw attention to the lack of interpersonal application and transparency that arguably undermines human well-being. PMT merely considers beneficiaries through the narrowness of impersonal knowledge generated by an algorithm. Thus, PMT is an example of an opposing paradigm to the characteristics of the interpersonal divine conditions for well-being – that of knowing and being known. PMT is applied to impersonally "know" the recipients (thus arguably representing a form of limited manipulable knowledge) and cannot itself be "known" (mathematical obliqueness is inbuilt to dissuade household manipulation of proxies). This example depicts the necessity for a paradigm shift to acknowledge relational drivers of human well-being to transfigure the mere commodification of the human subject of development. Interpersonal communication and the actual interaction with the "other" are necessary in a development paradigm that seeks to truly enrich human well-being.

Understanding the dynamic of interpersonal relation that attends an ontology of divine well-being, Christians should exercise caution towards using reductive and impersonal knowledge of beneficiaries. Such knowledge can be manipulated to attest to a reportable "outcome", or used to justify aid dollars, without actually achieving enrichment. In the quest to achieve a breadth of development (outcomes for as many as possible), development work may actually undermine human well-being. The quest for breadth of reach, through impersonal mechanisms, might, in fact, be at the expense of a depth of enrichment. If development is not delivered through mechanisms that are based on personal and reciprocal engagement, delivery mechanisms may appear productive but fail to deliver authentic human well-being.

7. Conclusion

The intention here has been to provide a preliminary interrogation as to what a renewed praxis for development might entail in light of the inquiry into the constitutive features of divine well-being. The discussion is by no means complete

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the forces pushing for better targeting are more regularly motivated by cutting entitlement bills and ensuring financial sustainability than by helping the poor."

and requires further research and application. However, it does contribute to the growing research in the field (Freeman 2019; Thacker 2017; Loy 2017) towards the shaping of a theologically regulated Christian development rationale that provides an alternative perspective to the hegemony of a contemporary development paradigm. A systematic enquiry into the dynamics of triune well-being provides three significant possibilities for Christian development rationale and praxis. First, such a concept allows a development rationale to be derived from a pivotal Christian doctrine that simultaneously dislocates a secular pragmatic approach. Second, it identifies nascent theological principles by which agencies may critique and reform their foundations and operations. And third, it subverts the erroneous conflation of all religions to a common altruistic rationale by advancing a distinctively *Christian* rationale for development that may complement and challenge the current paradigm. A divine ontology of well-being calls for a reorientation of development rationale and praxis towards its originating cosmological foundations and, ultimately, locates the contingency of all created well-being within the conditions of divinity itself.

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Freedom by Regulation

A Legal Assessment of the CRL Commission's Report on the Commercialisation of Religion and Abuse of People's Belief Systems
(Research Article)

Abstract:

The South African Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities is one of the key institutions established by the Constitution of the country to strengthen its constitutional democracy. The Commission conducted investigations and released a report in 2017 related to suspicions that there are abuses of beliefs taking place in religious communities. The report was subjected to a number of challenges from academia, especially with regards to the constitutionality of some of the findings and recommendations of the Commission. In this article, it is argued that one of the contributing factors to the main shortcomings of the report emanates from a lack of nuance in the approach of the Commission. Considering the complex nature of religious beliefs, it is argued that the investigations by the CRL Rights Commission would have offered an opportunity for better conversation if the Commission had taken a human rights approach. In the main it is argued that a clear differentiation between the right to freedom of religion which vests on individuals, and the right of freedom of religious practice which vests on individuals in their capacity as members of religious communities, would have created a discourse that would better grapple with the complexity of ensuring maximum freedom of religion while creating safety for communal interests beyond specific beliefs.

1. Introduction

Following a number of media reports about "unusual" practices by some churches in South Africa, the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission), a body created in terms of section 181(1)(c) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, conducted a number of hearings with religious leaders and organisations across South Africa. Subsequent to these hearings, a report containing findings and recommendations was published which proposed certain regulations of religious institutions. The report and its recommendations have received significant academic criticism (such as Kgatle 2017, Henrico 2019 and Du Plessis 2019).

Commentary on the report focused on the legality and constitutionality of recommendations of the Commission on the one hand, and on the need for regulation of religious organisations to protect communities on the other. This article argues that in taking a legalistic and regulatory approach, the CRL Rights Commission missed an opportunity for a discussion that could enhance protection of the freedom of religion in South Africa. While a regulatory approach may be a natural response to the extreme nature of the alleged abuses of some congregants by their leadership, it still remains important to broaden the discussion of religious freedom in a multicultural context.

Some of the activities that led to the investigations by the Commission are a cause for real concern. However, by recommending the regulation of religious organisations as the CRL Rights Commission did, there were potential long-term effects on the promotion of freedom of religion which were overlooked. There was not a nuanced discussion of the different rights involved and how those rights were being balanced by the Commission. The constitutional imperative for the protection of human rights necessitates a nuanced approach to the relationship between religion and law, which was not fully embraced by the CRL Rights Commission during the investigations into the commercialisation of religion and the abuse of people's belief systems.

To better understand these issues, this article begins with a general discussion of freedom of religion and legal regulation within the South African constitutional framework. Thereafter, the role of the CRL Rights Commission is defined, in light of the imperative to protect freedom of religion. In the fourth section, the discussion focuses specifically on the CRL Rights Commission's *Report of the Hearings on the Commercialisation of Religion and Abuse of People's Belief Systems* (2017). In the fifth section, the recommendations of the Commission are dealt with in more detail, focusing on their legality and how they impact the right to freedom of religion. The sixth section considers nuances that could have been added to the process to reframe certain core issues around religious regulation.

2.   Freedom of Religion and Legal Regulation

The South African Constitution protects freedom of religion primarily through two human rights enshrined in the Bill of Rights. First, everyone has a right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought and opinion (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996, section 15(1)). This is in line with the liberal foundations which guarantee freedom of religion as an individual freedom. In line with this approach, the right to religious freedom allows an individual to choose their own religion, free from coercion (Eisenberg 2017, 65). This concerns an individual's deeply held views, and therefore does not directly affect other people.

Secondly, the Constitution protects religious communities and their members by protecting a person's right to belong to a religious community, practise their religion, and form associations (section 31(1)). People are protected against the censoring of religious practices or exclusion of members of religious communities from religious practice. Both individuals and the communities to which they belong are protected. This approach is akin to the treatment of religion as identity (Eisenberg 2017, 65). The right to practise religion and to form and maintain religious associations, however, is qualified. It may not be exercised in a manner that is inconsistent with any provision of the Bill of Rights (Constitution 1996, section 31(2)). This means in instances where the right of persons belonging to a religious group to practise their religion or to form religious associations conflicts with any other right, the other right takes precedence.

Although the ideal is for the state to not regulate religion, in reality the state often becomes involved in religious matters, for example through the recognised adjudicatory role of courts on non-doctrinal and procedural aspects of religious organisations (du Plessis 2019, 140). The constitutional provision for religious freedom takes into account the consideration of other rights. In exceptional circumstances, such as instances where religious activities are harmful to a population, international law allows states to intervene to the extent of preventing the harm, being otherwise intolerant of states assessing the legitimacy of religious beliefs or how they are practised (Taylor 2018, 316). All rights in the South African Bill of Rights are subject to a general limitation clause (South African Constitution, section 36). However, the rights of religious practice also have an internal limitation clause (South African Constitution, section 31(2)), which means any religious practice that is contrary to the provisions of the Bill of Rights will be excluded from protection in terms of section 31(1) (Johannessen 1997, 139).

The complexity of state regulation of religion considers the extent to which the state interferes with religious convictions and practices, as well as the extent to which the state may endorse specific religions. The South African state is constitutionally permitted to support religion, provided that such support does not work against provisions of equality and does not amount to interference with freedom of religion

(Heyns & Brand 2000, 705, 749). Due to its personal nature, religion is inherently complex to regulate within the legal and political spheres. However, since religious practice is so omnipresent in society, public interest often requires that the state and the law have to grapple with dogmatic aspects of religion, even in democratic countries. For example, "prosperity-tinged Pentecostalism" in sub-Saharan Africa is growing faster than other religious groups (Phiri & Maxwell 2007, 23), and has ignited discussions around implications of these phenomena on theories of state and religion, and especially around the regulation of religious practices by the state.

In South Africa, publicised instances of congregations eating grass and drinking petrol have reignited debates on whether or not the state needs to be more active in regulating religious activity. Those who are in favour of more stringent regulation question whether some of the reported activities are authentic religious practice (Resane 2017, 6). In doing so, congregants are not seen as able to give valid consent to some of the activities, and therefore "fall prey" in search of spiritual deliverance (Kgatle 2017, 3). Some practices are seen as undermining the dignity of participant congregants, and often pose real risk to the lives and health of the participants (Resane 2017, 7). As indicated above, in instances where religious practice is inconsistent with any right protected in the Bill of Rights, the other right(s) would supersede the right of freedom to religious practice. However, this provision is clearly more useful in instances that are continuous and are being subjected to some form of litigation or dispute resolution. In that case, the arbiter would need to give precedence to the other rights. What the provision does not suitably deal with is the prevention of instances that are one-offs or may potentially infringe on human rights. The need to consider the prevention of potential harm informed the approach that the CRL Rights Commission took when seeking to deal with alleged abuses of people's belief systems.

3. The CRL Rights Commission and Freedom of Religion

South Africa is a pluralistic society, with diverse religious beliefs and practices. While some argue that it would be inaccurate to regard the South African state as a secular state, opting rather to use the phrase "religiously neutral state" (Henrico 2019, 15), it is important to note that all religions within South Africa are legally protected by the Constitution. Religion is one of the listed grounds under section 9(3), meaning no one may be discriminated against on that ground. Any discrimination on the basis of a listed ground is presumed to be unfair unless proven otherwise.

In spite of a past characterised by discriminatory laws prior to adoption of a democratic constitution, "in the history of South Africa there has never been a statutory (regulatory) body that has granted religious bodies licences to operate

or practice their beliefs" (Henrico 2019, 15). However, the apartheid government's approach to religion cannot be described as secular. Various Christian theologies, and aspects of African traditional religions when convenient, were used to justify discrimination (Amien & Leatt 2014, 506). In acknowledgement of this past, and in an effort to ensure that the protection of religious freedom is entrenched in the South African legal system, South African courts have demonstrated deference on matters of religion. In the few instances that the courts have been called upon to decide on matters relating to religion, they have recognised religious diversity as promoted by the Constitution.

The approach of South African courts demonstrates a point of departure that views religion through the eyes of the believer, and therefore should not be assessed based on what any other person might consider to be sensible (*Christian Education South Africa v Minister of Education* 2000 (4) SA 757 (CC)). For courts to decide on points of doctrine would be inappropriate (*Ryland v Edros* 1997 (2) SA 690 (C), 703). This notwithstanding, courts acknowledge that they have a duty to step in and effectively set a limit on the expression of beliefs (*Christian Education South Africa* 2000). This is the case when religious practice undermines other rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. While courts can mitigate limitations on the freedom of religion, the constitutional provisions discussed above envisage a situation where freedom of religion is not only legally protected, but one where it is also promoted.

4.   The CRL Rights Commission's Report on Commercialisation of Religion

The CRL Rights Commission was created in terms of section 181(1)(c) of the Constitution of South Africa as one of the institutions designed to strengthen democracy. It is an independent body that must be impartial and exercise its powers without fear, favour or prejudice, subject only to the Constitution and the law (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996). The Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities Act 19 of 2002 provides for the composition and additional functions of the Commission.

The constitutional and legislative bases of the CRL Rights Commission demonstrate that the Commission is tasked with the complex duty of promoting the religious, cultural and linguistic interests of groups, while not overlooking the individual rights of members of society. Unlike courts, the Commission is not an arbiter (Du Plessis 2019, 137). Rather, the Commission is intended to side with religious communities should their interests be under threat, and to promote their well-being. The Commission should promote peace, humanity and tolerance among different religious communities (Constitution, section 185(1)(b)). It also has responsibilities towards ensuring the attainment of constitutional objectives and ideals, and the fulfilment of the rights in the Bill of Rights (Constitution, section 7(2)).

The rights that apply to the mandate of the CRL Rights Commission relate mostly to collective rights that are to be enjoyed by communities. Essentially, the CRL Rights Commission is mandated with ensuring that an environment exists that promotes the recognition of religious diversity within the country, a clear separation between religion and the state in order to ensure that some religions are not unfairly favoured over others, and the creation and promotion of equal opportunities for all religions in societal life (Koopman 2002, 237). Although it is impossible to draw a strict line of difference between the individual internal aspects of belief and community practice of religion, the CRL Rights Commission ought to focus on the protection of communities.

Around 2016, there were a number of incidents reported in South African and international media of what has been described as "recent unusual practices within some Neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa" (Kgatle 2017, 2). These included reports that some religious leaders instructed congregants to eat snakes and grass, to drink petrol, and "part with considerable sums of money to be guaranteed a miracle or blessing" (CRL Rights Commission Report 2017, 6). This is what triggered the CRL Rights Commission to conduct an investigative study through which they would, among other things, "investigate and understand further issues surrounding the commercialisation of religion and traditional healing; identify the causes underlying the commercialisation of religion and traditional healing; understand the deep societal thinking that makes some members of our society vulnerable and gullible on views expressed and actions during religious ceremonies; and realise what form of legal framework regulates the religious and traditional sectors currently" (CRL Rights Commission Report 2017, 6).

The Commission had to balance perceptions of intrusion into practices that are sacred on the one hand, while at the same time demonstrating presence as a constitutional body tasked with ensuring the promotion and protection of religion when these organisations are in the news for the wrong reasons. The CRL Rights Commission reported that during their investigations there were a number of issues raised by religious leaders, including the fear of state control, perceptions that the investigation was a form of attack on religious organisations, concerns that there were attempts to abolish home schooling, and concerns that the investigation was unnecessary given that "the incidents are few and isolated, and there is no need to act aggressively" (CRL Rights Commission Report 2017, 27–30).

The findings of the CRL Rights Commission report received criticism for recommending strict regulation of religious institutions (Du Plessis 2019, 134) by proposing regulations which limit the freedom of religion (Henrico 2019, 16) and for dealing with religious bodies in manners which create a negative impression about religious communities (Banda 2019, 5). The parliamentary portfolio committee reviewing the report felt that most of the issues raised by the report were

already addressed by other laws (Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 27 June 2017).

There are a number of constitutional criticisms that can be levelled against the report of the CRL Rights Commission on the commercialisation of religion. For instance, the Commission reports that there is prima facie evidence of the commercialisation of religion because of cases of people being expected to pay "substantial amounts of money before blessings and prayers could be said over them" (CRL Rights Commission Report 2017, 31). This finding lacks specificity. The Commission needed to go beyond stating that there is a commercialisation of religion, and actually delineate what commercialisation of religion means for the purposes of the report. Indeed, as du Plessis (2019, 139) points out, the report does not offer a definition of what commercialisation of religion is in the context of the investigation and report.

Defining "commercialisation of religion" differentiates between instances that consist of such commercialisation, which could require legal sanction, and other instances that do not amount to commercialisation. Without a definition, there is a vagueness about which practices should be considered commercialisation. In *Affordable Medicines Trust and Others v Minister of Health*, the Constitutional Court states that "The doctrine of vagueness is founded on the rule of law, which … is a foundational value of our democracy. It requires that laws must be written in a clear and accessible manner. What is required is reasonable certainty and not perfect lucidity" (2006, 288–289). Without a definition, religious practitioners have no way of knowing if they may be engaging in practices that could fall under the Commission's definition of commercialisation.

Considering the sensitive nature of issues related to religion, extra caution should be made to allay fears on the part of some religious communities that the CRL Rights Commission might target them, against its requirement for even-handedness. Some of the practices found by the CRL Rights Commission to illustrate the commercialisation of religion include blessed water and oils being sold to congregants for marked-up prices, and the use of bank card payment machines during ceremonies (CRL Rights Commission Report 2017, 31). There should be more said by the Commission about how practices are determined to demonstrate commercialisation and why this is undesirable.

The Commission reports that some churches were found not to be in compliance with laws. For instance, some religious organisations failed to register as non-profit organisations (NPOs) with the Department of Social Development, and some of those that were registered did not report and declare revenues as required by law (CRL Rights Commission Report 2017, 31). The Non-profit Organisations Act (71 of 1997) is aimed at creating an environment in which NPOs can flourish by, among other things, providing an administrative and regulatory framework within which

NPOs can conduct their affairs and encouraging NPOs to maintain standards of good governance (NPO Act 71, 1997, section 2a–c).

The provisions of this Act that relate to registration are permissive (section 12(1) provides that an NPO *may* apply to the Directorate for registration; section 11 provides that the Minister *may* prescribe benefits and allowances applicable to *registered* NPOs; and 13(1) provides for the format in which an NPO *may* apply for registration). It does not require NPOs be registered in terms of the Act. Section 16(1) of the Act provides that a certificate of registration for an NPO is proof that such organisation has met all requirements of registration. When the Commission's report states that some organisations are not compliant in that they are not registered as NPOs, this seems to be based on an interpretation that the NPO Act makes it a requirement for NPOs to be registered. However, the language used by the Act is clearly one that is permissive of registration, and not one that makes such registration compulsory. Although there may be advantages to being registered as an NPO in terms of the Act, the law does not make it a requirement for non-profit organisations to be registered.

While the CRL Rights Commission has a duty to "determine and co-ordinate the implementation of its policies and measures in a manner designed to promote, support and enhance the capacity of non-profit organisations to perform their functions" (section 3 of NPO Act), as required of every organ of state in terms of the Act, the provision states that the duty is to occur within limits prescribed by law. This duty would not apply in this case because an interpretation of the Act in a way that makes registration compulsory would be an expansion of the intended application of the Act, which is outside the powers of the CRL Rights Commission, and therefore unconstitutional.

There are a number of other findings by the Commission that are concerning. One finding that seems out of place is where the Commission holds that there are instances of a "misuse of visa application systems" by pastors who apply for certain categories of visas, and then "demand a permanent or residence visa" once they are in the country. Although the specific instances of such "abuses" are not outlined by the Commission, questions of migration, particularly from other African countries given a context of xenophobia, need to be dealt with in a manner that is in line with the founding constitutional values of equality, freedom and dignity, including ubuntu. The report would have benefitted from more detail to support the finding. As a constitutional body, the Commission needs to ensure the protection of human rights, as this is a requirement for the promotion of democracy.

When pressing issues are not within the mandate of the CRL Rights Commission, it might be better for the Commission to defer the issues to other constitutional bodies. Without suggesting that the CRL Rights Commission must concern itself strictly with religious matters to the exclusion of other human rights issues, it needs to be clear that the primary mandate of the Commission is the protection of the

rights of religious, cultural and linguistic communities. Therefore, matters relating to suspected wrongdoings should be referred to other constitutional bodies. The powers of the Commission in terms of section 5(1)(k) of the CRL Rights Commission Act to bring any relevant matter to the attention of an appropriate authority or organ of state is crucial in this case. Investigating matters that are directly within the mandate of another constitutional body would amount to unconstitutional expansion of its own mandate.

5. Regulating Freedoms: Proposals for Dealing with "Abuses" in Religious Organisations

Emanating from the problems identified, the CRL Rights Commission made a number of recommendations in its 2017 report. First, the Commission recommended that since it is important to protect religious freedom without an attempt for the state to regulate, religious communities should regulate themselves more diligently to be in line with the Constitution and the law (CRL Rights Commission Report 2017, 34). Further proposals for regulation by peer review tend to operate against the Commission's principle that religion needs to be protected from regulation (Freedom of Religion South Africa 2017, 55). By recommending that peer-review committees will account to the CRL Rights Commission while those committees are branded as self-regulating, the Commission seeks to essentially regulate religious organisations on the one hand and distance itself from such regulation on the other (Henrico 2019, 17).

The Commission's recommendation about existing legislation affecting religious organisations (CRL Rights Commission Report 2017, 35) is not particularly clear. The recommendation is that existing laws need to be enforced. There is no question that laws that exist must be enforced. But while the Commission reports that there are "numerous examples" given to demonstrate gaps in enforcement (CRL Rights Commission Report 2017, 35), the report does not address the extent of the problems identified, even among the religious organisations that were investigated (Banda 2019, 6).

The fourth recommendation is that the Commission should provide "essential assistance in helping [religious organisations] get their house in order and to ensure compliance with existing legislation and propose new legislation. The current disregard of fiduciary responsibility is a serious concern" (CRL Rights Commission Report 2017, 35). Henrico has criticised this recommendation as being too wide, and possibly impossible to implement (Henrico 2019, 16).

According to the Commission, one of the ways religious organisations can "get their house in order" is by receiving "proper training" (CRL Rights Commission Report 2017, 36). It is not clear what training is required, or how this should

be determined. This recommendation does not reflect the diversity of religious communities existing in South Africa, and their varied practices and capacities. The recommendation for training is preceded by an observation of "schisms and disputes within religious organisations". Again, the Commission does not detail the prevalence of this problem within the religious communities that were part of the investigation.

Also concerning is a finding that "there is an established and *exponential increase in religious organisations and leaders of foreign origin*. There is an appreciation for bona fide foreigners serving the South African nation, *but the evidence has shown that in some cases they display a propensity for amassing money*" [own emphasis] (CRL Rights Commission Report 2017, 36). However, the report provides no data on the prevalence of the problem. As stated above, given the prevalence of xenophobia and the potential accompanying violence, there are clear negative implications of a constitutional institution making these remarks. A commission created to protect the rights of religious, linguistic and cultural groups is surely going against the spirit of its core mandate by making observations that can be perceived as prejudicial.

As discussed above, there are a number of technical, legal and procedural problems with the Commission's report into the commercialisation of religion and the abuse of people's belief systems. However, the overarching concern relates to the proposed regulation of religious organisations. While there is some support for regulation, the proposals in the report were received with overwhelming opposition. The Commission's approach to the investigation and subsequent report was a missed opportunity for discussions of the nature of the right to freedom of religion, and how those rights ought to balance with other human rights.

6.   The CRL Rights Commission and Protecting Communities from Abuses by Religious Leaders

The events that led to the CRL Rights Commission's investigation into the commercialisation of religion are serious, and often took place in a context of intersecting vulnerabilities. While the Commission's report may have a number of shortcomings, the issues raised remain serious. Some activities that occurred during church services, such as drinking petrol as part of worship, directly threatened people's lives. As a constitutional body tasked with strengthening democracy by promoting and protecting the rights of cultural, religious and linguistic communities, the Commission's approach to the issues raised should have the Constitution, and especially the protection of human rights, at the centre of all investigations and reporting. While the rights of religious, linguistic and cultural communities must serve as the starting point, the Commission is expected to deal with all the other rights affected.

The Commission does not need to adjudicate on those rights, but rather to point out the complexities that exist in balancing rights.

The Constitution provides for the right to freedom of religion, belief and opinion (section 15) separately from the rights of cultural, religious and linguistic communities (section 31). While the two rights are closely related, they are separate rights. The constitutional mandate of the CRL Rights Commission is around the latter right (South African Constitution, section 185). Under the rationale for the study, and in a number of other occasions in the report, the Commission seems to conflate issues of belief with those of practice (CRL Rights Commission, 11). Section 15(1) of the Constitution protects the rights of a person to "(a) entertain the religious beliefs that one chooses to entertain and; (b) the right to announce one's religious beliefs publicly and without fear of reprisal" (*Prince v President, Cape Law Society* 2002, 812). Strictly speaking, the Commission is not mandated to deal with this right. Although it is complementary to the section 31 right, they are treated separately by the Constitution. A clear acknowledgement by the Commission that the main focus of their investigation is on *practices* and not on beliefs would have dealt with some of the criticism that has been levelled against the report.

Henrico (2019, 13) states that South African case law reflects a judicial view that is deferent to adjudicating the doctrinal content of people's beliefs and religion, because religion consists of deeply held personal beliefs. A person's beliefs are not legally required to be in accordance with any measure of reasonableness. Further, he states that South African courts have endorsed a right to freedom of religion, and by implication expression thereof, even if such religion might be viewed by some as bizarre, illogical or irrational. What Henrico's interpretation overlooks is the internal limitation in provisions of section 31(2). If the expression of religion amounts to actions that are contrary to any right in the Bill of Rights, these expressions of belief can be limited. An approach that delineates the distinction between the right to believe and to practise would be relevant to the point made by the Commission around a religious community that prohibits education of their children as part of their beliefs. In terms of section 29(1)(a) of the Constitution, everyone has the right to a basic education. Therefore, no religion may function in a manner that deprives anyone of that right. The limitation is not on the doctrine, but on the practice. Section 28(2) of the Constitution further places the best interests of a child above any other consideration in any matter that concerns the child.

The limitation of a practice informed by a person's beliefs is not the same as limiting the right of a person to have and hold beliefs and convictions. As discussed earlier, the right to hold specific beliefs primarily considers the individual and is a requirement to ensure the freedom of individuals within democratic societies. What individuals, and even communities, believe is beyond the mandate of state regulation. However, the right to freedom of religion does not mean that one is allowed to claim the freedom to do harm to other people because of one's religious

beliefs. A person may not use religion as an excuse for breaking the general laws of a country (Richmond 2017, 5). An approach that takes into account these differences in detail would make it clear that the Commission is not seeking to regulate what people believe.

For instance, the CRL Rights Commission's approach could have been anchored by clarifying two significant factors. First, that while people might perpetrate harm or illegality in the name of religion, the constitutional order does not protect such claims, and therefore those actions cannot be conducted in the name of freedom of religion. Secondly, that it is in the interest of the collective dignity of religious communities that actions that infringe on human rights and that are illegal should not seek refuge under the umbrella of religious freedom. This informs not only the legitimacy, but necessity of investigating behaviours that threaten the legally protected rights of religious communities.

An opportunity existed for the CRL Rights Commission to demonstrate that a discussion of limiting the right to freedom of religious practice is not a controversial matter and would happen in such a way that avoids interference with religious doctrine (Du Plessis 2019, 132). The involvement of the state in religious practice has legal implications; this is not unique to South Africa. For instance, in the United Kingdom, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act of 2015 provides for specified authorities to prevent people from being radicalised and drawn into terrorism (section 26(1)). Although this provision has been criticised for being vague about what amounts to being radicalised (Richmond 2017, 9), this legislation still serves a legitimate purpose. While such provisions call for caution on the part of arbiters, there are circumstances in which the limitation is justified in a democratic society. Therefore, concerns by the Commission emanating from suspicions of abuse of human rights could be couched in terms of section 31(2) of the Constitution.

7.   Conclusion

Protection of the freedom of religion is one of the rights enshrined in the South African Constitution, and the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities plays an important role in the protection of this right. Using the Commission's investigations and report into the commercialisation of religion and abuse of people's belief systems as a focal point, the article argues that the complexity that comes with ensuring the protection of freedom of religion requires clear definitions of a range of complex concepts, and nuanced approaches to how they are applied in law.

The investigation by the Commission took place due to incidents that are concerning to South African society. At the same time, the report which the Commission developed was met with legitimate criticism. This demonstrates the ongoing need to

have a nuanced discussion about how rights relate to one another, and how they can best be protected. While the procedural and legal challenges to the Commission's report have a sound constitutional basis, limiting the discussion to those factors still does not address the lived experiences of members of religious communities. Supporting regulation as a means of dealing with problems identified by the Commission downplays the impact that such regulation could have on the legal protection of the right to freedom of religion.

The protection of freedom of religion, and addressing potential abuses within religious communities, is a nuanced human rights and legal issue. To understand it, and develop an appropriate response, it is critical to distinguish between individual rights to hold a belief, and community rights to carry out religious practices. The individual right to a belief and conviction is inviolable, while the communal right to practise one's religion is limited by other rights in the Bill of Rights. As such, in instances where religious practice takes place in a manner that is inconsistent with any other right enshrined in the Bill of Rights, the other rights would have precedence over the right to religious practice.

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Religion and Sustainable Development in Africa

Neo-Pentecostal Economies in Perspective
(Research Article)

Abstract:

The secular world has treated religion as anti-developmental. However, the history of how development was part of missionary activity in some African countries, such as those of health and educational infrastructure, has been widely acknowledged. In this paper, therefore, we contend that the marginalisation of religion in development discourse is a result of a faulty and fractured understanding of religion. We argue that sustainable development, if attainable in contemporary Africa, would require that organised and institutional religions in Africa as well as their religious cosmologies, convictions and orientations feature and remain integral to such processes. With reference to neo-Pentecostal economies in Africa, we intend to discuss why and how religion – religious cosmologies and institutions – is indispensable in the sustainable development process in Africa. Specifically, keeping in focus the human dimensions of development, we intend to argue that the beliefs, teachings and activities of neo-Pentecostal churches on human salvation, progress and/or transformation, such as prosperity and wealth creation, which has seen them emerge on the socioeconomic scene, indicate the potentials of neo-Pentecostals in particular, and religion in general, to contribute immensely to sustainable development. This, however, is not to gloss over some of the challenges they potentially pose to sustainable development.

1. Introduction

Religion has most often, during modernity and even beyond, been considered as anti-developmental and posing impediments to development, and therefore divorced from development theory, policy and practice (Ter Haar and Ellis 2006, 352; Hoffstaedter 2011; Rakodi 2012; Marshal 2011; Jones and Pedersen 2011; Kaag

and Saint-Lary 2011). Consequently, institutionalised and/or organised religion, until recently, has been largely considered problematic to development, if not "part of the development problem" (Haynes 2007, 1). Noticeably, therefore, the contributions of religion to development have been largely beholden to their secular and functionalist performative categories where religion is still largely defined in terms of its institutions with less emphasis on the role of their beliefs and norms.

In contemporary times, especially in the developing world, the development community, such as faith-based organisations and many other non-governmental organisations in humanitarian and development work, have shifted their focus and emphasis on "macro-scale economic matters" (Freeman 2015, 114) and begun problematising religion in development thinking. This came with the emerging clarity that in thinking about the role of religion in development, there is the need to go "beyond simple matrices of religion as inhibitor to development or religion as a source of development" (Hoffstaedter 2011, 5). This is due to the acceptance by most development policy makers that "development can be achieved only if people build on their resources" (Ter Haar and Ellis 2006, 353) and "the realisation that human beings are not rational economic agents and do not make their life decisions solely based on economic criteria and the soulless and lonely goal of economic maximisation" (Freeman 2015, 114).

In this paper, therefore, with a focus on neo-Pentecostal economies in Africa, we argue for the centrality of religion to sustainable development. We intend to pursue and answer the question "What contribution do neo-Pentecostal churches and their economies offer sustainable development in Africa today?" Offering what we consider a holistic conception of development and a discussion of religious resources as spiritual capital to development, we discuss how some beliefs, teachings and activities within neo-Pentecostal economies in particular, and of religion in general, have the potential to contribute to sustainable development. These, particularly, we discuss in the light of their teachings on human salvation as progress and/or transformation, as depicted by their emphasis on prosperity and wealth creation, which has seen them emerge on the socioeconomic scene.

This article opens with a background discussion on neo-Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostal economies in Africa as the central unit of analysis of the paper. It is followed by problematising the concept of development and a discussion of the dynamics of its disconnection with religion. The background is followed by a methodology section that outlines ways in which data was gathered and analysed. We then devote the rest of the paper to analysing the contribution of neo-Pentecostal economies to sustainable development in Africa. In our analytic discussion, we offer how certain activities and practices of neo-Pentecostals can be described as their substantive and/or potential contribution to sustainable development in Africa.

2.   Neo-Pentecostal Economies of Africa

Generally representing the third wave of Pentecostalism in Africa, neo-Pentecostal churches differ from the first two waves of Pentecostal experience in Africa. The first wave of Pentecostalism started with the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles and its reverberations throughout the Christian world and is usually known as the "classical Pentecostals"; the second wave of Pentecostalism, which is believed to have started around the 1960s, were Pentecostal revival or Pentecostal-inspired movements within mainline churches, including Roman Catholicism (MacTavish 2014, 2–3). Meyer refers to neo-Pentecostal churches, the third wave, as "more recently founded Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, which are organized as global megachurches addressing masses of believers, make prolific use of media technologies to spread the message, and endorse the prosperity gospel" (Meyer 2010, 113).

By neo-Pentecostals, we refer to an eclectic category of Pentecostal-type churches "often regarded as Charismatic independent churches, including megachurches, and influenced by both classical Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement" (Anderson 2010, 19). They could be said to be represented by the blend of Pentecostal expressions which Miller and Yamamori (2007, 26–27) identify as the second and third waves, which are indigenous Pentecostal denominations and independent neo-Pentecostal churches respectively, and equally blended orientations to a prosperity gospel and "integrated" or "holistic" gospel (Miller and Yamamori 2007, 30–31). These churches are defined by Togarasei as having the cumulative characteristics of "transnationalism and internationalism, association with urban areas, preaching of gospel of prosperity, spiritism and association with modernity" (Togarasei 2011, 338). In Ghana, which is the context that the authors are more familiar with, neo-Pentecostal churches, which are also generally referred to as Charismatic churches, are offshoots of the classical Pentecostal churches such as the Church of Pentecost, Christ Apostolic Church and the Assemblies of God Church. Neo-Pentecostal churches emerged in the late 1970s and saw exponential growth in the early 1990s (Matthews 2008, 168).

Distinctions between neo-Pentecostal churches and the first two waves are marked with features such as much more "modern outlook, relaxed dress codes, internationalism, innovative use of the modern media and contemporary forms of worship" (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005, 4). However, unlike classical Pentecostal churches, a unique distinction is that these neo-Pentecostal churches usually evolve around one charismatic visionary who is the founder, leader and embodiment of the vision of the church. Examples of such churches are Archbishop Duncan-Williams' Action Chapel International (Ghana), Bishop Agyinasare's Perez Chapel International (Ghana), Pastor Mensa Otabil's International Central Gospel Church (Ghana), Apostle Sam Korankye-Ankrah's Royalhouse Chapel International (Ghana), Bishop Oyedepo's Living Faith Church (also known as Winners Chapel) in Nigeria, Chris

Oyakhilome's Believers' Loveworld Ministries (also called Christ Embassy Church) in Nigeria, Enoch Adeboye's Redeemed Christian Church of God (Nigeria) and Alph Lukau's Alleluia Ministries International (South Africa).

There is no consensual definition of neo-Pentecostal economies, and just as diverse as neo-Pentecostal churches are, so are the economies. However, in this paper, we define them as the spaces within which neo-Pentecostals functionally deploy their beliefs, norms and resources, especially fiscal and structural resources, in ways that are similar to and/or function to support neo-liberal development, in order to achieve the mission and vision of their calling. The mission and vision of their calling they largely interpret as teaching and working towards the spiritual, physical and socioeconomic redemption and liberation of oppressed humanity to enjoy and manifest "the glorious grace and love of God – including the blessing to a prosperous and wealthy life (mostly defined materially)" (Golo 2012, 350). This is largely driven by their radicalisation of the doctrine of salvation, which is defined as extending beyond inner spiritual, moral renewal and righteous living before God through Jesus Christ, and includes salvation as redemption (liberation) from the powers that induce ill health and poverty into the realisation of good life and well-being on earth (Golo 2013, 371).

This radicalised doctrine of salvation emphasises salvation as acts of deliverance, healing, transformation and empowerment (Golo 2013, 368; cf. Asamoah-Gyadu 2005) in order to partake and become both functional and beneficiary in the socioeconomic life of the society. This must be seen against the backdrop of the difficult socioeconomic conditions and under-development of Africa during the late 1970s and the 1980s that saw the emergence of the prosperity gospels, which were directed at enforcing social change and transformation (Matthews 2008; Larbi 2001; Asamoah-Gyadu 2005; Golo 2012). Thus, we do not use the term "economy" in the narrower popular sense in terms of an economic system of trade or exchange of services for fiscal benefits, though not entirely excluding aspects of it.

Therefore, one would dare say the neo-Pentecostal economies are contexts or spaces within which "Pentecostal churches have come to function as non-state sites addressing social needs that have gone unmet by the state due to a combination of factors" (Barker 2007, 409). They are economies largely driven by the radicalised doctrine of salvation and its interactions with norms, behaviours and resources in achieving socioeconomic transformation and change as goals of salvation. We further explore neo-Pentecostal economies with recourse to Barker (2007), who suggests that "Pentecostalism has the capacity to embed neoliberal economic activities by integrating these activities into society" (Barker 2007, 409). This is because "it exists in a harmonizing, even symbiotic, relation to neoliberal capitalism. Pentecostalism provides adherents tools to respond to the vagaries of the neoliberal organization of the economy in a way that is supportive of this organization" (Barker 2007, 409). Barker further notes that "the individualist theology, charismatic prac-

tices, and the new kinds of community fostered by Pentecostal worship reinforce shifting modes of production and globalizing markets, purveying values that support the informalization of the labor market, increased labor migration, and the rapid transformation of local communities" (Barker 2007, 409). It is against these developments, which are central to neo-Pentecostal economies in Africa as well, that we engage in their role in sustainable socioeconomic development in Africa.

3.   Development – Problematising a Hydra-Headed Concept

For the purpose of this work, we offer two definitions of development. The first considers development as "nothing less than the upward movement on the entire social system or it may be interpreted as the attainment of a number of ideals of modernisation such as production, social and economic equalisation, modern knowledge, improved institutions and attitudes, and a rationally coordinated system of policy measures that can remove a host of undesirable conditions in the social system that have perpetuated a state of under-development" (Meier 1995, 7). The second definition sees development as "the process of enhancing individual and collective quality of life in a manner that satisfies basic needs (as a minimum), is environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable, and is empowering in the sense that the people concerned have a substantial degree of control over the process through access to means of accumulating social power" (Simon and Narman 1999, 21).

However, it is important to underscore that development is a hydra-headed concept. Because development is complex and "has long been a vague yet predictive term, struggling to acquire a precise meaning" (Haynes 2007, 5), there exists "no such, precise, single meaning" (Gasper 2004, 25) for it. The complexity of the term development is well reflected in the many complex concepts and terminologies it is loaded with, which Cornwall (2007, 472) describes thus: "Development's buzzwords gain their purchase and power through their vague and euphemistic qualities, their capacity to embrace a multitude of possible meanings, and their normative resonance." She further suggests that "engagement with development's language is far more than a matter of playing games with words" (Cornwall 2007, 482).

Gasper (2004, 28–39) discusses four major types of usage of development in development studies: (i) development as fundamental structural/qualitative change, interpreted either as the process of change or the outcome where, "in the crudest usage, development is equated with economic growth or, its outcome terms, GDP per capita"; (ii) development as action or intervention that is aimed at improvement; (iii) development understood in evaluative terms as "improvement or good change; or in the outcome form, achieved improvement, a good state or situation"; and (iv) development instrumentally understood as "that which facilitates or enables

improvement." He suggests that if development means improvement of that which instrumentally facilitates development (which has long been popular), then the first two – economic growth and technological advancement as actions or interventions – would then be regarded as "only hypothesised means towards development" (Gasper 2004, 30) and could be subject to evaluation if they achieved improvement or not. Economic growth programmes are, therefore, neither pre-conditions – the fundamental change – for improvement nor are they improvement in themselves; nor is there a single thing to be described as development, as some people show a strong belief to desire (Gasper 2004, 31).

For many decades, modern society and most secular development experts thought that "finding ways to generate economic growth and then to distribute the resulting wealth among a country's population according to varying ideas of what is just and equitable" (Haynes 2007, 4) reduces development largely to its economic dimensions. Even the UN "used GDP per capita as the single measure, and indeed perhaps definition, of development" (Gasper 2004, 36) for a long time till the 1990s, when attention shifted to human development as an alternative (Gasper 2004). This reflected the belief and expectation that the economy will lead to the improvement of the lives of many, especially the majority poor. In contemporary times, however, it has become increasingly necessary to rethink the development paradigm that has been pursued. This is largely due to "the widespread failure of secular development trajectories to achieve widespread poverty reduction or reductions of inequality and injustice in the developing world" (Haynes 2007, 1) and certain obvious flaws of the modernity project, such as negative climate change and the diminishing of natural resources in the world. It is unsurprising, therefore, that by the turn of the 21st century, the concept of sustainable development had become central and critical to development thinking, policy and practice. In this development option, human and planetary well-being feature centrally, where sustainable development is defined by the report *Our Common Future* (WCED 1987) as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The need to focus on development that is sustainable and holistic has since become a global priority, culminating in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which member countries are expected to meet on an agreed schedule.

Therefore, the modernist idea of development, which was dominant until the second half of the 20th century, conceives of development not in the sense of "the holistic human development dimension" (Haynes 2007, 1). Human development, which according to Haynes (2007, 4) is understood in various ways, prioritises human well-being and social transformation in the developing world considerably and overlaps with the spiritual and religious dimensions of life. Here, the essence of religion matters and plays a vital role, such as providing "important resources for the protection of human dignity and promotion of social justice" (Atiemo 2017,

251). This holistic human development dimension reflects the visions of development from faith perspectives, which "differ significantly from those expressed historically by secular development organisations, which often appear to be singularly concerned with 'economic development' to the exclusion of other aspects of development" (Haynes 2007, 1). This human development dimension is particularly relevant to us as it hems the social and spiritual dimension of development to the discourse on development (Golo 2019). This is particularly crucial, considering that we intend to lay emphasis on religious beliefs, values and institutions, which largely play out not in measurably quantitative terms but largely in qualitative terms.

4. Religion and Development – Exploring the Relationships

While it is widely acknowledged that religion and development are not separate spheres of life (Rakodi 2012, 625), until the late 20th century, religion had been largely neglected and divorced from mainline development theory, policy and practice (Ter Haar and Ellis 2006, 352; Hoffstaedter 2011; Rakodi 2012; Marshal 2011; Jones and Pedersen 2011; Kaag and Saint-Lary 2011). This divorce especially went "increasingly unnoticed when modernization theories of development became dominant in the 1950s and 1960s" (Kaag and Saint-Lary 2011, 2). Hence "religion has been a marginal, if not a neglected topic" (Marshall 2011, 339) in development thinking. This is largely attributable to modernisation theory and the secularisation of the state and society leading to the separation between state and religion (Rakodi 2012, 638; Marshall 2011, 343).

Secularisation, driven largely by modernisation theory, "the theory that most clearly influenced development during the 1950s and 1960s and even later" (Rakodi 2009, 18), meant a faulty, fractured and narrow understanding of both religion and the idea of development (Jones and Pedersen 2011). During modernity "the notion of development was closely tied to both secularisation and modernisation" (Haynes 2007, 1), leading to the emphasis and prioritisation of the secular and rational (usually economic) perspectives in development thinking. In relation to approaching religion, a particular ingredient to look for here is the functionalist approach, which sees religion in terms of its institutions and structures, what they do, and how they affect their members and the society of which they are a part. This approach gave no central place to the supernatural or the transcendent as a central point of reference to beliefs and rituals, without which institutions and structures make no real meaning to the typically religious. This notion is partly due to secular development experts' faulty perception of religious thoughts, norms and practices as "irrational" and also to the fact that religious authorities and powers have the tendency to induce conflicts and upheavals that curtail the process of development (Hoffstaedter 2011).

Thus, an apparent result of the secular marginalisation of religion in development thought is a functionally deficient approach to religion based on world religion's approach to religion (largely modelled after European Christianity). This was a Eurocentric creation and an approach to understanding that "favoured textual religions, preferred religions most like Christianity and elevated those religions that were deemed to be 'big' or 'global'" (Tishken 2000, 303) into what was defined "world religion". This is itself captive to the secular modernist understanding of religion as institutions and structures, as in Christianity and its role in society (Ter Haar and Ellis 2006). A result was a configuration of religion from perspectives not typically religious but from secular social scientific perspectives. In relation to development, therefore, it is clear that "the apparent lack of a satisfactory grasp of religion, as well as the diverse manifestations of the phenomenon (of religion), undoubtedly is a crucial factor in its exclusion in this field of endeavour" (Amenga-Etego 2016, 2). It has also resulted in leaving "large areas, some very tangible, such as religious provision of social services and religious roots of social tension, largely unexplored" (Marshall 2011, 343). It is therefore unsurprising that the connection between religion and development was lost in modern thought and "the secularisation of society has caused many to overlook the original connection between the notion of religion and the notion of development" (Ter Haar and Ellis 2006, 355).

Beyond the development community, recent scholarship on the religion–development nexus in Africa has tried to offer a corrective to this reductionist deficiency (see for instance Kaag and Saint-Lary 2011; Atiemo 2017; Myers 2015; Amenga-Etego 2016; Freeman 2015). Indeed, it remains that functional approaches to religion are seminal for a social scientific analysis of religion and, largely, its relevance within domains of development thought and practice. In the context of Africa, however, we argue that such abstract approaches to development without a clear reference to the supernatural grasped in real life with which one can have a relationship may have difficulties "if such notions are expected to make a significant and/or sustained impact" (Amenga-Etego 2016, 3). Furthermore, while we consider these functional approaches to be very important, we argue that such reductionism is fatalistic to a holistic and even healthy resourcing of religion to the sustainable development process as well as the role of religion generally in development thought and practice. It unjustifiably ignores the religious ontologies that actually lubricate religious institutional performance and seems "ridiculous" (Amenga-Etego 2016, 3).

We do not intend to suggest that Africans with a religious orientation to reality are not intelligent enough to grasp abstract ideas through the so-called scientific grid. Rather, we intend to suggest that there are many Africans with a theistic and transcendental point of reference that condition human choices and actions and to whom the interpretations of the supernatural are significant to development thought and practice. This is due to the view that many Africans are still otherworldly-oriented (Ter Harr and Ellis 2006; Amenga-Etego 2016). To empha-

sise such a religious dimension "does not contradict scientific interpretations of the world; rather, spiritual power may be another means to a material end that scientific means alone cannot achieve" (Atiemo 2017, 256–257). It is to emphasise that although religion and the modern concept of development are conceptually different, their visions for the human person and the society are interconnected. Religious worldviews, with their utmost goal of salvation, have goals that correlate with the idea of development. Believers, through structural and normative frameworks, work and look forward to achieving and living out this salvation in the mundane realm as the realisation of a perfect world and good life, which is "a vision of an ideal world and of the place of humans therein" (Ter Haar and Ellis 2006, 355).

Therefore, in this paper, we pursue the claim that the subjective dimension of religion in terms of believers' encounters and experiences with the supernatural and the spirit world (cosmology) and the effects of such encounters on the individual(s) and the society in general are worth considering as integral to any debate on the religion–development nexus, and in development practice. These are the vertical and horizontal dimensions, respectively, of the religious dimension which Atiemo (2017, 263) refers to as spiritual capital. In his point of view, this will include the spiritual and moral frameworks, convictions and orientations (religious ontology) that believers form and develop as a result of such encounters and which feature in the way they conceive reality, including the religious view of the person and the goal and vision of society, which include that of development itself. These normative frameworks, which represent the deep embers from which individual and community decision, choices and action flow, will either motivate sustainable development choices and actions of believers or fracture them. These are the very subjective and fundamentally qualitative aspects of development that would be seen as crucial to any development that will be sustainable.

When we consider development, whether qualitatively or quantitatively or both, it becomes evident how difficult it is to think of sustainable development in Africa without the fabric of religion, especially within the contemporary context of Africa. This is driven by the view that, "Development starts with people understanding one another, and effective development can take place only if its starting point is the way people perceive the world and their place in it" (Cader 2009, 13). Thus, the religious ontology of a people has implications for development. It is with this claim and understanding we examine the religion–development nexus in Africa, with recourse to neo-Pentecostal economies. It is also important to keep in mind that the beliefs, norms and resources of neo-Pentecostal churches and/or neo-Pentecostal economies, which is our unit of analysis, are oriented towards the "fundamental aspects of the lived realities of believers and societies where neo-Pentecostal churches claim their relevance" (Golo 2019, 253). Also, it is important to underscore that "as individuals or groups, neo-Pentecostals seem to have a different

vision and goal of socioeconomic transformation and/or development" (Golo 2019, 253).

5.   Neo-Pentecostal Economies and Sustainable Development in Africa

The contribution of neo-Pentecostalism to sustainable socioeconomic development has been debated by scholars with varying positions. While some posit a very positive contribution of Pentecostalism to socioeconomic development (CDE 2008; Myers 2015; Benyah 2019), others are more critical of such contributions (Meyer 2007; Gifford and Noguiera-Godsey 2011; Golo 2019). Some also question the contributions of neo-Pentecostals to environmental sustainability in Africa (Golo 2013; 2014). Therefore, before we examine the contribution of the neo-Pentecostal economy to sustainable development in Africa, we intend to, first and foremost, draw attention to some of the developments within these economies that have been met with scholarly critiques, thereby questioning their potentials to contributing to sustainable development and economic transformation in Africa.

First, it is suggested that the spiritualising of structural socioeconomic problems within the neo-Pentecostal economy, whereby the evil forces are accused of being the cause of misfortune and structural hardships, contradicts the ethic of hard work and responsibility. As argued by scholars, many neo-Pentecostals spiritualise the problems of poverty, health and economic depravity such that practical avenues for solving such socioeconomic problems are frustrated (Gifford 2015; Kahl 2015; Golo 2019). Emerging out of spiritualising poverty are covenant solutions, where believers are expected to sow seed as a covenant practice or any other spiritual intervention to improve their socioeconomic fortunes. Second, it is argued there is the accumulation of capital among a few, especially leaders within the neo-Pentecostal economy, in a kind of spiritual capitalism and its negative effect on sustainable development. For instance, Golo (2019) gets curious and questions if some of the gains made towards socioeconomic transformation by these churches can be sustained when one considers the thoroughgoing prosperity messages that most neo-Pentecostal churches are noted for, with its wealth-accumulating individualism that curtails wealth distribution. It is also suggested that some of the church investments and social ministries turn out to be run purely as private profit-oriented institutions and are privately owned by the leader (and family) of the church (Eshun 2013, 109, 115)

Third are concerns about the environmental sustainability of the neo-Pentecostal economy within a sustainable development paradigm, considering that the theologies of prosperity and the materialist attitudes and lifestyles they engender and enforce, as exhibited by many of the neo-Pentecostal leaders, are not environmentally sustainable (Golo 2013, 2014). The question whether the unrestrained material

consumption that the neo-Pentecostal economy engenders is environmentally prudent and desirable in an era of global sustainable development agenda is worth posing (Golo 2013). Fourth, and finally, is the concern that neo-Pentecostals spend a lot of productive hours engaged in church activities, thereby losing lots of economically productive hours to religious activities (Golo 2019). Spanning concerns about the frequency of neo-Pentecostal religious activities, averaging three times a week of about three hours, to concerns about holding services during the working hours of the day, which encourages workers to leave work to attend (Gifford 1998), these concerns appear genuine. It would, therefore, be argued that neo-Pentecostalism may be working against sustainable development in Africa, as these activities may constrain personal and household incomes, with a rippling and cumulative effect on productivity and social change and transformation. This has been corroborated, to some extent, by one of our informants, who suggests that is not the entire picture and there is more to it than meets the eyes.

Clearly, the above concerns raised about the neo-Pentecostal economy need to be addressed by Africa's neo-Pentecostals if they want to unquestionably position themselves as enduring contributors to sustainable development in Africa. Notwithstanding the criticisms and concerns discussed above, it is worth mentioning that those concerns are not the whole story of the neo-Pentecostal economy and sustainable development in Africa. The very fact that these concerns relate to neo-Pentecostal economies' contribution to the development trajectories of nations states is suggestive of the roles of neo-Pentecostal economies in the development process in Africa. We therefore turn our attention in the following sections to examining some of the contributions of the neo-Pentecostal economy to sustainable development.

6. Methodology

Analysis in this work is informed by data collected qualitatively. Due to the need for well-informed responses and quality control of data, respondents were purposively selected, based on their position and status in their respective churches. Primary data was collected from four leaders of four different, major neo-Pentecostal churches headquartered in Accra, Ghana, and which we code as LLG (a female church founder), LAC (a male bishop), LCG (a male district pastor/overseer) and LRC (a male associate pastor to a founder). A combination of survey and interviews, using themed open-ended questions, was used for the data collection. The surveys were used for those who opted for it, whereby the questions were sent to them, to which they responded – one in writing and the other through audio recording. The interviews and audio recording were transcribed and all data thematically analysed. The analysis is also based on the researchers' long-term association with, knowl-

edge of and research into neo-Pentecostalism, with one of the researchers being a regular participant of prayer sessions and worship activities of one of the biggest neo-Pentecostal churches in Ghana. These have been augmented by secondary literature, on the activities of neo-Pentecostals in Africa. Secondary data was also sourced from the websites of churches. Thus, as indicated, the data, focus and scope were largely on neo-Pentecostals from West Africa, particularly Ghana, but not necessarily limited to it.

7.   Neo-Pentecostal Businesses and Entrepreneurship

Positively, the contribution of the neo-Pentecostal economy is quite varied and impressive, giving reasons why one can lay claims to the neo-Pentecostal economy as a resilient stakeholder in the sustainable development of Africa. The entrepreneurial zeal and focus of neo-Pentecostal churches come to the fore in this regard (CDE 2008). The quotation below explains this clearly:

> Entrepreneurship and response to opportunity are central features of these churches. This is noticeable at three levels: the churches themselves have usually come about as a result of individual religious entrepreneurship; there is a considerable amount of entrepreneurship in the membership; and in some of the churches, entrepreneurship skills training features as an important intervention in the lives of congregants. (CDE 2008, 18–19)

In pursuit of the now dominant prosperity gospels of the neo-Pentecostals that the children of God must lead a successful and victorious life on earth "here and now", neo-Pentecostal prosperity leaders teach different paths to success, which include motivation, entrepreneurship and practical life skills. A respondent leader noted,

> So, we encourage them to start small businesses; we pray with them for the businesses to succeed, we try to lead them to places and people who can help them to succeed in business and by so doing we are trying to help development and productivity. I mean my personal experience in this field is the fact that when young people come to me that they want to start businesses, I try to link them up and connect them to people who can help them; some bank people who can give them loans; some people who can help them develop a business plan; and anything we can do to help them. (LAC)

Neo-Pentecostal churches with prosperity orientations frequently organise seminars for skills in entrepreneurship and economic productivity (CDE 2008; Golo 2019). This has been corroborated by a leader we interviewed when he noted:

… don't forget the Charismatic ministries themselves are like small enterprises, [you know] the founders and those who started them started them out of nothing so they are like mini businesses for lack of a better word. So, people who come are also encouraged to start; and don't forget the charismatic churches, the pastors of these churches are because we teach prosperity and wealth creation, we want our people to succeed. (LAC)

He further affirmed:

We also have months that are dedicated to really developing people and giving them training or for instance how to manage their finances or how to build their finances so we do have like every year, we do have a monthly programme on wealth creation; so we teach on how to save [your] money, how to get into mortgage, buy houses, how to trade on the stock exchange and all these are geared towards helping individuals to build wealth and create a balance between the spiritual life and their natural life. (LAC)

The entrepreneurial focus of neo-Pentecostal churches, to some extent, hinges them alongside corporate entities in Africa as they engage in various kinds of direct economic activities. The neo-Pentecostal economy and businesses employ lots of people directly into jobs in their churches and businesses, such as schools and media houses. In Ghana, for instance, neo-Pentecostal churches provide employment through their offices, businesses, and print and electronic media such as TV and radio stations. Many others also privately and/or indirectly engage in economic activities and businesses that have emerged around neo-Pentecostal activities such as event planning and organisation and the importation and sale of diverse types of anointing oils, face towels and other material elements that have become popular in neo-Pentecostal worship.

8.   Social Ministries

It is important to mention that the social ministry – interventions towards social transformation – of Africa's neo-Pentecostal economies have been instrumental in making them sustainable developmental partners in contemporary Africa (Myers 2015; Freeman 2015; Benyah 2019). While the doctrinal basis why neo-Pentecostals do this could be varied, according to Miller and Yamamori (2007, 22, 30), neo-Pentecostals do this as part of a holistic and/or integral ministry in response to what they see as following the ministry of Jesus Christ who took care of the physical needs of people while also preaching the gospel of the Kingdom to them. However, it is important to underscore that this could be case and context specific (see Miller and Yamamori 2007, 30), as neo-Pentecostal churches do these for diverse theological

reasons, rather than for one particular hard theological reason. For instance, quoting Matthew 25:35–36 as the scriptural basis for their social ministry, a leader noted that: "The church believes that doing good to others and using the resources of the church or nation to equitably provide for the needs of the people is a godly calling and responsibility as taught by the Lord Jesus Christ" (LRC). Another leader quoting the same Matthew 23:35–36 and Proverbs 19:17 said,

> So social intervention to us is actually ministering to Christ, whether the people are Christians or not [you know and] and aside that there are a lot [lot lot lot] of scriptures in the Bible that talks about Jesus doing a lot of acts of benevolence and kindness [you know] where he was moved to compassion when he saw the many that he was preaching wait and that aspect of compassion which we call compassion ministry is one of the bases for social intervention actually but there are a lot more of such scriptures that we deploy to get into social intervention. (LAC)

Similarly, in Ghana, while the International Central Gospel Church's (ICGC) educational social interventions are a result of the founder's, Pastor Mensa Otabil's, interpretation of fruitfulness and multiplication in Genesis 2:28 to mean the development of talents and skills for transformation and development, which is only achievable through education, Seth Ablorh of Manna Mission Church interpreted his involvement in the provision of health services through his Manna Mission Hospital as a continuation of the healing ministry of Jesus Christ and an extension of ministry, which he identified as holistic ministry (Eshun 2013). It is also suggested, however, that neo-Pentecostal churches engage in social ministry as their response to societal needs and their contribution to development as well as for economic reasons (Eshun 2013).

A founding leader of a neo-Pentecostal church (LLG) indicated that leaders of neo-Pentecostal churches exhibit a passion for impacting their societies, especially through helping the less privileged and some identifiable needy members of society. This comes in many forms, especially through educational, medical and economic contributions. A leader (LCG) noted that though some of these contributions are targeted towards members, others are inclusive. He indicated that, for instance, he was aware that the Central Aid of the ICGC (Ghana) runs an open scholarship fund for needy students irrespective of religious affiliation, while the Royalhouse Chapel Scholarship Foundation of Royalhouse Chapel International (Ghana) has a quota of about 70% for members and 30% for non-members (including non-Christians). It is suggested that five hundred students benefited from Central Aid's scholarship scheme between 1988 and 2000, and the number increased to about two hundred and fifty annually since 2010 (Eshun 2013, 64). Gifford (2004, 115–116) corroborates this when he suggests that in the 1990s Central Aid gave scholarships

worth over 200 million old Ghana cedis to 500 brilliant but needy students; many of them were Muslims. The provision of these scholarships would be regarded significant contributions to the educational and productive opportunities of many Ghanaians.

In Ghana, the provision of health services also features centrally. For instance, Eshun (2013, 127) suggests that until the establishment in 2009 of a district hospital in the municipality the Manna Mission Hospital serves, it was the only hospital that served the entire community since its establishment in 1989. An informant noted, "some of the things we do include rehabilitation centre for drug addicts. We have a rehab centre that people go to and are taken care of for free. There is an orphanage we have adopted; we try and take care of them…. [eh] a number of activities that we do to make sure that we [are] not only looking inward but we are giving back to the community" (LAC). Another submitted that the women's fellowship of his church provides "seed capital and business skills to the unskilled young ladies such as street girls and also single mothers and widows"; the church offers educational scholarships to brilliant but needy students to attend school from the basic level through to the tertiary level; and operates a restoration or rehabilitation school for ex-convicts and drugs addicts "through love fellowship and orientation to get them [to] abandon their hurts and vindictiveness and rather accept the forgiveness of God and society to reintegrate back to society and their families" (LRC). Also, in Nigeria, the Chris Oyakhilome Foundation International (COFI), which is an NGO affiliated to the Christ Embassy Church, runs the Inner City Mission GEM Initiative, which aims at ending child poverty in the inner cities (see https://christembassy.org/gems-initiative/). In Africa, where social welfare systems at the national level are hardly existent, when churches extend social services and amenities to vulnerable groups of people, they contribute to the lives of people who may not have any economic means of affording such services.

9. Emphasis on Personal Transformation and Empowerment for Socioeconomic Prosperity

Beyond the obvious quantitative developmental contributions of neo-Pentecostal churches in Africa, such as those examined above, one important aspect of the neo-Pentecostal economy we intend to emphasise is the very subjective and qualitative contribution to development. Freeman (2015, 117) refers to this as "transformation of subjectivity". A neo-Pentecostal leader noted that the church's teachings give the members a sense of responsibility towards God, fellow humans and creation by motivating them "to strive towards positive achievements, knowing they are adding to creation and keeping or sustaining what the Creator has entrusted to them. It

also gives a sense of achievement, judgement and responsibility towards God, the state and posterity" (LRC).

The personal transformation that is emphasised by neo-Pentecostals is crucial for social transformation, which is an important part of the development process. For instance, positive confession and refusal to fail and capitulate to fatalism is one of the roles the Pentecostal cosmology plays in development. This is because in Pentecostal cosmology, as noted by Myers (2015, 116), "development is understood as a war against the devil and demons, not a war against poverty or unjust social structures." Underdevelopment, failures in life and all things that diminish life, such as poverty and economic despondency, are devil-induced. Thus, neo-Pentecostals emphasise that the good and liberating life, which are the focus of any development thinking, are within the reach of believers through Jesus Christ, if only they would overcome the cosmic battle between evil and good by positioning themselves in positive thought and confessions and righteous living. It is this Pentecostal cosmology that motivates belief and action towards efforts at life improvement and achieving the good life. The Holy Spirit is believed to liberate and transform the individual, thereby giving him or her a transformed identity to succeed in all aspects of life. An informant noted: "… so I realize that through the teaching of faith, the word of faith, a lot of people have been challenged to take up small businesses, to become entrepreneurs, they are challenged to start things" (LAC).

Consequently, emphasised in Pentecostal transformative theology is a trans-formed human person who is positioned to fight and win battles against the devil and all other forces that diminish life. Indicating that Pentecostalism in general provides individuals with non-state resources to adapt to economic restructuring processes such as individual and national financial insecurity, urbanisation and migration, and the reorganisation of work ongoing for decades, in especially most developing countries, Barker underscores how "Pentecostalism fosters norms and behaviors that harmonize well with the demands of neoliberal economies" (Barker 2007, 408). A leader informant corroborates this when he said:

> So, for instance, one of the things that we teach very effectively in church is developing a vision and a personal vision. … So, we teach our people that they need to develop vision, they need to know how to use time effectively, manage time effectively and use their resources effectively. So that is one teaching that is very strong within the neo-Pentecostals. Teaching on vision and how to get resources and use influence to get to where you want to get to. (LAC)

Miller and Yamamori (2007) have already underscored how transformed Pente-costal identity is pro-developmental, in that previous life choices and attitudes that motivate reckless spending and other socioeconomically unhelpful lifestyles which

diminish household incomes are discouraged (see Myers 2015; Golo 2019). Of particular pro-developmental importance are some post-conversion changes and moral requirements of a "born again" believer towards the breaking from their pasts, such as no drinking of alcohol and partying, no womanising, no gambling, and many other unhelpful cultural and wasteful practices (Maxwell 2005, 27; Myers 2015, 118; Miller and Yamamori 2007, 23, 33, 160–165; Novieto 2013, 107–109) and other dominant norms of masculinity (Lindhardt 2015, 256). Miller and Yamamori therefore conclude that:

> Pentecostal converts who are not wasting their money on alcohol, drugs, and partying now have surplus capital that they can invest into their businesses or the education of family members. Furthermore, their businesses gain a reputation for honest transactions, and this in itself leads to a greater volume of exchange, since customers know that they will not be cheated. Or if they are not self-employed, these hardworking people are promoted in their workplace faster than their more self-indulgent colleagues. (Miller and Yamamori 2007, 164)

In most parts of Africa, where men still have authority within the household and have control over the household economy, the potential of these changes for economic advancement cannot be underestimated. Thus, the turn to the subjective in African neo-Pentecostalism draws "the issue of personal transformation into focus as an important element of social transformation" (Myers 2015, 117), when the debate of sustainable development is made in Africa. This highlights how the subjective aspects of the religious person's life largely form part of how "individuals decide to make changes, to take on new behaviours and to transform their social relations – activities that make up some of the key aspects of the developmental process" (Freeman 2015, 114).

Furthermore, consistent with the prosperity and entrepreneurial focus of neo-Pentecostals, virtues such as self-confidence, determination, motivation, discipline, hard work, courage and living morally upright lives are the practical approaches members are encouraged to apply to their personal lives in order to be successful in life. Maxwell (2005, 28–29) writes: "A sense of positive attitude, overcoming fear, a sense of personal destiny and self-worth and self-reliance are key traits in the Pentecostal character that adherents operate at the level of individuals in a volatile labour market. And in such conditions the domesticated Pentecostal male has an advantage over his unreconstructed brethren." Thus, we agree with Freeman that the greatest impact which Pentecostals have on development in Africa does not come from their faith-based organisations, "but from the changes instilled in 'believers' by the religious activities of the churches themselves. In these churches, 'religion' is not separated from 'development'. Church leaders focus on the 'whole person' and

try to bring about change socially and economically, as well as spiritually" (Freeman 2015, 116–117; cf. CDE 2008, 31).

10. Conclusion

In this paper, we argued for the centrality of religion to development and discussed how religion nonetheless got lost as a category in defining development. We suggested the need to re-conceptualise and/or broaden the scope of the definition of development towards its sustainable agenda as socially transforming. With this understanding, identifying the diverse contributions of religion and religious institutions to the sustainable development agenda of Africa becomes less Herculean. This brings neo-Pentecostal economies directly into the sustainable development process and agenda and nudges the consciousness of their role in the sustainable development of their societies. There remain concerns and criticisms on neo-Pentecostal churches' positive contributions to sustainable development in Africa, to which these churches will have to respond. Nonetheless, it remains that these churches have the potentials to and are contributing progressively in diverse ways to sustainable development and social change in contemporary sub-Saharan Africa. What we could not achieve in this article and which remains a genuine question and ground for further studies is how the neo-Pentecostal economies can sustain and make holistic their contributions to sustainable development in Africa.

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The Notion of "Development" in Ubuntu
(Research Article)

Abstract:

The *Sustainable Development Report 2019* points out that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) might not be achieved, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa[1] (sic). This paper tries to investigate alternatives to the hegemonic "development" discourse and ideas of "development": what would be the notion of "development" in Ubuntu? The paper proposes a contextual understanding of "development" rooted in tradition, religion and culture by using Michel Foucault and Ferdinand de Saussure as a theoretical basis. The heterogenous understanding of Ubuntu and its diverse understanding definition of "development" are an argument against universalising "development" ideas, but for tailor-made solutions. The paper follows the hypothesis that the SDGs rely on premises of epistemologies of the Global North which are (post)colonial. It also proposes that failing "development" strategies rely on epistemologies from the Global North which are excluding, imperial, Eurocentric and rely on *abyssal* – extractive and postcolonial – productions of knowledge (Sousa Santos 2018). The paper is a contribution to the decolonisation of knowledge in the Global North, to challenge hegemonic northern epistemologies and to bring them into contact with knowledge from epistemologies of the Global South.

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1   In current discourse in Germany, increasing distance is being taken from the geopolitical division of the African continent into "sub-Saharan Africa". This is based on the fact that this division is colonial, not as a classification of Africans themselves. As a consequence, the term will only be used in places where it is used explicitly by the authors and/or cannot be omitted for the sake of understanding. In order to stress this ambivalence, the term is marked with "(sic)". Cf. on the debate, for example, the discourse and the change of name of the association ANSA (*Alumni Netzwerk Subsahara-Afrika/ Alumni Network Sub-Saharan Africa*) to ANSA (*Afrika Netzwerk für Studierende und Alumni/Africa Network for Students and Alumni*), cf. http://ansa-ev.org/neuer-name-ansa-e-v-wird-zu-ansa-e-v/ [16.2.2021].

1.   Introduction

One out of nine humans can't access sufficient food (SDG hunger 2019). The *Sustainable Development Report 2019* (SDR), published in June 2019, indicates to what degree individual countries comply with the SDGs. The SDR 2019 draws a negative picture, especially for sub-Saharan Africa: no country seems remotely able to achieve the goals (SDR 2019, 35). No country at all, not even the richest ones, is close to achieving all SDGs (SDR 2019, xi).

"Development"[2] can be described as a normative process: those who don't follow certain indicators of "developed" countries are perceived as a deficient and often a homogenic entity. This is usually followed by "development" interventions, carried out by "experts". If a project fails, it is usually followed by integrating aspects which have previously not been visible (Ziai 2006, 44). Therefore, "development" projects have often been a history of (post)colonial intervention and domination. My hypothesis is that in the 21th century, these (post)colonial hierarchies and normative claims will be continued, voluntarily or involuntarily, in terminology such as "first world and second world", "underdeveloped", "developing" and "developed" countries, "high-income and low income" countries (Ager 2011, 463) as well as "Global South" and "Global North". Therefore, my second hypothesis is that the perceived difference between countries considering "development" is based on a construction of what is to be considered as "developed". The construction usually only implies values and indicators concerning "development" by those defining "development". Historically this has been the Global North, former colonial powers. These definitions tend to disregard knowledge and values of those people who are supposed to be served by "development". The understanding of "development" has vast political, cultural, religious and economic implications. To break this neocolonial dynamic, this paper intends to learn from cultural, religious and political ideas; values, cosmologies, ethics and belief systems from the Global South. This paper researches ideas of Ubuntu connected to "development" guided by the question: what is the notion of "development" in Ubuntu? The intention is to step beyond the "dominant epistemological canon" (Santos 2016, 238) of the Global North to achieve an understanding of the notion of "development" in Ubuntu, as a non-universalising and less hierarchical example. Furthermore, Ubuntu's contribution to the "development" debate of the Global North will be elaborated.

Ubuntu, from US-European perspectives, is often defined as a cosmology (Auffahrt 2008, 1706–1707). It can be categorised as an epistemological system of the Global South. Boaventura de Sousa Santos understands "Global South" as follows:

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2 In order to point out the conflicted debate on the meaning of "development", the word in all of its conjugations will be used in quotation marks. Cf. also to chapter 2, "What is 'development'?".

"The 'south' in the epistemologies of the south is not a geographical south. It is a metaphor for the life experiences of those that have suffered the systematic injustices caused by capitalism, colonialism and sexism and for the validation of the kinds of knowledge they resort to in order to resist such injustices. It is an anti-imperial south and as such it may exist in the geographical north as well as in the geographical south" (Ziai 2013, 732). To describe the hierarchy of power between "Global North" and "Global South", between these two (entangled) spheres, I will use the term "Global North". In most recent development discourses, the terms "Global North" and "Global South" are used in the understanding of the United Nations. Christine Lienemann-Perrin criticises this categorisation of North and South as (geographically) imprecise. She also criticises the lack of consideration of borders between "East" and "West". There is no agreement on the terms "Global North" and "Global South", which makes both rather vague (Lienemann-Perrin 2013, 132). Lienemann-Perrins' critique strengthens Santos' argument. Therefore, the term "Global North" will be used as opposite to "Global South" as an epistemological concept to describe epistemologies that have rather benefited from capitalism, colonialism and sexism, as stated by Santos. By using both the terms "Global North" and "Global South" I do not intend to open an undifferentiated dichotomy. Both epistemologies are indissolubly entangled. I use both concepts to describe a hierarchy of power in global epistemological relations. I do not use the terms "Global North" and "Global South" the way they have been used in some recent German development debates, because it seems just to be a replacement of the words "developed" and "underdeveloped" countries with no critical claim. Following the logic of "Global North" and "Global South", Santos understands epistemologies of the South as trying to overcome the hierarchical dichotomy between North and South and the inherent normative dualism; to erase power hierarchies; a bottom-up cosmopolitanism, a pluriversality, not a universality to a achieve decolonisation and mestizaje through intercultural translation. He understands the dominant criteria of Western modernity, which considers norms outside the Eurocentric ideal as deviant and as a form of epistemicide. As a consequence, this leads to the destruction of knowledge and disempowered societies. Santos considers northern epistemologies as colonial and Eurocentric, contributing to the creation of hegemonic scientific knowledge. This represents the world according to the North's need and constitutes the Global South as a victim (Santos 2018, 6–7).

In combination with superior military and economic power, epistemologies of the North have "granted the global North the imperial domination of the world" (Santos 2018, 6) and its hegemonic representation of the world up to the present day. The context of epistemologies of the South is the emergence from social struggles, which is why it cannot be separated from the social struggle. Knowing this, it is conclusive that for these epistemologies, practice is more important than a sophisticated theory. This has methodological implications for the goal of decolonising

epistemologies and knowledge. Santos underlines non-extractivist methodologies. This means principally, but not exhaustively, for the researcher to be engaged in the conversations and practices, creatively applying techniques and methods and letting people speak for themselves. These points summarise what Santos calls post-abyssal or post-extractivist methodologies: not to research in ways that mirror the colonial thinking of the northern epistemologies (Santos 2018, 143–163). To evoke associations of blunt dichotomies between North and South is not Santos' intention. He sees epistemologies of the South as inherently diverse, and many epistemologies as hybrid. The constitution of Bolivia has roots in the indigenous *buen vivir*. A constitution represents an idea of northern modern epistemology (Santos 2018, 9). This reflects the approach of this paper, where I research the idea of "development" (a term of northern epistemology) in (South) African indigenous thought, transported by (epistemologically) hybrid agents. It's also an attempt of cultural translation (Santos 2018, 235). I would like to note that no cultural system is ever complete, as Santos learned from Mahatma Gandhi (Santos 2018, 245).

Afrotopia, published by the Senegalese economist Felwine Sarr, fuelled the post-colonial debate on Africa in Europe. Sarr sets the frame for a vision of the future of the African continent. Considering "development", he stresses not to project Western myths of "development" on Africa (Sarr 2019, 17), but for an African break-through according to the conditions of the respective countries. Proper terminology is important to disassociate words from the ideological ties that the (colonial) terms imply (Sarr 2019, 125). Referring to African visions, Sarr names Ubuntu as an example and as a source of Nelson Mandela's political vision (Sarr 2019, 96). Sarr explicitly understands these points as a contribution to decolonisation (Sarr 2019, 125).

I propose two research questions for this paper: what is the notion of "development" in Ubuntu? How can Ubuntu contribute to the development debate in the Global North? This will be conducted by a (discursive) analysis of three exemplary papers. After a chapter with a discursive analysis of "development", I will focus on the understanding of Ubuntu, followed by chapter 4, where the three papers are analysed. Final remarks concluding the research question will be given in chapter 5.

I would like to point out that looking for the notion of "development" in Ubuntu reminds me of abyssal research, because it is based on using European models in the context of Africa. My attempt is to advocate opportunities for people socialised in the Global North to learn from southern epistemologies. As a process of cultural translation, I need to use some vocabulary predominantly used in northern epistemologies, such as "development". To minimise the mentioned risks, I rely on non-extractivist methodologies. A part of this is to break down the author's viewpoint: I am a person educated and raised for the most part in Germany, who has worked in "development" and who, while doing research for this paper, was

working as a lecturer and researcher at a Lutheran University. The usefulness of such enterprises as this post-abyssal paper for epistemologies of the South is up to the judgement of these very epistemologies.

Regarding the authors analysed, some works are linked to "development" as self-reference. In another work, I will demonstrate the link. To show the connection and for my analysis I will use linguistic theory following Ferdinand De Saussure (1857–1913) and elements of discourse analysis according to the suggestions of Michel Foucault (1926–1984). The details of these approaches will be explained in chapter 4 of this paper.

Critique, Limits and Dangers

All human ideas and systems have their limits, dangers and blind spots. In the present paper, all authors analysed were men. The choice was based upon articles which were most tightly linked to my question of research. I could find almost no women authors. In all examples men are overrepresented. This seems to be a case in point of Magadla and Chitando's critique of Ubuntu. If Ubuntu perpetuates patriarchal structures, it can contribute to this violence (Magadla/Chitando 2014, 189–190). I have tried to take this critique seriously by pointing out gender imbalances. Ubuntu has emancipatory potential which should be in focus (Magadla/Chitando 2014, 189–190).

2.   What is "Development"? An Overview of the Global "Development" Discourse

To explain the "development discourse" from World War II until present, Ziai follows basic assumptions: "development" exists as an organising frame, because it links different social, economic, cultural and political phenomena to "development". It allows, according to Michel Foucault, to group certain dispersed events and to link them to one organising event, "development". "Development" exists as a conceptual frame, because it allows for the interpretation of certain phenomena such as "development" and "underdevelopment". There is a normative assumption: "development" is a good thing. The practical assumption is that "development" can be achieved and realised in the whole world. The methodological assumption is that units can be compared according to their "development" (Ziai 2016, 56–57).

Ziai gives an account of three major issues. Industrialised countries see themselves as "developed" – less "developed" countries need "development". This reflects a strong hierarchy. Because certain countries need "development", more "developed" countries apply specific interventions to help them, usually as a transfer of capi-

tal and technology, knowledge and market interventions from the Global North. This I would consider interventionism. These processes, "development" projects and programmes rely on the knowledge of experts who supposedly know how to improve people's lives and attain a "good" society. This I would consider expertism (see also Ziai 2016, 56–58).

Ziai argues these three points to be Eurocentric, because they assume European societies follow an ideal model. This basis determines who is "developed" and who is not. This is depoliticising, because causes, for example struggles of wealth distribution and land repartition, are veiled by statistics. Ziai furthermore criticises many interventions as authoritarian, because the opinion of the people directly affected is often not considered (Ziai 2016, 59–62).

Many interventions in the name of "development" have produced dire consequences (Ziai 2016, 62–63.). This is the reason why many scholars have demanded the term be abandoned (Ziai 2013; Sachs 2010, xv; Gutierrez 1978, 6–42) or be replaced with different terms and concepts (Gutierrez 1978, 6–42; Conradie 2016). Another well-known strategy is to fill the term "development" with different content by adding an adjective such as "sustainable" (Conradie 2016, 2). There have been alternatives to the indicators of how to measure "development" such as the Human Development Index (HDI), which measures life expectancy, literacy and income – intended not to measure only material standards. Esteva criticises this as "a technical refinement of the good old universal yardstick, GNP" (Esteva 2010, 14). The 2015 UN Social Development Goals (SDG SDGs, 2019) seem to start with a different premise. All countries could be considered "developed"; all countries still need to meet certain goals. According to Ziai (2016), this seems to break the discursive hierarchy inscribed in the SDGs. Did the criticisms of Ziai, Esteva, Escobar and Sachs become irrelevant with the SDGs?

Ziai denies a fundamental change in the "development" discourse. He argues that the "development" discourse of the SDGs stays within the traditional "development" discourse that can be traced back to the mid-20th century (as shown in the issues of hierarchy, expertism, interventions and Eurocentrism). These discourses see global poverty as a predominantly materialistic problem and propose technical solutions[3] and economic growth as the sole solutions, as US President Harry Truman did in 1949 and the SDGs in 2014 (Ziai 2016, 194–195). It becomes clear that the SDGs follow Truman's discourse in terms of category and structure. The SDGs rely on free market, materialistic and growth-oriented (e.g. SDG 8) notions of "development". The hierarchical division inherent to the terms "developed" and "developing" perpetuate the "development" narrative, as in the example criticised by Esteva. This

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3 Santos 2019, 295: Social and political problems solved by technical solutions is what Santos describes an example of epistemologies of the Global North.

hierarchy is to be found in the SDGs (Ziai 2016, 198). It is because of these hierarchies of power, victimising the Global South as a deviant construction perpetuating colonial hierarchies and Truman's development narrative, that scholars like Ziai (and others, e.g. Sachs 2010, xv) view the concept of development as overly vague (Ziai 2016, 59). As a possible alternative, Ziai proposes to research indigenous concepts such as Ubuntu (Ziai 2016, 67). To agree on a common understanding of "development" seems impossible. To express this, I will use "development" in quotation marks. By referring to the term "development discourse", I refer to the hegemonic "development discourse" as laid down by Truman and followed by the SDGs (Ziai 2016, 56–57). I consider these notions of "development" to rely on premises that reflect a rather individualistic and materialistic anthropology. This anthropology accepts inequality, at least to a certain degree (not only economic; also for example expertism as an epistemological hierarchy), othering and (authoritarian) interventions. It is therefore not truly participatory/democratic and follows colonial patterns.

3. What is Ubuntu?

This chapter gives a basic insight into and a brief understanding of Ubuntu. Ubuntu is too abundant and heterogenous to give a concise definition. The first challenge is whether to talk about Ubuntu as an anthropology, a philosophy, a (religious) ethic, a cosmology or a way of living. In the following explanations these dimensions will overlap. All categories tend to display perspectives rooted in epistemologies of the Global North. From an Ubuntu perspective, these categorisations would probably not make sense, because they oppose the fundamentally holistic idea of Ubuntu. This explains why there is no easy explanation of "what Ubuntu is". There is no "canonical" literature to which one could refer to as *the* understanding of Ubuntu, which is why I extract the interpretations of different authors. To research "lived" Ubuntu in written texts seems to be a *contradictio in adiecto*, but also as a German researcher the only way. This is why I proceed discursively like other researchers such as Gade (2012), who refers to people knowing Ubuntu not from written resources but from lived relations.

Ubuntu has evolved over centuries as a part of southern African culture and tradition. Slight variations with similar concepts exist in different regions such as the Malawian Umunthu (Kwiyani 2013). Ubuntu is "pre-literate, pre-scientific, pre-industrial" (Shutte 2001, 9). It appears utterly holistic: there is no differentiation between the physical and the spiritual; between humans, animals and objects, the visible and the invisible. Augustine Shutte from South Africa describes God as the centre of this cosmovision (Shutte 2001, 22). The concept of relation is central. No one can ever be Ubuntu without others, because Ubuntu requires recognition from

other members of the community. The Zulu phrases "*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*: a person is a person through persons" or "I am because we are" point out the centrality of relation in Ubuntu (Gade 2012, 23).[4] The Danish researcher Christian B.N. Gade argues that this meaning of Ubuntu was established as a predominant discourse in South Africa in the 1990s after the end of apartheid and the creation of a new constitution (Gade 2011, 313; 318–322). Community has utmost importance to Ubuntu, which is at odds with the self-centred individualism associated with the Global North: "Each individual member of the community sees the community as *themselves,* as one with them in character and identity […] [and] every other member as another self" (Shutte 2001, 27). There is no concept of separating the individual from the community, which appears an almost organic entity. Shutte also describes Ubuntu as an ideal that has never been fully practised (Shutte 2001, 32). This might explain the normative character often found in writings advocating Ubuntu. The Christian image of the transcendent God as the creator of the world, as referred to in the Old Testament, the idea of *imago dei*, and the New Testament teachings that humankind are the children of God, all correspond with Ubuntu (Shutte 2001, 12, 22).

Michael Battle, a US-American and Anglican minister, worked with Desmond Tutu over several years. Battle sees a link in sub-Saharan (sic) spirituality between the human being and God's being: an inherent theological understanding of Ubuntu (Battle 2009, 3). Tutu's theology is seen as a "Ubuntu theology" (Haws 2009; Battle 2009) to combine the Christian idea of forgiveness, of not insisting on retribution towards transgressions such as apartheid, to express the interconnectedness of humankind in Ubuntu (Haws 2009, 477–489). Battle takes the relation within trinity as a model of displaying God's "communal love within God" (Haws 2009, 477–489).

Gade's research on Ubuntu differentiates between those who understand Ubuntu as a moral quality of a person and those who see it as a philosophy, an ethic or a worldview. Central to all answers is the concept of personhood. Some respondents "believe that all Homo sapiens are persons, while to others only some count: those who are black; who have been incorporated into personhood; who behave in a morally acceptable manner" (Gade 2012, 494). According to a respondent, humans can lose the quality of personhood by committing terrible crimes against the community, violating Ubuntu's essential principles, such as rape or murder (Gade 2012, 498). Interviewees state that Ubuntu has a divine element, such as God's presence within the respective human, as ethical instruction or because of forgiveness (Gade 2012, 489). Gade argues that the meaning of Ubuntu has shifted since its beginnings

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4 Those familiar with Jean-Luc Nancy might be reminded of his ontology: human existence is always to be with others (Nancy 2004).

in 1846, from "human quality" to "philosophy or ethic", as "African humanism", and from 1993 onwards to "*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*" (Gade 2012, 315–316).

These hegemonic understandings of Ubuntu are subject to criticism. Nyasha Mboti particularly criticises Shutte's perspective, which outlines a narrow dichotomy between Europeans seen as individualistic and Africans as communitarian. To Mboti, individual freedom and interdependent freedom are not mutually exclusive. Mboti locates the understanding of Ubuntu dynamically in an ongoing debate with a postcolonial perspective (Mboti 2015, 135–136).

4. Ubuntu and "Development"

According to Saussure, a linguistic sign does not represent a name and a matter, it represents an imagination and a sound: its phonetic representation. The phonetic representation is not the actual sound, but the psychological impression of the sound. The focus is towards the mental imagination, the idea that is represented by sound. Saussure calls the phonetic representation "signified" and the idea "signifier"; in combination they are a sign. The sound "*arbor*" can be linked to the imagination of "tree". The signified "tree" can be specified to palm tree, apple tree and so on. All terms, representing different trees, can be linked to the signifier *arbor* (Saussure 1967, 77–119).[5] In the same manner, the signifier "development" could be linked to different signifieds: nuclear power or the reduction of CO_2 emissions or economic growth or redistribution, as an understanding of "development". This principle allows concepts with different content to be linked to "development".

According to Foucault – who laid the foundation for a set of different methods generally known as discourse analysis – speaking means to act. Language reflects and interferes with (what is respectively considered as) reality and has an immense creative potential towards the conception of reality. Put simply: language creates reality – and reality creates language. A discourse is not simply "a group of signs" but a set of "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 2015, 298). Foucault focuses on power relations. Saussure's understanding can be linked to Foucault's idea of a discursive formation, which describes the structure of dispersed objects and formulations that enable the appearance of these elements. These can appear to be contradictory in content and do not have to refer to the same object; they form the condition of a certain object or statement to emerge (Foucault 2015, 54). Therefore, this research can investigate different approaches to "development" which do not seem to be connected content-wise but share a similar

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5 Because there is no English translation for the German word "*Lautbild*", I have tried to describe it with "(it represents imagination and) a sound – its phonetic representation".

structure (e.g. of a historical background). According to Foucault, the conditions in which certain objects appear can be explained as well as the conditions that allow them to appear in this exact way. It allows us to set a frame in which the research will take place without giving a static definition of what "development" could mean.

Literature relating Ubuntu to "development" exists. John Eliastam gives an account of many ways Ubuntu has been used. Several texts can be used as a signifier to "development": Ubuntu as a philosophical basis for democracy, moral theory, public policy, business ethics and management, conflict resolution and as a theological motif (Eliastam 2015, 2). As a following step, I will investigate three[6] texts that relate Ubuntu and "development". Dandala's (2009) text is an example of Ubuntu in an economy and a work environment. Bujo (2009) refers to Ubuntu elements used in political models which are rooted in African traditions. Metz and Gaie (2010) construct the foundation of a moral theory based on Ubuntu and Botho. Due to the limitations of this paper, I will rely on the outcome of my analysis and exemplify only where necessary.

Mvume H. Dandala, former Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa[7], stresses Ubuntu values in business ethics (Dandala 2009, 259–278). He attempts to establish good relationships between workers and employers. He cares about people with different kinds of (physical) disadvantages to make them self-sufficient in the working world (Dandala 2009, 274). Dandala links the signifier "development" to the signified "economic growth" (Dandala 2009, 266; 259). He promotes an African tradition of storytelling as a way of passing on knowledge, from old to young – a way to preserve unique heritage and a bulwark against colonialism to "sustain dignity and Ubuntu under humiliating circumstances" (Dandala 2009, 264–268).

Whereas Dandala seems to favour a very low hierarchical style of empowering people, he does not discuss the hierarchy between "employer" and "subordinates" and the hierarchy inherent in such terms. Dandala seems to advocate absolute obedience from the young towards the old. All examples only involve "men" and "boys", while women seem to be absent (Dandala 2009, 264–268). This is a case in point of the criticism that certain understandings of Ubuntu are patriarchal (Magadla/Chitando 2014).

Dandala uses quite economic language (e.g. economic growth, business, wealth, capitalist seed). The signifier "development" links these economic terms as signifieds. "Economic growth" can be understood as part of Dandala's notion of "devel-

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6 In the three texts analysed, the link to "development" in Ubuntu is most obvious, which provides a more in-depth view on the notion of "development". Other texts, such as those presented by Eliastam, are less fruitful for the debate. A second criteria has been that the text should be written by Africans or people who have been living in southern Africa for a long time. These two criteria were decisive and were prioritised.

7 https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/people/mvume-dandala [4/15/2021].

opment", which he seems to view positively and rather uncritically. Considering these arguments, Dandala seems to have more overlapping ideas with capitalist and economic "development" discourse than with more critical stances. On the other hand, the text is strongly impregnated with traditional thought. Dandala shows an acute awareness of colonialism, human dignity and the idea of community. He also treats the idea of empowerment towards self-sustainability[8] quite differently to hegemonic "development" discourses, in which "investments" to empower impoverished people can turn into (monetary) debt needing repayment. Human dignity and autonomy suffer with intents to repay debt which can never be repaid. Ubuntu differs: in Dandala's thought, "investment" is always entangled with dignity – a poor person receives financial help in a face-saving manner, which enables this person to achieve economic autonomy (Dandala 2009, 274–275).

Bénézét Bujo, a Catholic ethics scholar[9], analyses several southern African traditional political models from different cultures.[10] He links the signifier "development" to the signified "human dignity" (Bujo 2009, 410). Bujo explicitly uses language which reflects a hierarchy, following the discourse of Truman in 1949 (Ziai 2016, 194–95) using the terms "First World" and "Third World" throughout the text. This hierarchy is something he explicitly rejects, but still uses this language all the same. Consequences of colonialism and other Eurocentric perspectives are criticised on economic, cultural, social and political levels without mentioning the term "postcolonial".

Bujo combines traditional African participative models with democratic models inspired from the US and Europe. "Traditional political models" (Bujo 2009, 392) were mostly dismantled during colonisation. He gives examples of participative elements such as a council of elders. It is furthermore important to realise that a chief in many African traditions plays the role of an intermediator between the "living" and ancestral world. Religious and political power seem to be inseparable (Bujo 2009, 393–394), reflecting the holistic character of Ubuntu. Considering

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8 "Sustainability" is not specifically defined in Dandala 2009; his understanding can only be concluded by its use.

9 Bujo is a Catholic scholar who worked and studied in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Germany and Switzerland (Bujo 2009, 411).

10 Ibid. 392 f. Bujo does not explicitly mention Ubuntu, but he refers to examples from the "Bantu" (Bujo 2009, 394–395). Bantu languages refer to a multi-ethnic group of people. Within the Bantu language family more than 500 languages exist (Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Bantu languages", 2019). The proverb "*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* – a person is a person through persons", which, as mentioned above, is widely used to break down a core definition of Ubuntu, is Zulu. Zulu belongs to the Bantu languages. The realm of thought, of ethics, of society and religion is inseparably inherent to language. Content-wise, as will be clear from the presented thoughts of Bujo, I consider Bujo's text as influenced by Ubuntu thought, although he does not explicitly use the term. Desmond Tutu proceeds similarly in the case of Rwanda (Tutu 2001, 25; Rauhut 2015, 280).

participation, an "elder" can grammatically be a male or female person, but there is no explicit mentioning of women's roles in this participative system, nor whether a young person can be an "elder" (cf. Magadla/Chitando 2014). Bujo heavily criticises power relations, although he uses language such as "First World" and "Third World", which is usually only used by those (implicitly) advocating the innate hierarchy. By doing so Bujo perpetuates the (post)colonial hierarchy of power innate in these terms.

Bujo's understanding of "development" firstly means that all forms of decisions must be democratically approved and contextually implemented and adopted. Secondly, all systems, whether economic or political, must be rooted in local tradition. I would argue that "development", according to Bujo's line of thinking, must follow the principle of solidarity, starting at the local level. He is very critical of any form of non-democratically approved economic and political (foreign) interventions. Bujo furthermore criticises economy, although he does not tackle a particular economic system. He criticises (economic) inequality (Bujo 2009, 400), he considers "development" in an African context as depending on the influence of the "First World" (sic) (Bujo 2009, 402–403) and its actions and behaviour towards Africa on a political, economic and cultural level. This relates to political demands strongly criticising the debt policy of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Bujo 2009, 409). He is inspired by Christian ethics (Bujo 2009, 400–401). "Human dignity" (Bujo 2009, 410) could be understood as the essence of his notion of "development". Bujo seems to be in favour of an entangled system of (Western) democracy and indigenous culture. His arguments are in line with Mboti, who rejects the interpretation of a strong dichotomy between Western ethics as individualistic and African ethics as communitarian (Mboti 2015, 144).

Metz and Gaie have a different approach: they investigate the foundations of a sub-Saharan (sic) moral theory based on Ubuntu/Botho. Both use Botho as a synonym of Ubuntu in Sotho-Tswana.[11] Their aim is not to set up a representative or normative moral theory, but a theory with themes that are recurrent among many people native to sub-Saharan (sic) Africa (Metz/Gaie 2010, 274 & 277). Reflecting a moral theory and relating it to "development" makes sense, since the foundation of the understanding of "development" often relies on pretensions of morals and values. I would consider this to be a general assumption. The investigation shows how predominantly individualistically impregnated "development" policies, (e.g. Metz and Gaie's understanding of Western "development" policies[12] can collide with sub-

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11 Sotho and Tswana are terms for several Bantu languages spoken by millions of people in sub-Saharan (sic) Africa; see Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Tswana", 2019 and Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Benue-Congo", 2019.

12 In the discourse of Metz and Gaie's paper, African traditions are associated with communitarianism, while traditions from the Western world are associated with individualism. This dichotomic scheme

Saharan (sic) epistemologies. Both understand these epistemologies as inherently communitarian and "essentially relational" (Metz/Gaie 2010, 275). Because the authors would like to attract specifically a Western audience (sic) with their writings, they skip the belief of many Africans in ancestors (Metz/Gaie 2010, 274). This sets a discursive formation that leads to conclusions disregarding the belief in the invisible. This in turn contradicts the holistic claim of Ubuntu and reflects an epistemology of the Global North. The authors assume that by leaving out certain key points the narrative would be more appealing to a non-African audience. They outspokenly downplay the entanglement of many African and European traditions (Metz/Gaie 2010, 274). Metz and Gaie do so although they are aware of the danger of binary patterns. I will demonstrate how this occurs. This is problematic, because in a postcolonial perspective, many advocates of indigenous thought have, even with the best of intensions, paternalised the people they wish to advocate.

Metz and Gaie's notion of "development" considering criminal justice in Western terms relies on retribution and deterrence. Ubuntu/Botho focusses on reconciliation, on revitalising broken relationships (Metz/Gaie 2010, 278). Unresolved conflicts are often major "development" obstacles.

Considering economic inequality, Metz and Gaie confirm that there is less tolerance towards economic inequality in Botho/Ubuntu than in the West (Magesa 1997, 277). Being part of a community entitles one automatically to the possession of shared wealth, e.g. cattle, on the condition that they are put to good use (cf. Gyekye 1997; Masolo 2004). Article 14 (2) of the German constitution points out that property obliges the owner to use it for the common good, which can make nationalisation possible (Gesetze im Internet, 2019). This example is relatable on a content level to the care-for-community ethics of Ubuntu and deconstructs the dichotomous and narrow narrative of "Africans as communitarian" and "Westerners as individualistic". It is important to remember Mboti's critique of Ubuntu as something diffuse and ungraspable, which also stresses that the dichotomy of the West as individualistic and African as communitarian is a construction (Mboti 2015, 144).

There are more papers which mention the link between Ubuntu and "development". Since these articles have already investigated and articulate their respective relation to an understanding of "development" there is no further in-depth investigation needed. I mention only the outcomes relevant for this research. Molefe proceeds methodologically in similar ways to this research by constructing the frames of a theoretical conception of "development" based on Ubuntu (Molefe 2019, 99). Key to his thought is relationality: people need each other, to become

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is subject to criticism; see for example Mboti (2015). Mboti criticises this duality as suitable to neither "European" nor "African" people, nor are these two mutually exclusive designations.

fully human, to achieve personhood, to achieve moral virtue, and to ultimately become Ubuntu. People need a community with moral standards (Molefe 2019, 100-103). Hoffmann and Metz (2017) operate similarly to this research by outlining how the capability approach can learn from an Ubuntu ethic. Although they seem to think and speak about "development" in a quite materialistic manner – probably conditioned by the capability approach and focused on material aspects, which are not an Ubuntu priority – their paper has interesting outcomes. In the perspective of Ubuntu, capability deprivation can limit a person's ability to care for others. It could be the outcome of neglect through bodies such as the state (Hoffmann/Metz 2017, 12). This deprivation of capabilities, in Ubuntu terms, will detract from a person's (cap)ability to develop towards full personhood, to be Ubuntu. For Hoffmann/Metz, relationality is a central aspect of Ubuntu, too. These two papers align with the above analysis, which thinks of "development" in terms of Ubuntu prioritising human relations.

An important observation at the end of this analysis is the fact that in all descriptions of Ubuntu, nature and objects are seen as essentially inherent to Ubuntu (see chapter 3). This has not played a major role in the texts analysed.[13] The reasons can only be speculative. A possibility could be that the term "development" as influenced and entangled to epistemologies of the Global North has not been extended beyond human beings.

5. Conclusion, Firstly: The Notion of "Development" in Ubuntu

This conclusion is divided into two parts, according to the two research questions of this paper: firstly, the notion of development in Ubuntu and secondly, the learning possibilities for epistemologies from the Global North.

Firstly, there is no single notion of "development" in Ubuntu – there are many! It is heterogeneous, diverse, self-critical, constantly evolving and very dynamic (cf. Magadla/Chitando 2014). Ubuntu is important to many people in southern Africa, across cultures, nations, religions and languages. Therefore, it has a special attractiveness as a common ground for "development" theory building. This diversity should be kept in mind as I narrow down a notion of "development" based on the given examples. I conclude the following common themes across the analysed cases: human dignity is more important than money. Human relations are more important than the economy. Everything needs to be contextual. Empowerment, enabling people to provide for themselves (materially), is essential. The following

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13 The only paper to my knowledge which states the importance of the natural environment with respect to Ubuntu and uses it in his argument is Shumba (2011).

points were not stressed in all texts: tolerance towards economic inequality is very low. The economy must be realised under the premise of solidarity. Redistribution is a part of that. Although none of the authors explicitly call for a different economic system, the mentioned points fundamentally criticise the current hegemonic notions of (economic) "development". These rely on premises which are rather individualistic and materialistic (cf. chapter 2). The notion of "development" in Ubuntu relies on different premises – on an anthropology which prefers relations over individualism, which sees dignity and solidarity first, and economic, material gain second. Another consequence is a decreased tolerance towards economic inequality than the hegemonic "development" discourses accept. The Ubuntu participatory approach demands no one-size-fits-all "development" approach, but local, contextual solutions that follow – in terms of the Global North – the principle of subsidiarity. It opposes authoritarian "development" interventions, which can often be found in hegemonic "development" discourses. The innate hierarchy of the hegemonic "development" discourse, differentiating between "developed" and "developing" countries, repeating colonial patterns, is absurd to Ubuntu. The individual cannot be seen without his/her relation to the whole community. The mentioned points of critique applied would lead to a fundamental change of present hegemonic economic and "development" models. All points are subject to a critique regarding influences, foreign or internal, which are not (democratically) approved by a participative system.

References to postcolonial theories are not mentioned by any of the authors, although many points of their critiques seem to fit into this discourse. The reason can only remain speculative, but might display the problem *pars pro toto* with the following example: does Bujo use the language of the hegemonic development discourse ("First/Third World") due to a lack of alternatives or lack of knowledge? Does he use these terms in order not to be excluded from the discourse, or for completely different reasons? The use of these words set a discursive formation, a hierarchy of power in play which perpetuates the hegemonic "development" discourse. New thoughts can only be implemented at the condition of the hegemonic terminology – and can only perpetuate the existing (postcolonial) hierarchy. In other words, if a dichotomous system of "First" and "Third" world exists, everything which is not considered "First World" is a copy of the very idea and will never reach the "original".[14] This underlines Sarr's critique of creating a new terminology (Sarr 2019, 125), which goes hand in hand with creating new concepts and systems of thought and power.

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14 I am fully aware that by using the terms I criticise (even in explanation), I perpetuate the very power hierarchy I criticise. This is highly problematic but, since this is a linguistic analysis which aims to deconstruct and discursively change the meaning of these terms, I do not see another way.

There is no such thing as a "pure" notion of development in Ubuntu. Traditions are highly appreciated, and in many cases entangled with epistemologies of the Global North. Ubuntu is essentially heterogenic. I understand this as a criticism of all universalising "development" ideas. This is at least partly due to a problem with the SDGs, which rely on premises not shared by Ubuntu and which therefore lead to problematic outcomes.

6.   Conclusion, Secondly: How can Ubuntu Contribute to the "Development" Debate in the Global North?

Ubuntu challenges the thinking patterns of practitioners and researchers from the Global North – if they actually intend to support people on *their* terms. Ubuntu does not differentiate between nature and humans, the visible and invisible, nor distinguish between political and religious power as is the case in the epistemologies of the Global North. Instead, there is a real demand for human participation and interaction, for democracy and accountability; a demand for change of conditions. This is an example of a southern epistemology according to Santos (2016, viii–ix). This has been exemplified with ideas developed not in Europe or the US, but rooted in Africa. Ubuntu, and so the mindset of many people outside the Global North, is genuinely holistic – which is beyond the imagination of many people from the Global North. Material goods and physical care for human beings are indeed essential. But according to Ubuntu, people have needs beyond the material. In the demonstrated examples, these additions are mainly to be found on a relational and spiritual level. This has consequences for the ways of forming a society and its infrastructure. An imposed capitalist system of debt (if it prioritises the repayment of debt over human relations) will likely be detrimental both to interpersonal relationships and to people's notions of dignity within a society. Universalising approaches, such as the SDGs, seem to tackle existing fragile constructions such as Ubuntu, particularly on a local level. The SDGs are connected to a mandate of growth and capitalistic principles, which has little to no value from an Ubuntu perspective, in comparison with the priorisation of human relations. Western European-modelled states exist as different forms of laic political systems and distinguish between religious powers and the state. This does not seem to apply to the example of African traditions. The underlying structure of the SDGs contains structures which are analogous to imperial and colonial structures imposed on Africans. For instance, universalising the SDGs without regard to the context. By contrast, Ubuntu is always contextual. This affects prevalent social systems and beliefs while those people affected have no say. "Development" policies which don't want to be perceived as a postcolonial power tool by the people who they are supposed to serve have to take those very people's voices and values into consideration. If this means a person from the Global

North working in "development" to appreciate communication with ancestors – as practised by many people in Africa – so be it (Metz/Gaie 2010, 274)!

Ubuntu's diversity questions the universalising of "development" approaches. There is no one-size-fits-all solution, as I have demonstrated by the texts analysed. An Ubuntu proposal is quickly criticised by another Ubuntu advocate. All Ubuntu criticisms against US-European models implicate what is labelled as "postcolonial critique". The structural asymmetry between Ubuntu and the SDGs is obvious: although the SDGs involve non-material goals, such as "Gender equality" (SDG 5) or "Peace, justice and strong institutions" (SDG 16), they still place emphasis on material objects, free markets and growth-oriented (SDG 8) economics. Ziai criticises the SDGs as following hierarchical premises and constructions that can be traced back to Truman's mid-20th-century America (Ziai 2016, 195–207). Seventy years later, these discourses and the "development" policies based on them have proven to be ineffective in creating worldwide equality or reaching the goal of eradicating world hunger.[15] This is why I consider inherent structural and conceptual concepts to be the biggest obstacles for change. In order to achieve the SDGs, the *Sustainable Development Report* (SDR) proposes six transformations alongside the goals. Among them are education, gender and inequality; health, well-being and demography; and sustainable cities and communities (SDR 2019, 35). The above-mentioned examples of Ubuntu revolve largely around the themes of gender, inequality and health. This is what Ubuntu can contribute to the development debate of the Global North: a contextualised adaption of supposedly indifferent terminology and linked concepts. This is a reason why "development" ideas and concepts based on these analyses give different results, as demonstrated. "Naturally, no single framework can apply equally to all countries, so these transformations will need to be adapted and tailored to suit local needs and customs" (SDR 2019, 2), as the report emphasises. This seems to confirm Ubuntu's diverse development approach that calls for local, tailor-made solutions and has a rich experience in doing so. The universal solution is not to universalise! The SDR seems to prove an argument of this paper, that the hegemonic "development" discourse is not able to achieve its own goals. In other words, "development" for people who live Ubuntu must consider Ubuntu – as lived and reported by the very people who are supposed to benefit from "development".

This is not to say that Ubuntu-based notions of "development" would necessarily reject approaches such as the SDGs based on their content. As shown at the beginning, the SDGs are a development agenda which opens up towards context:

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15 SDR 2019, 24–36 shows that a majority of countries have great difficulties eradicating hunger and reducing inequalities. Eradicating world hunger, which has been a goal of former development agendas, such as the Millennium Development Goals, has yet to be achieved, although improvements have been made (https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/ [4/14/2021]).

rich and poor countries can be "developing" on different levels. Ubuntu would rather reject the semi-democratic, non-contextual, universalising and partly authoritarian structures and the material focus that the analysed examples have shown (Bujo 2009; Dandala 2009; Metz/Gaie 2010; Molefe 2019). This is where different understandings of northern and southern epistemologies are flawed. In certain aspects of "development", as Dandala exemplifies, economic growth would be a fully compliant strategy with SDG 1 "no poverty" (SDG: poverty, 2019) – adding the premise of dignity over material wealth. Bujo gave the idea of entangled participative elements with democratic ideas from Europe rooted in African tradition. This is in accordance with SDG 16, "peace, justice and strong institutions" (SDG: peace-justice, 2019). In the context of the SDGs, Ubuntu would require a less hierarchical structure (e.g. "developed" – "developing") and would certainly alter the content to reflect a greater emphasis on the importance of human relations over material wealth.

Acknowledgements

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Policy & Practice Notes

Jørgen Thomsen

Religious Actors for Gender Equality – SDG 5

A Reflection on the Side by Side Faith Movement for Gender Justice
(Policy & Practice Note)

Abstract:

The article reflects on the practical experience of the Side by Side Faith Movement for Gender Justice (SbS): faith actors often play a decisive role in the formation of values, concepts and beliefs that determine how women and men see themselves and each other and how they thus practise gender equality – or not. In both cases, faith actors are key partners in the transformation of ideas and practices towards achieving gender equality – SDG 5. SbS began in 2015 in response to a gradual dominance by restrictive faith actors' voices in the international debate on gender. Faith-based development agencies and local faith actors already involved in pro-gender-equality practice began building national chapters of SbS to mobilise, organise and strategise our work and have it reflected in international advocacy – including for a change of policy towards improved engagement with religious actors. The article presents this experience in the practical realm of "Community", whilst the progress made in that realm can only be understood with its intimate link to the realm of "Cosmology": it is because of what we believe as faith actors that we do what we do. Therefore, interventions for change (Agenda 2030) must be rooted in people's values, convictions and beliefs if the change is to be sustainable[1].

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1 After an introduction the article is structured around the two foci of the conference "Between Cosmology and Community" in Berlin, July 2019. See "Call for Papers": "Cosmology refers to the ideological dimension, the impact of the formation of mind-sets, belief and knowledge systems, attitudes and behaviour on these processes of transformation. Community indicates active contributions by religious agents to processes of social, economic, ecological and cultural transformation." Summarized here in 'Faith Matters' (*Cosmology*) and 'Faith Works' (*Community*).

1.   "This Cannot Be!" – Background and History of Side by Side

"Gender justice for everybody, women and girls, men and boys." This was the vision agreed on by a diverse set of religious leaders and faith-based development actors at the inception meeting of the Side by Side Faith Movement for Gender Justice (SbS) in London in March 2015. Half a year later, in September 2015, the world's political leaders followed suit when the 193 member states of the United Nations approved Agenda 2030 with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 5, which aims to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls."

SbS is today a growing movement, including 49 member organisations and 14 national chapters. SbS is mobilising thousands of faith-based gender champions, who strive to build communities and societies free of gender inequality – and has established a track record of effective advocacy work at local, national and global levels.

In March 2015, the then CEO of Christian Aid, Loretta Minghella, contributed a rallying call to sister agencies and faith actors. Three messages from her talk kept resonating with me long after:

– In 2014, Minghella had participated in the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). This is a huge gathering of UN member states and up to ten thousand civil society organisation (CSO) representatives who meet to assess and advance the rights of women and gender justice throughout the world. In this space she, like other faith-based actors, had been met with suspicion by many, who perceived faith to be a barrier to achieving gender justice.

– During her participation in the 2014 CSW58 commission she came to understand why. In this setting, some expected a conservative, regressive stance on gender from a faith-based actor. That expected regressive stance was indeed the most vocal and outspoken faith voice at this global gathering. Often in an "unholy alliance" with very conservative political actors.

– Lastly, her insistent plea to the participants that "this cannot be!". We are united by our belief that each person is created equal in the image of God and has intrinsic value, dignity and holds equal rights; and we know through our partnerships and cooperation that an overwhelming body of faith-based gender champions toil daily to model and shape gender-just communities. Let us therefore mobilise and demonstrate – also through effective advocacy at all levels – that the genuine faith voice is one of passion for gender justice[2].

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2 SbS on gender justice: "*Gender justice is achieved when women and men, girls and boys have equal enjoyment of human rights, responsibilities, life prospects and opportunities, and the power and resources to shape their own lives and contribute to society, irrespective of gender or sex. Gender justice seeks to see all people free from cultural and interpersonal systems of privilege and oppression, and from violence and repression based on gender*" (Brabrant and Brown 2018, 3).

Minghella's message found a strong resonance in the inception meeting and our next step was to consult many more faith actors at regional and national levels. Out of that grew in the years to follow the Side by Side Faith Movement for Gender Justice (http://sidebysidegender.org/), with the global movement being officially launched at the CSW61 in March 2017. Following consultations, development agencies, faith communions and faith-based activist networks worked together with local faith actors already involved in pro-gender-equality practice and began building national chapters of SbS to mobilise, organise and strategise their work and have it reflected in international advocacy, for instance at the CSW, in PaRD and in the UN Women's Beijing follow-up (see more under *Advocacy* below) to better reflect the faith-based pro-gender justice reality and to better include this important role of religious actors in policies and strategies for change (SDG 5)[3].

2.   "... for You Are All One ..." – Faith Matters

"Eighty-four per cent of the world's population self-identify as members of a faith group" (Hackett and McClendon, 2017). "Faith leaders play a key role in shaping people's values, norms of acceptable behaviour, life roles and understanding of what constitutes 'a good life'. For people of faith, this faith identity is core to the development of many of the laws, policies, programmes and relationships which shape and govern the societies in which we all live" (Brabrant and Brown 2018, 3).

This insight quoted from the SbS Advocacy Briefing captures what for decades has been overlooked in development theory and praxis but is now resurfacing as an increasing interest in the role of religion and religious actors in processes of societal change – the new discourse on religion and development.

The rights-based approach (RBA) is mainstream in most development work today, including faith-based development work. In the RBA, change is aimed for at different levels to overcome barriers to rights fulfilment (see the simple pyramid). Sometimes, development actors have engaged mainly with the two top levels of the pyramid (policies and practices) and may have overlooked the importance of engaging with the bottom level of ideas and beliefs – even though this bottom level is crucial for sustainable change. If, for example, the aim of an intervention is to change the relationship between women and men towards a more equal gender relationship (SDG 5), then new effective policies and recognised practices will bring us a long way. But it is only when these policies and practices are owned by people that they bear real fruit. It is when men begin to see themselves differently and

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3 In its presentation of the SbS Faith Movement for Gender Justice this article draws extensively on strategy papers, research reports and briefings developed in the first five years of SbS.
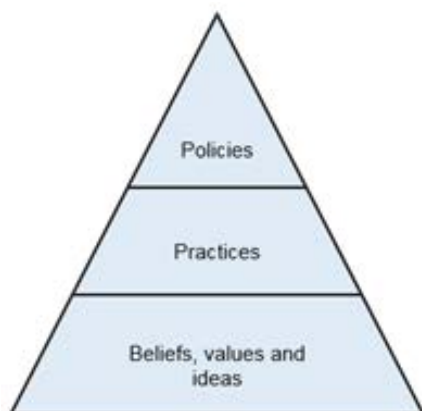
Figure 1 Pyramid of challenges and barriers to rights fulfilment

women internalise equality and believe in their equal role that the change becomes sustainable. For then it is rooted in – and supported by – what people believe to be right.

This was clearly demonstrated in a programme planning workshop with colleagues from Uganda where the question was raised, "Who is most influential in forming our ideas about men and women?" There was no doubt in the minds of the participants: the traditional and religious leaders in the villages and all the way up to the national level, through their religious messaging and organisation of the congregational life, are the single most influential element of shaping and challenging people's understanding of gender justice (Thomsen 2017, 28).

So, religion can promote change as for most people their beliefs inform their ideas. But religion can also block change (as many religious institutions continue to do for women). However, the fact that religion is ambiguous just proves that it is important: it can be either conducive to development or block development, but it is never irrelevant for development if change is to be rooted, lasting and sustainable.

Side by Side interventions always start with consultation. In these conversations, leaders within faith actors (not necessarily ordained) reflect on their theological mandate to champion gender justice. We do not ignore that religion has been and can still be part of the problem, promoting patriarchal practices. We aim to address this in both national and international spaces. And returning to our scriptures and creating space for reflection is key. We need – and the people we invite need – to be part of the conversation, to own the change. We aim to meet people where we/they are.

The importance – and potential – of engaging with the normative narratives of religious communities in work for pro-gender justice change was strongly underlined in research that Side by Side through PaRD (see below) helped commission

from the Joint Learning Initiative[4] and used at an official side event at the 2019 CSW63. The research "Religion, Development and GBV"[5] documents that

> … **a scriptural/theological approach** has been shown to be particularly effective in working with religious leaders and communities. There is a number of reasons why this is a crucial way of engaging. First, sacred scripture is often inaccurately read and interpreted to justify gender inequality and GBV (Bridger & Sadgrove, 2019; Kaviti, 2015: 501; Sadiq, 2017). Re-reading and re-interpreting such scriptures are therefore important ways of addressing religion's role in facilitating GBV. Second, engaging with sacred scripture is an especially effective way of working with religious leaders, who are comfortable with it, see themselves as experts on it, and trust it. By using sacred scripture, one is engaging through a medium they trust and find authoritative. Third, as many religious leaders have had little theological education, such theological engagement increases their ability to read and interpret their sacred text. In the study on harmful practices, the four FBOs being studied all combined a public health and theological approach, finding it the most effective way of working with religious leaders on these sensitive issues (Le Roux & Bartelink 2017). (Le Roux 2019, 13)

The research also reminds us not to forget the other layers of the pyramid above. Working with the layers of religion, belief and conviction must go hand in hand with improvement of the structural framework of policies and practices: "… A person is influenced by more than just religion. If society, politics, and family, for example, continue to promote gender inequality and violence, reinterpretation of scripture is often not enough to lead to sustainable attitude and behavior change" (Le Roux 2019, 15).

Yet religion is decisive. And in a Christian context, for instance, it all starts with the understanding of the Christian community – the church – as the body of Christ in its historical and geographical context. In this community, in the church as the body of Christ, there is no male and female division or inequality: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). How can that be articulated and strived for?

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4 The Joint Learning Initiative is an international collaboration on evidence for faith groups' role and contributions to local community health and well-being and ending poverty – see https://jliflc.com/

5 GBV (gender-based violence) is a collective term for physical, emotional and structural violence (economic, harmful cultural and religious practices etc.) that is directed at an individual based on his or her biological sex or gender identity.

3. Agents of Transformation – Faith Works

To challenge patriarchal structures of power and create an enabling environment for gender justice, interventions at multiple levels are required: societal, community, household and individual (see graphic below). Faith actors and communities "are present and have influence in each of these 'realms of power' and can play a unique and far-reaching role in achieving and sustaining gender justice" (Side by Side 2015, 2).

Realms of power in which gender issues are played out. Faith actors can make vital transformative and coordinated interventions in all realms of power:[6]

Societal level

Interventions to build political will and legal and institutional capacity to end gender inequality; gender responsive policies, and services which respond to gender specific needs.

Individual level

Interventions which focus on influencing an individual's self-confidence, knowledge or self-awareness; these empower people to seek and claim their rights including through increased voice and agency.

Community level

Interventions which aim to change social and cultural norms, values and practices which condone or reinforce gender inequality at the community level;

Household level

Interventions which target relationships within the family, within marriage, within sexual relationships; to promote equal decision-making power and more equitable division of household roles, responsibilities & resources

Society (public realm)

Community realm

Close relations (private realm)

Individual (intimate realm)

Source: DFID PPA Gender Learning Group Theory of Change. 2015.

Figure 2   The different realms of power

The following sections will briefly present a few elements of the active contribution by religious actors in Side by Side to processes of transformation towards reduced gender inequality. "How does Side by Side act as an agent of change?" The listing may indicate a timeline or sequential order. But these elements appear in parallel and blended order.

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6   The DFID quoted as source of the graphic is the UK Department for International Development (now replaced by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office).

3.1 Mobilisation and Movement Building

Many faith-based organisations (FBOs), interreligious councils, councils of churches and faith networks and communities, as well as individuals are already making encouraging progress towards gender justice. However, interventions could be stronger and have greater effect if better coordinated to make full use of this potential. The Side by Side movement is a response to this. We recognise that we will achieve far more for gender justice if we work together. Closer partnerships will more rapidly build on and strengthen existing efforts and lead to deeper, more extensive and sustainable transformation. This would be true even if we were seeing a gradual change for the better. UN Women assesses that at current rates it will take 50 years before there is gender parity in national parliaments and more than 100 years to reach overall gender equality.

Unfortunately, we are not just seeing a far too slow[7], gradual change to the better. On the contrary. At the 2019 CSW63 the UN General Secretary António Guterres bluntly observed that: "Around the world, there is a pushback on women's rights. That pushback is deep, pervasive and relentless … We have a fight on our hands. And it is a fight we must win – together. So let us say it loud and clear: We will not give ground. We will push back against the pushback. And we will keep pushing" (Guterres 2019).

For Guterres, as for SbS, the key word is "together": building a movement is therefore important. Growing a faith movement side by side builds energy. We are stronger, and can be bolder, when we know that we are not acting alone. History shows us that movements can challenge and change unjust structures – from the anti-slavery movement to #MeToo. Therefore, SbS intends to "develop a more focused and coordinated faith response across and within sectors, faith groups, and geographically, e.g., through helping to establish national and regional faith coalitions for gender justice, spaces for inter-faith dialogue and a global faith response to SDG gender targets" (Side by Side 2015, 4).

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7 Still women are deprived of their economic, political, social and cultural rights. Extensive research in many fields shows this in painful detail: more women than men are hungry (only 1% of the world's women own land (!) (2015) and yet they make up 50% of the agricultural workforce in developing countries). Women more often than men experience exploitation, discrimination and violence (women in full-time positions earn 70–90 per cent of their male colleagues' salary; one in five women and girls reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner within a 12-month period). And women continue to be under-represented in decision-making processes, both where gender justice is openly ignored, and in institutions that claim to be democratic (globally 23% per cent of all national parliamentarians are women, 2016). In situations of conflict and social insecurity, women suffer most. (From PPT presentation by Senior Advisor Elsebeth Gravgaard, DanChurchAid, 2019.)

3.2 Reflection on Faith Mandate

As elaborated above, under "faith matters", it is fundamental to draw on and revisit the normative faith narratives. Deepening and widening our understanding of the foundational scriptures of our religions allows for new insights. This potentially transformative and liberating hermeneutics is key to change in faith communities and therefore in what faith communities can contribute to achieving SDG 5.

Interpreting the meaning and consequences of the normative religious text is a key function in most religions – in some faith traditions reserved for a few, in others "democratised" to many. Interpretation is also a realm of power that needs to be shared to bring out the fullness of it and avoid corrupting it. As stated in the SbS Advocacy Briefing, "... female faith leaders are key to promoting gender justice within and outside faith institutions". And later: "Female theologians can be influential actors in interpreting religious scriptures in a liberating way for women" (Brabrant and Brown 2018, 4). Plus, obviously implied: "... and for men."

Therefore, in the SbS Theory of Change, one of the prioritised interventions pivots around scripture and theological training:

> Through such means as supporting national symposiums and coalitions, build awareness, capacity and commitment among faith leaders to challenge and change damaging social norms and address social, political, religious and economic gender inequality issues in their communities **by promoting sacred texts that uphold gender justice**, through gender audits, **religious education and theological training**, and by **using faith-based resources** to advance gender justice in schools and communities. (Side by Side 2015, 4 – *my highlighting)*

3.3 Empowerment

In order to engage with, and where needed to unlock, the potential of religious leaders for improved gender justice, it is important to support these leaders to act – internally in the faith communities and vis-à-vis the wider society. With the fight against GBV in focus le Roux concludes that:

> It is important to engage and work with religious leaders in a way that **empowers** them and allows them to take on a "champion" identity. This means seeing them not as obstacles to ending GBV, but rather focusing on the potential role they can play in addressing violence and injustice (Le Roux & Bartelink, 2017; Le Roux & Palm, 2018). Effective interventions offer religious leaders the opportunity to embrace a positive identity (e.g.

"encouraging positive fatherhood", rather than "ending harmful practices"). (Le Roux 2019, 10 – *my highlighting*)

That empowerment includes support of different kinds – including building capacity and facilitating links with political institutions. SbS therefore aims to "support faith leaders and FBOs to engage collectively with government and regional and international policy fora, and the media, to seek laws, policies and services that recognise, prevent and respond to gender inequality" (Side by Side 2015, 4).

Where possible, we bring together diverse faith actors with government representatives, media and gender rights groups. For example, in the DRC, this required an investment of time, to enable gender rights groups (who initially identified faith actors as being part of the problem) to be part of the national coalition (Yoka Mbombo 2018; Brabrant 2019).

3.4   Research/Evidence

One of the challenges in unlocking the potential of faith actors in the fulfilment of SDG 5 (and of the wider UN Agenda 2030) that SbS has identified is the short-sightedness, if not occasional blindness, of many traditional development actors: "Governments and development actors have been slow to enrol faith actors consistently and support their potential to become key actors in achieving gender justice" (Side by Side 2015, 4). This is rapidly changing. And recognition of this often-overlooked potential – and of the need to engage – was for instance evidenced at the 2019 CSW63 official side event "Unlocking the power of faith-based partnerships: Enabling the right to social protection". This event was jointly organised by SbS and here one of the governmental co-sponsors, H.E. the Danish Ambassador to the UN, Martin Bille Hermann, acknowledged in his opening remarks that:

> "At its best religious and cultural norms can be a powerful vehicle for development, for progress and for positive change. But it can also be a powerful adversary holding back, locking societies and family structures. But if we want to change this, we need to engage."[8]

To help open the eyes of traditional development actors to the potential of faith actors in change towards gender justice, SbS will prioritise to "build an evidence base for the efficacy of faith institutions in addressing social, political and economic gender justice issues and convene joint faith-secular spaces to advance gender justice" (Side by Side 2015, 3).

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8 As recorded by a note-taking participant.

3.5 Advocacy

Advocacy at all levels is a key element in SbS's understanding of how to contribute to gender justice. Our advocacy briefing explains it in the following way:

> Political, economic, religious, educational, cultural, judicial, and administrative structures can create and reinforce gender inequalities. **Gender advocacy** is understood as the *challenging and changing of these structures and systems that privilege one gender and marginalize another, through the influencing of the policies and practices of the powerful. At its core, advocacy is about transformation and justice.* Faith leaders can speak with a unique moral authority and credibility and represent often very large numbers of people. At community and congregation level, where they have a permanent presence, and often at national and even international levels as well, they hold respected positions; they are listened to. They have many opportunities to teach and influence their congregations, including through their sermons, and reach into their wider communities. (Brabrant and Brown 2018, 4 – *my highlighting*)

Working at the local and national level, SbS analyses *the local context* and listens to what is already happening in the country to understand the country-specific barriers to gender justice. This involves consultations and analysis to understand each other's perspectives, as well as the structures (political, legal, religious, social) that are allowing and enabling gender injustice. This local, contextual rootedness of advocacy is central:

> We support and promote local ownership, we are not a prescriptive movement, and our national coalitions focus on different areas of work (for example, Kenya advocating on the 2/3 Gender Rule, joint advocacy in Uganda on the Marriage Bill, and a collective statement in Malawi against the political violence experienced by women). (Tavernor 2019)

The challenges, experiences and evidence from the local and national advocacy are then taken to the international level – loyal to the initial experience that Loretta Minghella had at the 2014 CSW58, where the pro-gender justice faith perspective seemed to be squeezed out and replaced by a regressive faith voice. At subsequent CSW commissions, SbS has represented a progressive faith voice and perspective in advocating for a change of policy that would better engage with the important role of religious actors – through official side events and additional parallel events, through local SbS chapters' conversations with their governments' delegations to CSW before, during and after the CSWs and in some instances through official participation in the official delegations. This has contributed to some progress (and

prevented some regress). One of the notable advances was at the 2018 CSW62, where the governments in the "Agreed Conclusions" § 46 for the first time included a positive reference to the role of faith-based organisations (UN Women 2018).

Another important space for SbS's international advocacy is the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD). PaRD is a tri-party platform of governments, intergovernmental structures and CSOs/FBOs[9] for policy engagement, learning and cooperation and a partnership for change. Change that is rooted in people's beliefs and convictions and therefore is lasting, i.e. sustainable change. SbS is a member of PaRD and co-chairs PaRD's workstream on gender equality and empowerment SDG 5 – one of PaRD's three works streams: on SDG 3 Health, SDG 5 Gender and SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. The key question in PaRD is this: how can religious actors be better included in development work to achieve the SDGs?

3.6 Challenges and Sustainability

The SbS experience has been a substantial contribution to the religion and development discourse. But challenges remain, also for SbS: whilst inter-religious cooperation is widespread in local SbS chapters, the vast majority of global SbS members are still of Christian background. More women than men engage in the SbS governance structure. And whilst the impact of SbS on advocacy and policy agendas is notable, it is obviously still incremental. However, while development actors may come and go, faith actors tend to be sustained voices within our communities across the globe. Therefore, investing, supporting and building the capacity of faith actors, who often occupy respected positions within political and social spaces, is a strong and necessary catalyst for transformational change. Engagement with religious actors will thus serve to amplify messages for gender equality.

4. Conclusion

Members of the SbS movement are affirmed by the working experience over the last five years that if we
– create greater awareness of the faith and development nexus for gender justice
– mobilise and support a more coordinated, capacitated and collaborative faith movement for gender justice

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9 PaRD brings together eight ministries of development or foreign affairs, seven intergovernmental structures from KAICIID to the World Bank and African Union with seven additional UN organisations in an Advisory Council, and 128 CSOs/FBOs of every background and size, from big global alliances to smaller, national entities.

– ensure that government and development actors increasingly recognise and support faith actors as key actors in achieving gender justice outcomes

then we will accelerate the transformation of damaging gendered social norms, significantly reduce gender inequality, and assist in delivering the SDGs.

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The Role and Impact of Faith-Based Organisations in the Management of and Response to COVID-19 in Low-Resource Settings
(Policy & Practice Note)

Abstract:

The COVID-19 crisis is affecting millions of lives and has wreaked some of its greatest havoc and suffering among the vulnerable and marginalised populations of the world, many of whom belong to religious and faith-based communities. In times of crisis and difficulty, religion and faith are a source of hope and strength for many. In this paper, we underscore the critical role and impact that some faith-based organisations have had in the pandemic crisis response and management of three countries: Brazil, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. In Brazil, Pastoral da Criança is leveraging their mobile phone application to fight mis-information about COVID-19. In Indonesia, Muhammadiyah launched a COVID-19 command centre to support treatment in hospitals, to disseminate guidelines for religious activities backed by science, and to provide water, sanitation and hygiene packages, food and financial support to the most vulnerable and neglected. In Sri Lanka, Sarvodaya is working closely with religious and community leaders on risk communication and community engagement messages and is also providing hygiene care and economic relief packages to the marginalised. We further discuss some of the challenges these organisations have faced and propose recommendations for greater engagement with this group of global public health actors to maximise their contributions and impact in the crisis management of and response to future infectious disease outbreaks, epidemics or pandemics in low-resource settings.

1.   Introduction

Karl Marx famously said that "religion is opium for the people" (Marx 1844). This statement has again been reified in the context of a global pandemic that is affecting millions of lives globally. The pandemic has wreaked some of its greatest havoc and suffering among the vulnerable and marginalised populations of the world, many of whom belong to religious and faith-based communities encumbered by extreme poverty and a lack of basic housing, clean water and sanitation. These basic living essentials are imperative to successfully practise some of the non-pharmaceutical interventions that are currently recommended by many public health authorities in poor and rich countries worldwide.

In times of crisis and difficulty – such as the times we currently live in – religion and faith are a source of hope and strength for many, a "spiritual" opium that numbs and relieves the pain and anguish, somewhat giving credence to Marx's aforemen-tioned quote. One externality of this spiritual opium during the COVID-19 crisis is that some religious institutions were still holding large faith gatherings at the onset and peak of the pandemic in 2020, thereby spurring clusters of outbreaks in various countries globally because congregants were not physically distancing, wearing masks, or practising hand hygiene measures (Wildman et al. 2020). In this sense, some religious institutions and leaders have directly or indirectly perpetuated the spread of the SARs-CoV-2 virus (the causative pathogen of COVID-19) and the subsequent morbidity and mortality that have ensued, especially in many impover-ished communities in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) (Jaja, Anyanwu and Jaja 2020). But perhaps more importantly and less emphasised is the fact that religious and faith-based organisations (FBOs) have also formed the bedrock of the pandemic crisis response to COVID-19 in many resource-constrained set-tings globally, promoting and safeguarding the mental, physical, psycho-social and spiritual well-being of millions of people around the world.

For the uninitiated, a faith-based organisation is an organisation (usually non-profit) that is inspired by religion or religious beliefs and values that drive its social mission and work in grassroots/local communities (Bielefeld and Cleveland 2013). FBOs have been providing succour and social protection to vulnerable and marginalised populations as far back as the Middle Ages, a time when the maxims of love and charity were commonplace and the tenets by which the greatest religions of that epoch have lived by, even up till this present day (Rys 2010).

Global health and international development organisations have over the last few decades begun to recognise and value the very important role that faith-based organisations play in eradicating poverty and poverty-related infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis (Duff and Buckingham 2015). This is why the United Nations created an interagency task force on religion and develop-ment in 2010. However, it was not until the post-Millennium Development Goals

era that it was evidently clear to global (health) governance actors and advocates that one of the most pragmatic ways to fast-track the achievement of the world's ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 was to actively engage these FBOs in the decision-making and planning processes of global health and development bodies. Specialised agencies of the United Nations like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank Group, and intergovernmental forums like the G20, are continuously advocating and spearheading these new inclusive governance approaches and mechanisms (Welsh 2020). For instance, the WHO's Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors adopted in 2016 formally recognises faith-based organisations as non-state actors to engage with, and since 2015 the World Bank Group has intensified its collaboration with FBOs active in LMICs to accelerate the scale and impact of their activities in impoverished settings (The World Bank n.d.).

The 2014/2015 and more recent 2018/2020 Ebola epidemics in West Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo, respectively, are vivid reminders that FBOs are also important stakeholders in the global health security agenda to keep us all safe from the threats of emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases (Marshall, Wilkinson and Robinson 2020). The lack of engagement by global, national and local public health authorities with West African religious and faith-based leaders and organisations at the onset of the 2014/2015 Ebola epidemic crisis management led to widespread community outbreaks often from religious burial ceremonies and other gatherings or activities where infection prevention and control measures were not adequately implemented or followed (Marshall and Smith 2015; Marshall 2020). Unfortunately, the lessons learnt from the West African experience were not quickly applied in the context of the Democratic Republic of Congo's epidemic, further complicating the response in a milieu of violent conflict between the government and rebellious armed groups that entrenched societal distrust and misinformation (ReliefWeb 2019; Balibuno, Badjonga and Mollet 2020). Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF (in collaboration with Religions for Peace and the Joint Learning Institute on Faith and Local Communities) and the WHO have published guidance and recommendations for religious leaders and faith-based communities that were co-developed with this specific group of actors, thus reaffirming the crucial role they play in the crisis management of the pandemic (World Health Organization 2020; UNICEF 2020).

Our organisation, the Ahimsa Fund and Partners, is part of a growing network of global health stakeholders that is actively marshalling and empowering FBOs in their social mission to deliver preventive and curative public healthcare services in various communities in LMICs, and we are also advocating for and fostering collaborations and partnerships among these FBOs to bolster the impact of their work globally. As close observers and collaborators, we want to highlight in this paper the critical role and impact that some of these organisations have had in

the COVID-19 pandemic response and management of three countries: Brazil, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. These FBOs were chosen because they represent three different faith communities within Ahimsa's network. The insights were gathered (using unstructured interviews and focus group discussions) from our monthly virtual check-in meetings with representatives of these organisations who are leading their COVID-19 work. We proceed further to discuss some of the challenges these organisations have faced and propose recommendations for greater engagement with this group of global public health actors to maximise their contributions and impact in the (crisis) management of and response to future infectious disease outbreaks, epidemics or pandemics in low-resource settings.

1.1   Pastoral da Criança (Brazil)

Pastoral da Criança is a Catholic faith-based organisation that was founded in 1983 to provide health and nutrition services to all children and women in Brazil regardless of their religious affiliations. It has since extended its reach to twelve other Latin American, African and Asian countries, namely Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Peru, Venezuela, Benin, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and the Philippines. Pastoral da Criança's social mission is to prevent the deaths of mothers and infants by providing follow-up home visits to educate pregnant women and households with children under the age of six on nutritional and health needs. Their impact has been massive, to date serving over 700,000 children and 41,000 pregnant women using their growing network of 72,000 volunteers in Brazil alone, just before the pandemic hit. As a social mission of the Brazilian Catholic Church, Pastoral da Criança has built a lot of credibility and trust since its founding, contributing enormously to the reduction of infant and maternal mortality in many regions and municipalities (SciELO 2003). Brazil has more Roman Catholics than any other country in the world, estimated at 123 million people or 65% of the entire population in 2010, while more recently 58% of Brazilians identified as Catholics in a survey conducted in 2018 (Pew Research Center 2013; Statista 2018).

The pandemic has negatively impacted their work, by preventing some of their volunteers from engaging in home visits due to shelter-in-place and (semi-)lockdown restrictions in different Brazilian regions, but it has also enabled them to leverage their innovative Home Visit Android mobile health (mHealth) application, which has been supporting the work they did prior to the pandemic. The mobile application can work offline when there is minimal or no internet connectivity and can sync data to and from cloud storage after connectivity is restored. There are several features on the application: (i) volunteers can share guidelines on health and nutrition with families via email, Bluetooth and WhatsApp, (ii) it has a chat function for two-way communication between users and app coordinators, and (iii)

has e-trainings on health, nutrition, hygiene, child development and citizenship. Since the pandemic, they have included new e-trainings on toys and plays to enable households to keep their children entertained at home, on food and home vegetable gardens to teach families about healthy foods and vegetable home garden planting, and on fighting against coronavirus misinformation and disinformation using reliable and trustworthy sources like the WHO and other national and regional health agencies. Over 13,000 people in Brazil have participated in the 'fight against coronavirus' e-training since the start of the pandemic. The mHealth application is available in Portuguese, Spanish, English, French and Haitian Creole languages and is also currently downloadable in Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Peru, with the content adapted to local realities in the different countries.

1.2 Muhammadiyah (Indonesia)

Established in 1912, Muhammadiyah is arguably one of the largest and most influential Islamic faith-based organisations in Indonesia and the world, with well over 29 million members in 2008. It currently has more than 130 universities, over 10,000 elementary and kindergarten schools and over 107 hospitals and 250 clinics, through which it provides educational and healthcare services to millions of people in Indonesia. Since the onset of the pandemic, Muhammadiyah has been supporting the federal government's response with its COVID-19 command centre, which is overseeing the organisation's pandemic healthcare response by responding to mild, moderate and severe cases of the disease in various parts of the country. They have supplied more than 500,000 items of personal protective equipment, including surgical-grade masks, hazmat suits, face shields, goggles, shoe covers and other equipment like ventilators and oxygen concentrators to their network of hospitals providing COVID-19 medical care, with support from international development agencies like the WHO and United States Agency for International Development. They are also supporting the prevention and control of the pandemic by working with other private companies like Unilever to train students and teachers about personal hygiene, provide hygiene kits (with hand sanitisers and reusable cloth masks), and build water and sanitation facilities in various communities that lack access to these amenities.

Indonesia has the world's largest Muslim population, estimated at 205 million in 2010, so Muhammadiyah as an Islamic FBO has played a pivotal role in shaping the public's perception of the pandemic, especially regarding contentious issues like vaccinations and funeral rites, by disseminating guidelines or fatwas regarding vaccination for COVID-19 prevention, religious worship in COVID-19 emergency conditions, Eid al-Fitr prayers, Arafah fasting, Eid al-Adha, etc. that are aligned with international and national public health measures/protocols on infection prevention and control (Pew Research Center 2010). Additionally, they are also

addressing the adverse socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 by providing foodstuffs and cash assistance such as business capital stimulus packages to families and small businesses in various districts and provinces of Indonesia.

1.3   Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement (Sri Lanka)

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement was founded in 1958 on Buddhist and Gandhian principles. Sarvodaya is an indigenous FBO that is addressing development challenges in Sri Lanka. They engage in a broad range of activities including educational training, disaster response and humanitarian relief, and conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and they have been instrumental to the progress made on various health, educational, sociocultural and economic development outcomes in Sri Lanka. Right from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sarvodaya – with 34 district centres and a presence in over 3,000 villages – offered all its residential and training centres to the Sri Lankan government to be used as quarantine facilities. They have also been actively working in close liaison with all relevant local, national and international stakeholders to plan, support and strengthen a "whole of society" response to the pandemic. For instance, thanks to this approach, the leadership and meaningful participation of women and girls in all decision-making has been critical to the success of the response.

In Sri Lanka, at least 70% of the population believe that religion plays an important role in their lives and society, hence religious and faith-based leaders are considered respected and trust-worthy sources of public health information (Poushter and Fetterolf 2019). Sarvodaya has leveraged this by working closely with global health authorities like the WHO, the Sri Lankan government and religious leaders in various communities across Sri Lanka to develop and disseminate risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) guidelines, especially for religious worship and other religious activities, to avoid or ameliorate further community spread and outbreaks of COVID-19. With these partners, they have also created and disseminated accurate and culturally appropriate general public information about COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment via television and radio broadcast media channels, print media and digital/social media platforms in the local languages of Sinhala, Tamil and English. This has been crucial to curtail the impact of (stigmatisation and discrimination from) misinformation and disinformation infodemics that are hampering the global and national response.

Sarvodaya has also been instrumental in distributing hygiene and economic relief packages to daily-wage workers and vulnerable and poverty-stricken communities with assistance from philanthropic donors.

2. Challenges and Opportunities

The challenges and opportunities highlighted below are a mix of anecdotal and global reflections to highlight the role and impact that FBOs could have if they are actively engaged in the response and management of the pandemic.

2.1 Funding and Partnerships

The resource mobilisation needed to address the health and socioeconomic impact of a pandemic is just as unprecedented as the pandemic itself, but regrettably, as of mid-June 2020, only 0.07% of funds channelled through the United Nations had reached local non-governmental organisations (including FBOs) responding to COVID-19 (Konyndyk, Saez and Warden 2020). FBOs like Sarvodaya, Muhammadiyah and Pastoral da Criança rely on the philanthropic benevolence of (charitably inclined and religious/faith-based) donors, volunteers and state partners to deliver the outputs and outcomes highlighted above, but huge funding gaps continue to hamper the execution of their programme goals and objectives. The pandemic offers an opportunity for private-sector entities in particular to plug resource gaps by increasing funding and partnerships with FBOs, and vice versa (Cheney 2021). For example, Unilever partnered with Muhammadiyah early on during the COVID-19 pandemic to upgrade water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in Indonesian boarding schools and to provide other hygiene kits necessary to maintain optimal hand and personal hygiene practices in various communities and districts.

FBOs are important gatekeepers that have built trust and reliable networks from decades of consistent engagements with local communities. Private organisations and national and international development agencies can leverage this instead of starting from scratch or reinventing the wheel when attempting to establish cordial working relationships in these communities. We hope to see more formal engagements between private funders, development agencies and FBOs during and after the pandemic (Lieberman 2020).

On the other hand, FBOs are mostly working in silos in the absence of partnerships with other local, national and international partners as they respond to the pandemic in various settings. There is likewise a general need for better accountability, transparency and coherence between FBOs operating in low-resource countries and regions and the specific need for a coordinated and systematic approach to resource mobilisation and collaboration for the epidemic/pandemic response between FBOs with a focus on strengthening community resilience, thereby avoiding competitive "me first" approaches. The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement is a leading voice and proponent of these kinds of collaborative "whole of society"

approaches that bring all relevant stakeholders together, working hand in glove for the betterment of the most vulnerable in Sri Lanka.

2.2 Risk Communication and Community Engagement

RCCE has not been optimal at global, regional and national levels for several (sometimes interconnected) reasons. One of them, as alluded to earlier, is a lack of early and/or consistent active consultations with faith-based actors by international and national public health agencies, especially in the absence of an emergency. There is also a general tendency for stakeholder engagement fatigue with faith-based actors to quickly set in after the imminent risks in a crisis are surmounted and countries are out of the woods. A recent report by the World Bank, assessing country readiness for COVID-19 vaccines in LMICs, revealed that only 27% of countries (as of mid-February 2021) had developed social mobilisation and public engagement strategies to encourage people to get vaccinated. Advocacy, community engagement, and risk and safety communication strategies are key in epidemic and pandemic crisis management to proactively combat misinformation and disinformation about health products like vaccines and to improve the confidence in, acceptance of and demand for these products (The World Bank 2021; Wouters et al. 2021). It is paramount that FBOs are intimately embedded in RCCE working groups/advisory committees within national public health ministries and international development or global health organisations from the early onset of infectious disease (crisis) management and response. There is also a need to optimise risk communication channels to ensure a trilateral two-way communication between religious/faith-based local communities, faith-based organisations and national health authorities (see Figure 1 below). This will help to quickly identify communication gaps and to rapidly counter or suppress misinformation and disinformation.
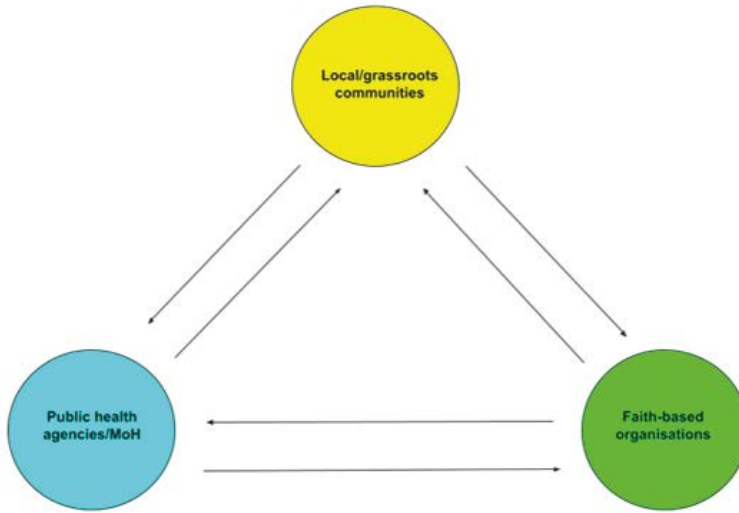
Figure 01   Trilateral two-way communication between local/grassroots communities, faith-based
organisations and public health agencies/Ministry of Health (MoH)

2.3   Vaccine Access Inequity

COVID-19 has laid bare the colossal disparities between the haves and haves-not
of the world. While many high-income countries were close to vaccinating half of
their vaccine-eligible adult populations by the middle of 2021, most economically
disadvantaged countries had not vaccinated even 20% of their populations within
that same timeline. WHO's Director General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus,
has called this vaccine inequity "a catastrophic moral failure" and has said that the
gap in vaccine access and distribution between the rich and poor is "becoming more
grotesque every day". The COVAX facility, a WHO-led joint global sharing initiative
with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness
Initiative, aims to provide 2 billion doses of vaccine to the most vulnerable in
LMICs by the end of 2021. As at the time of writing, COVAX had only delivered
29 million doses of vaccines to 46 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America
(Human Vaccines Project n.d.).

The sheer scale and speed of vaccinations required to achieve herd immunity
in low-resource settings means that these countries cannot rely only on existing
(or sometimes even non-existent) national or international development infras-
tructure and mechanisms. There is an urgent need and opportunity to leverage the
integrated network of volunteers, health personnel and infrastructural assets of

FBOs across LMICs to expedite vaccine access and delivery in hard-to-reach areas and underserved communities in developing countries (Wilkinson and Marshall 2021).

3. Recommendations and Conclusion

To conclude, we would like to propose some recommendations for actionable changes:

– Multilateral and intergovernmental global (health) governance fora/organisations like the United Nations, G20, World Bank and Global Fund must allocate more funding to FBOs working in LMICs to accelerate the impact of their pandemic interventions in low-resource settings.

– Private-sector funders and partners must explore more funding and partnership opportunities with mission-driven FBOs that align with their values and/or corporate social responsibilities, barring any conflict(s) of interest that may arise after proper due diligence and risk–benefit assessments of such engagements.

– FBOs must institute and strengthen accountable and transparent mechanisms that will enable them to generate and disseminate evidence-based faith-centred data to support the impact of their engagements in vulnerable communities. The Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities has a monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning hub that is supporting FBOs with best practices to achieve this.

– FBOs must foster and advocate for more local, national and global inter-faith and intra-faith collaborations and partnerships that strengthen coherent COVID-19 responses across all development actors.

Global public health authorities and international development actors around the world have had many opportunities in the last few decades to significantly elevate and prioritise the inevitable role that FBOs play in the timely and successful management of and response to infectious disease outbreaks or epidemics, and more broadly their role and impact in achieving the SDGs. The COVID-19 pandemic is another time of reckoning to go beyond rhetoric and implement long-lasting reforms and actions that would keep the world healthier and safer for all, especially for religious and faith-based communities in low-resource settings.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this policy and practice paper are primarily those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the policy or views of their affiliated institutions.

Acknowledgments

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Book Reviews

Corrie DECKER/Elisabeth MCMAHON, The Idea of Development in Africa. A History. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2021. Pp. 333. Paperback: $22.99, ISBN 9781107503229.

The title is the first hint that *The Idea of Development in Africa* by American historians Corrie Decker and Elisabeth McMahon is a book of significance. As readers familiar with African studies will recognise and the authors explain, it is a nod to Congolese philosopher V. Y. Mudimbe's *The Idea of Africa*. In that seminal book, Mudimbe made the case that the very idea of Africa is rooted in Western thinking, where Africa is "a paradigm of difference" and constructed as Europe's "own negated double". In *The Idea of Development in Africa,* Decker and McMahon see the idea of "development" as rooted in Western thinking – even if it has been shaped by Africans as well – and they see Mudimbe's "idea of Africa" and what they call "the development episteme" as inherent to each other.

The development episteme is the core idea of the book. It "refers to the knowledge system that claims there are real, measurable differences in 'development' between nations, societies, or social groups" (p. 3). By providing an overview of its historical foundations and how it gave shape to "the idea of development", Decker and McMahon aim "to engage readers in a conversation about how and why international development efforts in Africa have historically had ambiguous results, and why we need to challenge the basic assumption underlying our contemporary idea of development" (p. 3).

The Idea of Development in Africa features twelve chapters, which are organised into three parts, as well as an introduction and an epilogue. The development episteme is introduced starting in the introduction, and the three parts focus on its origins, implementation and selected areas of intervention. Correspondingly, development is used in three different, but interrelated, ways: referring to the creation of knowledge about Africa, specific policies and practices imposed in Africa, and a discourse of power inflicted on Africa, mainly by people who are not themselves African. The epilogue draws on African scholarship to make a case for the decolonisation of development.

The broad understanding of development outlined in Part I provides context and nuance to the prevailing view that development emerged after the Second World War. Linking the idea of development to ideas such as progress, capitalism and race reveals linkages and parallels between imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism and development as ideas and practices.

Part II examines development policies and practices. The first three chapters present a history of state-led development and public welfare in colonial and postcolonial Africa up until the 1980s. The fourth chapter, Chapter 8, "examines the shift in nongovernmental interventions in Africa's development from the civilizing mission of the late nineteenth century to the 'NGOization' of African development

in the twenty-first" (p. 165). While a vibrant civil society is generally seen as a sign of a working democracy, Decker and McMahon point out that "the assumption in such a statement is that civil society consists primarily of citizens" (p. 177). Yet, they argue, "the majority of the organizations, institutions, and people that have comprised 'civil society' in African countries originated in the west; they were not citizens of African countries. Even where citizens, locally owned businesses, and national or community-based religious organizations have actively participated … one often discovers the overwhelming influence of foreign financing and directives" (p. 177). This is compelling, but I am left wondering how African religious communities' welfare and development practices fit into the picture. Overall, I suspect that readers of *Religion & Development* will find Chapter 8 particularly useful to think with and against.

Part III features chapters on housing, education, health and industrialisation. The chapters show how development practice tends to be premised on foreign knowledge and fails to consider the knowledge, experience, culture and viewpoints of those it impacts. The four chapters skilfully put historical and contemporary examples in dialogue, revealing long lines, but leaving little space for details. In Chapter 12, the best examples in this part of the book illustrate how "African industrialization and economic development does not always (and does not have to) look like western modernity" (p. 253). African agency comes to the fore, and *The Idea of Development in Africa* moves beyond critique of development to show what decolonising development can mean in practice.

A more critical review could have argued that the book kicks in some open doors. The long view of development espoused, for example, has a predecessor in historians and development scholars Michael P. Cowen and Robert W. Shenton's 'The Invention of Development' (whose title, incidentally, evokes the title of the better known prequel to *The Idea of Africa*, *The Invention of Africa*). It could have been critical of the implicit binary between "African" and "Western" featuring throughout the book – and this review. (Chapter 4 touches on this, but it is left unresolved.) Furthermore, the book has more to say about anglophone and francophone Africa than other parts of the continent, and some examples seem more relevant to Decker and McMahon's American context than to development or Africa. However, none of these critiques change how *The Idea of Development in Africa* is a timely and thorough history of development in Africa that deserves the readership it can get.

The Idea of Development in Africa will be excellent as reading in courses in development studies and African studies, especially on advanced levels, where the whole book or selected chapters can be paired with in-depth case studies to challenge students to consider the long lines of history. It should be read by development practitioners who want to understand decolonisation, and perhaps even more by those who do not. It will give those caught up in the jargon of development goals and other development fads space to reflect on the configurations of knowledge

and power underlying their work, the history of these configurations, and what alternatives might look like.

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Séverine Deneulin, Human Development and the Catholic Social Tradition. Towards an Integral Ecology. Routledge: Abingdon 2021. Pp. 118. Hardback: £35.99, ISBN 9780367639617.

This short book serves to relate Amartya Sen's thinking on development to Catholic social teaching. The author is well equipped to do this, having completed a doctorate in development studies on Sen, and has also long studied Catholic theology since the Second Vatican Council 1962–1965. The book is an admirable introduction to both partners in the dialogue. Sen's approach through "capabilities", although of wider application, is particularly fruitful for development. Catholic social teaching (CST) is the name given to the evolving papal tradition on social economic and justice issues since Pope Leo XIII in 1891, with recent milestones *On the Progress of Peoples* (1967), *On Social Concerns* (1987), *Charity in Truth* (2009) and culminating (if that is not too definitive a word for a work still in progress) with the encyclicals of Pope Francis *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (2015) and *Fratelli Tutti: Brothers and Sisters All* (2020), with added reflections from the 2019 Synod of Bishops on the Amazon (and this book privileges considerations from the Amazon basin).

The book follows a simple structure: chapter one examines the concept and meaning of development, the second the understanding of being human underlying different concepts of development, the third practical ways forward; a conclusion relates the preceding discussion to the 2020 Human Development Report. Each chapter follows the same structure: firstly outlining Sen's thinking on the issue, then the relevant CST (alert to what CST might add), and finally noting differences.

The first chapter discusses Sen's capability approach in some depth. Sen is a dominant force in the move away from per capita GDP as the only measure of development. He added considerations of what people are "able to be and do", that is, their "capabilities", closely linked to their "functionings" or their concrete "beings" and "doings" such as enjoying good health, participating in the community, eating adequately, deciding for oneself, interacting with others and so on. These additional elements should also be factored in in determining human flourishing, with special attention paid to the condition of the marginalised. Of course, different peoples value "flourishing" differently, which makes evaluation even more open-ended. This is where CST can introduce the notion of "integral human development",

introducing the element of interiority or spirituality as necessary for a full human existence, as also love; and Pope Francis has extended this love to the non-human creation, thus introducing considerations of the ecosystem. This serves to anchor Sen, to focus his open-endedness. The chapter ends by noting the lack of attention CST pays to gender inequality, an area in which it could learn from Sen.

The second chapter on what is meant by living a human life argues that Sen is not guilty of the charge of excessive individualism, for his position is "fundamentally relational"; that is, people flourish together, by speaking, listening, empathising, reasoning with others, and consequently being open to self-criticism. CST adds the idea of relating not just to other humans but to the world around us, animals and plants, thus preserving nature for future generations, by for example a low-carbon lifestyle. CST is also more aware that human freedoms can be misdirected to the detriment of the common good. However, CST rather slides over the fact that gender inequality often means that women disproportionally suffer in areas of ecological deterioration.

The third chapter on practical activities that might follow from the preceding reflections considers some critiques of Sen, especially his optimistic assessment of the process of public reasoning and (closely related) power imbalances. It's all very well to talk of "the public (as) the agent of change", but one must be realistic. In a revealing aside, Deneulin cites Sen in a question and answer session admitting that the American election of 2016 and the UK Brexit referendum were "not examples of 'good' public reasoning processes". Indeed Deneulin seems to admit that Sen pays insufficient attention to the power of social media and the markets. CST perhaps can contribute here its emphasis on institutions, systems and structures, and moreover its stress on the common good, its "option for the poor", and the need for "change of heart". Where Sen could fertilise CST is this emphasis on public reasoning, for Catholicism is far from transparent in its discernment processes and remiss in its "listening as governance".

The conclusion relates previous material to the UNDP's 30th Human Development Report in 2020 which adds "people's interaction with nature" to its previous criteria of GDP, educational levels and life expectancy. It proposes an experimental index, the "Planetary Pressures-adjusted HDI", which adjusts the HDI according to a country's per capita carbon footprint. The new rethought HDI seems to have come round to restoring the balance between human and earth systems which the CST has advocated (does Deneulin on p. 97 half-suggest that Pope Francis had some influence on UNEP's head Achim Steiner?), and the book ends by suggesting that secular and at least this faith-based perspective are moving in the same direction.

The book is a remarkable introduction to both Sen and CST and, in comparing and contrasting, Deneulin raises many stimulating points. The book is logically structured and jargon free, and Deneulin is a skilful and easily comprehensible guide

through sometimes quite profound reflections.   he book is a worthy contribution
to reflection on the role of religion in comprehensive development.

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