Towards an Integral Mission

Towards a Theology of Social Change and Development

by Todd Pokrifka

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I must begin with a couple of stories. Though fictional, these true-to-life vignettes illustrate the need for a theology of social change and development.

A family living in rural Laos was lifted out of extreme poverty when a Christian non-profit organization gave them a small loan and helped them to sell their products to a wider market. But the father began to use the newfound extra funds to buy alcohol. This eventually led him to violence, created tensions in his family, and ruined his ability to sustain the business. The Christian NGO believed their loan would bring "the fullness of the kingdom," but did it?

A young couple moved to a large city in Northern India. They were passionately committed to seeing a movement to Jesus in a particular unreached group that has a large presence in an urban slum where they live. As they arrived and began to learn the language, they became aware of how poverty and environmental deprivation were having great impact on the people they served. Yet they intentionally pursued discipleship in ways that didn't specifically address these issues. In their view, mission work was exclusively a spiritual matter concerned with preparing people for the next life. However, when one of the main emerging leaders died at the young age of 45 due to complications from a preventable virus, they began to reconsider the nature of their ministry. Perhaps alleviating poverty and promoting good health was a part of their calling after all.

Stories like these—and there are potentially thousands more—illustrate the challenge of understanding both social change and development in a way that is sound and wise, biblically-based and experientially-attuned.

The Kingdom of God: Some Big Questions

These common predicaments are prompting mission agencies to reconsider their theology of social change and development. In the organization in which I serve, we have a vision statement that beautifully proclaims our desired

future: *Movements to Jesus expressing the fullness of the kingdom of God among all peoples.* But what *is* the "fullness of the kingdom of God"? To what extent can and should we participate in bringing about this fullness of the kingdom? Is it something only God can do? What would it mean for a movement to Jesus to express the fullness of the kingdom of God? Answering such questions are foundational for a theology of development that is both scripturally-grounded and relevant to contemporary missional practice.

To ask what the fullness of the kingdom is, requires that we have a solid understanding of what the kingdom of God is. One can hardly overstate how important this theme is in Scripture. If the kingdom was Jesus' favorite topic and theme, then should it not be a central priority in our reflections? Yet traditional systematic and doctrinal theology has done little with the kingdom of God theme, and this has been to the detriment of the church and its mission.

The primary meaning of the kingdom of God in the Gospels, as G. E. Ladd emphasized,[1] is the "reign of God." It is primarily about how, through Jesus Christ, the Creator God who is the God of Israel has become king on earth.[2] Only secondarily is the kingdom a place, such as the place we go (i.e., "heaven") in the afterlife. But questions persist:

- How does God's kingdom—and the fullness of the kingdom—relate to social transformation and to the human work of development?

- How does the kingdom of God bear on the spiritual and material aspects of human life? How do these aspects relate to one another?

- What are the most effective means of sustainable, positive social change? Scripture says little; we need to consult best practices.

Part 1: An Initial Response to the Questions
A Key Distinction: The Core and the Fullness of the Kingdom

One basic theological distinction that we can make, based on the overall biblical witness and story, is between the core of the kingdom and the fullness of the kingdom. This distinction is not made based on explicit biblical terminology, but rather on themes and emphases found in the way Scripture describes God's kingdom, understood in dialogue with historical and contemporary missional practice.

- The *core of the kingdom* is primarily the spiritual and relational expression of God's Christ-centered reign, focused on people coming into right relationship with God, with one another and with the world. This "core" or "center" is the main emphasis of Jesus' teaching on the kingdom, and it addresses how God's people may participate in it. (Kingdom core can be pictured as the smaller of two concentric circles.)

- The *fullness of the kingdom* is the comprehensive expression of God's reign in all creation, overcoming all evil and undoing every cause of suffering, spiritually, materially, and ecologically. This fullness is a fulfillment of God's penultimate goals in the created universe, which serve the ultimate goal of bringing him glory. (Kingdom fullness can be pictured as the larger of two concentric circles, a circle that includes the full scope of God's kingdom purposes within it.)

The Relationship between the Core and Fullness of the Kingdom

I wish to make the following claim about the relationship between the core and fullness of the kingdom: *The fullness of the kingdom cannot come in a society until the life-giving core of the kingdom has been established and continues to thrive in it.* We can understand this relationship with the help of an analogy. Imagine a spring of water that is the source of water and life for an entire society. A host of good things come from and depend on that water source. Yet if the spring dries up those good things fade away, sometimes quickly and sometimes over a much longer period of time. Some aspects of kingdom flourishing (say, a wise and healthy government or legal system) may remain present when core kingdom elements (say, multiplying gospel movements) have long since disappeared. Yet the fullness of the kingdom is not present unless there is a comprehensive expression of the kingdom of God that includes every major area of life.

"Development" as Human Participation in God's Bringing of Kingdom Fullness

In a biblical understanding of the kingdom of God, God is the only one who can bring or build the kingdom, but God chooses to rule in, with and through his people. Community and international development work can be understood as intentional human work that seeks to move broken human societies, especially the most poor and vulnerable ones, into a state of greater overall well-being or *shalom.*[3] Such development work is an expression of human participation in God's kingdom work. Insofar as development work is corrupt or faithless, it is a human or even demonic work, but insofar as it is God-honoring and virtuous work, it can be ascribed to God or to God's empowerment.

Development is rightly understood as holistic, comprehensive and systemic in character. Rather than reducing development work to its economic or material dimensions, these dimensions represent only parts of the fullness of the kingdom in a community or society.[4] The various aspects of development—addressing different fundamental human and creational relationships, freedoms and needs—are interconnected and interdependent aspects of God's solution to the problems of fallen creation. When a problem in one part of life is

addressed or not addressed, it has an effect on other parts of life and their problems. In particular, the material aspects of fullness cannot be adequately achieved or sustained without addressing the core aspects of the kingdom involving right relation to God, the king.

Life and Development Between the Present and Future Kingdom

The kingdom or reign of God is expressed in varying ways in different periods of the history of the world as well as in the history of different societies and communities. In the largest scope of universal, world history, Scripture shows that we currently live in an epoch between the initial inauguration of the kingdom of God (or kingdom of heaven) in Jesus' first coming and the final perfection of the kingdom in his second coming. For this epoch or age, then, the kingdom is both already present and also not yet full or complete. In different ways, God's reign is both now and not yet. This perspective avoids triumphalism (because we know that much is not yet fulfilled) and pessimism (because the kingdom and access to its resources is already a reality). Societies exist on a "development continuum" based on their level of progress toward the fullness of the kingdom.

PART II: Six Theses for a Theology of Social Change and Development

With the above foundational categories and convictions in mind, I wish to propose six theses that outline dimensions of a theology of social change and development. These theses do not represent a comprehensive perspective, but focus on the relationship between the "material" and "spiritual" aspects of the kingdom. This relationship is key to answering the theological question: "How does the fullness of the kingdom relate to social change and development?" These theses offered are based on my understanding of both a biblical theology of the kingdom of God and empirical evidence gathered from history and recent case studies.

Before I state the first thesis, I want to comment on my use of the potentially controversial terms "material" and "spiritual" as aspects of the kingdom. These terms are imperfect, but are familiar and popular enough to warrant using them. I use the terms in ways that undermine some of the dualistic assumptions with which they are often associated, as aspects of God's interconnected, relationally-constituted creation. This is in contrast to how they have sometimes been understood in dualistic worldviews in the West and elsewhere as entirely distinct, watertight domains of reality. The spiritual aspects of God's creation and kingdom generally relate more closely to the core of the kingdom, whereas the material aspects relate more to the fullness of the kingdom.

Thesis 1: Spiritual and material well-being are both deeply important to God.

To deny the importance of either spiritual or material well-being is an unbiblical dualism. Such dualism has often plagued the Western World, sometimes prioritizing the spiritual (in the pre-modern world) or sometimes the material (in the modern, especially the post-Enlightenment, world) in ways that excluded or diminished the other. Both are essential parts of God's kingdom: the spiritual, concerned with the activities and relationships of spiritual beings (God, humans, angels, and the like), and the material, concerned with physical beings and objects. The future "new heavens" and "new earth" will involve the perfection of both spiritual and material beings as well as a close and harmonious relationship between them. Humanity is a union of the spiritual and material; we are both spiritual and material beings. Accordingly, the incarnation of Jesus Christ indicates God's willingness to step into the spiritual and material aspects of his creation. As the Word becomes flesh (John 1:14), he takes human nature upon himself, including its embodied qualities. Sin and evil have deeply corrupted both the spiritual and material aspects of creation and, therefore, God's Christ-centered work of redemption, his recovery and pursuit of *shalom* or well-being, encompasses both.

> # We should not feed the hungry or develop affordable housing *simply* in order to lead more people to Christ or to disciple them more effectively.

Because the spiritual and material well-being are both deeply important to God, we cannot reduce one kind of well-being to the other. They are distinct goods. Neither spiritual nor material well-being should be treated instrumentally as a mere means to the other. This means that we should not feed the hungry or develop affordable housing *simply* in order to lead more people to Christ or to disciple them more effectively. Neither should we lead people to faith in God *simply* because faith makes people more resilient and thus more upwardly mobile.[5]

In his time on earth, Jesus demonstrated a holistic ministry in which the spiritual and material were important and interwoven.[6] Preaching, focusing primarily on spiritual needs, went hand in hand with demonstrating the gospel of the kingdom in ways that often focused on addressing material needs (healing, doing miracles that benefited

the poor like the multiplication of food, and so on). Jesus ministered in words and works. Luke tells us, quoting Isaiah, that the kingdom was "good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18; Isa. 61:1) and good exegesis shows that this is not merely spiritual poverty, although Matthew highlights this aspect in his beatitudes ("Blessed are the poor in spirit" in Matt. 5:3). The kingdom is not merely spiritual or concerned solely with the spiritual, and his healing and feeding miracles were never absent of spiritual aspects or meanings. Jesus' signs and wonders involved both healing bodies of sickness and delivering people from spiritual darkness and oppression.

Jesus' earthly ministry is important not merely as a testimony to his marvelous character and ways, but truly as model for us, demonstrating what it looks like for a human to partner with God in the Spirit. We have the same Spirit who calls and empowers for both spiritual and material service and redemption. Our particular forms and approaches to ministry will be different from what Jesus needed to do in first century Palestine as the unique God-man with a unique mission, but the importance of both material and spiritual well-being to God should be a consistent feature of our ministries. It expresses the constant character and revealed values of God.[7]

Conversely, the material can often affect the spiritual. For example, people who die young due to material deprivation have significantly less opportunity to hear the good news and receive the gift of eternal life.[10]

An admirable articulation of this integration and interrelatedness thesis (my Thesis 2) is "The Micah Declaration on Integral Mission," which focuses on the integration of evangelism and social involvement:

> Integral mission or holistic transformation is the *proclamation and demonstration* of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our *proclamation has social consequences* as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our *social involvement has evangelistic consequences* as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ.[11] (emphasis mine)

The early church was an example of this symbiosis of what I earlier called kingdom core and kingdom fullness. From Acts through the early fourth century, early Christianity is marked by a series of rapidly-multiplying Jesus movements, with conversions often growing at a rate of 30–40% per decade.[12] This is at the heart of the largely "spiritual" core of the kingdom

Early Christian care for the poor and sick, at least in cities, took on proportions that were unprecedented in the Greco-Roman world.

Thesis 2: Spiritual and material well-being are integrated and interconnected.

To deny the integration of spiritual and material well-being is another aspect of the dualistic error. Not only are the spiritual and material both important (Thesis 1), but they are interconnected with one another. Although tracing causation is difficult, it is clear that a change in one often affects the other. This is particularly obvious in human life. On an individual level, humans are created and saved by God as spiritual-material unities.[8] As such, a change in the (material) body (say, having too much or too little food or having an injury to one's brain) can affect the spiritual (including one's ability to live a virtuous life or one's level of spiritual hunger) and a change in the spiritual (say, healing prayer) can affect the body (physical healing).

This mutual integration is also evident in the social or corporate lives of humans. The spiritual can affect the material, as when conversion of an individual or group gives them a motivating hope of a better overall life and as a result empowers people to be more economically successful and upwardly mobile.[9]

and its advance in this time. This kingdom core naturally grew into kingdom fullness that brought about growth in material well-being for Christians and non-Christians alike. Early Christian care for the poor and sick, at least in cities, took on proportions that were unprecedented in the Greco-Roman world. This led to Christians having a good reputation for care of the vulnerable, which seemed to lead to more conversions.[13] They first cared for "their own" in extraordinary ways (e.g., Acts 4:32ff), but as they grew in social power and influence, their care reached into the surrounding community—through extensive church care for the needy.

Thesis 3: Spiritual well-being has priority over material well-being; the spiritual is central.

Despite what I have said in the first two theses, Scripture presents the ultimate priority of the eternal, spiritual aspects of the kingdom over its temporal, material aspects.[14] In a fallen and incomplete world, we must sometimes choose to prioritize the spiritual over the material, even though the material remains important in God's purposes.[15] To say otherwise contradicts the testimony of Scripture and post-biblical history. Consider the words of Jesus and Paul and the

legacy of many "martyrs." Jesus asks poignantly: "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world but forfeits his soul?" (Matt. 15:26).[16] Paul reasons, "If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Cor. 15:19; cf. 17–18, 33). The human soul has a worth that transcends what this world can offer, and there is a more valuable life that transcends "this life." From the first century on, countless witnesses have suffered and died for their faith, knowing that such physical suffering and death was not in vain.

I realize that there is a danger in affirming this third thesis, since it might appear as if I am denying the sufficient importance of the material (against Thesis 1) or denying the symbiotic integration between the material and spiritual (against Thesis 2). But one can affirm a kind of priority for the "spiritual" or, better, a priority for what I have called the relational "core of the kingdom," without denying or undercutting the truth of these earlier theses. For example, I want to affirm with the Micah declaration that "The struggle against injustice is spiritual"—and that such injustice often degrades the material well-being that God is working to maintain or develop.[17] In addition, we can affirm the "priority of the spiritual" without denying that material well-being is both important and eternal. Instead, we forward look to a renewed earth and to resurrection bodies, not to a disembodied, immaterial heaven. With Howard Snyder, we affirm that redemption is holistic and "salvation means creation healed."[18] Yet we sometimes need to prioritize the "spiritual"—including suffering material loss in this life—in order to be faithful to Jesus Christ as Lord and to participate rightly in the eternal, comprehensive purposes of God for all creation.

Again, Jesus' earthly ministry gives us an example of integral, holistic mission that nonetheless has a kind of priority on the spiritual core of the kingdom and the gospel of the kingdom. For example, Jesus demonstrates concern for the poor, but does not initiate a program of structural social change in the wider Roman society in which he lived.[19] While his ministry and perspective do clash with both Caesar and the Pharisees and Sadducees,[20] he does not overthrow the Roman Empire, nor does he press for a take-over of the religious leadership of Israel. Instead, he focuses on discipling twelve Jews and, through them, founding a new spiritual-religious community that would multiply and become a movement. Why? What does this focus imply? It *does not mean* that Jesus simply rejects the value of structural social change. Rather, we must understand that Jesus was in a setting in which he and his disciples were relatively politically powerless and in which the political options were limited and undemocratic.[21] Systemic social change as an aspect of the fullness of the kingdom could (and sometimes would) come later with a "critical mass" of believers and with some of them obtaining significant positions of social power and influence.

Instead, the spiritual-relational focus of Jesus does mean that he found much fruitful kingdom work to do without emphasizing wider structural social change or advocacy that directly challenged the Roman empire.[22] Accordingly, it is often true today, especially in less-reached contexts or politically restrictive contexts, that it is entirely appropriate to focus primarily on the core matters of the kingdom, on discipleship and of proclamation of the offer of eternal salvation, without giving great attention to establishing material well-being. Jesus' situation in founding a new movement is somewhat similar to the situation of believers in vulnerable, frontier situations in which right relationship with God must be prioritized and where seeking systematic and holistic well-being in the overall society is still relatively unrealistic as an immediate goal.

> ## It is often true, especially in less-reached contexts, that it is entirely appropriate to focus primarily on the core matters of the kingdom without giving great attention to establishing material well-being.

In missiological language, how can we best express the insight that the core dimensions of the kingdom have priority? In *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement,* both the course and its Reader, we find the helpful conceptions of frontier missions vs. regular missions and other related concepts. Unlike the typical work patterns in churches and mission agencies alike, we should prioritize frontier missions, especially in frontier situations, without denying the validity of regular missions. We may unpack this in more detail as follows:

- *Frontier Missions* seeks *missiological breakthrough,* the "essential missionary task,"[23] among unreached or "hidden" or neglected peoples.[24] This involves prioritizing the largely spiritual core of the kingdom through evangelizing, making disciples, planting churches (groups of Jesus' followers), and fostering multiplying movements to Jesus.

- *Regular Missions* seeks *the fullness of the kingdom* in already "reached" peoples. This happens in diverse ways through ongoing expansion of discipleship and holistic community development. After a people or a community experience missiological breakthrough, "the beginning of all that God intends to do,"[25] the missional task remains unfinished.[26] The missional task to glorify God through ongoing evangelism, discipleship, and transformation of culture and society goes on until Jesus returns. This corresponds to how the Great Commission includes Jesus' call to teach disciples to "obey everything that I have commanded" (Matt. 28:19).[27]

- Frontier and regular mission tasks can and should flow together and interrelate fruitfully (Thesis 2), but have different and complementary kingdom foci. Frontier missions should generally be prioritized as the initial focus of kingdom work and regular missions should not become a significant focus (in the overall work of Christians among a people or in a place) unless frontier missions has already been the main focus in a particular people or place. Yet frontier missions should not be conducted in ways that neglect the ongoing push towards the fullness of the kingdom among all people and in all places.

Thesis 4: Spiritual flourishing often accelerates material flourishing, but not automatically.

Spiritual flourishing—especially in settings of revival or multiplying Jesus movements—generally accelerates social change towards greater material well-being. All things being equal, redemption naturally tends toward material "lift." This "redemption and lift" was stated in a classic form by missiologist Donald McGavran in his writings on church growth.[28] The biblical basis for this thesis can be summed up like this: the fundamental roots of poverty and social ills are often due to sin and the roots of material flourishing are due to spiritual and relational uprightness and renewal (e.g., Gen. 3, Lev. 26, Deut. 28; 3 John 1:2). Historical evidence, including the growth of positive social institutions in the West after the Reformation and the increased well-being of Dalits in India after their turn to Christian faith, also point in this direction.[29] Empirical data also indicates that a lack of spiritual flourishing, either in the past or the present state of a society, is generally correlated with a lack of material flourishing, as evident in data modeling concerning the "unreached" and various social and material ills.[30]

Yet, the "material lift" of an individual, community or society following "spiritual lift" in Christ is not automatic. Various factors inhibit this dynamic of "lift," including:

- Lack of adequate integrative theology and theological ethics and a related lack of repentance regarding social evils.[31]
- Evangelism without discipleship or Christian formation that addresses social evils.[32]
- The majority of those who have become Christians do not have adequate social power among "elites."[33]
- States and societies actively persecute Christians or resist values that make for greater prosperity among believers (e.g., in parts of China today).

Some historical examples of spiritual flourishing accelerating material flourishing are found in the history of European Continental Protestantism, namely, in the Moravians and other German Pietists in the early eighteenth century. Early German pietists built orphanages, cared for the poor (including widows) and sick (including building hospitals) and promoted universal education (emphasizing schools for the poor and lower classes/castes)—all while still emphasizing the need for personal new birth and holiness.[34] In 1701, August H. Francke defined the goal of the Pietist renewal movement as the "concrete improvement of all walks of life, in Germany, Europe, in all parts of the world."[35] Accordingly, the early Pietist and Lutheran missionary to India, Bartolomaeus Ziegenbalg, declared that the "service of souls" and the "service of bodies" were "interdependent and that no ministry to souls could remain without an "exterior" side.[36] The Moravians experienced spiritual revival marked by extraordinary unity, prayer, and mission (local and global). This spiritual renewal was correlated with, and seemed to lead to, their mission efforts which included an early form of "business as mission" and an emphasis on education. The presence of social elites among both groups (e.g., Franke, the royal Frederick III or Elector of Brandenburg [later known as Frederick I, Duke of Prussia], and Count Zinzendorff of the Moravians) seems to have allowed for greater social change in the first half of the 1700s, in keeping with James Hunter's compelling argument about the need for elite involvement in pervasive social change, although such elite involvement within the Pietist movement either did not last or became conflated with a corrupt Colonialism.[37]

Want a blossoming democracy today? The solution is simple— if you have a time machine: Send a 19th-century missionary. —Andrea Dilley

A further example of how spiritual flourishing often accelerates material flourishing is found in modern Protestant missions in the nineteenth century which tended to establish a greater material well-being in many nations, including the foundations of democratic culture in those nations. In a summary of Robert Woodbury's extensive research on this topic, Andrea Palpant Dilley writes:

> Areas where Protestant missionaries had a significant presence in the past are on average more economically developed today, with comparatively better health, lower infant mortality, lower corruption, greater literacy, higher educational attainment (especially for women), and more robust membership in nongovernmental associations. In short: Want a blossoming democracy today? The solution is simple—if you have a time machine: Send a 19th-century missionary.[38]

Interestingly, the positive social gains of such Protestant missionary work did not come primarily because such missionaries were focused on social uplift or transformation.

"Conversionary Protestants" of the nineteenth century focused on evangelism, yet also "came at social reforms through the back door. That said, they were often critical of colonialism and promoted universal literacy and education, which made democratic movements possible." Again, "Most of the early nationalists who led their countries to independence graduated from Protestant mission schools."[39]

More recent social-scientific studies of communities in the Global South also confirm Thesis 4. One is a notable study by Yale researchers on faith and income among poor communities in the Philippines.[40] A randomized controlled trial of a Christian development agency in the Philippines found that very poor people earned significantly more money—9.2% more—as a result of receiving religious instruction. The study of two Yale professors (one an agnostic Jew and one an evangelical Christian) and an atheist from the London School of Economics, compared results between two groups over four months: one group received non-religious health and livelihood instruction only and the other group received that instruction plus instruction in Christian values. Why these results? The authors of the study believe that these results come down to two things: the power of Christian values/virtues of optimism (or hope) and grit (or perseverance).

To conclude this section, we can return to Richard Lovelace's instructive treatment of "the spiritual roots of social concern." He ably defends these two "balancing" claims based on historical analysis:

- *We need revival:* "No deep and lasting social change can be effected by Christians without a general spiritual awakening of the church."[41] Because the roots of material poverty or other material ills are so often spiritual and relational, spiritual renewal or awakening is a great need.

- *Revival needs to be complete:* "Evangelicals must stress more than evangelism and church growth if they are to duplicate the social triumphs of earlier periods."[42] The triumphs to which Lovelace refers include the abolition and anti-poverty efforts following from the First and Second Great Awakenings. While revival stressing evangelism and church growth may have some wider social effects, more conscious social efforts make the effects more extensive and lasting. The same can be said on an individual level: conversion must be complete, being marked by biblical transformation to a lifestyle of justice.[43]

Thesis 5: Material well-being often inhibits or erodes spiritual well-being.

Despite what we have seen above, especially in our treatment of Thesis 4, we also find that material well-being can easily lead to a decrease in spiritual well-being in the forms of idolatry,

forgetfulness of God, increased vice, and a breakdown of social and family relationships. That is, in the context of fallen humanity in a fallen world liable to Satan's influence, the very material blessings that often come from spiritual rebirth or renewal can also become an occasion for temptation that leads people away from God and his standards. We can speak of this as a *kingdom paradox:* The *fullness* of the kingdom ultimately includes material well-being,[44] yet this fruition can endanger the *core* of the kingdom! Further, when material prosperity leads people away from right relationship to God and one another, then people are liable to divine judgment, both temporal judgement and, without repentance, to ultimate, final judgment. Material well-being, despite being a gift from God, is spiritually dangerous to fallen people, even to redeemed people.[45]

Both Scripture and sociological research point to the spiritual dangers of material prosperity. Moses warned the Israelites not to forget the Lord and his laws once they were well fed and prosperous in the Promised Land (Deut. 8:11–20). Jesus warned his followers about the great difficulty of the rich entering the kingdom. In Sociology, these biblical warnings are confirmed by means of the widely known "secularization thesis" that modernization (including "rationalization" of social realities and "privatization" of religion) brings secularization, a social state in which religion progressively loses its authority, especially for public life.

John Wesley famously identified the dilemma that spiritual renewal leads to material prosperity which later leads to spiritual decline. He commented:

> I do not see how it is possible, in the nature of things, for any revival of religion to continue long. For religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so will pride, anger, and love of the world in all its branches.[46]

Christians reflecting on the overall social effects of Christian mission and development work are among those most concerned about the dangers of increasing material well-being without due attention to other aspects of human life or creation. For example, Donald McGavran, to whom I referred above (under Thesis 4), saw the phenomenon of "redemption and lift" as potentially undercutting Jesus movements. The reason is that when believers become more "upwardly mobile," partly through the gains produced by their faith,[47] they often leave the social group in which they grew up and forge relationships with a new wealthier social network, cutting off opportunities for the natural, relational spread of the gospel from them to those of their original group.[48] In the realm of Christian development work, David Bronkema points out that many development agencies are "flying blind," unaware of how their economic strategies

have "anti-shalomic" effects in other important areas of life.[49] For example, business initiatives that increase economic gain could break down relationships between families and between rural and urban communities, or could damage the environment or public health, or could increase the opportunity for temptation (e.g., when new money can be used to purchase alcohol).[50]

Certainly, material well-being is a great test of kingdom faithfulness. Whether or not contemporary societies, communities, or individuals will pass this test depends in large part on whether they will be intentional to "strengthen the kingdom core." If modern societies like the USA or South Korea were marked by an upsurge in holistic discipleship, then their material prosperity would not undercut the spiritual and relational well-being that is at the center of God's vision for human life. Wesley's wise solution to the problem of revival being short-lived (due to the growth of materialistic values and vices) emphasized thorough discipleship that included radical generosity (calling believers to give away as much as they can) and advocacy and action towards structural change in society, as in his rejection of slavery.[51]

Thesis 6: The fullness of the kingdom involves lasting, holistic well-being.

With this final thesis, we remember that God's ultimate desired purpose is holistic well-being. This means that, all things being equal, God desires not only spiritual flourishing, but material flourishing, which is the partial truth in the so called "prosperity gospel." This partial truth is protected from becoming error and heresy through a balanced biblical vision of holistic and sustainable *shalom*. In the end, such all-encompassing well-being is only possible through the work of God.

Sustainable, overall *shalom,* including and integrating both the spiritual and material, has already been significantly approximated in some peoples, cities, and societies. However, the fullness of God's kingdom of *shalom* and justice will only be completely realized on earth after the Second Coming when all peoples and communities will experience it. Yet, to work towards kingdom fullness now remains a worthy, God-honoring goal. If we do this work with the right mindset—one of participating in God's current work with hope for his ultimate completion of it—we can be freed from the "burden" of needing to "change the world." We will bring lasting change within the world, in small and partial ways, but only insofar as we participate in God's own great work of changing the world.

There is much scriptural support for "final social change," i.e., future eschatological change in this world. There is a glorious final future in store for this material world, not for a separate and disembodied "heaven." Our hope, which empowers and envisions our present action, includes many distinct dimensions of well-being:

- *All peoples in worship:* All nations, tribes, peoples, and languages will be at God's throne (Rev. 7:9–12).
- *Regime change:* "The kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord and Christ" (Rev. 11:15).
- *A restored and healed creation:* (Rom. 8:20–22.)
- *No more suffering, grief, or pain:* God will wipe every tear away (Rev. 21:4).
- *No more evil opposition:* Every enemy, including fallen Principalities and Powers, will be overcome (1 Cor. 15:24–26).
- *Ongoing human participation:* The saints are kings and priests and will reign with Christ (Dan. 7:18, 22, 27; Rev. 1:6; 5:10).
- *Summary:* A renewed creation in which heaven and earth are one and in which the kingdom has fully come in all creation.[52]

What are the implications of God's multifaceted, coming kingdom of *shalom* for missional practice? Without getting into concrete practical recommendations (this article is not the place for those), I believe that wise missiology leads to a revised understanding of "vocation" or "calling" that rightly frames our praxis. In particular, we can distinguish the *general calling* of all followers of and believers in Jesus and the diverse *specific callings* of individual believers.

- *Our general (shared) call as believers* is to make known the gospel of grace and to make disciples from all nations. This is the kingdom core, which shows us as the overall Body of Christ, where to start and what to prioritize. This general call is not without social implications (such as caring for the poor in love), but the Body of Christ is not primarily called (nor is every believer or church called) to "change the world" in the sense of bringing systemic or structural change. This reflects Jesus' ministry while in this world.
- *Our specific callings* as individual believers, based on our gifts and situation, involve different ways of extending the kingdom's fullness, above and beyond our general call to disciple and proclaim the gospel. According to their callings, most believers (except those called to "full time" ministry in the institutional church) will have opportunities to be a faithful presence in diverse institutional settings in the world. Some, especially those with access to elite-level social power and its networks, will be particularly called and equipped to bring lasting systemic change in society. More generally, the call to pursue the fullness of the kingdom reminds us that our job is never done, even where spiritual movements have appeared; even there, the complete fullness of the kingdom has not yet emerged.

Both of these callings, our general calling and our specific callings, depend on biblical hope. We obey these callings in the knowledge that only God can bring the kingdom and yet with the trust that we can partner with him in his unfailing, consummating work of new creation.

The Role of the Church in Holistic Mission and Social Change

We have now surveyed a series of theses that articulate a theology of social change and development. An important further question still remains, which is of both theoretical and practical import: what is the role of the church in the fulfillment of our callings and in the pursuit of holistic kingdom fullness? The church, understood minimally as fellowships of believers, is the "core community" of the kingdom and the people of God. It is unique among the various institutions and societal groups as the "living center" of God's presence and work in the world and as the beloved Bride who will one day be fully united to Christ in perfect love and worship. The church, especially in the form of local congregations, is thus the hermeneutic of the gospel which already expresses and interprets, albeit imperfectly, the relational union between heaven and earth, between God and creation, that will one day be complete in all creation. As such, it is a distinctive "community of hope" that witnesses to, anticipates, and stewards the coming kingdom.[53] To be faithful to its God-given calling, the church must be attentive primarily to the spiritual-relational core of the kingdom, while not forgetting the full scope of the kingdom's fullness.[54]
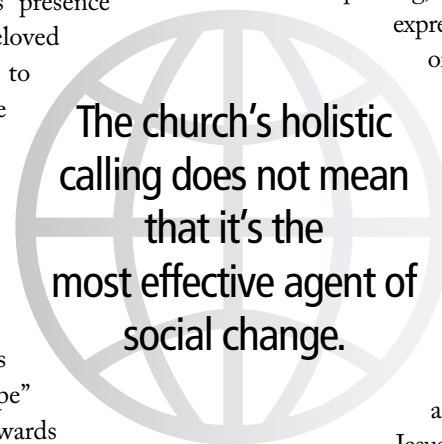
The church's holistic calling does not mean that the church—at least as understood as a set of institutional and local bodies—is always the most central or most effective agent of either community development or social change. It depends on what kind of change is in view. In a helpful clarification of the church's role in development, Richard Slimbach articulates that the institutional, local church is central and effective at spiritual, psychological and social (including interpersonal and intergroup) healing or change, but is generally ineffective (especially without collaboration with governmental and non-governmental institutions and their leaders) at institutional (structural) and ecological healing or change.[55] Slimbach here follows Abraham Kuyper and Tim Keller by distinguishing between the institutional, local church and the organic, universal church made up of all believers who live out their faith in all the spheres of society.[56]

A related point was made by Ralph Winter, namely, that the church should be understood broadly to include both "modalities," local churches and related denominations, and "sodalities," committed communities and agencies that carry out specialized aspects of God's mission in the world.[57] The church includes both modalities and sodalities, both parishes and orders. As Keller explains,

> A parish is a church that ministers to all kinds of people in one place. But an order ministers to a certain kind of people in all places… These institutions [specialized ministries or orders] must have a symbiotic relationship with each other and with [local] church congregations.[58]

To bring these two sets of terms together, we could say that the organic church formed by believers in society includes sodalities, organized sub-groups or networks of believers committed to specific aspects of God's global purposes. Broadly speaking, we may consider all of the above as diverse expressions of the church as the people of God or bride of Christ, which transcends the institutional local church alone. With the church defined broadly and universally to include both the organic church and its various sodalities (agencies or orders) then we can say with Johannes Reimer that the church is "community-centred" and that "community development is what she does in her mission" or that the "mission of the Church is discipling nations and teaching them to live according to what Jesus teaches."[59] If we considered the local church alone, we could not make such statements compellingly, and even if we were to do so, we must recognize that often sustainable social change requires extensive collaboration with non-church agencies and governments.[60]

In light of the above theology of social transformation, what kind of people are followers of Jesus called to be? We in the Christian community, the church, are called to "faithful presence" in the world.[61] We must be *faithful*, upholding a counter-cultural set of values. We must be *present* in the world, engaged with its problems and avoiding isolationism. We are individually called to be transformed agents of transformation[62] and "reflective activists" in God's work for God's glory. We need to reflect on the many questions that come up on the frontiers of mission and in the face of the vulnerabilities of creation. Yet we need to reflect in the context of action, not from an ivory tower or an armchair. We must be engaged in mission—in both word and deed, both in respect to kingdom core and in pursuit of kingdom fullness. Without reflection, our actions can fall into blind zeal. Without action, our reflection has no effect on the world that we are called to

> The church's holistic calling does not mean that it's the most effective agent of social change.

serve and love—in union with our God who loves the world (John 3:16). Both our reflection and action must be guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit, who alone can enable us to partner with God fruitfully in his mission in the world.

Conclusion: Revisiting Laos and India with the Question "What if?"

I conclude by returning to the hypothetical stories from Laos and India with which I began this article.

Story 1: Microenterprise in rural Laos: What if believers in that community worked together to combine economic development strategies with thorough discipleship and support of the father and the family, overcoming alcoholism and cultivating wise stewardship?

Story 2: Frontier Mission in Northern India: What if believers in that city worked together with one another and with other community leaders to build holistic development projects that would address both spiritual and material needs in harmony?

In situations like these, and in many more like them, may we embrace and encourage one another for our shared call to a kingdom core and to our special callings for kingdom fullness, unto God's eternal glory. **IJFM**

Endnotes

[1] See especially George Elden Ladd, *The Presence of the Future,* Revised Edition (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 2000).

[2] See N. T. Wright, *How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2011).

[3] The definition of transformational development provided by a team from Food for the Hungry is helpful: "Relief and Development work that promotes and facilitates mutual transformation to advance and accelerate measurable well-being improvements of the most vulnerable and the graduation of communities from extreme poverty" (Luis Noda et al, "God's Story: The Foundation for FHs Work in Relief and Development," *Food for the Hungry,* 2017, 38). By referring to "mutual transformation," they refer to God's transformation both of communities and of the development workers who serve them" (39). See also the definition of transformation found in the same document: "The Spirit-driven process of radical change in the behaviors, attitudes and worldviews of individuals, communities or cultures, towards living in healthy relationships with God, others and God's creation" (37).

[4] Bryant Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development,* Revised and Updated Edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), ch. 1 (sub-section on definitions; Kindle location 566): "I use the term transformational development to reflect my concern for seeking positive change in the whole of human life materially, socially, psychologically and spiritually. The adjective transformational is used to remind us that human progress is not inevitable; it takes hard work." I would add that the work of transformation is ultimately the work of the Triune God, in which humans may participate. Insofar as it is our work also, it is "Spirit-driven" work (Noda et al, "God's Story," 37).

[5] See our treatment of Thesis 4 below for some examples of this dynamic.

[6] Ronald J. Sider, *Good News and Good Works: A Theology for the Whole Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 1993), 143–145.

[7] Yet the extent to which Jesus' precise, particular ways of doing ministry—or any other biblical examples—should be a model for our own works of ministry, mission, and development is a complex problem. My own sense is that the Western church has, generally speaking, foolishly departed from the nature of Jesus' ministry and mission on several levels and needs to accentuate a greater correspondence to it (e.g., prioritizing life-on-life discipleship, challenging religious and political leaders, conducting holistic ministry). At the same time, I realize that aspects of Jesus' ministry were contextual and situational, corresponding more to some contemporary situations than others (i.e., corresponding more directly to Middle Eastern cultures, to societies in which there is a strong Monotheistic religious heritage and yet in which the Christocentric "gospel" is relatively new, small and divergent from the interests and perspectives of those with social-religious power). I will return to this question below under Thesis 3.

[8] Scripture does not teach that God creates disembodied human souls first and then places them in bodies later, although this belief is found in early church fathers such as Origin, in Islamic sources (perhaps Sura 7, verse 172) and in the Church of the Latter Day Saints (the Mormons).

[9] See Thesis 4 and Donald McGavran's classic "redemption and lift" thesis, as found in his *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, Revised Edition, 1990), 209–220.

[10] See also Thesis 5.

[11] "The Micah Declaration on Integral Mission," Micah Network, 2001, accessible online at: http://www.micahnetwork.org/sites/default/files/doc/page/mn_integral_mission_declaration_en.pdf. See also the longer and similar conclusions of the Lausanne Paper on Evangelism and Social Responsibility in 1982, online at: https://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/lop-21.

[12] Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 6–8.

[13] For example, they offered an extraordinary response to epidemics in second and third centuries, caring for all when pagan leaders and priests fled (Stark, *Rise of Christianity,* 73–94). In response to poverty, "Christian care for the poor was not distinctly Christian in

practice," against some earlier historical perspectives, "but was indeed supported by a uniquely Christian worldview" (K. C. Richardson, *Early Christian Care for the Poor: An Alternative Subsistence Strategy under Roman Imperial Rule* (Cascade Books. Kindle Edition, Kindle location 222–229). Richardson goes on to say that Christians offered an "alternative subsistence strategy"—similar to that which was practiced in rural villages in their day, but now transferred it for the first time to urban settings. The subsistence strategies of the rural villages in the first century and in the later Christian communities were based on the principle of giving to those in need, not giving based on social honor (the latter was more common in urban settings in the Roman world).

[14] Sider, *Good News and Good Works,* 165–171. Sider insightfully discusses various aspects of this question of primacy, including the logical, ontological, vocational, temporal and "resources" aspects. His discussion of the ontological aspect is most relevant to my purposes in this section, while his discussion of the temporal and resources aspects shows that the ultimate ontological priority of evangelism over social justice should not lead to minimizing the amount of time and resources people should give to works of social justice.

[15] Again, see the Lausanne occasional paper, the CRESR report of 1982 (https://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/lop-21), plus Christopher J. H. Wright's careful reflections on the question of "primacy" in the concluding chapter of his *Mission of the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan/Langham Partnership International, 2010, Kindle edition, Kindle locations 5288–5945).

[16] Sider, *Good News and Good Works,* 166–167.

[17] "The Micah Declaration on Integral Mission"

[18] Howard A. Snyder, with Joel Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed: The Ecology of Sin and Grace* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011).

[19] Some, such as Anabaptist John H. Yoder, especially in his *The Politics of Jesus,* Revised Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), rightly argue for the "political" and structural implications of the teaching and ministry of Jesus, but also recognize that this new social "polis" is found not in a new order that overthrows the powers that be, but in the formation of an alternative counter-cultural community, the church, in the midst the world ruled by fallen powers and principalities. The church manifests things like "Jubilee economics" in contrast to the typical ways of the world. When the church grows to a sufficient size it may begin to transform the powers that be, but this happens over long periods of time and often is difficult to maintain in purity; it will only happen fully and sustainably in the eschatological future (Rev. 11:15). For a helpful summary of Yoder's *Politics of Jesus,* see https://peacetheology.net/2012/06/16/summarizing-john-howard-yoders-politics-of-jesus/. For reflections on Jesus and politics that parallel Yoder, but move beyond him, see Sider, *Good News and Good Works,* 152–154.

[20] Wright, *How God Became King,* 127ff.

[21] Sider, *Good News and Good Works,* 152–154.

[22] Lesslie Newbigin argues both that Christ demonstrates a "faith that rebels" against the status quo—never accepting sickness as God's inevitable will, for example—yet also faith in a kingdom of "radical otherworldliness" that leads to the cross, rather than to a political program that finds worldly success (see his "The Kingdom of God in the Life of the World," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement,* eds. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne. Fourth Edition (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library/Publishing, 2009), ch. 15.

[23] See Ralph D. Winter and Bruce A. Koch, "Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge" in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement,* 2009, ch. 84, 531–546, esp. 538–542.

[24] Despite challenges in defining "reachedness," the concepts of reached and unreached (or less reached) give us some simple strategic guidelines about whom to prioritize as having the greatest spiritual need. Generally, the areas in the world (and peoples of the world) with greatest spiritual need (the least reached) are also the places with the greatest overall need, including material need (e.g. the 1040 window). This is evidence for the next thesis, Thesis 4.

[25] Winter and Koch, "Finishing the Task," 542.

[26] *Frontier Missions* seeks *missiological breakthrough* among unreached peoples until all peoples are "reached." This is a way of saying that, in terms of our overall emphasis in the body of Christ (and not necessarily in a person's individual calling), we need to prioritize the primarily spiritual core of the kingdom, both initially and (in some sense) ongoing. *Regular Missions* seeks *the fullness of the kingdom* in reached peoples through ongoing expansion of discipleship and in holistic community development. When peoples experience breakthrough, there is still much work to be done to be faithful to God and to seek the peoples' well-being in love.

[27] The Great Commission, in its various forms (in Matthew, Mark, Luke-Acts, and John), supports the "spiritual priority" thesis, Thesis 4, since it is focused on the witness and the discipleship of people. Even in its classic form in Matthew, the Great Commission is not about "discipling nations," although this is widely claimed. A glance at the context of the command to "make disciples of all nations" in Matthew 28:19–20 shows that the command is referring to making disciples of *people from* all nations *(ethne).* The next phrase says: "baptizing them . . . and "teaching them." We don't baptize nations or people as collective wholes, we baptize *people.* Further, "Jesus can hardly have been referring to nations as collective entities in themselves, for then there would not have been the shift to the masculine 'them' when referring to baptism and instruction because the word for 'nation' is neuter" (Arthur F. Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003], 237). This doesn't rule out the possibility that other parts of Scripture may support a general concept of "discipling" or teaching/guiding peoples or geo-political nations (indeed, this is an important theme in some passages), but this verse does not teach that.

[28] McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth,* 209–220.

[29] See Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 355–399, where Lovelace traces "the spiritual roots of Christian social concern." Another version of the claim that spiritual well-being

leads to holistic (including material) well-being is made in the works of Vishal Mangalwadi, such as *Truth and Transformation* (Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, 2009), *The Book that Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization* (Thomas Nelson, 2011). Mangalwadi shows the Bible's powerful role in Protestant Christianity and its multifaceted, positive social impact (in human rights, compassion, empowerment of women, intellectual and scientific advancement, educational flourishing), but also shows, conversely, that the roots of "backwardness" are also spiritual, rooted in non-biblical philosophical and religious perspectives and practices (e.g., concerning India, *Why Are We Backward? Exploring the Roots, Exploding the Myths, Embracing True Hope* (New Delhi, India: Forward Press, 2014).

[30] See Paul Dzubinski, Sharon Mo and Gus Lee, "Reimagining the Way We Do Missions: The Kingdom-focused Missiology, Development, and Intended Impact of Data Visualizations Done at the Urbana 2018 Hack4Missions Hackathon," unpublished paper presented at the Evangelical Missiological Society Annual National Meeting in September 2019 in Dallas, TX. The authors of this paper, and others they worked with at Urbana 2018, created "a data visualization web application that dynamically brings together the unreached people data of the Joshua Project and databases that track the human suffering connected with their environments (health needs, extreme poverty, environmental crisis, etc.)" (1). They found that "The distribution of environmental degradation, food and water insecurity, health risks due to sanitation and pollution, human trafficking and slavery, political instability and religious freedom, susceptibility to diseases, and many other indicators of human suffering *heavily overlap* the areas of the highest concentration of unreached people groups" (5). See also how the 1040 window, where most of the least-reached groups are located, overlaps much with what is sometimes called the "arc of instability" in Africa and Asia with regards to political (and water) instability. An exception is that much of sub-Saharan Africa is both highly evangelized and yet numbers among the poorest and most disease-plagued regions of the world.

[31] See especially Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life,* 355–399, especially 358.

[32] Sider, *Good News and Good Works,* 117–118; 174–175. "Coming to faith in Christ . . . doesn't guarantee that we will have a major impact on society," 117.

[33] Changing ordinary people in popular movements is not enough. James Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 32–87 and throughout.

[34] Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life,* 362–363, and David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Marynoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 254–255.

[35] As quoted and translated by Bosch, *Transforming Mission,* 254.

[36] Bosch, *Transforming Mission,* 254. Ziegenbalg's claims are a striking early affirmation of my theses 1 and 2 above.

[37] Hunter, *To Change the World,* 32–87. Lasting socio-cultural change doesn't happen just through changing ideas and hearts, but requires Christian presence among networks of elites and their institutions; populist revivals are not enough. Hunter's own historical analysis of the post-Reformation period focuses on the Anglo-American contexts, such as the anti-slavery movement associated with William Wilberforce (70–74). Bosch, in his *Transforming Mission,* had earlier made a similar point, noting how the Pietist movement, although it reached some early church leaders (253), never penetrated "into the heart of the German churches" and "remained a movement on the periphery" and thus vulnerable to the dominant spirit of the age represented by the Enlightenment or Colonial Westernization (255, 260, 302ff). Yet, Bosch does affirm that the "evangelical movement" as a whole, which included Pietism, "represented a fairly effective opposition, in some respect even an alternative, to the Enlightenment frame of mind" (281).

[38] Andrea Palpant Dilley, "The Surprising Discovery about Those Colonialist, Proselytizing Missionaries," *Christianity Today,* Jan/Feb 2014, https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/january-february/world-missionaries-made.html. For an article presenting the original scholarly research, see Robert D. Woodberry, "The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy," *American Political Science Review* Vol. 106, No. 2 (May 2012): 244–274. See also, the summary of Bruce Wydick, *Shrewd Samaritan: Faith, Economics, and the Road to Loving our Global Neighbor* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing, 2019), 145–146.

[39] Dilley, "The Surprising Discovery."

[40] Gharad Bryan, James Choi and Dean Karlan, "Randomizing Religion: The Impact of Protestant Evangelism on Economic Outcomes," 2018. NBER Working Paper No. 24278, Feb 2018, accessed on September 30, 2019, https://www.nber.org/papers/w24278 (also available in other sites online). The study is summarized in Wydick, *Shrewd Samaritan,* 147–148. See also the summary of this study and related interviews on the Freakonomics Podcast ("Is the Protestant Work Ethic Real?" Ep. 360, Dec 5, 2018, http://freakonomics.com/podcast/religiosity/). I thank Greg Parsons for making me aware of this study. For other support for Thesis 4, see the evidence and perspective presented by World Vision's Rachal Boyer in answer to the question: "Are Christian Charities More Effective At Humanitarian Work?" https://www.worldvision.org/christian-faith-news-stories/christian-charities-effective-humanitarian-work (updated July 20. 2017).

[41] Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life,* 358.

[42] Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life,* 358.

[43] Sider, *Good News and Good Works,* 116–118.

[44] See Thesis 4 above and especially Thesis 6 below.

[45] This is not to say that growing material well-being *always* has an inverse relation to spiritual well-being. The evidence is mixed, as are the viewpoints of practitioners and theorists. I believe that there can be a direct relationship between the two, with both spiritual and material well-being increasing over the long-term, and that this is the ideal, while also recognizing that this seems to be less common than an inverse relationship in both historical and current societies. A recent study of the viewpoints of the Accord network's members reported that "The responses we received . . . tilted strongly in the direction of believing that there is an inverse relationship between material

wealth and spiritual dynamism" (Stephen Offutt and Amy Reynolds, "Christian Ideas of Development: Understanding the current theories, networks and priorities of Accord organizations," *Christian Relief, Development, and Advocacy* 1(1), Summer 2019, 6; accessed September 25, 2019, https://crdajournal.org/index.php/crda/article/view/189).

46 Rupert E. Davies, ed. *The Works of John Wesley,* vol. 9, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989), 529–530. Sider, *Good News and Good Works,* 181.

47 One "immediate economic benefit" is that "money previously spent on things that are now forbidden or frowned upon" by their new-found faith "is suddenly available" (David Bronkema, "Flying Blind: Christian NGOs and the Political Economy," *Christian Mission and Economic Systems,* eds. John Cheong and Eloise Meneses [Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2015], 239).

48 McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth,* 209–220. McGavran asks: "How then can the church lift and redeem Christians and yet have them remain in effective contact with receptive sections of society that they can influence?" (213). His solution includes emphasizing how believers with newfound "upward-mobility" can continue to emphasize intentional social connections with the people group in which they were raised (217–218). See Sider, *Good News and Good Works,* 181–182.

49 David Bronkema, "Flying Blind," 211–245.

50 See Eloise Meneses, "Exchange, Relationships, and Reciprocity: Living as a Christian in a Capitalist World," *Christian Mission and Economic Systems,* eds. John Cheong and Eloise Meneses (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2015), 1–26. On another level, libera-tion theology, revolution movements and empirical studies of post-War global development projects have shown the inadequacies of the traditional development paradigm for addressing the systemic root causes of injustice and human misery (Bosch, *Transforming Mission,* 432–435; cf. 435–447).

51 Bosch, *Transforming Mission,* 529 (note 2).

52 Many writings of N. T. Wright, especially his popular *Surprised by Hope* (London: SPCK Publishing, 2011) emphasize this holistic (spiri-tual and material) vision of the future against the dualistic, spiritualistic vision of the future that has been present in much of Christian history. Again, see Snyder's *Salvation Means Creation Healed.*

53 Lesslie Newbigin's insightful treatment of the church congregation as the "hermeneutic of the gospel," or chief interpreter and "plausi-bility structure" for the kingdom and its good news, concludes with the feature of hope *(Gospel in a Pluralist Society* [London: SPCK Publishing, 1989], 232f).

54 Jay Van Gronigen expresses a broad view of the church's mission in his *The Theology of Development: A Biblical Understanding of Christian Mission and Community Development. Christian Reformed World Relief Committee,* n.d., accessed September 28, 2019, https://network.crcna.org/community-engagement/theology-development-biblical-understanding-christian-mission-and-community. Van Gronigen states: "the calling of the church is to equip men and women to be faithful servants of God in all these possible expressions of living faithfully to God's call to steward the creation and to develop its potential" (26; cf. 34). The church's focus is on equipping and developing people, but does so with a view to the broad end of creational flourishing. In the introduction, Van Gronigen states that "the church of Jesus Christ has vital roles as a witness to the power of the gospel and an agent of change in the world" (1).

55 Richard Slimbach, "Local Churches in Global Development: How 'Central' Are They?" *William Carey International University Develop-ment Journal* Feb. 28, 2013, especially discussion points 3–4, accessed September 27, 2019, https://www.wciujournal.org/blog/post/local-churches-global-development-how-central-are-they

56 Slimbach, "Local Churches in Global Development," discussion point 2. See Keller, *Generous Justice,* 144–147.

57 Ralph D. Winter, "The Two Structures in God's Redemptive Mission," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement,* Fourth Edition, eds. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library/Publishing, 2009), 220–230.

58 Tim Keller, "How a Gospel Movement Works," Redeemer Report, December 2017, accessed September 28, 2019, https://www.redeemer.com/redeemer-report/article/how_a_gospel_movement_works. The words in brackets in the quotation are my clarifying additions.

59 Johannes Reimer, with Christopher Wright, *Rethinking Church: Community Called out to Take Responsibility* (IM Press, Micah Global, n.d.), 58–59. Accordingly, a team of authors from the sodality Food for the Hungry regard Food for the Hungry as "an extension of God's universal church, helping the most vulnerable in the world" (Noda et al, "God's Story," 26). Of course, even such "sodalities" themselves do not automatically do great work in sustainable community development or global holistic mission, since they often do not attend to "struc-tural" social change much better than local churches do (see Slimbach, "Local Churches in Global Development," discussion point 9).

60 See Slimbach, "Local Churches in Global Development," discussion point 10.

61 This is the terminology used by James Hunter in *To Change the World,* 238–272.

62 Rightly understood, transformation is both ongoing and mutual, for we "do not exclude ourselves from the process of transformation" (Noda et al, "God's Story," 38).