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# Keeping Faith in Humanitarianism

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# Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

This ministry focus paper entitled

KEEPING FAITH IN HUMANITARIANISM

Written by

JOE HARBISON

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary  
upon the recommendation of the undersigned reader:

  
Kurt Fredrickson

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KEEPING FAITH IN HUMANITARIANISM

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

JOE HARBISON  
MARCH 2016

## ABSTRACT

### **Keeping Faith in Humanitarianism**

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2016

Compassion that drives the humanitarian service of Christian, faith-based agencies transcends process and policy through informed practices leading to positive and compassionate engagement bringing transformational change among people in calamity and unjust systems. This dissertation explores the transformative role that faith-based agencies need to play in contemporary humanitarianism in order to span the gap between procedure and mercy in action. Further, it is an examination of theological, historical and practical applications of compassion at work demonstrating God's unconditional love to all of humanity.

Faith-based humanitarian agencies struggle to serve marginalized communities and people groups, but are pulled in different directions by stakeholders. Donors who are highly motivated toward proclamation, expect a strong Gospel message. Local communities desire significant inputs to bring visible and tangible change. Institutional donors expect clear goals and outputs that belie evidence-based results. Local governments may welcome faith-based agencies but forbid religious proclamation especially where Christianity is a minority religion. Faith-based agencies are held to the same standards which govern all humanitarian agencies, creating new and complex challenges to serving the poor as ambassadors of God's good will and love.

Part One deals with the unique historical and contemporary context within which faith-based humanitarian agencies operate. The reality and complexity of structure and policy, and the demand to meet greater humanitarian needs creates an environment of scrutiny and competition to fund, staff, resource and implement larger and more complex interventions. These developments are examined and reviewed in the light of contemporary agencies that have developed along parallel paths yet compete for resources. Part Two reviews theological underpinnings of faith-based humanitarianism. Beginning with a biblical reflection on the design and concept of neighborliness and concludes with three case studies along the themes of Justice, Policy and Mission providing a framework for understanding practical applications of mercy in action.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
PART ONE: CONTEXT	
Chapter 1. THE EMERGENCE OF HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS	11
Chapter 2. CONTEMPORARY HUMANITARIAN SPACE	30
PART TWO: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION	
Chapter 3. LITERATURE REVIEW	48
Chapter 4. A THEOLOGY OF COMPASSION	58
PART THREE: CASE STUDIES	
Chapter 5. JUSTICE	76
Chapter 6. POLICY	94
Chapter 7. MISSION	116
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	137
BIBLIOGRAPHY	143

## INTRODUCTION

If anyone says “I love God,” but keeps on hating his brother, he is a liar; for if he doesn’t love his brother who is right there in front of him, how can he love God whom he has never seen?

1 Jn 4:20 (TLB)

In the spring of 1859, a young Swiss businessman surveyed a scene of unimaginable carnage and death. Napoleon the Third’s army had just fought an intense three-day battle with Austrian troops in the Lombardy region of Italy near an obscure hamlet called Solferino. Scattered throughout the expansive battlefield, 23,000 troops and civilians lay dead or dying with little hope of aid or comfort. Until then, that was how wars were fought. No quarter was given to the vanquished while wounded soldiers and civilians were left to languish on the field of battle. On this day, a young man changed history by heeding his soul’s call to act out compassion. Today, neither the outcome of the battle, nor the trade opportunity that compelled Henri Dunant to visit the French emperor is widely noted. Yet the legacy of the man who paused from his business errand and acted out practical compassion has changed forever the way civilization, in the north and south, are obliged to attend to the needs of people impacted by the savageries of war and natural calamities.

The story’s plot line is remarkably familiar to that of Luke, chapter ten; a man journeying through distant lands on an errand arrived upon the grotesque sight of a person violently pummeled, near death, and in need of urgent care. The Good Samaritan is compelled to stop and act out the mercy he felt in his heart for the victim. It is quite possible that the priest and Levite, who also passed by, “felt” mercy yet, stepped to the



far side of the road to gain safe passage away from the victim. The Samaritan, however, actualized his sense of compassion into practical aid, becoming more than a spectator and provided a template of care for all who regard others as true neighbors. An important lesson of the Parable of the Good Samaritan found in Luke (10:25-37) is that the works of Jesus, and of his followers are indicators of the nearness of the Kingdom of God. That Christ commands that Christians not only love their neighbor but also their enemy reveals a new standard of accountability toward one's neighbor.

Dunant was a businessman intent on an errand that would "turn Algeria into a bread basket for Europe,"<sup>1</sup> requiring Napoleon's sponsorship and hence vital to Dunant's business interests. Fueled by a generous nature, he was committed to improving civilization through business and development. Surely, of all people it would have been forgivable for Dunant to keep the big picture in mind. He sought a meeting with the emperor that could result in good for those fortunate enough to be engaged in his initiative. The meeting with the emperor never occurred, instead Dunant had the rare opportunity to become a spectator, participant and eventually a powerful humanitarian advocate who would change the course of history. The outcome of Dunant's remarkable journey may be credited to the juxtaposition of history and technology, or that the stars of human civilization were aligned to usher in a new era. Whatever the cause, in Solferino compassion surpassed an ideal and became a universal standard because a young man decided to be interrupted for the sake of mercy.

The world has changed significantly after Solferino. Humanitarian space, the professional and legal arena in which individuals, agencies and nations respond to

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Marwil, *Visiting Modern War in Risorgimento Italy* (Palgrave: Macmillan, 2010), 102.

inhumanity and disasters, is guided by internationally-sanctioned standards. The founding of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 1863 led to the establishment of numerous humanitarian charters. These provide guidance to political decision makers and responders alike, while framing a legal foundation for enforcement upon belligerents through International Humanitarian Law (IHL).<sup>2</sup> Despite these advances, global citizens continue to suffer from war, calamity and under unjust systems. War, civil strife and inter-communal violence continue to take a relentless toll upon life, property and the environment. Humanitarian charters and standards may dictate how people ought to respond to calamity, but it cannot be a substitute for the deep, transcendent role of the individual's response to human suffering. It is the soul's call to respond, personally, "with-passion," and neighbor-to-neighbor, resulting in the transcendence of healing over suffering.

### **Keeping Faith in Humanitarianism - A Faith Based Approach**

As the double entendre within the title of this dissertation suggests, it is essential to continue having faith in the efficacy and ideals of humanitarianism and to allow faith to guide in the practice of humanitarian service. If policy alone and not compassion is to guide humanitarianism at large then there is a risk to lose the spirit of the compassionate neighbor that guides the principles of service. For the sake of this dissertation, the term "faith based" is defined within the Judeo-Christian context of biblical inspiration and practice. Because this is a very narrow treatise about faith-based humanitarianism, all religious streams of compassion cannot be covered. What are unique about the Judeo-

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<sup>2</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, "What is International Humanitarian Law?" [https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/what\\_is\\_ihl.pdf](https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/what_is_ihl.pdf) (accessed March 21, 2016).

Christian approach to faith-based humanitarianism are three commands revealed very clearly through Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments: “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord,” (Lv 19:18); Christ’s reframing of the Leviticus command, with a caveat, the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37); and showing how far Christians are to go with the command to love one’s neighbor, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven” (Mt 5:43-48).

These three concepts of neighborliness frame the foundation for this dissertation. It will be seen that contemporary humanitarian space is filled with imperfect practitioners, as demonstrated in the three case studies presented. It is in the case studies and within the conclusion for this paper that alternative practices are recommended in order to provide balance between compassionate practice and humanitarian policy.

The faith-based approach to humanitarianism is not “rights based,” nor is it “needs based” alone, because one’s faith perspective does not allow viewing one’s neighbor as a victim nor as a beneficiary. Dunant’s traumatized volunteers, mostly resident women, gathered under his guidance and attended to the wounded and dying. On that devastated plain there arose at first a murmur, then, as though a battle cry, “*tutti fratelli*,” all are brothers and sisters, help them all. It is asserted here that “rights” are granted by a higher power. All have the right of free speech or freedom to practice religion because there are people empowered to grant those rights. As seen in the Dunant story, transformation is a two-way street. This is never clearer than what was enacted in

the post-Napoleonic battle at Solferino. On that day, no one spoke of the rights of the victims; they were beholden to a higher code, the duty of care of one neighbor to another.<sup>3</sup>

International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the Geneva Charters and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, echo this duty of care: “The . . . recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”<sup>4</sup> The IHL tomes standardize how civilization is to behave toward those who have slipped from the mainstream of wellness, or do not fit neatly within the boundaries of societal norms and conventions. Yet when it comes to a personal level it must be asked, “How many of us actually stop what we are doing to assist?” In practical contemporary terms this may mean stopping the car, rolling down the window and inquiring about the welfare of the needy. It can even mean the art and practice of active listening. The ideal of compassion was modeled both within Scripture and by the example of Christ and his followers, yet, most rarely stop to provide assistance.

The “good” Samaritan did not look upon his wounded neighbor as a victim nor as a potential beneficiary of his care or services. Instead, he saw a wounded fellow traveler in need of a helping hand and responded without fanfare or need for recognition. Faith-based humanitarianism compels Christians to see their neighbor, not through the lens of

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<sup>3</sup> Hugo Slim, *Claiming a Humanitarian Imperative NGOs and the Cultivation of Humanitarian Duty*, <http://www.oxfordjournals.org/en/> (accessed March 28, 2016), 168.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Bailey OBE, “The Creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” <http://www.universalrights.net/main/creation> (accessed March 28, 2016).

dignity-robbing slogans or impersonal labels, but through the lens of *imago dei*, by which the spark of the divine in the soul is seen of the one in need.

Today people go about humanitarian business, applying policy, process and protocols in an approach to human suffering, yet neglect personally and directly attending to the needs of their neighbors. In systematizing compassion, humanitarians have too often despairingly labeled neighbors as victims, dehumanized the approach, while making it ever more difficult to respond personally to human suffering. In other words, people, as neighbors, still refuse to pause from their busy lives and act out compassion.

### **A Transformational Experience**

In November 1979, I had the opportunity to visit a newly opened UNHCR refugee camp on a plot of land near the district city of Sa Kaeo, about 40 kilometers inside Thailand, near the Cambodian border. The Thai Supreme Command had allocated 160,000 square meters of uninhabited rice fields for this refugee camp.<sup>5</sup> The UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies, including CAMA, World Vision and Catholic Relief Services, were hastily making preparations for the influx of Cambodian refugees fleeing the invasion of Democratic Kampuchea by Vietnam. On the evening I arrived at the camp it was already overflowing with 30,000 refugees; most were malnourished and sick with a variety of diseases, including malaria and beriberi. The humanitarian situation within the camp was nearly as bad as what they had experienced under Pol Pot's murderous regime. There was little potable water; sanitation and hygiene facilities were woefully inadequate because the rapid influx of refugees had left no time to construct facilities. Once inside

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<sup>5</sup> Fiona Terry, *Condemned to Repeat? The Paradox of Humanitarian Action* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 110.

the mostly bamboo and tarpaulin constructed camp, we were met with stares from wide-eyed refugees, gaunt with starvation and dysentery.

Crowded into the main NGO staging area were thousands of desperate people seeking hope and relief from their nightmare experience in the systemic Khmer Rouge pogrom. The air was thick with the pungent odor of disease and the haze of kerosene lamps that provided meager light. My group walked past a large open pit where the bodies of the recently deceased were hastily interred to prevent the spread of disease, estimated at up to one hundred per day in the first month.

We found the camp officials' office and waited patiently while representatives of three agencies argued heatedly. It did not take long to discover the nature of their dispute. One organization had erected a large signboard over their clinic, taking credit for the aid that was being provided. Other agencies, lacking permission for signage, objected to the perceived favoritism. Whether their objections stemmed from altruistic motivations or were spurred by jealous rivalry, I had no way of knowing. While the argument continued, I felt a tugging at my trousers and looked down. I was surprised to find a young boy of about eight years old attempting to get my attention. I knelt down to converse with the lad. Despite words failing us, we were able to engage in simple banter and a basic sign language that amused us both. The agony and heartbreak around us was transcended through this very basic human interaction. Not the resulting material aid supplied to the people of Sa Kaeo camp, the volunteers who worked there for the next five months, nor even the succeeding years of practical aid provided by our organization has given me as much joy as my short repartee with the child whose name or fate I never learned.

This dissertation asserts that humanitarianism is, at its core, faith-based.<sup>6</sup> It will build upon this theme by demonstrating that the soul's need, that place which is hidden in Christ and prompts people to respond to human suffering is essential to the universality of practical compassion. Firstly, because all humanitarianism stems from the biblical imperative found in Luke 10:37, "Go and do likewise" as the primary call to neighborliness. Secondly, humanitarianism is essentially faith based because it seeks transcendence from one state to another for a person or people in desperate situations. And, thirdly, humanitarianism requires people to lay down prejudices and see even their enemies as neighbors, to serve the enemy with impartiality, even though he or she may be their neighbor. As stated previously the context of faith-based humanitarianism in this paper is traced mainly from the stream of post-Napoleonic war compassionate interventions in Europe, and the social reformers and Protestant humanitarian pioneers of the twentieth century. However, it is here recognized that traditions of compassion and mercy in many faiths have contributed to the global humanitarian movement as is now practiced in countless humanitarian efforts around the world.

Finally, this dissertation will attempt to demonstrate that it is often the unseen and unknown aspects of service that can far outweigh "programming" as a means to results that are sought. This happens when genuine human connection creates transcendence from despair to hope, when a simple interpersonal gesture inspires, or a meaningful look gives hope to a child or emphatic listening strengthens the bereaved or crushed. Wess Stafford, former president of Compassion International and tireless advocate on behalf of

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<sup>6</sup> The UN Refugee Agency, "Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders," UNHCR, <http://www.unhcr.org/51b6de419.html> (accessed March 21, 2016).

children living in poverty pointed out that: “Children are ingenuous. They are also blessed with uncanny ability to read a person’s character instantly. Even though they are inexperienced and unsophisticated, they often know instinctively who can be trusted and who is the charlatan.”<sup>7</sup> Faith that is extemporaneous and transcends human reasoning is like a seed planted in fertile ground, taking root to grow into unimaginable proportions of hope and transformation.

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<sup>7</sup> Wess Stafford, *Too Small to Ignore: Why Children Are the Next Big Thing* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2010), 214.



PART ONE

CONTEXT

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE EMERGENCE OF HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS

The moral sense of the importance of human life; the humane desire to lighten a little the torments of all these poor wretches, or restore their shattered courage; the furious and relentless activity which a man summons up at such moments: all these combine to create a kind of energy which gives one a positive craving to relieve as many as one can. . . .

There is something akin to cold calculation, in the face of horrors yet more ghastly than those here described, and which the pen absolutely declines to set down.

Henri Dunant, *Memories of Solferino*

Born into a devout Calvinist family, the *Réveil* or Swiss Awakening had an impact on Dunant's upbringing during the early-nineteenth century. As a youth he participated in the Geneva Alms Giving society, regularly visiting hospitals and prisons. He frequently took part in Bible study groups and prayer sessions. Dunant was involved in the YMCA, having founded the Geneva chapter and was a participant in the organization of the international YMCA in Paris in 1855.<sup>1</sup> Even so, Dunant's devout upbringing, years of participation in evangelical activities and even his gifted organizational skills did little to prepare him for the horrors of Solferino.

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<sup>1</sup> Caroline Moorehead, *Dunant's Dream: War, Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross* (San Francisco: Harper Collins 1998), 585–94.

His vivid description of the battle, the aftermath and the toll upon the local citizenry is gripping:

Here is a hand-to-hand struggle in all its horror and frightfulness; Austrians and Allies trampling each other under foot, killing one another on piles of bleeding corpses, felling their enemies with their rifle butts, crushing skulls, ripping bellies open with sabre and bayonet. No quarter is given; it is a sheer butchery; a struggle between savage beasts, maddened with blood and fury. Even the wounded fight to the last gasp. When they have no weapon left, they seize their enemies by the throat and tear them with their teeth.<sup>2</sup>

The execution of war was not new and organized humane responses to the fallen were imperfect, as they are today. Even so, until the eighteenth century both war and response were practiced on a limited scale. The mechanization of weaponry, manufacture of heavy artillery, the ability for thousands of troops to be transported by steam locomotion, created a sustainable supply chain to field battalions, and unleashed an unprecedented measure of slaughter. Prior to the nineteenth century, humane response to calamity was limited in scope and scale by the lack of medical technology.<sup>3</sup> With no international law to sanction it, humanitarian response on the battlefield was the responsibility of the warring faction on whose side the casualties fought. Local citizenry generally fled to the countryside with their belongings, necessitating the battle wounded to die slowly on deserted battlefields.

Long before the humanitarian charters were ratified a theme of neighborly care was threaded through the Scriptures, compelling Christians to delve deeper into the humane-ness of their response to others. Whether they are witness to a personal tragedy

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<sup>2</sup> Henri Dunant, *Memories of Solferino* (Geneva: ICRC 2010), 19.

<sup>3</sup> Patrick Murphy, "The Effect of Industrialization and Technology on Warfare: 1854-1878," Military History Online, <http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/general/articles/effectofindustrialization.aspx> (accessed March 21, 2016).

on a desolate trade route such as the road to Jericho, or to the tumultuous clash of armies, Christians are called to account at a personal level for their humanitarian sense of neighborliness and act out practical compassion. Having raised the bar on ordinary neighborliness, Christ calls his followers to a proactive kind of engagement that reaches out even to the enemy. Often, that enemy lives within one's neighbor. Dunant, a product of the Reformation in both culture and practice, was intuitively aware of the standard set by Christ.

Dunant's place in culture, his personal experience and orientation in spiritual development set him in a dynamic and unique historical context, giving vent to his actions in the succeeding days after the events of Solferino.<sup>4</sup> He became no longer a spectator on a desert road with perhaps a credible excuse as to why he should not intervene. Dunant, however, took informed and compassionate action. Organizing the local people he became a spark, igniting momentous change in the way humankind views its role in caring even for the "enemy within" one's brother and sister. He writes,

But the women of Castiglione, seeing that I made no distinction between nationalities, followed my example, showing the same kindness to all these men whose origins were so different, and all of whom were foreigners to them. "*Tutti fratelli*," they repeated feelingly. All honour to these compassionate women, to these girls of Castiglione! Imperturbable, unwearying, unflinching, their quiet self-sacrifice made little of fatigue and horrors, and of their own devotion.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> David Neff, "Compassionate in War, Christian in Vision," *Christianity Today* (Dec 2004), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/decemberweb-only/12-13-52.0.html> (accessed March 30, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Dunant, *Memories of Solferino*, 72.

## Laying the Foundation for Global Humanitarianism

With increasing acceptance of the provision of humanitarian aid in times of war and the neutrality of aid givers on the battlefields, civilization inched forward along the path to universal humanitarianism. From the example of compassionate nineteenth century pioneers such as the women of Solferino, Dunant, Mennonites and the Catholic Caritas in Germany to name a few, the codification of humanitarianism had begun. By establishing *jus bello*; the rules that balance humanitarian concerns with the necessity of military operations, morality was acknowledged on the battlefield. James Turner Johnson, professor of religion at Rutgers University described the dilemma in this way: “In just war language, the evil produced by the war must not be greater than the good done or the evil averted by it. In contemporary language, the costs of the war must not outweigh the benefits.”<sup>6</sup>

Framed on the original 1864 charter, IHL is recognized from among the four charters within the 1949 Geneva Convention and ultimately ratified by 196 nations. IHL is non-partisan prescribing the limits of wartime conduct, proportionality and appropriate treatment of people and property which do not add to the war effort and in effect, holding nations accountable to the “law” of compassion.

A world in which universal annihilation might be achieved by conventional, let alone atomic weapons, yet exists in a condition bereft of universal conventions limiting such possibilities is a terrible scenario. Although not perfect, IHL was a step in the right direction. Perfection, however, can only be achieved through spiritual obedience to the

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<sup>6</sup> James Turner Johnson, *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War: A Moral and Historical Inquiry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Press, 1981), 204.

inner law, such as Christ’s admonition to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven” and thereby to “be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:44-48).<sup>7</sup> A key factor to the dawn of humanitarianism, was the distinction that assistance proffered to the fallen was indiscriminate, non-political and without reward. The radical nature of *agape* love, whether motivated from a pious heart or that of a heart overflowing with human and humane compassion, may not have been unique in the annals of human history, but became a matter of historical reality when it was “chartered” into real values.

Although highly divergent in values and approaches, most twenty-first century humanitarian agencies trace their DNA to the “*Tutti Fratelli*”<sup>8</sup> movement of Dunant and his assistants who placed intrinsic value in the commonality of women and men over that of alignment to warring factions. The result was the formation of a new “humanitarian space” where the sanctity of human life is held paramount over politics and war. In Matthew 26:11, Jesus said “the poor you will always have with you,” and spoke of hard times to come in the future. It is highly unlikely that the formation of societies, foundations and structures designed to address human tragedy will ever solve humanity’s deeper ills, yet an informed civilization has raised the bar, calling people to echo Christ’s command to love the enemy wherever he or she is found. Often people are called to love the enemy “within our neighbor” and not a far off entity. In this way, loving one’s enemy becomes a daily choice about how one reacts to her neighbor in all the petty or major conflicts that come her way. It is a call that must be heeded for the sake of neutrality and

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<sup>7</sup> All Scripture quoted is from the *English Standard Version*, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>8</sup> “*Tutti fratelli*” (All are brothers) coined by the women of nearby city Castiglione delle Stiviere.

impartiality, whether in interpersonal relationships or in the arena of global peacemaking.<sup>9</sup>

It is evident that Dunant realized the importance of Solferino when he asked the question of his contemporaries:

If the new and frightful weapons of destruction which are now at the disposal of the nations seem destined to abridge the duration of future wars, it appears likely, on the other hand, that future battles will only become more and more murderous. Moreover, in this age when surprise plays so important a part, is it not possible that wars may arise, from one quarter or another, in the most sudden and unexpected fashion? And do not these considerations alone constitute more than adequate reason for taking precautions against surprise? Would it not be possible, in time of peace and quiet, to form relief societies for the purpose of having care given to the wounded in wartime by zealous, devoted and thoroughly qualified volunteers?<sup>10</sup>

The rise of humanitarian agencies was a direct result of the *agape* call within all hearts, matched to the perilous context of global warfare. Like grace, it appeared at just the right time. The juxtaposition of societal development and the technological advances of communications and information as a means to propagating faith is as strong a contributing factor in the expansion of Western humanitarianism. Indeed, William Carey asked his peers, sixty-nine years before Dunant, whether a similar organized approach to missionary service might be effective in reaching the “heathens” of his era;

Suppose a company of serious Christians, ministers and private persons, were to form themselves into a society, and make a number of rules respecting the regulation of the plan, and the persons who are to be employed as missionaries, the means of defraying the expense, &c. &c. This society must consist of persons whose hearts are in the work, men of serious religion, and possessing a spirit of

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<sup>9</sup> Toni Pfanner, “Asymmetrical Warfare from the Perspective of Humanitarian Law and Humanitarian Action,” *International Review of the Red Cross* (March 2005): 171.

<sup>10</sup> Dunant, *Memories of Solferino*, 128.

perseverance; there must be a determination not to admit any person who is not of this description, or to retain him longer than he answers to it.<sup>11</sup>

It is, however, recognized that Christians and people of all faiths who hear the soul's call to respond in compassion, have silently and invisibly paused from their busyness, tended to the fallen and met her needs in imitation of Christ's injunction to "Go and do likewise" (Lk 10:37). By "doing likewise," they have demonstrated that the Kingdom of God has become manifest. Today a dense field of humanitarian activities can be seen that have their roots and distinctions in nineteenth century service.

### Pre-twentieth Century Examples of Humanitarian Service

We live in a world of humanitarianisms, not humanitarianism. Although it is impossible to carbon-date the origins of humanitarianism, the actual term began coming into everyday use in the early nineteenth century. We can certainly understand it as a form of compassion, but in practice it had three marks of distinction: assistance beyond borders, a belief that such transnational action was related in some way to the transcendent, and the growing organization and governance of activities designed to protect and improve humanity.

Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*

Following are brief examples of humanitarian issues and events that sparked a chain of events leading to a new era of faith-based interventions and ushering in the contemporary humanitarian landscape.

### **The Lisbon Quake, Tsunami and Fire**

The All Saints Day Lisbon earthquake in 1755 is an example of how a major disaster converged with technology and philosophy to result in change that far outlasted

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<sup>11</sup> William Carey, "An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens," [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org) (accessed March 21, 2016).



the original catastrophe. Sparking a dramatic crisis of faith in Europe that shook the core of Western civilization it was an impetus for change in science, religion and philosophy.<sup>12</sup> Nearly destroying the entire city of Lisbon, the quake and subsequent tsunami and fire, killed between fifty and sixty thousand people in Portugal, Spain and Morocco. In addition, it caused tremendous soul-searching as people of faith in staunchly Catholic Portugal grappled with theodicy in their stark new reality. It also instigated a chain of events when responders of the day followed their soul's call to compassion and made practical advances in the arena of humanitarianism.

Examples include John Howard, England's original prison and hospital reformer. He was on his way to Lisbon in response to the great earthquake when French privateers captured him.<sup>13</sup> His experience as a prisoner is widely held as the impetus for his activism on behalf of regulating prison systems. Howard, in turn influenced Elizabeth Fry, another of England's great social reformers, who influenced Florence Nightingale. Along that vein, Voltaire, who was deeply impacted by the All Saints Day calamity, used his intellectual and material resources to abolish torture. Immanuel Kant was moved to near obsession with the event and wrote two tracts, a book and created a scientific model of seismic phenomena in 1756.<sup>14</sup>

Fortunately for the citizens of Lisbon the Portuguese ruler, King Joseph I and his family survived the earthquake, as did his prime minister, the Marquis of Pombal.

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas G. Long, *What Shall We Say? Evil, Suffering, and the Crisis of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 5.

<sup>13</sup> John Howard, *The State of the Prisons in England and Wales* (Nashville: Rare Books Club.com, 1984), 22.

<sup>14</sup> Arsinij Gulyga, *Immanuel Kant, His Life and Thought* (Boston: Birkhäuser, 1987), 295.

Together they led efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to those affected by the quake and rebuild the city, implementing early examples of seismic-proof construction. The statement attributed to Pombal is likely apocryphal, yet sums up accurately the mindset of the quick thinking and decisive ruler: “bury the dead and feed the living.”<sup>15</sup> Not only did civilization advance in preventative technology related to earthquakes and gain new insights on tsunamis as a result of Lisbon, but many Age of Enlightenment philosophers wrote of the significance of the quake. In summing up the earthquake’s philosophical impact on the enlightened world, Nicolas Shrady states in his epilogue: “Perhaps our view of progress has grown exceedingly Panglossian. If Lisbon does indeed provide a lesson for disasters that face us today, it is that man is at the center of our response to natural disaster, and not providence, metaphysics, or the ire of a living God.”<sup>16</sup>

### **The Great Famines in India and China 1876 to 1879**

The great famines that ravaged northern China and southern India during the years of 1876 through 1879 provided opportunity for the first major trans-global relief operation in modern times. In India, the famine affected mostly southern states and was caused by a toxic mixture of a two-year drought in the normally fertile Deccan Plateau, and the commoditization of grain and cash crops by the British colonial authorities. Successes in bumper grain harvests and shipments to the UK, would have been little

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<sup>15</sup> T. P. Kendrick, *The Lisbon Earthquake* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1955), 75.

<sup>16</sup> Nicholas Shrady, *The Last Day: Wrath, Ruin, and Reason in the Great Lisbon Earthquake of 1755* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 209.

comfort for the more than five million people who perished during the famine.<sup>17</sup> To make matters worse, colonial powers were growing impatient with charitable aid, cutting back relief budgets.<sup>18</sup>

In China, Presbyterian and Catholic missionaries cooperated to bring about humanitarian aid during the devastating three-year drought. Even so, the drought took the lives of over 10 million people out of an estimated combined population of 108 million in the five affected provinces. It also represents an early humanitarian crisis where an aid agency, in this case The Committee of the China Famine Relief Fund, an ecumenical alliance of various segments of the Church, responded in creative ways in a complex environment of geo-politics in rapidly changing China. In his comprehensive report, Timothy Richard, the founder of the China Famine Relief Fund, drew attention to the fact that the relief efforts brought about gratitude from all classes of people in China:

The generosity thus shown on the part of foreigners towards the starving millions of this country has been most striking, and may well excite the admiration and gratitude of all classes. We are happy to say, too, that the means availed of for distribution has been in every way satisfactory. Catholic and Protestant Missionaries and others, have heartily entered into the work; and at many different points they have ministered to the necessities of the people, and saved the lives of tens of thousands.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> David Hall-Matthews, "Inaccurate Conceptions: Disputed Measures of Nutritional Needs and Famine Deaths in Colonial India," *Modern Asian Studies* 42 (2008): 1189-1212.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity, A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 64.

<sup>19</sup> China Famine Relief Fund, Shanghai Committee, "The Great Famine: Report of the Committee of the China Famine Relief Fund," <https://archive.org/details/cu31924023248796> (accessed March 23, 2016).

## Social Reform Movements

Colonial powers in the nineteenth century were not following a humanitarian mandate. The raw materials gained through exploitation of colonized subjects fueled the industrial revolution back in Western Europe. The dramatic change in industry and focus on production outputs put tremendous pressure upon northern “developed” countries and exposed serious flaws within its social fabric.<sup>20</sup> With a wave of evangelicalism fired by popular preachers of the time arose a cadre of faith-based reformers who sought to instill biblical values into contemporary social structures. Their effort to bring God into social change is described in part by Charles Kraft: “The influence to abolish slavery, define and set up democratic government, work toward racial equality and the like should be applauded and encouraged, but not because there is any hope of ultimately producing a culture which we can label ‘Christian.’”<sup>21</sup>

Emphasis was likely not to define Christian culture, but demonstrate a compassionate approach to justice for the destitute who were either oppressed or fell through the safety nets. The great reformists were women and men, both Christian and enlightened activists. They sought out change that far surpassed their normal scope of impact through advocacy and social disobedience campaigns.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Jan de Vries “The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution,” *The Journal of Economic History* 54 (1994): 249-270, <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=4134456&fileId=S0022050700014467> (accessed March 23, 2016).

<sup>21</sup> Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 108.

<sup>22</sup> Henry Jones, *The Working Faith of the Social Reformer: And Other Essays* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), 189.

## **Abolition of Slavery**

Great Britain profited tremendously from a global slave trade that reaped income by providing human slaves to other colonial powers such as the Dutch, French, Spanish and Portuguese, as well as outlying British colonies. At its peak, the slave trade saw forty thousand men, women and children transported annually across the Atlantic and made up an estimated 80 percent of England's foreign trade income.<sup>23</sup> In the 1780s a number of anti slavery movements began, including the Quaker anti-slavery committees that resulted in the 1783 slave trade petition being submitted to parliament.

While many humanitarian reformers were active in bringing a successful end to England's slave trade, one luminary comes to the forefront; William Wilberforce. Wilberforce, who after becoming an evangelical Christian, influenced tremendous change in the United Kingdom. The most well-known outcome of his many social and religious endeavors was the successful ratification by the British parliament of the Slave Trade Act in 1807, bringing about the abolition of the slave trade in Great Britain. He also was instrumental in creating the free colony of Sierra Leone, the Church Mission Society, as well as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

In the United States the road to the abolition of slavery was revolutionary as opposed to the transformational approach gained in Great Britain. The process is described in part by Chuck Kraft. He writes, "The fact that in the United States the slower transformational process was interfered with by the desire of the non slaveholding

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<sup>23</sup> William Hague, *William Wilberforce: The Life of the Great Anti-Slave Trade Campaigner* (London: Harper Press, 2007), 97-99.

segments of the population to impose their will on the slaveholding segments has made many aspects of the process considerably more traumatic.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Women’s Rights**

In 1920, the nineteenth amendment to the US constitution was passed granting voting rights to women. Women’s suffrage, a centerpiece of the women’s rights movement spearheaded by abolitionists Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and many others was a significant event in the continuum of the struggle for equal rights of women in the US. In an era of intense social change that included the industrial revolution, the evangelical awakening and the rise of communism, women’s liberation took the course of social transformation in Europe and the US. To revisit Kraft:

Culture however does not have an existence independent of the people who operate it. Thus when we speak of cultural transformation, whether gradual or rapid, we must assume that we are speaking also of the people who bring about that change. When we speak of a cultures being prepared for rapid transformational change, we mean that the people within that culture (or at least sizable groupings of them) have felt a need and prepared themselves to bring about the change necessary to meet that need.<sup>25</sup>

In the US, it is significantly poignant that women, including Harriet Wilson and Susan B. Anthony, advocated on behalf of the abolition of slavery, child custody, property rights, as well as equal pay with men, before focusing on their own liberation in the feminist movement. Stanton’s position on equal rights for all citizens did not mean liberation for either blacks or women but sought equal rights for all:

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<sup>24</sup> Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 346-347.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 371.

“Their goal, they insisted, was simple and pure: to ensure that ‘Women and Negroes will no longer be known in law or constitution,’ but will be ‘buried in the citizen.’ This was powerful stuff, which Stanton expressed as a moral imperative with which no thinking person could disagree.”<sup>26</sup> Holding hands, the suffragists and abolitionists led the way into radical social change, one through transformation the other by revolution, both continues to this day.

### **Prison Reform**

Elisabeth Fry, the “Angel of Prisons,” was a Quaker social reformer during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries and took an unorthodox approach to prison reform. She spent nights in prison with female and child prisoners and invited local leaders and people of influence to join her in experiencing the squalor of unreformed prison life.<sup>27</sup> Fry later opened a training school for nurses, which proved highly influential upon a young Florence Nightingale. Nightingale felt a call from God while a teenager to dedicate her life in service to others. Her class-conscious family was exasperated when Florence broke the norms of traditional upper-class English society to educate herself in the art and science of nursing.<sup>28</sup> Nightingale spent the rest of her life in the promotion and organization of the nursing profession.

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<sup>26</sup> Lori D. Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: An American Life* (New York, Hill and Wang, 2009), Chapter IV.

<sup>27</sup> E. R. Pitman, *Elizabeth Fry* (Boston: University Press, 1884), Chapter V.

<sup>28</sup> Hugh Small, *Florence Nightingale: Avenging Angel* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 140.

## Other Reformers

The Factory Acts in England during the nineteenth century were in direct response to the dire working conditions of women and children in cotton mills, mines and hundreds of unregulated factories that required cheap labor. In 1790, Englishman William Took was asked to lead a Quaker initiative to develop a more humane approach to the care of the mentally ill. He established the York Retreat where the mentally ill were cared for in humane ways not yet seen in the Western world.<sup>29</sup> In the case of the reformist movements to abolish torture, Christians were less visible.<sup>30</sup> This was perhaps due in part because of lingering guilt by association to the Church's prosecution of crimes of heresy during the inquisition. It took a reformer of another kind to bring about abolition of torture in European countries. Voltaire hired expert lawyers to repeal the conviction of Jean Calas, who was brutally tortured and executed after a wrongful conviction for murdering his son.<sup>31</sup>

The above scenarios brought about phenomenal social change prior to the twentieth century, and gave credit to a few notable persons who themselves would likely assert that they were influenced by others more worthy of acclaim. Nineteenth and twentieth century reformers were, by and large, people of faith who were dedicated to bringing about positive change in the lives of people they did not know. As people of faith they believed in a transcendence of the human spirit that flourishes when hope is

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<sup>29</sup> The Retreat Website, "Our History," <http://www.theretreatyork.org.uk/> (accessed March 23, 2016).

<sup>30</sup> Jeremy Rifkin, *The Empathic Civilization: The Race to Global Consciousness in a World in Crisis* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press 2009), 390.

<sup>31</sup> Sean Gabb, *Voltaire: Crusader for Justice* (London: Libertarian Alliance, Jan. 1990), 3.



restored. Whether this conviction arose from a Judeo-Christian belief system or was sparked from a very human “moral sense of the importance of human life,”<sup>32</sup> the deeper, emphatic connection results in a transition from one state to another.

It is in the connection to compassion, whether through practical service or spontaneous gleam,<sup>33</sup> and the non-verbal capacity to communicate hope that real transcendence is achieved. It is little different for the person whose motives are not from a tradition of faith. She still requires faith to see the condition of a large or small group of neighbors transition from one state to another. Faith is required to believe that one’s efforts will make a lasting change in the lives of people who have suffered unimaginably.

Faith in action is an evident trait in many of the pioneer reformers and humanitarians. Dunant enlisted local women and called them into service inspiring future generations of service minded humanitarians. Eglantine Jebb, founder of Save the Children Fund in 1919 overcame her lack of a natural inclination towards children and insisted that, “All children, including the children of former enemies, be eligible for relief.”<sup>34</sup> She went on to draft the first Declaration of the Rights of Children,<sup>35</sup> bringing to the forefront the duty of the international community to put the rights of the child in their

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<sup>32</sup> Dunant, *Memories of Solferino*, 5.

<sup>33</sup> Heinz Kohut, “Reflections on Empathy - Final Lecture,” 1981 <https://youtube/ZQ6Y3hoKI8U> (accessed June 10, 2015).

<sup>34</sup> Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity, A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 85.

<sup>35</sup> Proclaimed by General Assembly Resolution 1386 1959. The Convention of the Rights of the Child was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and was entered into force in 1990.

planning.<sup>36</sup> Bob Pierce saw beyond the rubble of war-torn Seoul with a vision of long-term, child-focused programs in Korea and beyond. The spontaneous act of faith by these individuals may not have seemed momentous at the time but like the mustard seed “Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you,” (Mt 17:20).

### **Christianity in Action: The Rise of Post War Faith-based Humanitarian Work**

Dedicated reformers and humanitarian pioneers set the stage for humanitarian awareness and practice to expand on a global scale. Into this setting came about a gathering of missions and Church leaders who would chart the course for ecumenical Christianity into a new century and influence faith-based interventions well into the next century. The 1910 World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh, Scotland, ushered major Protestant denominations into a world impacted by reform in a variety of social arenas, and into a new commitment to “evangelize the world in this generation.”<sup>37</sup> The colonial world of the early-twentieth century offered unparalleled opportunities to missions. By co-opting the colonial goal of the betterment of the nations, they essentially joined forces with the colonial rulers of the day. Of the 1910 Missionary Conference, Michael Barnett writes: “The conference viewed colonialism and missionaries as two forces working together to spread civilization. The duty of government, as they put it, is

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<sup>36</sup> Claire Mulley, *The Woman who Saved the Children: A Biography of Eglantyne Jebb: Founder of Save the Children* (London: One World Publications 2010), 300.

<sup>37</sup> Gideon Goosen, “The World Missionary Conference Edinburgh 1910-2010: A Time for Reflection,” *Compass Review* (2010): 29.

‘to restrain evil and promote good,’ and ‘both missions and governments are interested in the welfare of nations.’ Colonialism was central to spreading Christianity.”<sup>38</sup>

There was more to the conference than the backdrop of colonialism; it was sophisticated and extremely well organized, including a two-year preparatory phase to prepare research papers for distribution to conference delegates. Plenary topics, including Education in Relation to the Christianization of National Life, Missionary Message in Relation to the Non-Christian World, Missions and Governments and Co-Operation and the Promotion of Unity, indicated a growing interest not only in ecumenical cooperation, a major take away for the conference, but also a greater respect for appreciative inquiry of the cultural values and local dynamics that framed the mission environment of the day. The conference launched nineteenth--century missions into a new world of increasing complexity fuelled by technology, geo politics and greater opportunities for proclamation and social compassion. War clouds, however, were gathering, and the need for the declaration of a universal humanitarian imperative would soon become tragically evident.

The holocaust brought about by Nazi Germany, and that of the nuclear holocaust that devastated Japan was matched only by the global devastation brought about by seven years of intercontinental warfare—dwarfing nineteenth century wars on continental Europe and the American Civil War.<sup>39</sup> Despite the previous ratification of the Geneva Charter and International Humanitarian Law that provided a standard by which nations were to observe in engaging in warfare, the world was faced with the specter of total

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<sup>38</sup> Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 72.

<sup>39</sup> John Keegan, *The Second World War* (London: Penguin 1986), 588.

annihilation.<sup>40</sup> Even as the Ten Commandments were powerless to bring about personal transformation, so the combined tome of humanitarian charters, code of conducts and IHL proved impotent when it came to the prevention of inhumanity in the midst of total war.<sup>41</sup> The new post-World War II order of economic catastrophe, severe food shortages and the relocation of millions of civilians created a humanitarian vacuum that needed to be filled if a generation of people, especially of vulnerable children, were to be saved from extinction. It was into this gap that pioneering people “marched off the map”<sup>42</sup> in service of the “*tutti fratelli*.”

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<sup>40</sup> International Red Cross, “The ICRC in WW II: The Holocaust,” [www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org) (2014). <https://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/misc/history-holocauste-020205.htm> (accessed March 23, 2016).

<sup>41</sup> Total warfare is a war that is unrestricted in terms of the weapons used, the territory or combatants involved, or the objectives pursued, especially one in which the laws of war are disregarded. Oxford Reference

<sup>42</sup> Halford Luccock, *Marching Off the Map* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952). Luccock wrote of Alexander the Great that he “marched off his maps,” after he had completed his conquest of Persia and headed east.

CHAPTER TWO  
CONTEMPORARY HUMANITARIAN SPACE

**Post-war Pioneers**

The post-war pioneers were creative and entrepreneurial, using limited resources to address needs that were left unheeded in the aftermath of war. They rarely went to governments or large institutions for funding, but turned to the Church Universal for the establishment of their respective ministries. Creating new funding concepts such as child sponsorship or animal banks they were proactive in bringing post-war humanitarian aid, meeting the desperate circumstance of children and widows in Europe, China and the Korean peninsula. Following are three brief summaries of Christian leaders who went abroad in an era of transition from global war to that of a simmering cold war.

Bob Pierce, Founder of World Vision International

“Let my heart be broken by the things that break God’s heart.”<sup>1</sup> These now famous words were written in the flyleaf of Bob Pierce’s Bible in 1948 when the adventurous young man first travelled to Asia. His experiences in post-war China, as well

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Stearns, *The Hole in Our Gospel: What Does God Expect of Us? The Answer that Changed my Life and Might Just Change the World* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 9.

as his time in war-torn Korea during the early-1950s, moved him with compassion for children who were dreadfully affected by decades of war and devastation, so much so that it was said of Pierce that he, “functioned from a broken heart.”<sup>2</sup> On a trip to China in 1947 he met up with caretaker, Tena Hoelkedoer,<sup>3</sup> who was caring for a young girl named White Jade. Pierce, who showed interest in the orphaned child, reportedly gave his last five dollars for her support after Hoelkedoer asked him, “What are you going to do for her?”<sup>4</sup> Pierce promised to send five dollars a month for the child, making White Jade the first sponsored child in what was to become the world’s largest faith-based nonprofit humanitarian organization.

Today World Vision has more than 30,000 employees with an annual operational budget of more than two billion dollars. Area Development Programs (ADP) through which more than two million sponsored children are recipients of developmental programs. Tandem with community development, World Vision responds to natural and manmade disasters, especially where those intersect with existing programs or ADPs. Pierce was a man of vision and faith. He boldly took Christianity-in-action to new heights in creative and innovative ways to respond to the needs of the two-thirds world, founding two of today’s major faith based-agencies, World Vision and Samaritan’s Purse.

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<sup>2</sup> Tim Stafford, “Imperfect Instrument,” *Christianity Today* (March 2005), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/march/19.56.html> (accessed March 30, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> World Vision, “Our History,” <http://www.wvi.org/our-history> (accessed March 23, 2016). “This encounter was a turning point for Rev. Pierce. He began building an organization dedicated to helping the world’s children, and in 1950 World Vision was born.”

<sup>4</sup> Stafford, “Imperfect Instrument.”

## Dan West, Founder of Heifer International

Wendy Smith wrote, “These children don’t need a cup, they need a cow.”<sup>5</sup>

Dan West was a young graduate from Manchester College in Indiana when he went to Europe to help with relief efforts in Spain during the Spanish Civil War in 1938. As a Christian pacifist serving as a Church of the Brethren volunteer, West was living out deep faith convictions to serve humanity, even in dangerous situations. While serving soup to desperate refugees in 1933, he came to the realization that soup lines were an inadequate solution to the problem of sustainable aid to poverty stricken families. He sought an end to the cycle of poverty by providing families with livestock and training so that they “could be spared the indignity of depending on others to feed their children.”<sup>6</sup>

Like Pierce, West was an energetic, pioneering youth who was living out his passionate ideals to love God while selflessly serving his brothers and sisters. The innovative result was a concept of “passing on the gift,” a foundational pillar still utilized in Heifer International’s sustainable programs. Since 1944, when what was then known as Heifers for Relief, Heifer International has benefitted twelve million families in more than 125 countries.<sup>7</sup>

West was influential in numerous faith-based humanitarian movements of his time and was instrumental in the development of Brethren Disaster Service. It was written of him:

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<sup>5</sup> Wendy Smith, *Give a Little: How Your Small Donations Can Transform Our World* (New York: Hachette Books, 2009), 61.

<sup>6</sup> Heifer International, “Our History,” [www.heifer.org](http://www.heifer.org) (accessed March 23, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

“The vision and commitment of Dan West is woven throughout the fabric of this institution,” said Manchester College President Jo Young Switzer. “He dedicated his life to relief work – from providing milk to hungry children during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s to inspiring farmers to raise and send heifers and other farm animals abroad through Church of the Brethren organizations. He wanted to provide support that helped solve the root of the problem, so each recipient promised to give offspring of the animals to others in need.”<sup>8</sup>

#### Everett Swanson - Founder of Compassion International

“Now that you’ve seen, what will you do?” was a life-impacting question for Everett Swanson. He went to preach to servicemen during the Korean War in 1952. Swanson was devastated by the neglect and abuse of children who were abandoned and orphaned by the war. At one time he witnessed soldiers abusing children by trying to scatter them because they were a nuisance. Once Everett watched as a guard picked up a child by the wrist and ankles and threw him into the back of a truck. Swanson told his friend, “No one, no matter how small, should be treated this way.” His friend looked at him and asked, “Now that you’ve seen, what will you do?”

This was the beginning of the Everett Swanson Evangelistic Association, later changed to Compassion International in 1963. The change in names was inspired by the words of Christ, “I have compassion on the multitude. I will not send them away hungry” (Mt 15:32). Like World Vision and Heifer International, Compassion International began with minimal resources in the face of tremendous need: “Two checks were presented to

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<sup>8</sup> Manchester University, “Preserving the Vision of Dan West ’17,” *Manchester Magazine* (Spring 2010): 18.



Rev. Swanson (\$50 and \$1,000) upon his return to America to help the orphans of Korea. 'This was conclusive proof to me that God was in it,' Swanson said."<sup>9</sup>

## **Other Voices**

Other post-war voices have called for unity and compassionate action in this world of need. Tibet, which saw the ruthless and overwhelming invasion by China in 1959, has generated a global call for tolerance and compassion in the voice of its spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama who said, "Basically universal responsibility is feeling for other people's suffering just as we feel our own . . . love and compassion are the moral fabric of world peace."<sup>10</sup> Sister Jayanti, Director of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual Organization is a spiritual teacher, a pioneer and an advocate for peace. She pleads for a common understanding between people regardless of race and other external differences: "If you say we are God's children, that is the very basic factor in my life. Whatever other factors of color, race, culture, gender different thinking, the relationship is the eternal one of the soul to soul."<sup>11</sup>

Robert Henderson, Secretary General of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'I in America, takes a philosophical view of why humans continue to have wars. He writes,

See, the essential is this—either human beings are incorrigibly selfish and aggressive and, therefore by definition, unable to build a peaceful world, or we are growing up on the job. . . . So when we look at war and prejudice and

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<sup>9</sup> Compassion International, "History of Compassion International," [www.compassion.org](http://www.compassion.org) (accessed March 24, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Igor Kononenko, *Teachers of Wisdom* (Pittsburgh: Dorrance Publishing, 2010), 367.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Tobias, *Parliament of Souls: In Search of Global Spirituality: Interviews with 28 Spiritual Leaders from Around the World* (San Francisco: KQED Books 1995), 291.

exploitation and inequality, we can either see it as a symptom in the flaw in the make-up of human beings or we can see it as things we did when we were too young to know better.<sup>12</sup>

Humanitarian workers today continue to follow in the footsteps of Dunant, Nightingale, Pierce and other visionaries who serve humanity in the spirit of “*tutti fratelli*,” without regard to political, religious or ethnic identification. The International Committee of the Red Cross (hereafter ICRC) has clarified the essence of *tutti fratelli* in its Code of Conduct (hereafter CoC).<sup>13</sup> The CoC is made up of ten precepts recognizing the humanitarian imperative as the prime motivating factor for responding to human need. Briefly, the imperative is to alleviate human suffering wherever it is found. Life is precious in all environments and aid must be provided universally and without partiality. As is written in The Sphere Handbook:

These principles are reflected in international law, but derive their force ultimately from the fundamental moral principle of humanity: that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Based on this principle, we affirm the primacy of the humanitarian imperative: that action should be taken to prevent or alleviate human suffering arising out of disaster or conflict, and that nothing should override this principle.<sup>14</sup>

The CoC further stipulates that humanitarian assistance must not be used to further political or religious standpoints, nor should it act as an instrument of a government or of foreign policy. Culture and customs are to be respected, even in the midst of a disaster response. As much as possible the response is to be built upon local

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<sup>12</sup> Tobias, *Parliament of Souls*, 31.

<sup>13</sup> The International Red Cross, “The Code of Conduct, Principles of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response Programmes,” <http://www.ifrc.org/en/publications-and-reports/code-of-conduct/> (accessed March 24, 2016).

<sup>14</sup> The International Red Cross, “The Sphere Handbook 2011: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response, Practical Action,” (April 19, 2011), 20.

capacities so that beneficiaries are not passive recipients, but are active agents in the design and management of programs that reduce vulnerabilities to future disasters and create sustainable lifestyles. Accountability to donors and beneficiaries in terms of finances and program effectiveness is required. Finally, beneficiaries shall not be recognized simply as disaster victims to be used as promotional material but as dignified humans.

While recognizing the CoC as a behavioral guide for humanitarian practitioners, the UN's Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), uses four humanitarian principles to guide their programming, starting with the humanitarian imperative. These include humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Aid workers often serve in conflict-ridden countries and failed states where beneficiaries are embedded among both combatant and noncombatant populations. It is here that the CoC and Humanitarian Principles create a potentially dangerous tension. Aid workers can be seen as a threat to the local balance of power. Humanitarian impartiality can easily pit aid workers against powerful and often dangerous factions. The trend toward more violence against aid workers has seen a dramatic increase in the past ten years. The number of documented violent incidents against all aid workers has mushroomed from 143 in 2003 to 474 in 2013.<sup>15</sup>

Whatever means are employed in creating vital aid operations in support of the poor, it is increasingly evident that humanitarian agencies are called upon to serve their enemies. In doing so they continue the faith tradition of Jesus' teaching to "love your

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<sup>15</sup> The Aid Worker Security Database, "Home Page," [aidworkersecurity.org](http://aidworkersecurity.org) (accessed March 24, 2016).

enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven” (Mt 5:42).

### **The Role of Faith in Contemporary Humanitarian Space**

Transformational development, the life-changing process that impacts individuals in community and makes them life changing agents,<sup>16</sup> is an important part of faith-based agencies *raison d’etre* even in an era of greater focus on compliance to accountability systems. Faith motivated International Non-Government Organizations (INGOs) seek to insure their work is not only materially, socially and spiritually significant, but also sustainable through those who are changed by the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit. If people hope to bring about positive, long-term change through compassionate service, they must keep focused on the foundational values and disciplines that have led them into humanitarian work in the first place. Faith-based agencies are challenged to prevent mission drift away from foundational values in the face of greater reliance upon government and institutional resources, an increasingly complex humanitarian space and a dangerous new world of increasing religious extremism.

Pioneers of post-war humanitarian organizations spoke affectionately of their early experiences with the poor. They fondly recall how program records were filed away in shoe boxes, how dedicated staff met daily to pray over beneficiaries by name or how founding men and women would personally distribute clothing and material aid to the poor in war torn societies. Afterwards they would deliver a message of hope through preaching. Although it is still possible to engage in the above “spiritual” activities, the

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<sup>16</sup> Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books Publishing, 1999), 111.

scope and scale of programs make it much less personal. Field level individuals, who implement the heart and soul of the organization's mandates, are usually far removed from the core, where policies are developed based upon founding vision and values. Those who can recall the history and foundational pinions upon which the organization was established are in far-away administrative centers. Their trips to the field are expensive, short of time and low on relational contribution to either the beneficiaries or the staff that deal daily with the local needs. Waldron Scott notes that:

Relief organizations commonly exercise three types of power: the power of finances, the power of expertise, and the power of organization. Para-church agencies are often in a position to wield all three unilaterally, sometimes insensitively. Indian mission executive Theodore Williams reminds us that "it is not the fulfillment of programmes but the fulfilling of human relationships that matter. If we ride roughshod over the feelings of people and have no time for individuals, under the guise of carrying out projects and programmes for God, our mission has no credibility."<sup>17</sup>

Organizational memory, a crucial element of informal learning, is too often embedded in the gray hairs at headquarters and not the practitioners in the field. The dollar competed for by faith-based agencies is pegged to the same standard that is held to by all applicants for international grants and funding. The indicators for success in proposal submissions reflect increasingly higher levels of education and sophistication for implementing plans and strategies.

This was demonstrated during a conversation with a UNHCR representative when he was asked about his view on the role of faith-based humanitarianism in the current humanitarian space. After an hour's conversation discussing a very difficult working

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<sup>17</sup> Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, eds., *The Church in Response to Human Need* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 213.

environment marked by constant inter-communal violence under a government that does not favor humanitarian interventions, his eyes brightened visibly. He enthusiastically shared how it was the faith-based groups who were willing to meet the humanitarian imperative head-on in the difficult places and make the hard decisions.

Where major donors and agencies were distracted by the merits of using temporary or long-term shelter schemes, faith-based groups stepped into the humanitarian space. They provided operational solutions that got Internally Displaced People (IDP) out from under plastic sheets and into shelters. While demonstrating that sometimes policy and standards can actually impede the humanitarian imperative. The agency must heed the soul's needs to respond to suffering humanity, even at times when it is counter to policy. The UNHCR leader, a self-confessed agnostic, spoke glowingly of agencies in the arena of humanitarian service whose staff feel and live out their faith convictions, noting that they have the added benefit of a ready-made grass roots structure when they enlist local churches in appropriate humanitarian services. In an article written for the *Forced Migration Review*, he elaborated:

The resumption of armed conflict in 2011 in the north of Myanmar led to tens of thousands of people being displaced; three years on, over 99,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) remain. In this predominately Christian area of Myanmar, Baptist and Catholic communities and organisations have been the pivotal providers of aid. . . . More recently in the wake of the conflict, churches and their compounds have served logically as safe havens and places where groups could respond to the immediate humanitarian needs of people of the same faith or even members of the same congregation, whether they were in government-controlled or non-government-controlled areas.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Edward Benson and Carine Jaquet, "Faith-based Humanitarianism in Northern Myanmar," *Forced Migration Review* 48 (2014): 48.

Beyond the Humanitarian Imperative, it is the imperative of the Spirit that urges faith-based workers onward, leading them beyond the “law” of humanitarianism, as seen in Benson’s article above. His statement underscores the call of personal action, pausing from the busyness of the humanitarian space and entering into the emphatic nature of the neighbor-to-neighbor essence of service. Referring again to The CoC’s ten “commandments,” the number one guideline is that the “Humanitarian Imperative Comes First:” “The right to receive humanitarian assistance, and to offer it, is a fundamental humanitarian principle which should be enjoyed by all citizens of all countries.”

Keeping faith in humanitarianism is recognizing, first and foremost, the soul’s imperative to respond compassionately to human need. Echoing the call to love one’s neighbor, the humanitarian imperative leaves out “you shall love the Lord your God” (Lk 10:27). This element is not entirely forgotten, however, since the third rule of the CoC stipulates that aid is not to be used to further a particular standpoint of politics or religious views. It elaborates in the following way: “Notwithstanding the right of NGHAs<sup>19</sup> to espouse particular political or religious opinions, we affirm that assistance will not be dependent on the adherence of the recipients to those opinions. We will not tie the promise, delivery or distribution of assistance to the embracing or acceptance of a particular political or religious creed.”<sup>20</sup>

In other words, agencies have every right to share their beliefs with people affected by disaster in appropriate ways. It is here that ethics are introduced in banning the use of aid as a means of gaining adherents. Many faith-based organizations state that

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<sup>19</sup> NGHAs are Non-Government Humanitarian Agencies.

<sup>20</sup> The International Red Cross, “The Code of Conduct.”

it is through faith-in-action that Christ's love is demonstrated to people in need. Many require their expatriate staff to indicate agreement to a statement of faith or adherence to traditional evangelical dogma. It is here at the nexus of dogma and praxis where things get tricky for agencies that, on one hand, serve the needy in practical ways while promising their constituency that the Gospel is being promoted.

The irony of "rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar's" (Mk 12:17) reveals the dilemma when people or agencies are caught between commitments to the government and a higher power. A corollary is when faith-based agencies receive government funding to engage in evidence-based programming, but are also expected by internal values and policies to share the Gospel in the context of those programs. There is a fine line between satisfying donors who expect Kingdom values to be promoted in the context of humanitarian programs while meeting the humanitarian imperative.

Franklin Graham, President of Samaritans Purse, faced this issue in 2005 when he started the Ministry Strategy Initiative that requires every humanitarian program to have a component of proclamation.<sup>21</sup> As a result, Samaritans Purse has a dualistic approach to programs. Faith component projects are privately funded and implemented through local churches or faith-based agencies. World Vision, on the other hand, believes that transformational change can be achieved if they are internally faithful to their core values. These values begin with "We are Christian. From the abundance of God's love, we find our call to ministry."<sup>22</sup> World Vision attempts to bring about alignment to faith-

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<sup>21</sup> Andy Kopsa, "Obama's Evangelical Gravy Train," TheNation.com, <http://www.thenation.com/article/obamas-evangelical-gravy-train/> (accessed March 24, 2016).



based values through their concept of Faith in Action: “Our faith in Jesus Christ is core to who we are. As an expression of God’s unconditional love for all people, especially vulnerable children, we serve alongside the poor and oppressed. We hope to live as followers of Christ by being active, visible bearers of Christ’s love.”<sup>23</sup>

### **Bridging the Gap: Bringing Hope in Diversity**

Faith-based humanitarian agencies will achieve transformational goals only to the degree that individual staff members are committed to seeking transcendence that spans personal transformation to connecting with their needy neighbor. Historically, the intent of faith-based humanitarian and development agencies has been to facilitate not only material, transitory change but transcendence from one state to another. As implied, the process requires more than simply finding a formula or structure that will insure desired results. Jesus warned against relying on entrenched practices to bring fruitfulness in the Kingdom He was proclaiming. He said, “Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved” (Mt 9:17). The ultimate goal is for transformed hearts and minds that result in adopted personal values and behavior. The challenge is to be context appropriate and match spiritual orientation and values to each organization’s unique environment.

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<sup>22</sup> World Vision, “Visions and Values,” <http://www.wvi.org/vision-and-values> (accessed March 24, 2016).

<sup>23</sup> World Vision, “Our Faith in Action,” <http://www.worldvision.org/our-impact/our-faith-in-action> (accessed March 24, 2016).

## Keeping Faith in the Ranks

Humanitarian agencies hire national staff and benefit greatly from their expertise, dedication and leadership. Faith-based agencies compete for qualified national staff in the same human resource pool as peer agencies. The recruitment process is hindered when faith is a criterion for selection, especially in countries where Christians are a minority. One way to insure that faith values are not “watered down” is to limit local leadership roles to Christians, thereby assuring that core strategic values and operational focus is maintained. This dilemma is keenly felt by the national staff that is tolerant, if not supportive, of the Christian values being promoted, yet is excluded from professional advancement. Often limited to mid- to senior-level field management roles they may not enjoy the benefit of advancement into the larger organizational context.

Limiting opportunity for advancement creates a double helix for expatriates and national team members, who are expected to perform in a professional work place, yet cannot advance because of their faith. The implicit message is that “it is enough that beneficiaries experience transformational growth, even though our national members are hindered from advancement under a glass ceiling of religious bias.” Further, when faith-based agencies exclusively hire Christian national staff they have created a learning gap and miss valuable insights and perspectives from local culture and expertise that comes from tapping local knowledge resources. Having non-Christian workers in the midst of a localized team provides the opportunity to practice charity at home and to gain from local learning and understanding. It propels programs and creates fresh relevancy and context

when committed local staff or new Christians are embedded in the vanguard of community-based programs.

With few exceptions, most faith-based humanitarian agencies do not openly proselytize, however many do require staff to attend daily or weekly devotions. In most cases it is a transparent attempt to genuinely engage with national staff, inculcating biblical values and truths. In the best of situations, these exercises allow for genuine inter-faith dialogue providing opportunity for spiritual growth and mutual awareness. In the worst, it can inoculate people away from Christ through dull and uninspiring encounters with Christian teaching. In these scenarios, cultural ambiguity can create misunderstandings. Staff can be led to believe that the only time the base leader is truly concerned for their welfare is during the exit interview and obligatory prayer upon dismissal.

Faith-based agencies are held to the same humanitarian accountabilities that are found in Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) and People in Aid. They are expected to adhere to Sphere Standards that govern operational activities. Donors, likewise, are pleased to fund the activities of faith-based agencies upon successful bids in the competitive proposal process.

Amy Martin, head of the UN's Office of Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs (hereafter OCHA) in Myanmar's restive western Rakhine State, sees the importance of faith in any humanitarian agency for reasons that differ from programmatic ones. From her experience in conflict zones such as Darfur, the Central African Republic and now Myanmar, she states, "When people face, on a daily basis, the threat of violence or rape

or inter-communal conflicts, they need to be able to call on a personal faith to keep them going, it does not detract from the humanitarian purpose.”<sup>24</sup>

Martin also is quick to point out that the purpose of UN’s large-scale relief and humanitarian effort is essentially technical in nature, getting goods and relief necessities to people affected by disaster. If the faith agenda of an agency gets in the way of this, there can be trouble. Martin relayed one instance when a small relief agency included Bibles into non-food items for distribution to a beneficiary group and was promptly asked to leave the country by the government.

In 2013, World Vision, although careful not to cross the threshold between humanitarian service and open faith proclamation, was accused of including Bibles in NFI shipments to benefit Syrians under siege in the town of Manbij, northern Syria. Although the claims were unsubstantiated, the consequences could have been disastrous in a highly volatile environment. ISIL militants, who were accepting aid from a variety of humanitarian agencies, governed the population. Although no evidence of Bibles or religious materials was produced, the resulting death threats achieved their intended purpose of intimidation and fear among the aid agencies national team members who bore the brunt of program implementation.

In today’s humanitarian space the issue of faith must be addressed. For instance, organizations must ask how much faith must be evident in faith-based ministries? If the true aim in humanitarian work is not material but spiritual faith-based groups must demonstrate how this element of their endeavor can be realized in measurable ways.

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<sup>24</sup> Amy Martin, personal interview June 6, 2015.

From a different perspective they must explore how much “faith” is required to build a community that is truly transformed and transforming.

The paradox of the faith-based organization today, whether as para-church, missionary society or Christian relief organization, is how to embrace and value people in culture while attempting to keep pace with an increasingly complex humanitarian space. This, however, is precisely their mission—to demonstrate Kingdom standards to the degree that people and communities are transformed. At issue is how behavior in everyday life reflects the secret life that Christians enjoy with God through Christ. The question is difficult, if not impossible, because the secret life is by definition hidden in God and not measurable by accountability instruments. Yet surely there will be results, whether measurable or not, and will reflect this mystery. If the nature of faith-based agencies’ work in ever changing cross cultural settings is difficult to manage, how much more the spiritual dynamic that they seek to employ as the great change agent in human lives.

PART TWO  
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

## CHAPTER THREE

### LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of literature dedicated to humanitarian subjects reveals a variety of resources available. However, when seeking literature that deals with faith-based humanitarianism, the field narrows considerably. The topic of this dissertation, keeping faith in humanitarianism, requires a historical perspective while also looking carefully at the theological framework for faith-based humanitarianism. The following works were of tremendous help in aligning a paradigm of Kingdom theology and subsequent orientation to both historical and practical humanitarian service. Following are brief reviews of five key works in which are described key contributing factors to this dissertation as well as limitations of the literature considered as it relates to the topic at hand.

#### *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism - Michael Barnett*

##### Thesis and Summary of Main Argument

Humanitarianism made a Faustian bargain through involvement in the domain of governance and political change while creating an empire of aid resulting in governance over global humanitarianism. Although well intentioned, humanitarian governance has

become a form of paternalism and control over those it seeks to care for. This has been exacerbated by the increased involvement and collaboration between states and international humanitarian agencies in the belief that the power of both will be increased.

### Contribution to Topic

Barnett takes up the history of modern humanitarianism with Dunant's narrative giving credit to faith-based pioneers as well as missionary movements as catalysts for social change. *Empire of Humanity* also delves into the connection between the notable nineteenth-century movements that were largely faith inspired with current peace building initiatives. In doing so he presents a more sophisticated, albeit complex humanitarian environment post-Cold War. It is one in which the fruits of compassionate aid are increasingly suspect when provided in the complex humanitarian arena of multiple actors whose motives are uncertain in the view of beneficiaries.

### Limitations

Barnett does an admirable job in describing and crediting the faith-based roots of humanitarianism as a political scientist. He faithfully acknowledges the contributions of women and men of faith who were instrumental in creating a world where humanitarian standards are now recognized as binding law. His primary focus upon Western based actors in the arena of modern day humanitarianism highlights the glaring omission of the other streams of humanitarianism, whether faith based or not, such as the Red Crescent Society, Hindu and other Eastern streams of compassionate traditions. More coverage upon these issues would have contributed greatly to the perspective and dialogue of the origins of modern humanitarianism.



***Kingdom Come: Why we must Give up our Obsession with Fixing the Church-and what we should do Instead - Reggie McNeal***

Thesis and Summary of Main Argument

“It’s time for the church to get over its self-absorption and self-centeredness and adopt the larger and more compelling story of God’s Kingdom as its reason for being and its mission in the world.”<sup>1</sup> God’s intention for humanity is that they all experience life abundantly and in fullness. In order for this to happen people are to pray, desire and dedicate themselves to seeing the Kingdom as it operates in heaven to be made visible and active in their daily lives here on earth. It is important that Christians realize that the Church and Kingdom are not the same, since in the Church the focus is usually upon church issues such as property, people and activities. Contrary to a very localized perspective, the Kingdom of God is an “invading force,” which is expanding the rule and reign of God in the world.

Contribution to Topic

*Kingdom Come* makes a number of important contributions to faith-based humanitarianism because it focuses on the powerful dynamic of the Kingdom of God at work in the world of people. As stated by McNeal, “If humans are involved in it, the Kingdom of god has a stake in it.”<sup>2</sup> McNeal contends that to the extent that God’s will and character is displayed, the Kingdom is made evident. Wherever faith-based humanitarians serve by demonstrating goodness, faithfulness, compassion, love, justice, righteousness

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<sup>1</sup> Reggie McNeal, *Kingdom Come: Why we must Give up our Obsession with Fixing the Church—and what we should do Instead* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2015), Kindle edition, loc 109.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., loc 531.

and sanctity they work with God to extend the reach of his effective will and influence in the world. McNeal emphasizes that sin is whatever diminishes life, and it is evident that much of the suffering in the world, whether by natural or human made conditions, is caused by unjust systems. When compassion is brought to the suffering, it is the Kingdom that focuses on the welfare of the community, not on the Church.

### Limitations

McNeal is careful to point out that the Kingdom of God is an invading force outside of the church walls. If every aspect of culture is to be exposed to the Gospel, the Church must go beyond its comfort zone. Although no mention is made of faith-based humanitarianism as an extension of the Church, he speaks of the freedom that comes from serving others and in that service Christians develop a sense of “empathy, a sense of responsibility, and compassion for the needy.”<sup>3</sup>

### ***Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church - Scot McKnight***

#### Thesis and Summary of Argument

The Church’s emphasis on social action and personal salvation has diminished the importance of the Kingdom of God as the redemptive force in creation. McKnight takes issue with Christians who equate social work with Kingdom work, which he sees as being linked inextricably with the mission and life of the Church. The author clarifies his

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., loc 1526.

theological position by stating that, There is no kingdom outside the church.”<sup>4</sup>

McKnight’s view of the Church is based upon an interpretation of the *ecclesia* being “Israel Expanded” embedded with political and social implications. By use of the word *ecclesia*, early Christians were in effect stating that they were “Israel Expanded and were gathered locally as a sociopolitical fellowship under King Jesus.”<sup>5</sup> Kingdom mission is interpreted as action or activities that usher people into a state of blessedness by a union with Christ and with others through fellowship of the Kingdom.<sup>6</sup>

#### Contribution to Topic

McKnight’s work in *Kingdom Conspiracy* contributes to the topic of faith in humanitarianism by “pointing our noses” back to the Bible, forcing a re-evaluation of the role that Christian faith should play in compassionate service. A key point is made about the importance of context in such service. Comparison is made to Christ’s Kingdom theology being shaped by the specific context of his day. He underscores this concept by stating that, “Kingdom mission today only works when tied to our context as we seek to live out Jesus’ kingdom vision in our world.”<sup>7</sup>

#### Limitations

The obvious implications of the extensive history of humanitarianism, especially where Christians were seeking to expand the effective reach of God’s kingdom requires a

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<sup>4</sup> Scot McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2014), 93.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 42.

more liberal view of the kingdom-church polemic. Christian faith based humanitarian workers aim to be a living viable presence of Christ often in a context where there extreme distress and suffering. Emphatic compassion is then the embodiment of Christ where there is no church. We therefore see the work of the kingdom more broadly than that which is expressed only through or by a local church context but see this as an extension of the church universal.

### ***The Divine Conspiracy* - Dallas Willard**

#### Thesis and Summary of Main Argument

Jesus Christ is more than a portal to eternal life, he is leading his followers into a walk of discipleship that transforms them into Christ-like people and gives them access now to a life that will continue into eternity. God's Kingdom is a kingdom of the here and now, not of some far off reality. As transformed people Christians are to usher that Kingdom into the world permeating all aspects of the "personal, social, and political order where it is now excluded."<sup>8</sup>

#### Contribution to Topic

*The Divine Conspiracy* is a call for Christians to actively participate in ushering in the Kingdom of God through personal transformation resulting from discipleship under Christ's rule. Unless people of faith experience transformation, it is unlikely that beneficiaries of their humanitarian endeavors will be transformed. Willard calls for a fresh look at the beatitudes as a means of availing Christians of God's rule and

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<sup>8</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1998), 26.

righteousness through reliance upon Christ.<sup>9</sup> Mercy, a hallmark of the compassionate is highlighted in the beatitudes: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy;” “The worldly wise will, of course, say, ‘Woe to the merciful, for they shall be taken advantage of.’”<sup>10</sup> Faith-based humanitarian workers are often criticized for their naïve approach to helping the poor or the oppressed or victims of calamity. Taking this a step further, the faith-based servant of humanity will have to learn how to deal with enemies, whether on behalf of beneficiaries or of real enemies who seek evil for humanitarians because of their line of work. Willard describes the dilemma thus: “The final illustrative contrast between the old rightness and the rightness of the kingdom heart has to do with our attitude toward our enemies: those with standing contempt and hatred for us who regularly fantasize our pain and destruction.”<sup>11</sup> He completes the section with the concept that loving one’s enemies is equated with perfection: “But, Jesus says to his disciples, because you are living from God as citizens of the kingdom, have the kind of wholeness, of full functionality, that he has. ‘Be perfect [*teleioi*] in the way your Father, the one in the heavens, is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).”<sup>12</sup>

### Limitations

Willard speaks to people of faith from all walks encouraging them to engage in proactive fellowship and discipleship under Christ’s tutelage. This teaching provides spiritual meat for people called into service in difficult locations, but does not serve as a

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 182.

handbook to dispensing the same spiritual truths to the suffering. Rather it serves as an instructors' manual for how to live a life that will be better prepared to demonstrate the attributes of the Kingdom where human need is abundant.

***Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development - Bryant Myers***

Thesis and Summary of Main Argument

“The goal of development is to create the environment and conditions within which all people have the freedom to seek the better human future they desire.”<sup>13</sup> The message from Western culture has been that spiritual and material domains are separate and unrelated and too often development concepts taught and practiced were and are loaded with negative implications related to the material, social and cultural arenas of life. Poverty is about relationships that do not work while transformation is about restoring relationships with God, self and community, the “other” and with the environment. God is at work in the world and as such Christian holistic development is a theological act. Christians always witness, the question is to whom or to what. Because of this a genuine biblical and holistic understanding on development must be identified and practiced. Myers writes, “The goal of development is to create the environment and conditions within which all people have the freedom to seek the better human future they desire.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Bryant Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, NY: World Vision, 1999), Kindle edition, loc 1084.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

The beginning of transformation according to Myers is “healing the marred identity of the poor.”<sup>15</sup> One way to accomplish this is to remove impediments to making choices so that the poor themselves can be actors in the process of their development. Engaging the biblical story must be central to the practice of transformational development done by Christians.

### Contribution to Topic

Myers’ call to listen to the community’s story about the unseen world so that solutions and methods can adequately address the community’s needs was an important message for this dissertation.<sup>16</sup> Also poignant is the need to, “Remember that the goal of human transformation is the discovery of true identity and vocation, not simply meeting the goals, outcomes and outputs of a program on time and on budget.”<sup>17</sup> As a reminder about priorities in transformational development, Myers stresses that real transformation means “right and just relationships.”<sup>18</sup>

### Limitations

Myers’ work is focused chiefly on development work, defined early on in this book as, “to create the environment and conditions within which all people have the freedom to seek the better human future they desire.”<sup>19</sup> While this can be said in general

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., loc 991.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., loc 657.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., loc 3984.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., loc 1174.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., loc 1085.

for faith-based humanitarianism, the disaster response environment seeks to normalize the situation so that, at some point people will indeed be able to “seek the better human future they desire.”<sup>20</sup> Also, the implication of theodicy, though not addressed in Myers’ book in detail is an important topic to grapple with, especially when people are victimized by a variety of perceived injustices.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., loc 1085.



CHAPTER FOUR  
A THEOLOGY OF COMPASSION

**Introduction**

Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.  
- Psalm 85:10

The relatively new field of Western humanitarianism is firmly rooted in Judeo-Christian values that can be summed up in four words: justice, compassion, faith and transformation. The Old Testament has painstakingly laid out for the Hebrews an ideal of inclusivity of the alien into the life and community of Israel. In this way the ideal of *Shalom* (a Sm 25:6) was conceptualized and practiced as a transcendent action of truth and justice to realize wholeness. Wholeness in community happens when ideals of truth and justice are consistently upheld, defended and cherished. When Christ described in explicit terms Kingdom expectations for love of one's neighbor, he went well beyond the "love your neighbor, hate your enemy" rubric of the Old Testament. Shockingly, he commands his followers to love their enemy and by doing so they are promised that they too can experience a moral perfection like the Father.

Through the parable of the Good Samaritan, he instructs his followers to love all of their neighbors, regardless of race, religion or political affiliations so that they are in effect commanded to love the neighbor even their enemy. Compassion, a sign of human transformation, bridges the gap between an enemy and neighbor and becomes the spark of redemption for humanity in crisis. It is written in Genesis 6:9, “Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Where is your brother Abel?’ ‘I don’t know,’ he replied. ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’”

Ever since Cain asked of God, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” humankind has struggled over the dilemma of how to behave toward their neighbor. Most people do not kill their brothers, however many will turn a blind eye to a person in need. The question that God asks of Cain, He asks his followers, “Where is your brother, where is your sister?” Too often the brazen retort to the creator is similar to Cain’s: “Must I also be held accountable for my brother and my sister?” The scriptural linkage between the sin of Cain’s murder and that of shunning a neighbor in need is contrasted throughout the Bible with a motif of *agape* love. To be clear, reference is made to Willard’s definition of agape love: “Love is an overall condition of the embodied, social self-poised to promote the goods of human life that are within its range of influence.”<sup>1</sup> God’s ideal for humanity transcends the obligation to be a “keeper” of humanity to that of being a lover of humanity.

The issue of compassion is seemingly unique to people because they not only possess the capacity to objectify their own existence but to identify empathically with

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<sup>1</sup> Dallas Willard, “Getting Love Right,” (A paper presented at the American Association of Christian Counselors conference in Nashville, on September 15, 2007), 6.

fellow humans. An implication being that suffering and the desire to compassionately respond is inherent within the human condition; this condition is in common with all people<sup>2</sup> and belies not only a shared destiny but a deep soul-felt identity with people who suffer. People share this commonality of suffering in spiritual dimensions due in part because of the personal conflict brought about by the “dark night of the soul.” Mother Teresa of Kolkata, known for her deep spirituality as well as her compassionate service to the indigent of that city was not immune to the same affliction that all experience. In 1957 she wrote, “I am told God lives in me, and yet the reality of darkness and coldness and emptiness is so great that nothing touches my soul.”<sup>3</sup>

Like Saint John of the Cross<sup>4</sup> Mother Teresa experienced deep personal trials of her faith and struggled with spiritual dryness that is common to people of faith. Yet, even in her struggles she saw the commonality of all people and reached out to the dying and indigent of Calcutta’s poorest communities. Christians also share a commonality of suffering through physical proportions of pain and anguish that afflict all humankind, and they are all finite and know this to be true; that all share an uncertain fate.

### **The Neighbor in the Old Testament**

The concept of the word neighbor is revealed through Scripture by a common thread of biblical injunctions and ultimately the greatest commandment made by Christ to

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<sup>2</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man (Volume 1, Human Nature)* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1964), 3.

<sup>3</sup> David Scott, *The Love that Made Mother Teresa: How her Secret Visions and Dark Nights Can Help You Conquer the Slums of Your Heart* (Bedford, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2014)

<sup>4</sup> St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul* (Saint Louis de Montfort, FR: Catholic Way Publishing, 2003).

his hearers: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” (Mk 12:30-31). As used in everyday conversation people casually refer to a nearby house or household as a neighbor. Unknown acquaintances are greeted with the term “Hi neighbor” and, depending upon locale people even salute total strangers with the familiar and friendly acknowledgment “howdy neighbor!” In most societies, the concept of a neighbor is that of a nearby person, family or household who can be called upon in times of need or even distress: a cup of sugar, charging cables for a dead car battery or a midnight run to the hospital for a sick child.

The books of Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy are liberally infused with civic commands insisting that adherents not only look after their neighbor but that they take responsibility for him and her. A casual reading of the oft quoted “eye for eye” commandment in Leviticus appears harsh: “If anyone injures his neighbor, whatever he has done must be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. As he has injured the other, so he is to be injured. Whoever kills an animal must make restitution, but whoever kills a man must be put to death. You are to have the same law for the alien and the native-born. I am the LORD your God” Lv 24:19-22.

Yet when read in light of the high value that God requires mankind to put upon the life, property and relationships for one another it becomes clear that all are called to “neighborliness,” the alien and the native born. In other words, the call to neighborliness is one of social responsibility and accountability and frames the concept of justice in

society. While being good neighbors is vital to the wellbeing of the social fabric, Christ's message had a deeper, more relevant connotation for Kingdom-ness that is to come.

When Christ instructed his disciples to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10), he was in effect providing his followers with a unique opportunity to be an answer to their own prayers. Seeking to allow Christ to live through them, they model or "poise the embodied social self to promote the goods of human life within our range of influence" to paraphrase Willard. In this manner Christians not only herald the Kingdom of God, but demonstrate its attributes. Willard continues: "So when Jesus directs us to pray, 'Thy kingdom come,' he does not mean we should pray for it to come into existence. Rather we pray for it to take over at all points in the personal, social and political order where it is now excluded: 'On earth as it is in heaven.'"<sup>5</sup>

Willard notes about the nature of the Kingdom of God, that it is seen or felt within the "range of his effective will, where what he wants done is done."<sup>6</sup> This brings up the question of whether engagement with the world as "lovers of humanity" is indeed a Kingdom endeavor. McKnight in, *Kingdom Conspiracy* contends that Kingdom works belong firmly within the realm and context of the Church. In offering up his rule of how Christians are to see Kingdom evidence in context of what God is doing in the world, he states: "Never use the word 'kingdom' for what we do in the world."<sup>7</sup>

It appears therefore that McKnight contends that Kingdom outreach is in effect Church outreach since Kingdom and Church goals are one. According to Old Testament

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<sup>5</sup> Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 26.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>7</sup> McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, 18.

terminology, the idea of “neighborliness” was targeted to those for whom the law was written, yet it was not limited to them. The alien referred to in Leviticus 23:9 was expected to behave according to the standards accorded to a neighbor. Exodus 12:49 makes this clear in generously proclaiming that, “The same law applies to the native-born and to the alien living among you.”

Elsewhere in the Old Testament, neighbors outside of the covenant are called upon to contribute to the society they live in. Ezra, who refers often to neighbors as “non-Jews,” describes the rebuilding of Solomon’s temple: “All their neighbors assisted them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with valuable gifts, in addition to all the freewill offerings,” (Ez 1:6). It is evident that the neighbors, though not of the same faith, were invited to contribute to the rebuilt temple. The result was that King Cyrus also joined the project: “Moreover, King Cyrus brought out the articles belonging to the temple of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his god” (Ez 1:6-7).

Scripture provides credibility to the notion that aliens, outsiders to the Hebrew nation, have a significant role to play in God’s plan for redemption, *shalom* and his future Kingdom. As seen in the biblical examples of Rahab, Ruth and the Ninevites the invitation is for gentiles to partake in and benefit from God’s grace and inclusion into his plan for redemption. Other Old Testament writers describe their awareness of Israel’s place among their “neighbors” both near and far, as seen in the Psalmists lament that: “We are objects of reproach to our neighbors, of scorn and derision to those around us” (Ps 79:4) and reveals a keen sense that Israel dwells in a world of neighbors and regards

their opinions and esteem. Jeremiah implies that people are to be concerned for their neighbor's spiritual welfare: "No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD" (Jer 32:34).

The final reference to "neighbor" in the Old Testament is found in Zechariah's oft-quoted prophesy of the Branch: "I am going to bring my servant, the Branch. See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are seven eyes on that one stone, and I will engrave an inscription on it," says the LORD Almighty, "and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day." In that day each of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and fig tree, declares the LORD Almighty" (Zec 3:8-10).

The Old Testament concept of neighborliness goes well beyond that of mere proximity and embraces the universal recognition that one's neighbor is indeed his fellow human being. An important concept is that valuing one's neighbor is predicated upon the awareness that all are of equal value in God's sight. There is in God's eyes a universal respect for and quality found in humankind. Cain, who was created in the image of God just as his father Adam was, lost sight of this fact and failed to see his brother's intrinsic value that was based upon *imago Dei*. Here, Willard's definition is used:

In creating human beings in his likeness so that we could govern in his manner, God gave us a measure of independent power. Without such power, we absolutely could not resemble God in the close manner he intended, nor could we be God's co-workers. The locus or depository of this necessary power is the human body. This explains, in theological terms why we have a body at all. That body is our primary area of power, freedom, and- therefore- responsibility.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), 53.

Reading through Old Testament Scripture, a panorama of who Christians ought to be amongst their neighbors unfolds while motifs of *agape* love and *shalom* emerge demonstrating how far the concept of neighborliness can and must go. In the social code of Mosaic Law, Cain is rebuked and his answer is that yes; Christians are indeed their brother's keeper, yet so much more.

### **Neighbor in the New Testament**

Jesus brought into his ministry a new teaching not only of radical concepts about neighborliness, he expanded upon the concept of the "soul" of humankind; that which exists "outside of nature". Willard expands on this when he writes, "Such a soul effectively interfaces God with the full person and enables every aspect of the self to function as God intended."<sup>9</sup> The soul of humanity in Christ's estimation is highly valuable and worthy of redemption as illustrated in Christ's words, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). While readers are confronted early in the New Testament with the words of Christ: "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you," (Mt 5:43), Christ's command to love one's enemy is a new covenant commandment that takes the Old Testament idea of neighbor into a whole new dimension. That Christians should love and do good to those who are ill disposed toward them is featured throughout Christ's teaching, behavior and ultimately his death. The tie-in between neighbor and enemy was beautifully illustrated by Jesus when after teaching

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<sup>9</sup> Dallas Willard, "Living a Transformed Life Adequate to Our Calling," <http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=119> (accessed March 30, 2016).



about humankind's accountability toward all people was asked, "Who is my neighbor?" In telling the story of the good Samaritan Christ featured as the hero a person despised and considered by many to be their enemy, Jesus challenged the man to answer Him, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

Scripture reveals that from the earliest time of recorded interaction with the divine, mankind was held accountable for one another. Mosaic Law is filled with commandments to care for one another's neighbor, looking after not only his personal wellbeing but that of his family and property. The foundations for justice have been laid in mutual respect and care for one another in this unfolding revelation of the higher calling from that of a tiller of the ground to participants in communities marked by *shalom*. Christ, in his teaching to the people of Palestine raised the bar from that of "a brother's keeper" status to that of a lover and caregiver of humanity. He equated the love of one's "enemy" to perfection in God's eyes.

Here, Christ is essentially telling his followers to love the neighbor "within" their enemy wherever she may appear. This newer, more seemingly impossible commandment is directed not so much at the state or authorities that dominated the Palestinian landscape but of everyday people who are at once neighbor and enemy. It is a new paradigm in conflict management and puts the onus on followers of Christ to become peacemakers in everything they do and every place they go. Matthew 5:44-48 communicates, "I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. . . . If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not

even the tax collectors doing that? . . . Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

The commandment to love one’s enemy frames a new indicator for Kingdom living and mirrors the divine life that was on display and exhibited an even-keeled love toward those that would spitefully use him, trick him into contradicting himself or threaten him with death. In his life and teachings he sought to lay a common ground between God with humankind and between humankind with one another, completing the triangle of unity and relationship. The “Our Father” opener to the disciple’s prayer, points to the inclusiveness that God intends for humankind. If indeed God is my Father then my fellow humans are indeed brothers and sisters. The concept here is echoed by Paul when he declares in Colossians 3:11 that “Christ is all in all.”

### **The Imperative of Compassion**

In the word compassion is revealed a concept somewhat less universally embraced than that of neighbor. God had compassion toward people, his people in particular as revealed in the following passages Deuteronomy 30:3 says, “Then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you.” Later in the book the writer communicates, “The LORD will judge his people and have compassion on his servants when he sees their strength is gone and no one is left, slave or free” Dt 32:36

When God revealed his nature and persona to Moses on Mt Sinai, he stated: “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion

and sin” (Ex 34:6). God’s compassion has extended through the generations to his people: “But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion and showed concern for them because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (2 Kgs 13:23).

Compassion, as illustrated in Scripture, describes the action of empathetically “suffering with” one’s fellow humans and is more visceral than cerebral. It implies an almost instantaneous response to the plight of a person in need. Further it is often associated with an action based upon a feeling that is taken on behalf of those near and dear. Upon reading the references to compassion in Scripture it becomes clear that the concept of compassion toward outsiders is not likely to be easily practiced for it is an act that springs from deep-seated emotions toward those with whom one has an empathic connection.

Charles Taylor, well-known social science and political philosopher describes this dilemma in the following way:

One thing the Enlightenment has bequeathed to us is a moral imperative to reduce suffering. This is not just a sensitivity to suffering, a greater squeamishness about inflicting it or witnessing it. . . . But beyond this, we feel called upon to relieve suffering, to put an end to it. . . . But this very critique supposes certain standards of universal concern. It is these that are deeply anchored in our moral culture.<sup>10</sup>

Taylor speaks of the need to put an end to suffering and injustice as being anchored in one’s moral culture, so that humanity not only deals with the problem of suffering from a personal perspective but, as social beings they must deal with the need to act out compassion collectively. Compassion is not a quality shared by all, nor are all people who suffer made the object of compassion by those who practice it. Christ however lived

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<sup>10</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 394.

out Kingdom values in practice, demonstrating on numerous occasions what true compassion looks like; two such examples are described in the following verses.

Matthew 9:36 records, “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” And after spending days teaching the people of Judea, Jesus says in Mark 8:2, “I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat.”

The writer of Hebrews celebrates this facet of Christ’s character linking the divine to the human through his emphatic nature: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet he did not sin” (Heb 4:15). It might be said without understatement that the ideal of loving one’s neighbor is counterintuitive. Humankind has learned through the millennia to distrust his neighbor for obvious reasons. Through Moses humanity learned to love God with all their hearts, but Christ provided the *fait accompli* when he added that everyone must also love their neighbors as themselves and that in these two commandments were all the laws and the prophets fulfilled. In other words, it took the law to point people’s faces in the direction of their neighbor; it is compassion that insures the follow through to action. To paraphrase Paul (Rom 8:2), if the call to neighborliness came through the law, then compassion is actuated by the spirit of Christ.

The deep call of the soul to care for one’s neighbor and to be held accountable for her fellow humans is intrinsic and common to all people. Humanity does not require a law to command a mother to nurse and care tenderly for her child, nor to instruct a father

to provide diligently for his family, even at peril to himself. If the act of being a “good neighbor” was mandated by the law, which is doomed to failure in terms of absolute obedience, then it is compassion that brings spirit and life to the command of neighborliness. It is at the nexus of neighborliness and compassion where *agape* love is lived out in everyday action and fulfills the law of the spirit. Compassionate service, being a neighbor and a brother, is *agape* in action and provides Christians with a moral imperative, a vocational calling to extending the reach of God’s Kingdom.

### **Keeping Faith**

Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” There is probably no better description of what the humanitarian worker is about than these words that start out the famous faith chapter in the book to the Hebrews. Like any person of faith who knows what it is like to envision things not yet seen and call them into being by the audacious act of faith, the humanitarian delves into the sublime elements of hope with a dogged assurance and tenacity required to see the miracle of change in the midst of calamity and chaos. It may well be argued that all humanitarian work, or for that matter all social services, and development efforts that seek to bring positive change into the human condition, is a matter of faith. McNeal states in *Kingdom Come*: “Jesus wants us to pray for, deeply desire and dedicate ourselves to seeing the Kingdom as it operates in heaven made visible and active in our daily experience here on earth.”<sup>11</sup> For the faith based-practitioner, faith takes on a significant role in bringing about change. The faith-based change agent may

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<sup>11</sup> McNeal, *Kingdom Come*, loc 144.

not necessarily bring about quantifiable or qualitatively better results than colleagues who are not faith based. In a disaster response, she will seek to develop a response that encompasses accurate data for early assessment. In addition, he will create a logical framework that clearly outlines the issues, identify opportunities and constraints and access resources upon which a framework of response can be initiated while creating systems of accountability that satisfy local communities as well as donor constituents.

Beyond these important tools Kingdom, workers must seek to identify the transformational processes that are unique in the context that they are faced with since situational awareness will only take in that which is seen, but not necessarily that which is higher, where a meta-level discernment is to be discovered. Whether this comes from a spiritual gift of discernment or a deeply-rooted intuitive voice that is part gut feeling and part spiritual divination is likely irrelevant. The point is that there is more at work here than building budgets, writing winning proposals, keeping burn rates lean or beating the other agency to the cluster meeting with a claim on sector assignments. It is here in the arena of faith in action that the experienced responder will take a step back, survey the plain to seek that which is unseen and bring it forth. This leads to the fourth component of finding a continuum of faith-based humanitarianism, personal transformation.

### **Personal and Spiritual Transformation**

Myers describes transformational development this way:

It begins by pointing out that the goals of Christian witness are the same as the goals for transformational development: changed people and changed relationships. The only difference is that primary emphasis of Christian witness is

on people's relationship with God. This convergence of goals is evidence that we have overcome the dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual.<sup>12</sup>

Willard sums up spiritual formation like this:

This, then, is the outcome of spiritual formation in Christlikeness. Again, it doesn't mean perfection, but it does mean we have here a person whose soul is whole: a person who, through the internalized integrity of the law of God and the administrations of the gospel and the Spirit, has a restored soul. The law and the Lord have restored it. (Psalm 19:7 & 23:3) Such a soul effectively interfaces God with the full person and enables every aspect of the self to function as God intended.<sup>13</sup>

Faith-based agencies seek a methodology that will insure their work is not only materially, socially and spiritually significant but also sustainable through those who are changed by the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit. Even so, if they hope to bring about positive, long-term change through faith-based agencies, they must not neglect the important first step of spiritual formation in the lives of the many people who make up all faith-based organizations. Further, they must keep on track and focused on the foundational values and disciplines that have led them into humanitarian work in the first place.

Spiritual formation is the exercise of inner and outer disciplines, but here spiritual formation, the formation of personal spiritual values in the workplace, becomes immensely important when considering the course that many faith-based organizations have taken over the past fifty years. A wide range and variety of strategic planning models, change management processes and business models provide important options on how to run competent and professional organizations. Over the past decades, new

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<sup>12</sup> Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 21.

<sup>13</sup> Willard, "Living a Transformed Life Adequate to our Calling."

management techniques, organizational development approaches and successive generations of new staff and leadership have added layers of complexity to agencies that once ran operations out of an assortment of shoe boxes.

Whereas spiritual leadership in faith-based organizations once framed the values and vision that propelled the mission, it is now a far more complex environment. Values and mission statements and bespoke core documents decorate the walls and adorn agency websites but do little to actually transform staff. The individual who designs a project keeps in mind that the donor wants evidence-based outcomes, water tight monitoring and evaluation. Sacrificed are transformative approaches for large scale material distributions that bring quick returns. This is especially true of those organizations that trace their roots to the post war era of relief and development work in third world countries. Many of these organizations owe their early beginnings to visionary evangelical ministers passionate to give practical assistance to desperate survivors of post-war Europe and Asia. Leaders were autonomous change agents who made on the spot decisions that tied donor dollars to local partner-based programs.

Today key decisions are referenced by matrices of success indicators while implementation is dependent upon a global functionality where key actors are sitting in front of their computers, monitoring programs from far flung homes and offices. Globalization, which is not a twenty-first century phenomena, may have created a crushingly complex work environment but it should not thwart the role that personal and corporate transformation can play in Kingdom service. Faith, the spiritual foundation of many mission-minded agencies, has been condensed into weekly devotions as an outlet



for “spiritual” development, not that there is anything wrong with devotions. The change intended must spring from the hidden life of Christ of members and then into offices, programs and ultimately as part of the very distinctive of who they are as a compassionate expression of Christ in the suffering world today.

### **I Do Choose – Chapter Summary**

Mark 1:40-42 says in the NRSV, “A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, ‘If you choose, you can make me clean.’ Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, ‘I do choose. Be made clean!’ Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.” In conclusion, Christ’s example of compassion to the leper is noteworthy for all followers of Christ. The leper appears to have had some doubt in his voice about whether or not Jesus would “choose” to heal him when he says to Jesus, “If you choose.” Jesus in turn, doubtless picked up on the uncertainty in the leper’s voice gave the confident, bounding reply, “I do choose. Be made clean!” Every day people of faith are looked to with a glimmer of doubt and a glimmer of hope, asking “if you choose” my life can be transformed. Jesus responded to the leper from his abundant resources, just as his followers are made accountable to meet the needs of people they come in contact with from their resources. It may be a word of encouragement, monetary gift, advice or possibly what may be needed the most is a confident smile acknowledging a neighbor on the same path.

PART THREE  
CASE STUDIES

## CHAPTER FIVE

### JUSTICE

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

- Micah 6:8

#### **Introduction**

This case study is a high level point of view, focusing on the people who serve as the face of their agency—the national workers. These workers implement justice programs and often pay a price for their advocacy for social needs in a given context. National workers are often the major human factor in bringing compassionate aid to disaster victims on behalf of INGOs. They are not excluded from the initial calamity they help to mitigate since events overtake all, though not equally. They are impacted directly because although they have family, assets and livelihoods that are also affected; they are expected to serve in their respective roles with professional expertise. When a finance specialist has a relative missing after a landslide, she is directly impacted as is a security expert who has been shot at by local militia. In both cases the team members will continue to serve under added burdens.

In Matthew 23:23, Christ warned his followers about using the law to circumvent true compassion: “But you have neglected the more important matters of the law— justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.” This case study is based on real events and illustrates this principle of enforcing policy or the law in Old Testament terminology, at the expense of compassion and justice. The organization name is fictionalized to protect confidentiality and will be referred to as Good Neighbor International [hereafter GNI]. GNI is an international, faith-based organization specializing in relief and development, with children and community as their primary beneficiaries. The context is the Gaza War which began on December 27, 2008, and ended on January 18, 2009. It will be referred to here by the Israeli Defense Force (hereafter IDF) code name Operation Cast Lead, and within Gaza as the Battle of al Furqan.

The emphasis of this case study is upon national and international staff that served with GNI at the time of this war. The general environment of systematic injustice under which they served to alleviate the suffering of fellow citizens created tremendous internal and external stressors. Despite the dire situation, staff was expected to adhere to corporate standards for key result indicators, compounding a work atmosphere that was fraught with performance, communications and interpersonal breakdowns. The implementing agency also struggled with under achieved dashboard indicators, delayed reports, budgeted funds not spent on time and stalled monitoring activities.

While crisis is bad for most businesses, paradoxically it is into the arena of calamity that humanitarians rush to save lives and restore normalcy. None of the 120

national and international staff were left unscathed in the course of this war. Even so they exhibited remarkable grace and humility in their service, transcending duty to realize unity in inter-faith work. In the midst of remarkable endurance and long suffering on the part of the Palestinian and interfaith team members, there echoed Paul's vision of a united humanity in his letter to the Colossians when he wrote, "Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all" (Col 3:11). The paradox however was not lost on the team members, who themselves were dedicated to bringing justice in an unjust system, they themselves fell victim to conflicts that hindered their important mission. The predicament is described in the following way by David Augsburger:

Conflict, is at its essence, the construction of a special type of reality. Most of the time we assume and take for granted that we share a single reality with others, but we do not. We simultaneously live in multiple realities. We accomplish this rather amazing feat because, "for all practical purposes, we assume we share a common definition of a situation with others at least sufficiently enough so that we can make sense of people and events in a coordinated fashion in order to act and respond appropriately."<sup>1</sup>

This precisely illustrates the situation the GNI team found themselves in during an extremely intense tie of internal and external conflicts.

## **Background**

### Leadership and Team Member Comments Overheard

The following statements, made by members of GNI's Gaza-West Bank-Jerusalem office (hereafter GWJ), were related during a time of extreme stress. The

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<sup>1</sup> David W Augsburger, *Conflict Mediation across Cultures* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 17.

Headquarters level director said, “Tell them (national staff) to keep their heads down and get back to work; they need to just get over it!” A team member communicated, “I have never done anything wrong to any person in the organization. I have not even done the slightest thing that could be construed as being coercive or threatening to any person. Why are you treating me like a criminal? I have worked two shifts every day to build this organization to the level it is now at and this is the thanks I receive?” Yet, another team member communicated, “I used to look forward to coming to work every day. People used to love and respect each other; we actually had fun at work. Now I dread the thought of coming to the office. How did we get to such a state?” Finally, a female staff member said just before fainting in the country representative’s office, “*Hallas* (enough)! I can’t take this anymore, the suspicion and mistrust here is killing us. Even though I am a victim of sexual harassment, I have no one to turn to! I think I am going to faint!”

Complex issues beset the team and contributed to the general malaise of staff that were normally highly-motivated, professional and compassionate individuals. During the worst days of the crisis it appeared the team would implode upon itself, consumed by mistrust and suspicion, its energy eroded by the constant strain of uncertainty and suspicion. The primary contributing factor to the state of affairs described above was the short, yet furious 2009 Gaza war. No staff was spared its affects. The war demanded all the team’s attention, either directly or indirectly. The national staff was all Palestinian living in East Jerusalem, the Occupied West Bank or Gaza. They lived with the harsh reality of restricted freedoms and daily reminders of a world in which they were not active participants in their personal destinies. Justice was nowhere to be seen.

## The Palestinian Dilemma

If the difficulties of the one-state or two-state solutions cannot be overcome, the future of Palestine-Israel looks very bleak indeed. One of the few principles that all parties in the conflict can agree on is that the status quo cannot continue: the levels of violence and human suffering are too high to make the current arrangements a sustainable or desired option.

Sonia Weaver

There are 4.5 million people living in the Occupied Territories which is made up of east Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza strip. They exist in a daily human rights struggle that touches on all areas of human endeavor: freedom of travel, access to land, water and other natural resources and ultimately personal liberty and happiness. It was within this uneasy environmental setting that GWJ's humanitarian work was implemented. The work often resembled an awkward dance of three steps forward and two back; develop strategy, make plans according to design and monitoring protocols while preparing to change everything at a moment's notice. War, roadblocks, terror attacks on both sides of the conflict and the vagaries of working within the occupied lands created stressors on staff and beneficiaries alike. Intermittent *intifadas* (uprisings), home demolitions or the shutdown of the entire West Bank added to the uncertain environment. Like osmosis, the external conflict seeped into the porous fabric of peoples' lives. The conflict permeated attitudes and relationships so that a perception of wrongdoing and suspiciousness of one another was commonplace.

Palestinians, the approximately thirteen million Arabs who live in or come from the region of Palestine, Israel, Jordan and Syria, are an ethnic group who are historically and culturally linked to the region of Palestine. Approximately 4,750,000 Palestinians

live in the State of Palestine (West Bank and Gaza), while approximately 1.5 million live within the State of Israel. The remainder lives in nearby countries such as Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, or as diaspora in the Middle East, Europe or North and South America. The GNI program in Palestine operated within arguably the most conflict prone region of the world. Cultural, religious and geo-political tensions contributed to a heavy load of corporate and personal angst. The cry of the people was similar to Amos 5:24: “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!”

In Gaza 1,850,000 Palestinians are cut off from basic humanitarian services and are prevented from traveling or from engaging in significant livelihood activities, such as agriculture, fishing or as laborers in neighboring Israel. GNI advocates on behalf of the confined population through media and mail campaigns. It is within Gaza, however, that justice “rolls on like a river” as national workers and their expatriate colleagues work together to bring about justice in practical ways through their immersion with the Gazan populace. At the onset of the Gaza war, despite the goodwill of humanitarian service providers, workplace frustrations resulted in a breakdown in trust, communications and performance. In Palestinian culture, people do not traditionally seek therapeutic means to vent their frustrations so, not surprisingly a sense of despair and hopelessness permeated the work environment. Again, Augsburger provides insight to conflict theory appropriate to the Middle East:

In many cultures, what counsel there is on how to manage differences is found in proverbs quoted, stories told, and cases recalled. Conflict theory is not easy to find, although the pathways for handling disputes, the processes of coping with power differentials, the role of mediator and go-between, and the means of



achieving mutually satisfactory settlements are well known in particular societies.<sup>2</sup>

GNI partnered with local communities in the West Bank and Gaza where programs included food security, psychosocial projects for traumatized children in Hebron, playgrounds in Jenin and agriculture in Gaza. Bringing practical aid and hope to Palestinians who live within the Occupied Palestinian Territories did not endear GNI to the Israeli authorities. Impartiality and non-alignment is a fine line when an agency strives to assist the needy and oppressed, yet is viewed as an enemy through the suspicious eyes of the occupying authorities. Whether people had their lives shattered by a terrorist bomb or were left homeless by the injustice of home demolitions, GNI credibly affirmed their solidarity with suffering humanity. In this environment, crisis and trauma interrupt the status quo, breaking the cycle of productivity and threatening stability with unwanted change.

The call to neighborliness is one of social responsibility and accountability and frames the concept of justice in society. Yet, in the Palestinian context, working for justice can be perceived to be in conflict with the ICRC Code of Conduct, which requires impartiality and neutrality in humanitarian service. This, however, is not a reason to curtail or turn a blind eye to injustice where these issues are flagrantly demonstrated. The act of “doing” justice in an unjust situation may not change the prevailing order, but is a means of hope and inspiration to people in restrictive settings. Justice is often the fulcrum for social change; it is at this nexus where spiritual light in humanitarianism may come

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<sup>2</sup> Augsburger, *Conflict Mediation across Cultures*, 19.

into conflict with policy-focused programs. Christ provides both the solution and example of Kingdom behavior that addresses unjust conditions.

Addressing unjust systems in South Africa and how Nelson Mandela responded to racial discrimination, McNeal writes the following:

Mandela saw the end of apartheid and emerged from prison to become the president of his nation. He publicly forgave his prison guards and set about working for racial and cultural reconciliation. His life matched his message. So many aspects of his Kingdom influence grew directly from the hostility and unjust persecution he had endured. God turned evil into good: Kingdom dynamics in action.<sup>3</sup>

An example of how external stressors can disrupt internal performance and function is illustrated by a security incident that took place after the Gaza war at the Israeli/Gaza border check point. Two staff members were put in the line of IDF gunfire while crossing this hazardous border, unintentionally contrary to security protocols, jeopardizing GNI staff as well as GNI's work in Palestine. Security protocols were clear on paper and had been followed diligently prior to the Gaza war. However, the stressful environment obscured the process while exasperating personal conflicts that had been brewing among various team members before the war. The security incident served to exacerbate an alignment of opposing factions within the team, furthering schisms that grew in the increasingly hostile environment. Tensions were mounting on a daily basis as team members feared their work was being undermined, reputations sullied and even their lives put at risk due to the factious climate. As will be seen, team members were increasingly impacted by depression, PTSD, anxiety, somatic disorders, panic attacks and a general low level of performance brought on by the dysfunctional malaise.

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<sup>3</sup> McNeal, *Kingdom Come*, loc 848.

## **GNI in Palestine**

GNI has implemented Christian, child-focused ministry in the Holy Land since 1975. Forty years ago the program focus was aimed at institutional support through education and rehabilitation programs. Since then, a new model for transformational community development has been implemented throughout the organization. It is called the Local Partnership and Development Program (hereafter LPDP). Within this model of community development, long-term plans are realized through partnership with communities with a project life goal of ten-to-fifteen years.

Attempting to implement long-term development strategies with clear transformational goals and outputs in an occupied land can be very challenging. Like most of the GNI national staff, LPDP beneficiaries are Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza whose lives are marked by uncertainty, and marginalized from rights enjoyed by the majority of Israelis. This systemic injustice has created tensions at the local organizational level, while headquarters continue to require a high level of quality and performance. The team, who face daily uncertainties and security risks, must also deal with IDF and national authorities that require detailed information on all activities and projected outputs in the Occupied Lands.

Complicating matters, Hamas, who govern the Gaza territory, are a declared enemy of the State of Israel and of the US government. Operating under Hamas jurisdiction creates obstacles with nearly all stakeholders, including important donors such as the USAID and US-based institutional funding sources. Staff and leadership alike must keep in mind long-term approaches to even trivial conflicts. One example of a

problematic scenario was when the IDF expropriated land in an LPDP agricultural project implemented on land annexed by Israel. To continue operations or protest the lack of justice on behalf of the aggrieved landowners risked a military tribunal, expulsion of the organization from the State of Israel and made national staff vulnerable to arrest.<sup>4</sup> Another example, in Hamas-controlled Gaza, LPDP projects were ordered to register with Hamas authorities and provide the names of staff and beneficiaries. This registration would put program staff at risk, while also creating a funding/partnership conundrum with the US State Department who would see the registration as a partnership with a declared enemy of the United States.

Keeping in mind the strategic mandate for GNI's work in Palestine, the threefold strategy provides an overarching justification for work in Israel: contribute to peace-building, contribute to the continuity of the Church in the Holy Land and support the GNI's partnership in public relations. While the above strategy is "overarching," the operational elements of the work are more practical. These five elements give a clue to the *modus operandi* of ministry undertaken in the Holy Land, but not necessarily to the specific activities: focus is on the poorest places, the vehicle for change is through the LPDP, advocacy is integrated within the program and emergency relief is activated when needed, while organizational excellence is required at all times. In time, the office and program environment became a microcosm of the world of conflict in which they lived and operated.

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<sup>4</sup> Gideon Levy, "IDF Real Face," *Haaretz* 30 (August 2014), <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.613212> (accessed March 30, 2016).

As a result of the tensions and dysfunctional alignments within the team, a leadership cabal emerged in which various loyalties stacked up along non-functional lines creating counterproductive barriers in the organization. Communication flowed primarily along vertical lines of authority while horizontal (cross-functional) communication became perfunctory with little relational value. For instance, finance became a silo where its leader was marginalized from core leadership. Initiatives made by her were first vetted by one of two core members who made recommendations to the country representative.

The final step in the meltdown process was a house divided. Horizontal trust, peer confidence and enthusiasm for the mission eroded until many members of the team, even the so-called neutral ones, felt that going to work was a chore and a burden. Unfortunate in any organization, the erosion of morale was even more debilitating because of the humanitarian nature of the organization. GNI did not have a hierarchical structure where it was always possible to trace exact, vertical lines of authority, influence and accountability. For this reason, it relied on the so-called soft skills that help a team function.

The tension was compounded by successive waves of involvement from upper echelon leadership and human resources. For instance, when human resources personnel became involved, confidentiality was necessarily required of local leadership and those concerned. While the intention was to protect the parties being investigated, the result was a pall of suspicion and fear cast upon the team in general. Compounding this situation into multiple inquiries and internecine politics in an already stressed environment, the result was a Machiavellian black hole. Regrettably, authentic, credible

communications was not provided and alternate communications channels were devised, gossip, rumor and at times outright slander. It was at this junction that a local crisis emerged. The grossly dysfunctional team was depleted of normal reserve capacity to respond to the external humanitarian situation spending time instead by questioning motives and actions of their counterparts. The consequences could have had been fatal.

### **A Shooting Incident at the Border**

“Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?”

- Mark 3:4

On April 18, 2009 at 11:45am on a Saturday and, therefore, the *Shabbat*, a visiting member from the GNI partnership office in Japan attempted to cross the border between Hamas-controlled Gaza into the Israeli-controlled Eratz Pedestrian Terminal (hereafter EPT). The crossing was limited to Palestinians, journalists and humanitarian aid workers who used the facility to gain access to the Gaza strip. When egressing the Israeli side of the border, the transiting person walks 500 meters down a gravel road, exposed to tower guards who are expert marksmen with a clear field of fire to anything moving across the border area. Upon reaching the Hamas checkpoint, visitors show identification, bags are checked and often greeted cheerily, “you are welcomed!”

The following account capped a long simmering dispute between the GNI security manager and the LPDP Director:

As per reports of Mansour (Gaza staff member) and Keith (Japan staff member visiting Gaza), at approximately 1145 hrs, IDF opened fire at both staff members while Keith was attempting to traverse the Eratz Border Crossing back into Israel from Gaza. After reaching the crossing, Keith got out of the vehicle and started to

walk towards the crossing while Mansour (who drove Keith to the crossing) was waiting for him to start his walk from Hamas controlled Gaza to the Israeli controlled Eratz facility. When Mansour noticed that the crossing was closed, he whistled to get the attention of Keith to inform him to turn back as the crossing is closed, which Keith did. When Keith reached the vehicle, they both heard gun shots and took cover behind a concrete wall. Once they assessed that it was safe for them to evacuate, they immediately got into the vehicle and drove off back to Gaza.<sup>5</sup>

The above excerpt from the security incident report describes, in part, what happened after months of a highly stressful work environment during and post Operation Cast Lead. The lapse in following security protocols was serious since border guards have a policy of shooting first and asking questions later. Because of the real danger, all border crossers know that the Israeli side is to be approached with extreme caution and with due regard for the protocols set forth by both sides. This Japanese visitor erroneously thought he had permission to cross the border on a Saturday; a day the border had been closed each week since 2004. The LPDP manager in Gaza, knowing that the visitor was departing on the *Shabbat* did not raise the issue, nor did the driver, who took the visitor to the border crossing. He waved him off before realizing that there were no Hamas guards on duty at the posting. In Jerusalem, the GWJ Security Manager had sent a message out that week reaffirming that the border would be closed on the eighteenth.

The result of the debacle was that responsible team members blamed each other, accusing them of wanting to see the other killed. This escalated the tensions to an extreme state. The incident did not escape the IDF commander in charge of the Eratz crossing. On the following day, the commander demanded to know from the GNI security officer why GNI would expose one of their staff to extreme

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<sup>5</sup> GNI Security Manager, "Security Incident Report" (West Bank: April 2009).

jeopardy. The incident sparked many debriefings and numerous queries and reports to senior HQ leadership, who were already aware of the situation in the team. The incident only increased tensions, exacerbating the divisions within the already estranged team.

A visiting Staff Care Team from the International HQ had the following to report after meeting with each of the team members individually:

All staff in the group meetings and in the one-on-one meetings gave indications of enduring entrenched cumulative stress. The sources of this stress include: the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict with its constant propaganda, feelings of being invaded and occupied and frequent interruptions of daily life through checkpoints, changes in regulations and documentation, and organizational stressors including recent examples of feelings of significant loss of trust, support, appreciation and understanding at local office, regional office and global office levels. Some staff advised that they had been affected by the recent crisis in Gaza and that they had not been able to satisfactorily process their thoughts and feelings about those events. All staff who spoke with the Staff Care Team indicated various levels of confusion, frustration, anger and distress concerning the recent investigations into the management and leadership in GNI-GWJ.

While the situation described above was serious and the consequences severe, all was not lost. Trust and confidence was in time restored and a house divided was repaired or at least mended. It was not, however, an intuitive process. The cycle of reconciliation was an intentional process to regain the status of open relationships previously enjoyed by the team. At the conclusion of the immediate response phase for the Gaza war none of the Palestine-based staff members were unaffected. The country representative had departed, along with her top-tiered managers. One expatriate staff member was sent home to recover from PTSD, while the remaining team members embarked upon a lengthy process of reconciliation.



Ironically the senior leadership of GNI had done little to avow the team after a very trying time of humanitarian service. The team needed and would have benefitted by affirmation of a job well done by those at the region and at IHQ. When celebration was in order, stress was compounded by internal and external pressures. Staff care, a policy level priority in GNI, came too late for those who were emotionally and professionally drained of energy. Psychosocial interventions that were prioritized and implemented on behalf of beneficiaries came too late for the stressed team, most of whom suffered from stress, PTSD and depression.

### **Lessons Learned**

Habakkuk spoke of the perversion of justice which he witnessed when the Chaldeans prepared to overtake Jerusalem. In Habakkuk 1:3-4 he writes, “Why do You make me see iniquity, and cause me to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; strife exists and contention arises. Therefore the law is ignored and justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous: therefore justice comes out perverted.” The people of Judea lived in dread and horror of an impending invasion, causing the prophet to question God’s motive; declaring “The law is ignored and justice never upheld.” Today, Palestine is once again under siege with justice seemingly perverted and the law of neighborliness ignored. Lessons were learned.

## Toxic Triangles

Toxic communications triangles result in dysfunctional relationships and work environment. The reluctance to “go to a brother or sister first,” can occur at the top of hierarchy and replicate downward or even across functional departments. It is easy to talk about someone; it is difficult to confront with care and objectivity. In addition, the lack of transparency when communication is not forthcoming can foster suspicion, mistrust and silo mentality. Augsburger explains it like this:

In western cultures triangles are viewed with mistrust. Healthful, functional relationships are person to person with the character of dialogue: conflicts are managed and resolved between the two; clear open communication of thoughts and feelings allows rational discussion as well as emotional investment. However, as tension increases beyond the ability of either person’s management skills, a third person is “triangle” to reduce anxiety.<sup>6</sup>

When no official channel for communication exists, alternate, more destructive ones will emerge, such as gossip and innuendo. An unhealthy senior leadership model may prevent creativity and healthy feedback, giving rise to valuing loyalty over transparency. In addressing the issues, the soft side of management should be attended to; team building activities, celebrating accomplishments large and small and an intentional effort at teaching conflict resolution and good communications practices.

## Pressure Valves

Throughout the GNI program in Occupied Palestine there lacked formal and informal means to personally and corporately vent frustrations in healthy, constructive settings. The default pattern for giving voice to aggravations was in the safety of a

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<sup>6</sup> Augsburger, *Pastoral Counseling across Cultures*, 181.

triangulated group against a third party. This method led to increased tensions and increased the sense of a factionalized working environment.

Another consequence of the insurmountable pressures that built often occurred at check points or during perceived unjust situations encountered outside of the office. These could be dangerous situations since authorities, especially armed IDF personnel sometimes resort to force when confronted by highly emotional or irate civilians. In addressing the issues GNI should create and facilitate safe open spaces that allow staff to talk about conflict, stress and issues they face, both in and out of the office.

### Cross-cultural Conflicts

As described, the GNI team in Palestine consisted of Muslim and non-Muslim Palestinians, Armenian Christians and Christian expatriate staff from Europe and North America. The factionalized groups did not strictly fall along lines of religion, ethnicity or nationality but reflect the manner in which people “regress to earlier learnings.” Again, Augsburger writes: “In stress, we all regress to our earlier learnings, and since defensive conflict behaviors were often learned in fragmented, distorted fashion from experience of high anxiety and tension, they may be our least functional behaviors.”<sup>7</sup>

It is evident that what happened to the GNI team was a combination of inappropriate learned behaviors in dealing with conflict as well as cross-cultural tensions that were at odds in the work place. Augsburger explains, “Culture minimizes this uncertainty by setting rules on how we should behave, how we should act, what we can

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<sup>7</sup> Augsburger, *Conflict Mediation across Cultures*, 24.

expect in every situation.”<sup>8</sup> In addressing these issues, cross-cultural issues and differences should be addressed in team-building activities that deal with differences in a positive and affirming manner.

Finally, it is questioned here whether an over attentiveness to advocacy issues by headquarters could have contributed to the dilemma of stress in a stressed out environment. Injustices observed on a daily basis contributed to an antagonistic approach to dealing with local authorities and thereby pitting humanitarian workers against local authority. In organizational conflicts, it is easy to point the blame at a few individuals and move on. In the situation analyzed here, all share responsibility for the consequences of human error and misunderstandings in a stressful environment. As a result, relationships broke down, corporate systems were slow in responding to emerging issues, levels of authority passed over and the fear of litigation prevented GNI from dealing compassionately with people as objects of grace and worthy of their own justice in a tough environment.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER SIX

### POLICY

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.

- Matthew 23:23

#### **Introduction**

Institutional policy often pits the humanitarian service provider against competing factions: that of the modality in which the worker finds herself and that of the external context such as local governments, UN agencies, local INGO fora and, most importantly, the beneficiary community to whom she is called to serve. This is especially true in the case of passionate humanitarian responders who see the needs of affected and traumatized beneficiaries as their primary concern. Humanitarian responders are faced with barriers such as competition for limited grant funding, tension to lower indirect costs to make the agency more appealing to donors, and the often inconsistent manner in which agencies count beneficiaries. Despite this, humanitarian calamities can create clarity of vision, stimulating innovation in the relief setting similar to a person whose instinctive

nature takes over when survival is of paramount importance. At such times internal and external policy, government bureaucracy and common sense may need to take a back seat to the immediate welfare of the needy.

Dunant alluded to this phenomenon in his testimony to the events surrounding Solferino: “The furious and relentless activity which a man summons up at such moments; all these combine to create a kind of energy which gives one a positive craving to relieve as many as one can.”<sup>1</sup> According to the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) Code of Conduct, “the humanitarian imperative comes first.”<sup>2</sup> As explained in the following text, aid must be rendered unimpeded:

The right to receive humanitarian assistance, and to offer it, is a fundamental humanitarian principle which should be enjoyed by all citizens of all countries. . . . The prime motivation of our response to disaster is to alleviate human suffering amongst those least able to withstand the stress caused by disaster. When we give humanitarian aid it is not a partisan or political act and should not be viewed as such.<sup>3</sup>

The need for expediency in providing practical aid in the days and months following disaster is exemplified in the recent Nepal earthquakes during April and May 2015. Here, as in most disaster settings, it is the marginalized, the under-represented and the hard to reach that suffer the most in disasters. Of the disaster it was written, “Structural inequalities and prevalent forms of exclusion and discrimination are likely to negatively affect the recovery of lower castes in the longer run. They face greater

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<sup>1</sup> Dunant, *A Memory of Solferino*, 11.

<sup>2</sup> IFRC, Principles of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response Programmes: “(1.) The Humanitarian imperative comes first.”

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

difficulties accessing credit. Where they borrow, it is much more likely to be from moneylenders who charge higher interest rate.”<sup>4</sup>

A popular maxim about large-scale disasters states that disasters have a way of exposing the weakness of the relief environment. Culture, religion, economics, politics, geography and historical issues, whether a vendetta or long-held clan prejudices, can and will negatively impact the respective actors in the event or aftermath. It also means that every disaster is an opportunity for learning. Systemic caste discrimination, gender bias, lack of attention to the needs of children at risk and a pervasive cultural disdain for the rural poor have created a bubble of neglect for those at the greatest need.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, politicians are quick to care for constituent bases that will perpetuate their political tenure in office, revealing two sides of one coin on which are imprinted the faces of altruism and avarice: “The government was seen by victims as being the largest provider of aid, potentially because of the ‘one door’ policy, with all aid materials to be channeled through the government.”<sup>6</sup>

The following case study refers specifically to a planned winterization project that was implemented within the broader context of the Nepal earthquake response. It consisted of the distribution of goods and cash by Medair staff in order to assist earthquake-affected people living at higher elevations in Sindhupalchok District, Bagmati

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<sup>4</sup> The Asia Foundation, “Aid and Recovery in Post-Earthquake Nepal (October 2015), Asia Foundation. <http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2015/10/28/aid-and-recovery-in-post-earthquake-nepal/> (accessed March 28, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Arnold M. Howitt and Herman B. “Dutch” Leonard, “The Novelty of Crises: How to Prepare for the Unprecedented,” in *The LA Earthquake*, edited by Stefan Sagmeister et al (Pasadena, CA: Art Center College of Design, 2009), 210-217.

<sup>6</sup> The Asia Foundation, “Aid and Recovery in Post-Earthquake Nepal.”

Region of Nepal. The plan, referred to as the “Sindhupalchok Winterization Project,” was conducted in December 2015, during a severe national shortage of fuel and nondurable goods due to a blockade along the Nepal/India border. In addition, the country was cast into political turmoil due to a period of partisan contentiousness after a controversial constitution was ratified in September 2015.

## **Background**

### **The Implementing Agency—Medair**

In response to the first of two major earthquakes on April 25, 2015, Medair deployed an Emergency Response Team (ERT) on April 27, and began implementing relief activities in partnership with Mission East, a similar faith-based agency with nine years of experience in Nepal. In its own words, Medair is “a humanitarian organisation inspired by Christian faith to relieve human suffering in some of the world’s most remote and devastated places.”<sup>7</sup> The Swiss-based agency is managed with a gentle, yet firm hand from its headquarters insuring that policy, strategy and logistical processes are adhered to in the field.

Like many faith-based agencies, Medair is careful to insure that only Christians who share their faith ethos are recruited for overseas service. Prospective candidates are required to attend a special orientation and training week called a Relief Orientation Course (ROC), a practicum of applied scenario exercises for humanitarian simulation, which also serves as a weeding out process for under-qualified candidates. A Medair distinctive is the New Relief Worker program whereby new or inexperienced relief

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<sup>7</sup> Medair, “Mission,” <http://www.medair.org/en/mission/> (accessed March 28, 2016).



workers are sent to the field under the supervision of more experienced Medair staff, receiving a minimal stipend for service during the first year. Medair's stated mission is to bring relief and recovery to beneficiaries affected by crisis, accomplished "regardless of race, creed or nationality."<sup>8</sup>

As a signatory of the International Committee of the Red Cross Code of Conduct, Medair conducts its humanitarian affairs indiscriminately, without regard to political, social, or religious affiliations. While its focus is relatively narrow in the disaster continuum, they pride themselves on being first responders in emergencies. They stay just long enough to "help people recover from crisis with dignity."<sup>9</sup>

#### The Disaster

On April 25, 2015, Nepal was struck with a 7.8-magnitude earthquake, the epicenter being in the Gorkha district, just south of the China border. The following months saw persistent and significantly strong aftershocks and landslides in thirty-nine of Nepal's seventy-five districts, causing widespread damage to homes and buildings, infrastructure and livelihoods. Fourteen districts, in which two million people reside, were identified by the Government of Nepal (hereafter GoN) as the most severely affected. While ongoing recovery activities were underway from the April 25 earthquake, a second powerful quake struck on May 12, 2015, with a magnitude of 7.6. This second major earthquake in less than a month caused extensive casualties and property damage

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

to areas that had previously suffered minimal damage, while inflicting further damage to areas hard hit the month before.

The GoN has estimated that the combined earthquakes resulted in the deaths of 8,693 people with 22,491 injured. It is estimated that upwards of 750,000 houses were damaged or destroyed while 8,000 schools and over 1,000 health centers were damaged or destroyed.<sup>10</sup> Further, it is estimated that eight million people, about one-third of Nepal's population were adversely impacted by the quakes while damage to the Nepal economy in terms of lost revenue to tourism and business is upwards of five billion dollars.

### **The Humanitarian Field—Coordination**

In *International Disaster Response Law*, the writers indicate, “Humanitarian coordination seeks to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response by ensuring greater predictability, accountability and partnership.”<sup>11</sup> To effectually assess, plan, coordinate and implement relief activities, humanitarian agencies must engage with a broad array of humanitarian and government actors. Together they will actuate response measures to provide a comprehensive approach to saving lives and restoring hope and stability to communities. As with most humanitarian responses, agencies seek authorization to work under the aegis of government mechanisms providing visa approvals, recommendation to local authorities and endorsements that will garner donor

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<sup>10</sup> Global Shelter Cluster, “Shelter and Settlements Vulnerability Assessment, Nepal,” Nepal (June 2015): 1-60.

<sup>11</sup> Andrea de Guttry, Marco Gestri and Gabriella Venturini eds., *International Disaster Response Law* (The Hague: Asser Press, 2012), 501.

support. Nepal's robust bureaucracy simultaneously assists and hinders aid agencies who are required to navigate a labyrinth of government ordinances.

Within five months of arriving in Nepal, Medair signed a cooperative agreement with the GoN on September 22, under the auspices of the Social Welfare Council (hereafter SWC), as did most of the humanitarian agencies that arrived in Nepal post-earthquake. Medair was permitted to engage in a limited field of activities within the district of Sindhupalchok. The agreement came with a caveat; that within three months, a formal Project Agreement was required to be submitted for review and approval by the SWC, whose decision was final and not likely to be appealed. As a newly-registered agency, Medair was interdependently linked with a variety of humanitarian actors and stakeholders requiring intensive coordination activities and consuming much focus from the small team of six international and twelve national staff. They also bore the burden for local administration, fund raising, filing reports and conducting new program assessments. Within Medair, coordination was a role that all of the international staff shared as well as some of the national staff who had previous experience in government and INGO relationships.

Government-level coordination included the SWC, United Nations (UN) agencies, the European Community Humanitarian Organization (ECHO) and the Association of Non-Government Organizations (hereafter AIN). Under the auspices of the UN's Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (hereafter OCHA) were the cluster groups where coordination of activities related to shelter, logistics, water sanitation and hygiene as well as the Technical Working Group (hereafter TWG), and

finally the cash-coordinating group, all of which played important roles in Medair's planned winterization program. In addition to central level coordination meetings, which were conducted in Kathmandu, District-level coordination bodies were established allowing the local-level authorities such as the Chief District Officer (hereafter CDO), Local Development Officer (hereafter LDO) and the representative of the District Disaster Recovery Commission (hereafter DDRC). Finally, local-implementing partner agencies, usually based within the districts, required coordination on a regular basis. Field coordination meetings, held in Chautara or Biribise, were often called with very short notice. Participants were rarely informed whether meetings would be conducted in English or Nepali, and required a full day of travel and meeting time.

#### External Factors Hampering the Recovery

As in most humanitarian crisis, the Nepal earthquakes did not strike in a vacuum. Serious political and cultural issues were also in process, fixated on a new constitution promulgated on September 20, 2015, just five months after the first earthquake. Seven years in development, it was the first to be drawn up by an elected constituent assembly; the previous six were drafted and passed by regents of past monarchies. The controversy surrounding the new constitution, unrelated to the humanitarian disaster, was centered around two issues: perceived gender discrimination (prohibiting women from passing citizenship to their children) and a perception that the ruling class in Nepal were being favored over the marginalized indigenous groups of the *terai* or lowland areas of Nepal where most of the minority population resides. Consequentially, a second humanitarian crisis developed when the Madhesi people, the dominant minority group, (with tacit

support from India) prevented almost all aid, including food, fuel and cooking gas from transiting the border from India to Nepal. Nepal, a landlocked country sharing borders with India to the south and China in the north, was forced to ration fuel, cooking gas and critical supplies. Aid agencies also were unable to procure many of the materials required for ongoing recovery. Exacerbating the situation, an excessively heavy monsoon season in June and July, caused landslides in already weakened mountainous terrain, hampered the early reconstruction of housing and infrastructure and resulted in more death and destruction.

Soon after the quakes and in response to the demands of bilateral and large institutional donors, the GoN launched the National Housing Reconstruction Authority (NHRA) on June 26, 2015. The rationale was to insure that an independent body, sanctioned by the GoN, would oversee significant contributions pledged for reconstruction efforts. The pledges, amounting to over four billion USD, was held in abeyance until the NHRA was fully functional and able to implement the large-scale operation required to oversee the complex task of establishing building codes, approve structural models and qualify beneficiary lists. The Medair medium-term strategy, as was the case with most other humanitarian agencies responding to the major disaster, would be led by the NHRA, having two major streams: the provision of a cash subsidy for households (shelter reconstruction) and large-scale, decentralized, technical assistance and training to support compliance with construction standards. Unfortunately, the NHRA was disempowered from its role shortly after elections ushered in a new government, and was not reinstated until late December 2015.

As a result of this government lapse in relief oversight, aid agencies were required to wrap up late-stage recovery efforts without the ability to implement medium-range programs to see beneficiaries through the perilous winter that was fast approaching. Subsidiary issues arose by not having a functioning GoN body to regulate reconstruction efforts. Beneficiaries had no clarity on specific housing models approved by the GoN; budgetary guidelines were not published nor were prescribed cash distribution limits for aid agencies addressed. Completion of these regulations was required within a secondary crucial deadline of planting season and monsoons that bring inclement weather, making construction nearly impossible.

The ensuing confusion was created by an environment of government ambiguity, the blockade causing a fuel shortage that prevented vehicles from engaging in mission essential activities and the amount of time that agencies had to coordinate what should have been routine activities. This created a logistical maelstrom within a humanitarian crisis. Meanwhile, the winter was closing in with approximately 49,000 households at higher elevations living in damaged or destroyed shelters because aid was not made available to them.

### **Government of Nepal Response Strategy**

The relief and recovery phase was declared by the GoN to have concluded in October 2015. Reconstruction became the paramount focus of the government and relief agencies. However, before actual reconstruction could be implemented, the government needed to establish regulations and policy over what kind of shelters would be constructed, where construction would be permitted and who would qualify for

assistance. Even were the government agencies capacitated to respond to the myriad issues required to implement a massive rebuild, winter was fast approaching during which time higher elevations would be inaccessible. Despite the ambiguous nature of GoN directives for INGOs in Nepal, Medair developed a strategy to address both the cold weather needs of the population in Sindhupalchok, while looking at reconstruction needs of populations in other unreached areas such as Ramechhap and Ochalhunga districts.

The key objective of reconstruction activities was to insure that beneficiaries were empowered to rebuild their homes. This meant that, in time, they would be afforded GoN-approved training to rebuild quality housing, resilient to earthquakes within a target budget. They also required essential materials to engage with the “build back stronger/safer” approach to permanent housing according to GoN codes. Assistance provided to beneficiaries was to be distributed by means of cash or vouchers, insuring that households maintain decision rights over specific design and size of shelters they chose to construct. The timing for actual housing construction will be influenced by the GoN’s approved cash grants and reconstruction plans. It was commonly understood throughout the humanitarian sector that government imposed limits on cash grants for rebuilding would be inadequate to enable households to build back better, unless aid agencies such as Medair was able to step in with assistance.

Of immediate concern however were important winterization needs of thousands of earthquake-affected families in high altitudes. Medair decided to focus on 4,000 people in the far eastern section of Sindhupalchok along the Nepal/Tibet border. As with the planned reconstruction strategy, the method of distributing winterization aid included

predominately cash distribution, with the exception of 4,150 foam mats that were used to insulate temporary shelters against the frigid Himalayan winter. The mats, taking up valuable storage space in Kathmandu, were surplus from the relief phase and were desperately needed in higher elevations.

In order to implement the winterization plan in the four separate Village Development Committees (VDC) critical elements required immediate attention. These included confirmation of the amount the GoN permitted to be distributed (a central government decision point), an approved beneficiary list that would be electronically verifiable in the field, a qualified national bank that would accept a cash transfer from Switzerland for half-a-million US dollars and provide banking staff to assist in the distribution and insure security of the assets. Because the distribution points were to be conducted in remote and insecure areas of the district, the police were called upon to provide overall security for the Medair team and for bank personnel. Experienced humanitarian workers have found that major distributions of food, non-food items or cash can be an inspiring event that promotes goodwill all around, or it can be a disaster within a disaster. As in many contemporary humanitarian settings, specialized technology was employed for this event requiring additional consultants to oversee equipment calibration and training staff in the use of the equipment.

#### Sindhupalchok Winterization Project Implementation

The primary goal of the winterization project was to provide practical assistance to earthquake-affected villagers who live at high altitudes during the cold weather months from November 2015 through March 2016. Community feedback mechanisms



highlighted the need to bring support to families living at higher altitudes in damaged or temporary shelters. These also revealed the severe lack of preparedness of the households. One assessment discovered that up to 90 percent of the households in northern districts reported feeling inadequately prepared for the coming winter.

Most villagers who lived in the earthquake zones stayed with their properties to protect possessions and livestock and tried to rebuild their homes from material salvaged from the usable debris. When these efforts were combined with subsidised material assistance such as tarpaulins, rope and corrugated tin roofing, villagers were able to construct temporary housing. The temporary structures, though suitable in moderate summer and autumn weather, would prove uninhabitable at altitudes above 1,500 meters. Therefore, in anticipation of the approaching winter season the TWG conducted an assessment of villagers who would be adversely impacted by cold weather. In addition, the TWG developed a list of critical items for households in sub-standard housing. In conjunction with market assessments in the targeted districts, it was advised that cash distribution to qualified beneficiaries would allow households to decide what items were most suitable for them while strengthening local economies and livelihoods. After consultation with the TWG, Shelter Cluster and donors, Medair decided to implement a cash-based winterization project to quickly bring needed material aid to over 4,000 villagers at imminent risk of exposure to the cold weather.

## **When the Humanitarian Imperative and Policies Collide**

Most of the work by the implementing agency, partners and beneficiaries went into the preparation phase of the winterization project. Field winterization and market assessments included logistical preparations, training and equipping enumerators. A bank that met local and international standards was identified, as well as a cash distribution partner experienced in cash transfer programming and able to provide equipment, training and technical support for the implementation. If all of the preparations were successful, the implementation would take place during an intensive five-day period.

Preparations were conducted in an unstable environment with the backdrop of major political upheavals—a nearly complete border blockade with India and a new government inexperienced in managing the wide array of INGOs, frantic in trying to assist a very large and vulnerable beneficiary group. The week planned for distribution in four remote VDCs in northern Sindhupalchok district was December 6-10, 2015. The key actors were Medair and Red Rose staff, the Laxm Bank, local security from Barabise, the 4,100 beneficiaries, as well as the transport drivers of nineteen large trucks required for hauling the bulky foam insulation mats. If any one of the actors was unable to fulfil their role, the entire operation would need to be cancelled.

Three major complications arose in this scheme: technology, coordination and ambiguous communiqués from the GoN. The technology required tracking and validating each household representative. The beneficiary accountability hardware proved to be problematic up until deployment to the field. Even then, as will be seen, it was uncertain all would go without shortcomings. Another issue was the coordination of the beneficiary

groups. These groups were instructed to arrive at a predetermined time with their identification cards, most of which were traversing up to six miles to arrive at the assembling points. Also looming were ambiguous communiques from the GoN about regulations concerning the dollar amount of distributions.

All of the humanitarian actors were required to arrive at the predetermined distribution point on time, and to prepare the location for their role for the distribution activities. During a previous distribution, 15 percent of the beneficiaries could not arrive at the distribution center on time which meant that those beneficiaries required inclusion in this new distribution. On Saturday, December 12, the first day of distribution, two major issues arose that threatened to cancel the event. The first was a malfunction of the barcode reader causing a lengthy delay; the second was an urgent communication from the government ordering a halt to the planned distribution.

Beneficiaries and stakeholders assembled at the agreed upon time and location, while Medair staff organized the layout of the distribution, including beneficiary waiting section, secure location for distribution and egress points after recipients received cash and material goods. Regrettably, the hardware failed to work properly so beneficiary names could not be confirmed against the approved database. Fortunately, the Red Rose representative had agreed to accompany the distribution team for the first day of distributions. The issue, a software malfunction was dealt with after consulting the organization's technical experts in Turkey. The four-hour time difference between Nepal and Turkey meant some very early consultation hours. Eventually, after a five-hour

delay, the distribution process was restarted. At the end of the day, beneficiaries, banking personnel truck drivers and the security personnel were very pleased at the outcome.

The second issue arose at the end of the delayed, but successful, distributions of cash and insulating material. The field-based team received a call from the Chief District Officer (CPO) for Sindhupalchok, located in Chataura. The purpose of the call was to inform Medair that the GoN authorities in Kathmandu were enforcing a heretofore-rumored edict stipulating that INGOs were to limit household cash distribution for winterization to ten thousand Nepali Rupees (hereafter NPR). The previously understood authorized amount was fifteen thousand NPR per household. The cease and desist notice of further distributions came without justification of why or when further clarification would be provided.

The field team, following security and program protocol, was due to report the day's activities to the team at the Kathmandu base who were awaiting word on the distributions. In attendance were the country director, acting program director and the head of country program, who was visiting from headquarters in Switzerland. The program manager's report of the day's activities brought relief that the distribution was completed, even after experiencing technical difficulties. He then went on to finish his update about the GoN order to cease operations, creating a major dilemma for the Medair Nepal team and the Medair organization at large. Changing the terms of the distribution from fifteen thousand to ten thousand NPR would mean that the entire planned operation must be halted and renegotiated with Red Rose. If the operation were halted the next window of opportunity would be in February 2016, making the winterization project

obsolete and necessitating returning funds to the donor. Importantly, the expectations of thousands of beneficiaries would be ruined but even worse they would be unable to receive potentially life-saving supplies for the winter months.

### **Government of Nepal (GoN), Donor, and Medair Considerations**

Although the GoN did not provide a rationale for ordering Medair to halt distributions in Sindhupalchok, clarification at a meeting called at a later date by the CDO, stated that the government felt it better to distribute fewer funds to more people, thus regulating private, non-government funds without GoN contribution. The donor, a private Swiss institution, had stated clearly that their intention was for the greater amount to be distributed, believing less would not accomplish the intended purpose. Another consideration was that the targeted district was saturated with implementing agencies. These agencies planned to implement winterization projects with an over commitment of 221 percent for VDC coverage. At the distribution site, local authorities were reluctant to enforce the central government official's ruling, especially after witnessing the enthusiastic reception by the beneficiaries and local population. Even so, repercussions could be anticipated against the agency for not heeding a direct order to cease.

### **Medair Headquarters**

Despite the hesitation of the field manager to continue operations after the GoN order to cease, the representative from headquarters was insistent that distributions go on as planned. The distribution capital was equal to 1 percent of the annual budget for the

entire agency. To be forced to return it would have budgetary repercussions for his and other departments.

### Medair Nepal

The Medair national office was caught in the dilemma of whether to obey the government who, although they did not halt the distributions by force, could take action against Medair, whose registration was pending an approved project agreement. Rejection of that application could force Medair to leave the country. Extensive preparation, training, material expense and partnership collaboration had gone into making these next five days successful. Calling off the event would mean starting over. In the bigger picture, the beneficiaries were the ones that gave significance to the Winterization Project. It was concluded, therefore, that the humanitarian imperative must come first, even at the cost of jeopardizing the country program status.

### Medair Field Operations

Upon clarifying with the program manager that there would be no legal or police action if his team continued the operations, it was agreed that the distributions would continue with a cautious eye on local authorities. It was understood that no one would stop them. However, there would likely be an accounting for Medair actions after the distributions were completed.

### Beneficiaries

For the most part, the beneficiaries had received very little practical aid in response to the earthquakes that occurred seven months prior. As the Asia Foundation

report had clarified, it was the poorest villagers in the most remote locations who had received the least amount of attention, either of assessments or distributions. Medair had spent the past eight months building trust with the communities through field assessments, training workshops and post disaster relief activities. Halting operations when they had finally reached the point of distribution would have broken valuable trust and community cooperation.

### **Conclusion**

On the twenty-first of December the CDO called a meeting at his office in Chautara, seat of the district government, requiring representatives from all humanitarian organizations working in Sindhupalchok to attend. Clarifying why the decision was made to reduce the amount of winterization funds from fifteen thousand to ten thousand NRS, the CDO stated that the central government desired to promote social harmony and justice since the nation was facing “various social conflicts”. In the meeting Medair’s representative was asked pointedly why they proceeded with the distribution after a direct order to cease. Further, the representative was asked why, since they chose to proceed, they did not limit the distribution to the ten thousand NPR as directed.

Responding to the CDO the Medair representative replied that it was not the intention of his organization to ignore the decision of District Disaster Response Committee (hereafter DDRC) and CDO’s order. However, since at that time they had completed the distribution at Gati VDC (the first location) and the terms of distribution was already communicated to all of the beneficiaries. There was also a concern about the consequences to the team and other stakeholders should they fail to follow through as

planned with the fifteen thousand NRS distribution. In addition, he stated that his organization would not be pleased to return the funds to the donor. The CDO replied that, “If an INGO does not coordinate properly with the district authority, and does not follow the decision of DDRC then they will not be recommended for further extension to operate in Nepal.”

### **Lessons Learned**

Humanitarian agencies make strategic decisions about when and where to respond to disasters based upon organizational mission, resources and capacity to effectively respond. Medairs’ mission statement; to relieve human suffering in some of the world’s most remote and devastated places, is bold and ambitious and requires dedicated, highly-trained staff to serve in the “devastated places” where they work. It also requires strategic focus and discipline on the part of the organization to accomplish their mission in a narrow window of opportunity. It is said that every disaster not only presents its own challenges, but also a unique set of learning opportunities, the Nepal tragedy should equip Medair for future events in the following ways.

#### **Develop and Build Capacity of National Staff**

National staff, the backbone of humanitarian interventions is too often under-utilized in terms of local knowledge, cultural wisdom and strategic insights. For an organization such as Medair, whose focus is on quick impact while keeping an eye on exit strategy, the temptation can be to see nationals as a utilitarian necessity. Taking the time to train staff in areas where expectations are critical such as core values, strategy and



cluster roles, even in disaster response situations, will pay dividends in training and managing expectations. Human resources training that meet the agencies expectations for national staff are often delayed until after the critical response efforts are completed and just before it is time to pull out, leaving local staff without preparation nor as part of the exit strategy.

#### Build National Response Strategy on Local Expertise and Wisdom

Disaster responses require fast action on the part of the agency in order to quickly identify and assess needs, be visible at local cluster meetings and create a profile required to garner funding for the organization's relief efforts. All the while building local infrastructure upon which to implement response efforts is crucial requiring local staff recruitment in a narrow and competitive human resources environment. While experienced international response experts are familiar with coordination practices following a disaster, local expertise brought on are rarely proficient in United Nations and INGO processes. This can result in a serious gap of cultural wisdom and local expertise costing the agency time and resources. Efforts must be made to bring to the planning table local experts early if serious mistakes are to be avoided.

#### Build Local Partnership Early On

Every disaster response is different owing to the fact that responses happen in different locations, under political, social and cultural dynamics that impact every aspect of implementation measures. Rarely do agencies come with the resources, or the authorization to implement all aspects of a response strategy. The potential for local

national partnerships exist to the degree that civil society in the country is successful. Often, the host government will require that humanitarian agencies coordinate through national partners, as was the case in Nepal. To mitigate potential conflicts with host governments it is recommended that Medair engage proactively with preferred national agencies in countries prone to disaster or where early alerts have been issued.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### MISSION

#### **Introduction**

Humanitarianism is the working out of compassion in response to human need. It is the soul's desire to alleviate a neighbor's suffering and is often spontaneous, as in the case of the Good Samaritan or what happened on the plains of Solferino. In today's humanitarian space, response is likely associated with highly sophisticated mechanisms that insure efficiencies of scale and scope of activity, but lose the desired human touch that comes from spontaneous interaction with people in need.

As this case study demonstrates, there is space for individuals and small groups to effectively respond to human need, and will yield greater humanitarian impact. Individual humanitarians, or more appropriately, neighbors, can and do move the Kingdom of God into the arena of human experience by creating a "God Space" where the effective range of God's influence is seen and felt in the lives of people. In the words of Willard: "Now God's own 'kingdom' or 'rule,' is the range of his effective will, where what he wants

done is done. The person of God himself and the action of his will are the organizing principles, whether by nature or by choice, is within His kingdom.”<sup>1</sup>

The following case study<sup>2</sup> reflects on the life of a rural Thai pastor who served in God’s Kingdom in the true meaning of this passage. It spans the course of his thirty years of ministry in Samoeng District, western Chiang Mai province, Thailand. Pastor Wanchai’s objective was primarily missional: establishing local churches made up of the rural Thai and hill-tribe inhabitants of Samoeng. Wanchai specialized in the practical aspects of what McNeal refers to as “living the abundant life that God intends for us,” which for Wanchai was not in an opulent lifestyle but to continue McNeal’s words, Wanchai’s life and example proved: “to be infectious and attractive to people looking for a way out of darkness, where an atmosphere of uncertainty, skepticism and cynicism generates constant discouragement and sense of loss.”<sup>3</sup>

Wanchai’s arrival will be seen to have coincided with the evidence of the arrival of the Kingdom of God. His chief means of communication was by no means limited to preaching, for he is highly gifted in communicating the Gospel with homespun wisdom and contextually appropriate parables. He fluently clarifies the nature of the Kingdom of God to the rural Thai. Like Dunant, Wanchai walked into the context of his time and instead of being satisfied with the status quo, leapt into the arena of social and cultural dynamics and changed the way neighbor treated neighbor.

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<sup>1</sup> Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Some details for this case study are derived from Wanchai Supawas’ Masters of Ministry thesis, พันธกิจมิชชั่นในประเทศไทย (*A Burden for Missions in Thailand*), (Chobhuri, TH: Pastoral Institute, YEAR), as well as personal interviews with Wanchai.

<sup>3</sup> McNeal, *Kingdom Come*, loc 903.

The result of Wanchai's thirty-year sojourn into a Thai cross-cultural context was made evident in the many lives he touched. Hundreds of young girls were sheltered and protected from exploitation, thousands of people in scores of villages were provided with access to safe water, poor villagers were provided creative opportunities to enhance their livelihood and attitudes toward the handicapped changed. Ten local churches were established throughout the district where the Gospel enriched the quality of life of the rural and peri-urban poor.

It should be noted that the change cannot be ascribed to Wanchai's aggressive nature, strategic planning or organizational development since these are not characteristics commonly attributed to him. More than likely it must be credited to his servant's heart and to his spontaneous approach to service, events and experiences that ranged from deeply practical to phenomenal. Two years prior to Wanchai and his family's arrival in Samoeng, an event occurred that is related here. It proved to be foundational, not only to his approach to ministry in the remote district but of key lessons learned over the course of two generations of service in the district.

## **Background**

Baca Forest, Northern Thailand, 1982

Walking quietly through the canopied forest, Jaw Ki steadied his rifle in the crook of his arm while scanning the trees for birds. He was five kilometres from his village but had yet to shoot anything for his family's supper. If he could not bring home any game, his wife and two children would have only rice and a few chillies for their evening meal, one of two they shared each day. Ki listened carefully for the telltale signs of a squirrel or

a bird; either would provide a nutritional supplement for their dinner. Hearing the flutter of wings, he noted that a crow had landed not ten meters away. Taking aim, Ki sighted down the barrel of the black powder musket and said a prayer to the forest spirits while squeezing the trigger. With a sharp crack, the acrid smoke filled the air and Ki knew the pellets found their mark. A good marksman, he nearly always hit what he aimed for.

The smoke cleared but Ki found nothing, not a feather nor a wing nor any trace of the bird. Impossible, he thought, but dejectedly turned and headed home. After a short while Ki heard a sound of leaves rustling came from the forest floor. Having exhausted his powder and shot, there was little he could do. Turning, Ki was puzzled at first to find a crow walking on the trail, following him with a purposeful gait. His bemusement turned to terror as Ki had a dawning realization that this must be the same bird he had shot. As an animist, Ki feared and respected the local spirits, believing that they could protect or bring harm to those who dwelt on the land. Whatever had just happened, Ki was convinced that the spirits were not pleased. Jaw Ki believed he was being followed by a phi baa,<sup>4</sup> or forest spirit, and that would not bode well for him or his family, or possibly, for his entire village.

For the small village of Baan Baca, the residents had in the past year endured a drought and privation. Now there appeared to be an ominous message from the spirits. On returning to his village Jaw Ki informed his wife what had happened. Unwittingly she told Ki to inform the village Shaman without delay. They consulted the aged shaman who lingered in a trance for much of the evening, keeping men, women and children in

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Davis, *Muang Metaphysics: A Study of Northern Thai Myth and Ritual* (Merksem, BE: Pandora, 1984), 258.

suspense. When he spoke, it was to confirm their fears that the spirits were indeed displeased with the mountain dwellers and only a sacrifice would appease the spirits and bring a return to the unity of their ecosystem.

An animal sacrifice they had expected, but they were not prepared for the pronouncement; a child must be slain over running water or the village would not survive. Tragically for Ki, it was not just any child. His eldest, a two-year old son must be put to death to appease the spirits. Ki's wife, now in hysterics, attempted to flee with the child but the villagers, believing their situation to be dire, wrested the boy from the mother's arms. Rushing to the running water where the spirits were known to dwell they sacrificed the child within the hour.

#### Pastor Wanchai

Born into a poor Buddhist family in Ang Thong District, Ayutthaya Province in central Thailand, Wanchai was gifted with the practical common sense of a rank and file craftsman. He could repair a mechanical plough, cast reinforced concrete to construct bridges or work quietly at the gentle art of coaxing honey from honey bees in a village apiary. Adjaan Wanchai also had a reflective, contemplative side to his practical nature and in his mid-twenties he entered the monastic order. It is often stated that, "The true disciple of Buddha is not the householder but the man who renounces the world, assumes the yellow robes and enters the monastic order."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Kenneth E. Wells, *Thai Buddhism* (Bangkok: Suriyabun Publishers, 1975), 136.

Choosing to be ordained into the *Dhammayuttika* sect, Wanchai was intent on a more austere experience, following the precepts set forth by King Mongkut in 1833.<sup>6</sup> In doing so, he sought out scholarly pursuits through the rigorous disciplines of a sect that followed the *Vinaya Pitaka*, or Basket of the Disciplines. Wanchai's one year in service under the saffron robe was marked by deep disappointments in what he perceived as an underlying corruption and hypocrisy among the clergy at his temple. Leaving the monkhood and returning to his trade, Wanchai signed on with the Accelerated Rural Development program in north Thailand and started building bridges in Chiang Rai. It was during this time that he was exposed to the ministry of Thai Christians from the Chiang Rai Thai Wiang Church. Having personally witnessed the healing of a friend from a near fatal illness, the future pastor decided he had found what he was seeking—true spiritual power.

His first Bible degree was obtained in 1983 at a New Zealand-run evangelism training school called Harvest Time International in Chiang Mai. He then earned his bachelor's degree from the Korean Methodists in 1997 and five years later his Masters of Arts in 2002 by the Good Shepherds Institute when he submitted his thesis entitled *A Burden for Missions in Thailand*.<sup>7</sup> Wanchai's efforts at gaining post-secondary education through to his advanced degrees are impressive considering his humble beginnings in rural Thailand. During this time he married, raised a family and mastered the northern Thai dialect; he also gained keen insights into the dynamics that frame the culture, religion and local Northern way of life. Wanchai's ardent service as a pastor was only

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<sup>6</sup> Rong Syamananda, *A History of Thailand* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1986), 119.

<sup>7</sup> Wanchai, *A Burden for Missions in Thailand*.



matched by his sense of neighborliness which he naturally cultivated with people he came into contact with. Kosuke Koyama illustrated this type of grass roots beautifully: “Our neighbors are not concerned with our Christology, but they show, from time to time, their interest in our ‘neighborology’. Not ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might’ (Deut 6.5), but, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’ (Lev 19.18).”<sup>8</sup>

*Adjaan*, or teacher, as he is formally addressed, is today a deeply-respected citizen of Samoeng, a recently developed district city in Chiang Mai province. He is a member of the village council, teaches in public schools and practices acupuncture, in addition to serving as principle pastor for ten district churches. Life and society was not always as accommodating for Wanchai. After completing Bible school, he was invited to join the New Life Asia (hereafter NLA) ministry based in the Lanna Thai church in Chiang Mai.<sup>9</sup> In seeking to establish satellite churches throughout Chiang Mai province, their goal was to establish a missional presence in all of the ten districts in Chiang Mai province. Each district ministry office looked different according to the local context and local receptivity. Some districts had a preaching hall, some a home-based fellowship or, in the case of Samoeng, addressed practical needs in the broader humanitarian context: health, livelihoods and water, sanitation and hygiene.

Upon appointment by the NLA team, Wanchai took his wife and two adolescent sons to live in the Samoeng district. As he did when choosing his Buddhist ordinations,

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<sup>8</sup> Kosuke Koyama, *Waterbuffalo Theology* (London: Orbis 1974), 91.

<sup>9</sup> Jim Hosack, “A History of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements in Thailand,” 2009. Like the Thai Wiang Church in Chiang Rai, Lanna Thai Church was started by the Free Foreign Finnish Mission.

Wanchai chose the most challenging context—a rugged location in the district of Samoeng, which, until recently, was only accessible by horseback or, in the dry season, by vehicle on dirt tracks. Due west and over a rugged mountain range from Chiang Mai’s Muang, or central district, Samoeng had a reputation as a hardship posting.

In the early-1980s crime was rampant in the district and violent attacks on domestic and foreign tourists were so prevalent that access to foreign visitors was tightly restricted. Historically, the Church had made little inroads among the lowland Thais living in the secluded valley. The Baptist and Presbyterian missions chose to focus on hill tribe minorities who settled in the mountains west of Samoeng city in the vicinity of Baan Wat Chan and Baan Baw Keow. Owing to the geographical isolation of the small agrarian-based district of 8,000 Thai and tribal residents, the villagers tended to be wary of outsiders who sought to bring unwelcomed change to the isolated community.

Early in Wanchai’s tenure in Samoeng, he had heard about the phenomena in Baan Baca related at the beginning of this case study. Kru Suthat, a teacher at Baan Mea Lamkan, a mountain-based secondary school, told Wanchai about the strange events in the hills that surrounded the community of Samoeng. It was an occurrence so heinous that villagers would not repeat the story within earshot of their children, that a village had made a human sacrifice of one of their children in obedience to an old soothsayer who predicted doom if they did not comply with the spirit’s command. In his heart Wanchai knew he had to find the community and take his hope to them.

It was into this context that Wanchai and his family arrived in 1984, enrolling his two young sons into the local school and occupying a rented house next door to an

influential *Wat*, or Buddhist temple. The NLA strategy for establishing a Christian presence in Samoeng was direct, following the traditional missionary tactics of proclamation through preaching, Bible study and door-to-door evangelism. Wanchai and his wife, Bua-Kam, quickly detected minor negative social behaviors that signified opposition from wary villagers. His neighbors were reluctant to engage in social interactions, apart from the usual greeting of “have you eaten yet?” While at school, his two boys were the target of harassment by their playmates that taunted them for being Christians.

Wanchai’s colleagues from the NLA base at Lanna Thai Church convened a meeting to consider the dilemma and devised a plan to raise his profile in his adopted, though resistant, community. An evangelical team was assembled for a three-day rally to benefit the reticent community. A team comprising a well-known Thai evangelist, a singing and drama troupe and a band of enthusiastic Thai and foreign evangelists was formed. The agenda for the three nights was varied: a film presentation, a singing group as well as a drama presentation. Consistent on each night, though, was a preaching message to end the night. The preacher, a popular Thai minister noted for his expository gifts, deep resonant voice and ability to colorfully share the Gospel in the Thai context, was Samaan Wannakiat.

Unfortunately, the plan, though well intentioned, would further alienate the newcomer and his family from Samoeng’s tight knit social fabric. A large fallow rice paddy between the pastor’s house and the local *wat* was the unwittingly chosen venue for the big event. Planning for the rural outreach was extensive. Flyers announcing the event

were posted and distributed throughout the idyllic community that was bordered by a long oval rice paddy and intersected by dykes. Announcements were made by young Thai and foreign evangelists on loudspeakers throughout the villages. A particularly glaring omission caused the group serious problems in the days to come when they neglected to build relationships with local political, religious and opinion leaders.

On the first day of the rally, Wanchai wore his neatly pressed *Moh Hom* shirt in solidarity with the local farmers. Vehicles loaded with stage equipment, loudspeakers and instruments were unloaded. The entire operation resembled the precision and scale of a military operation. As sunset fell across the placid Samoeng Valley, vendors began to set up their food carts of dried roasted squid and other savory snacks while colorful lines of villagers, young and old, were seen streaming across paddy dykes and along dusty roads to see what news the newcomer had brought to their valley. On the first night, things started smoothly with an introduction from the local pastor and a word of greeting from the American missionary who impressed the villagers with his graceful and eloquent command of the Thai language.

Shortly after nightfall the 16-mm projector spun into action and on the large cloth screen was projected *The Jesus Film*, produced and distributed by Campus Crusade for Christ. The 450 viewers were impressed with the quality of the film and were visibly moved by the presentation. Ominously, a group of unruly youths were gathered apart from the main group, making loud remarks, occasionally throwing rocks at the stage and viewing screen. At the end of the second reel, as the camera zoomed into the empty tomb, Samaan ascended the platform and gave a simple message to confirm that the story in the

film was as real today as it was 2,000 years ago. He invited anyone interested in knowing more to come forward for counselling or prayer. Most of the crowd dispersed with little fanfare with the exception of ten people who sought more information, including a family whose daughter was paralyzed from birth and asked for healing prayer.

On the second night things went differently. The crowd was notably smaller and there was again the group of young men who kept to the back of audience. Laughter and inappropriate remarks were frequently heard. Vendors stayed away or left shortly after arrival. The atmosphere was less festive among the locals. A northern Thai singing and dance troupe performed Thai style song and dance with Christian Gospel themes. A few of the young men hurled rocks at the singers on the stage who incorporated exaggerated hand gestures into their dance routine to ward off the incoming projectiles. After the performances, Samaan delivered an impassioned presentation of the Gospel, earnestly inviting his fellow Thais to consider the Gospel invitation to follow Christ. He invited those few who remained to the end of his message to come forward with an old-fashioned altar call. By and large it fell on deaf ears as the villagers dispersed to their homes and into the dark night.

On the third day, Wanchai was approached by members of the village committee informing him that many people were offended at the direct nature of the preaching. The preacher had stated that Buddhist idols were an offence to God and that the Buddhist religion was one in which there is no true god. In addition, the venue for the rally was set up next to the local *wat*, a perceived insult to the local religion. Ominously, elements of the community were threatening violence against the group. On the final night, the team

disassembled the platform and packed up their gear, discouraged at the lack of a more positive reception of the Gospel by the local community. By ten o'clock only the pastor and his family remained in the isolated house when it was pelted with rocks and bottles. Every window was shattered while Wanchai huddled with his family under the ominous barrage pondering what God was telling him. The next night Wanchai and family were harshly woken by the sound of a loud explosion. A pipe bomb was thrown near the front door of the combination preaching hall and home. The next morning, all hope of peaceful coexistence in the village was vanquished when the family discovered a small packet left on the front step. The pastor opened it gingerly and found a shotgun shell. On it was written in bold letters, "WANCHAI."

The poignant subtlety of the message was not lost on Adjaan Wanchai. He decided not to subject his family to further threats. It was another two days before a representative came from Lanna Thai Church to inquire how he was doing after the ominous departure from earlier in the week.

He found Wanchai packed and ready to take his family away from their home and the preaching hall that had held so much promise for the first church to be planted among the lowland Thai community in Samoeng. Wanchai's plan was to send his family back to Chiang Rai province and return alone to start anew and reassess his options for serving the people of Samoeng. The Lanna Thai representative suggested that he and his family relocate to another rented house, further from the *wat* and closer to other homes in the community. When the headmaster assured the pastor that all would be well, it was agreed that the boys would remain in school. After having listened to his colleagues at Lanna

Thai Church, Wanchai now listened to his inner voice, seeking to know God's plan for him and the district city he was clearly called to.

### Path of Humility

Wanchai's first step was the path of humility. He went to the village council and asked forgiveness for not seeking their permission to share the Gospel in the district. He also sought out the gang of youth who had thrown the rocks and were the source of considerable apprehension by Wanchai and his family. It transpired that the young men, a group of unemployed opium users were hired by local authorities to intimidate Wanchai. He did not blame or accuse the youth but eventually hired these same young men as laborers to build the first Church structure in Samoeng. The village committee, appreciating Wanchai's humility and candidness in coming to them, downplayed the cultural insult.

It was then, whether by insight, inspiration or both that Wanchai asked, "What are the needs here? Is there a way we can practically help?" It did not take long to arrive at a consensus. The prevailing need, they responded, was water. They responded, "The women walk two kilometres to the river for water while we watch our children get sick and die from water borne illnesses. Is there a way that your group can help to bring water to the community?" The air was electric with possibilities transforming a moment of humbling for Wanchai into a village committee planning session; water sources, pipeline routes and user rights were considered. Within a month a downhill corridor was surveyed for the construction of a three-kilometer long, gravity-fed water system that brought spring water to each of the one hundred homes in the village.

Subsequent committee meeting developed stipulations for participating in the water scheme. Each household was required to provide labor for digging trenches and laying pipe. Once completed, participants would pay a monthly upkeep fee of 10 baht (about 30 cents US). One hurdle for the plan was that the impoverished villagers could easily provide labor and the small maintenance fee, but could not provide funds for the thousands of meters of PVC water pipe and other material required for the system. The partnership deepened as Lanna Thai Church freed up one of its staff to write a grant proposal to the Dutch Embassy's Small Embassy Project (KAP) that provided up to five thousand US dollars to assist in rural projects benefiting developing communities like Samoeng. Within three months of Wanchai's meeting with his local village committee, the project was completed. The catchment weir, situated high on the hilltop at a picturesque waterfall, eventually provided water to hundreds of households. Other villages imitated the successful project, implementing water systems with local resources.

The innovative pastor, who was once an object of mistrust and ridicule in the village, soon became a respected citizen. Once, to his private amusement he overheard his neighbors jesting with the villagers who lived near his original preaching hall that "the guy you ran out of your village has brought us water!" The ensuing years have seen the pastor grow his small church in Samoeng, develop a home for girls at risk of human trafficking and establish satellite churches in seven hill tribe villages, reaching Karen, Lahu and Hmong communities. He has shared the Gospel in most of the schools of the district at the invitation of local authorities. He saw his sons grow to serve in the church and obtain post-graduate degrees, and sadly, buried his first wife, Bua Kam after she died



from cancer in 2006. Wanchai remains a fixture in the Samoeng community today due in part to his approach to ministry which is best described as organic, finding unity that encompasses the myriad relationships that make up rural Thai culture.

A key village that Wanchai counted within his sphere of influence was Baan Baca. The small Karen community referenced earlier enjoyed much progress since his first visit thirty years ago. Most of the families decided to follow Christ and a church was established with local elders and regular worship services conducted in what is now their third church structure. A second generation of Christians has arisen who worship God in their native Karen language.

### **Baan Baca Revisited**

In 1984, after a two-day trek up the mountain, Wanchai and companions found the infamous village, a dismal setting of poverty and abject despair. He had heard of people who lived naked, flitting from jungle brush to tree to hide their embarrassment, but now he saw it with his eyes. When he asked the village headman whether the macabre story was true, he admitted it and was quite open that the event had cast a pall of uncertainty over their once idyllic lives. The old shaman had died, leaving a legacy of shame and guilt for the families who were affected by the event.

The narrative continues in 1993, nine years since Wanchai and his family moved to the remote city of Samoeng. By this time the district had developed considerably, with a paved highway over the rugged mountain pass, a new bank and additions of schools and a hospital to the local infrastructure. In addition, the small dirt track to the hilltop village of Baan Baca that Wanchai had supervised the construction of five years prior had been

paved by the Accelerated Development Program. In the preceding nine years, Wanchai's blend of "neighborology," pastoral care and hard work saw many churches spring up in the dusty villages straddling jagged mountain ridges and deep-gladed canyons inhabited by a variety of Thailand's mountain dwelling tribal groups. Like a father, he tried not to show favoritism, but certainly the first one, the Baan Baca Church, gave him much satisfaction.

In 1993, the same people who stared at the first visitors in astonishment were now some of its leading elders. Some had spirits cast out, been healed of deafness or emotional instability. Bringing Gospel truths to light for the agrarian highlanders, Wanchai gently led them from fear of spirits to a renewal in faith through grace. The once oppressed villagers now freed their fellow captives. The village had experienced a renaissance with the establishment of a church, school and health clinic. People no longer tolerated open defecation, but knew how to prevent disease through hygiene and clean water. They sent their children to the village primary school, while children who completed the sixth grade and demonstrated an aptitude for learning went to the pastor's student hostel and attended the Samoeng High School. Wanchai often spoke hopefully about the day when the first Baca child would graduate from the Teachers College in Chiang Mai, a dream that has been realized many times since.

Twelve years had passed since Jaw Ki's fateful hunting trip. What had brought so much grief and even local notoriety to the villages of Baan Baca Nok and Baan Baca Nai,<sup>10</sup> had, in fact, become portals of grace and redemption for the remote communities. Ki's younger son was now a young adult and was gaining a dubious reputation for his enthusiastic preaching and zealous appeal to non-Christian villagers to forsake the spirits

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<sup>10</sup> Outer and Inner Baan Baca respectively.

and idols of the local religions and follow Christ. He distributed evangelistic literature which he obtained from Christians in Chiang Mai. Twenty kilometers away, Wanchai was preparing to visit one of the satellite churches established in the Samoeng District when he received an urgent call. He was needed at the sub district police station in Mea Lam Kan, Nai Tong, the surviving son of Jaw Ki, was being held for making inflammatory statements about Buddhism and local folk religion. These inflammatory statements were in direct contradiction to Thailand's strict code of religious laws designed to keep peace between people of different faiths.<sup>11</sup>

Wanchai knew this was a serious situation for Nai Tong because he was a repeat offender and the police officer in charge of the sub district was known to be a strict disciplinarian. Another concern was Wanchai's knowledge that extra judicial corporal, or even capital punishment,<sup>12</sup> was often the result when a recalcitrant offender was repeatedly brought in for offences. Wanchai knew that the situation could be dangerous for both Nai Tong and for himself since he would act as a *de facto* advocate on behalf of the accused. Happily, he recalled that his former colleague at Lanna Thai Church, who now served in a regional office in Bangkok, was due to arrive for a visit that morning. His presence would be good for moral support, with a foreigner present, the local authorities may not be quick to take drastic measures. As usual his intuition served him well. After briefing his friend on the situation, the two started the one-hour drive up the mountain to the police station. The dark monsoon clouds added a somber overcast as the two drove silently, contemplating the task ahead of them. Pulling into the gravel parking

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<sup>11</sup> Thai Federal Government, "Thai Criminal Code 1956, (ประเทศไทยทางอาญา พ.ศ. รหัส 2499).

<sup>12</sup> Chris Jones, "The Execution of Thai Justice," *BBC News* (July 22, 2004).

strip, Wanchai was alarmed to note an air of excitement surrounding the forest constabulary. Villagers were congregated outside the bamboo and roughly hewn wood structure. It was apparent that people were upset and some complained loudly when they saw the two newcomers walk into the office.

Entering, they immediately noted Nai Tong was distressed. He looked haggard and appeared to have been physically abused. He managed a demure *wai*, offering up both hands in humble supplication, looking at once sorry for the trouble he was causing, but also having a glimmer of hope that Wanchai might help him to escape his dire situation. The room, a large rectangle with slat bamboo benches along the walls where the elders, accusers and a handful of policemen, informally dressed but armed, sat waiting. Ominously, a number of machete knives were propped along one of the walls. Some of the faces of the assembled men were angry, some solemn, but all eyes were intently fixed upon Nai Tong as though he might try and bolt.

When Wanchai took his seat, the presiding police officer asked the *Kamnan* of Baan Baca Nok, a traditionally Buddhist village where a new temple was recently constructed, to start the proceedings. With a litany of accusations, he held up several pieces of literature that exhorted Thai Buddhists to forsake the Buddhist idols and follow Christ. The mood became progressively darker. Attempting to mollify the intensity of what now seemed more of mob than tribunal, Wanchai tried to explain that Nai Tong was a youth, uneducated in either school or in the Church, that his zeal for his newfound faith had overtaken him. He was shouted down. Several others stood up to passionately condemn the young man who, they argued, had made a mockery of centuries of Thai

values and traditions. At the moment when it was felt that a cloudburst of violence must break forth, the police officer in charge stood up and held both hands in the air, saying, “*Jai yen yen*,” (calm down), he said, with indisputable quiet authority.

Silently, following unspoken instructions, the assembly divided into small groups and whispered quietly with one another. Nai Tong sat alone, seemingly forsaken. The police officer pulled Wanchai and his foreigner friend aside where the three sat near a fire that gave off more smoke than heat from the dying embers. Across the fire he looked into Wanchai’s friend’s eyes and asked if he noticed the uniform he was wearing that day. The khaki trousers had holes at the knees. Not the factory-aged sort that youth liked to wear, but trousers that were roughly torn. Nodding, the foreigner held the policeman’s gaze as he continued:

I was wearing these pants two years ago when you and Adjaarn Wanchai picked me up off the road. You saved my life when you took me to the hospital. Others passed me by, but you two stopped and helped me. I often wondered why you would help a stranger as you did. Today it’s my turn to help you. Tell this young fool to keep his mouth shut so we can have some peace up here. The next time there won’t be a tribunal.

As though on an unseen queue, the crowded room disbanded, leaving Wanchai and Nai Tong alone. It is not certain what the pastor had to say to the young man, but he gently put one hand on his shoulder and with dark, penetrating eyes locked on his face, shared words of wisdom with the youth. He learned a valuable lesson that day and left unharmed, but not unscathed.

Two years prior to the forest tribunal Wanchai and his friend were traveling along the isolated Samoeng-Hang Dong road en-route to Chiang Mai. The road is a winding steep incline marked by sharp curves and treacherous cliffs. Rounding a sharp curve, the

two men were startled to see a uniformed man lying face down, bruised and bloodied, with his motorcycle nearby. It was obviously a solo accident and the injured man smelled heavily of alcohol. Stopping instinctively, they carefully loaded both the injured man and his motorcycle into the back of the pick-up and picked up the pace to get him safely to the nearest district hospital located in Mea Rim, about thirty kilometers away. The man, who was wearing the uniform of a Thai policeman, was instantly recognizable to Wanchai and had gained consciousness enough to sit up in the bed of the truck.

Speaking softly, Wanchai told his friend, “This policeman is a tough one. He has caused a lot of trouble in Samoeng, taking bribes and getting drunk. Let’s hope he doesn’t cause us trouble.” The two deposited the policeman at the hospital, made sure he was being taken care of and, after a short delay, were on their way again. Wanchai never mentioned the incident to the policeman and wondered whether he was too drunk to remember the kindness shown.

### **Lessons Learned**

The concluded case study is not that of a typical faith-based humanitarian scenario. Indeed, Wanchai would likely not describe himself as a Christian humanitarian. As a servant of God and a man of faith, he caught the vision and truth of *imago dei* and therefore the artificial boundaries that divide people were made irrelevant. Whether Wanchai is labeled as a pastor, humanitarian, teacher, faith-based development worker or as a “do gooder” is also irrelevant, for where he and his family walked in the land, the Kingdom of God was made evident through unconditional love and service.

In considering the life and ministry of Wanchai, there are significant attributes that should be reflected upon. Wanchai broke the mold by his posture of humility as demonstrated before the village council, the government officials and importantly the poor and marginalized of Samoeng. Like Christ he brought hope to the vulnerable and that confidence echoed Christ's words to the leper, "I do choose, be made whole!" (Mk 1:40). His humility allowed Wanchai to enter the community as a learner and as such he took on the posture of a student, learning the local dialect, traditions and even the folk religion that held the villagers in a vice like grip of fear.

Wanchai addressed taboos directly, without apology from a standpoint of authority. When he saw disabled people who were confined, sometimes in chains he spoke to the families offering alternative solutions. Children of very poor families were often entrusted to unscrupulous human brokers resulting in indentured servitude as labor or sex slaves. In response, he opened a home for poor tribal girls to receive an education breaking the cycle of bondage. Other programs were implemented to address livelihoods for women, safe water and local agrarian projects. These projects were not part of a grand strategy to address poverty throughout the Samoeng district but were organic, spontaneous. Some remain to this day; others have lived out the cycle of local necessity. Nowhere was the word "rights" mentioned because in Wanchai's vision of *shalom* it is the responsibility of a neighbor's duty of care to another neighbor that trumps rights as a motivating factor for service.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I have attempted to demonstrate that the command to love one's neighbor frames the concept of justice in society and that compassion in action is the spiritual fulfillment of the law of neighborliness. In terms of faith and humanitarianism, faith is the transcendent element that transforms people and situations. Transformation is therefore the result Christians seek, taking people from despair to hope, from being marginalized to empowerment, from personal and social dysfunction to a return to normalcy.

The ideals that inspire contemporary faith-based humanitarianism include compassion, faith, justice and transformational development. Contrary to a rights-based approach to addressing human need, faith-based humanitarianism is founded upon a biblical call to responsibility: the duty to care for one's neighbor. Attributes which define faith-based humanitarianism include spontaneity, genuineness and integrity and is action oriented. Compassion costs something, requiring an investment of time, emotions and physical resources and usually requires breaking from the routine of one's daily life in order to act out his response to human suffering.

The complex nature of today's humanitarian working environment has led many humanitarian agencies to focus on the duty and policy of programming, rather than the mission of compassion. To return to Theodore Williams: "If we ride roughshod over the feelings of people and have no time for individuals, under the guise of carrying out projects and programmes for God, our mission has no credibility."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel and Sugden, *The Church in Response to Human Need*, 213.



It is here that faith has an integral place in humanitarianism. Too often compassionate interventions do not reflect the ideals or the attributes that define faith-based humanitarianism. Agencies put more emphasis upon program outputs rather than fostering genuine compassionate responses to tragedy. Further, people do not practice in their own household what they preach to the world by ignoring the needs of national staff, even in the midst of disaster responses. Young response workers are sequestered away from the communities they have travelled far to serve, focused upon documenting the response rather than doing the response. Reports, monitoring, proposals and internal minutiae such as emails and communications have become paramount so that it is rare to see humanitarian workers take an interest in immediate surroundings because they are wrapped up in the internal life and activities of the response mechanism. As a result they become isolated and do not have time for local relationship building, creating a perception that the humanitarian crisis is out there, away from their local environment.

### **A Call to Return to Founding Ideals**

Following are recommendations for structured and unstructured approaches toward fostering an intentional faith-based approach to humanitarian service. The intention is not to create another to-do list but to incentivize humanitarian behavior, encouraging non-traditional approaches that create a holistic compassionate approach to integrated ministry. For structured approaches, agencies can implement programs that intentionally encourage a greater focus on the spirit of humanitarianism seeking transcendence that results from action to transformation. Unstructured approaches are intended to be permitted according to individual needs and available time and resources.

## Unstructured Approaches to Fostering Greater Humanitarian Effectiveness

Unstructured activities include contemplative exercises which promote a deeper awareness and sensitivity for compassionate action. The purpose here is to help the humanitarian worker internalize compassionate values and foster an in-depth sense of empathy. This is not only for when in the midst of suffering but to guard against the complacent attitude responders can develop when surrounded by insurmountable distress. Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection, a Carmelite friar of the seventeenth century, captured the spirit of this ideal when he wrote: “Wherein I keep myself by a simple attention, and a general fond regard to God, which I may call an actual presence of God; or, to speak better, an habitual, silent and secret conversation of the soul with God.”<sup>2</sup>

Contemplative exercises include personal disciplines such as private prayer and meditation,<sup>3</sup> mindfulness exercises,<sup>4</sup> a meditative walk through the neighborhood or a guided study of local cultural values and faith perspectives. The aim is that these activities can be practiced at the discretion of the staff member, at the desk, on a short walk or by informal conversations with neighbors surrounding the work place. Organizational support for the above activities includes approval, providing books and access to web-based resources. In addition, information, teaching and training on the above topics can be included in local team building exercises.

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<sup>2</sup> Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God: The Best Rule of Holy Life* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Christian Classics, 2005), 31.

<sup>3</sup> Pray as you Go, “Home Page,” <http://www.pray-as-you-go.org/> (accessed March 28, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Mindful, “Home Page,” <http://www.mindful.org/> (accessed March 28, 2016).

## Structured Approaches

Instilling enhanced awareness of the importance of a compassionate approach to humanitarian service requires the inclusion of relevant subject matter into staff training curricula. The object is twofold: staff biblical and historical relevance of practicing compassion and to prevent practitioners from becoming inured with the plight of people surrounding them. Henri Nouwen describes the danger of complacency in his book, *Life of the Beloved*. In speaking of the tendency to be caught up in busy-ness and the need to practice the art of presence, he states: “This attentive presence can allow us to see how many blessings there are for us to receive: the blessings of the poor who stop us on the road...but most of all the blessings that come to us through words of gratitude, encouragement, affection and love.”<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, topics of instruction and study can be considered as a tripartite approach to learning and discovery: ideals of compassion, practice of compassion and an appreciative inquiry of local customs and values.

### Ideals and Practice of Compassion and Appreciative Inquiry

In this grouping the theology of compassion, a history of compassion and International Humanitarian Law are taught. Along with the unstructured approaches previously mentioned are topics on the practice of compassion which include team life,<sup>6</sup> serving as a witness to Christ in deed,<sup>7</sup> and conflict mediation in cross cultural contexts.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual living in a Secular World* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 81.

<sup>6</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (Scranton, PA: HarperOne, 2009).

The writers of *Appreciative Inquiry* communicate, “Appreciative Inquiry is about the coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives “life” to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms.”<sup>9</sup> For the purpose of this exercise, appreciative inquiry is taken at its broadest interpretation in order to discover what gives “life” to local culture. It answers why and when do they practice compassion and what motivates people in a given culture to do good? By taking a closer look at local traditions and values, humanitarian workers will gain a deeper perspective of their environment and are enabled to relate at a level that demonstrates understanding of the culture. Most societies have traditions of faith or culture on how to treat the stranger or alien residing among them. This can look like, “The call to ‘welcome the stranger,’ through protection and hospitality, and to honour the stranger, or those of other faiths, with respect and equality, is deeply rooted in all major religions and our faiths demand that we remember we are all migrants on this earth, journeying together in hope.”<sup>10</sup>

In 2013, the World Council of Churches and twenty-five other agencies under the auspices of the United Nations Refugee Committee gathered to develop a declaration concerning protection for refugees entitled, “Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for

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<sup>7</sup> Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 41

<sup>8</sup> Augsburger, *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures*, 109.

<sup>9</sup> David Cooperrider and Diana D. Whitney, *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005), 3.

<sup>10</sup> Anglican Communion News Service, “We are all Migrants on this Earth,” (June 18, 2015), <http://www.anglicannews.org/comment/2015/06/we-are-all-migrants-on-this-earth.aspx> (accessed March 28, 2016).

Faith Leaders.” In part the declaration states, “A core value of my faith is to welcome the stranger, the refugee, the internally displaced, the other. I shall treat him or her as I would like to be treated. I will challenge others, even leaders in my faith community, to do the same.”<sup>11</sup>

If faith-based agencies will implement these and other exercises into their staff development curricula, humanitarians may find that they are better equipped to serve the needy in relief settings. There may be less emphasis on bureaucracy and a little more life and spontaneity in approaches to people who suffer. Possibly the spark of compassion will ignite the spiritual power that brings about transformation and connection. In conclusion, the question is not whether Christians are to keep faith in humanitarianism, but do the ideals of humanitarianism define them as a people of God. The story of humanity comes full circle when viewed from the perspective of Cain’s plaintive cry to the creator, “Am I really my brother’s keeper?” Bearing the stamp of *imago dei*, do we embrace our sister and brother as having equal value to ourselves?

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<sup>11</sup> The United Nations, “Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders,” <http://www.unhcr.org/51b82ff16.html> (accessed March 28, 2016).

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