WALKING *with* THE POOR

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF TRANSFORMATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

REVISED AND UPDATED EDITION

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Charting the course

IN THE BEGINNING

The purpose of this book is to describe a proposal for understanding the principles and practice of transformational development (positive material, social, and spiritual change) from a Christian perspective. It is my intention to try to bring together three basic streams of thinking and experience. The best of the principles and practice of the international development community needs to be integrated with the thinking and experience of Christian relief and development nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Then these two streams of experience need to be informed and shaped by a theological framework for transformational development.

Throughout this book I will struggle to overcome problems presented by the persistent and insistent belief in the West that the spiritual and physical domains of life are separate and unrelated. This assumption has invaded and controlled almost every area of intellectual inquiry, including development theory and practice as well as much of Christian theology. I will seek an understanding of development in which the physical, social, and spiritual dimensions of life are seamlessly interrelated.

Origins

The pilgrimage that this book represents had its origin in 1975, the year World Vision received a Development Program Grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for the purpose of helping World Vision begin its relief and development ministry. I was part of the original team. We went to Washington DC, took a three-day course in development planning, and were then released to help World Vision's seven offices in Asia begin planning their first development programs. God forgive us for our sins.

The 1970s and early 1980s were interesting times for Christian relief and development agencies. It was a time full of argument and sometimes divisive discussions among evangelicals as to whether or not Bible-believing Christians ought to do development. Some were deeply concerned that including social action in the Christian agenda blunted the church's commitment to evangelism. Evangelism must be primary, went the argument. The modern assumption that the spiritual and the material were unrelated areas of life had infected Christian mission thinking.

Throughout this pilgrimage, many of us in the World Vision family shared a deep-seated concern that, for a Christian agency to be Christian, development programming had to be holistic, by which we meant that development and Christian witness should be held together in a creative tension. In these early days we simplistically and incorrectly understood this to mean that Christian witness was something one added to the development program mix to make it complete, just another sector, a wedge in the development pie.

In time we realized that this conceptualization was flawed. It implied that all the other development sectors had nothing to do with spiritual things and that we were treating spiritual work as a separate sector of life. This meant that, in the very communities where we wanted to be good models of the Christian faith, we were in fact witnessing to the fact that the material and the spiritual realms of life were separate and unrelated. Our struggle to escape this modern assumption led us to a great deal of inquiry concerning both the theology and the worldview of development.

The 1990s were a decade of seeking professionalism. Good intentions were no longer enough. The poor deserved better than gifted amateurs with their hearts in the right place. The world had learned a great deal about development and Christian organizations needed to take this on board. The social sciences were studied and our staff members were sent off to England, Canada, and the United States, to learn from centers of development learning in the West.

The first edition of *Walking with the Poor* was written in 1998. A lot had happened in the intervening twenty-three years since we set out to "do development." Much had been learned. As a cadre of long-time friends, we had shared our successes and wept over our failures. Hundreds of workshops have been celebrated or endured. Hundreds of papers have been pored over, and many books have been read. Thousands of hours of discussion, anguish, and discovery have taken place in long rides on dusty roads and over the dinner tables in featureless hotels. The outworking of all of this is the source of the thinking for the first edition of this book.

It is now 2011. I left World Vision to become a professor of international development in the School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary five years ago. Still in touch with World Vision friends

and colleagues, I continue to see a steady stream of position papers, evaluations, and white papers. I do a bit of consulting from time to time.

But my major source of new material and insights comes from the world of development studies and development research, a product of the professionalizing of the international development community that began in the 1990s. Today, there is a wide variety of academic journals, a number of serious schools of development studies and thousands of "fugitive documents"—research papers, evaluations, empirical studies—hanging on the websites of most development agencies, a number of development studies centers in Europe and the United States and the World Bank. By virtue of leaving the hectic life of an agency executive for the life of an academic, I finally have time to read and graduate students to exploit. Much of the new material in this book is a result.

Definitions

I will use two phrases over and over in this book: *transformational development* and *Christian witness*. It may help the reader if I define them here in the beginning.

Transformational development is the term I use as an alternative to the more traditional *development*. There are two reasons for this. First, the term *development* is heavily loaded with past meaning, not all of which is positive. When most people think of development, they think of material change or social change in the material world. Second, *development* is a term that many understand as a synonym for Westernization or modernization (Escobar 1995). For some, development is understood as simply having more things. Many in the development business, including many of us in the West, are not sure that this kind of development is good for people or for this planet.

I use the term *transformational development* to reflect my concern for seeking positive change in the whole of human life materially, socially, psychologically and spiritually. The adjective *transformational* is used to remind us that human progress is not inevitable; it takes hard work. There is an adversary who works against our desire to enhance life. True human development involves making choices, setting aside that which is not for life in us and in our community, while actively seeking and supporting all that is for life. This requires that we say no to some things in order to say yes to what really matters. Transformation implies changing our choices.

Transformational development is a lifelong journey. It never ends. There is always more before us. Everyone is on this journey: the poor, the nonpoor, and the staff of the development agency. The transformational journey is about finding and enjoying life as it should be, as it was intended to be. In this book I suggest that the goals for this journey of transformation are to recover our true identity as human beings created in the image of

God and to discover our true vocation as productive stewards, faithfully caring for the world and all the people in it.

Christian witness is the second phrase that I use frequently. Understanding what I mean by this requires a short introduction. Everyone believes in something and what we believe in shapes what we do and how we do it. This is no less true for those who are concerned for the poor and wish to help the poor on their development journey. This ideological center is a matter of faith, whether we are Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, agnostic, or atheist. These core values and beliefs are where we get our understanding of who we are and what we are here for. These guiding principles shape our understanding of what a better human future is and how we should get there.

I am a Christian, and I have been working among Christians in the development business for over thirty years. My Christian identity and my understanding of my faith shape my view of what development is for and how it should be done. Part of that understanding is my conviction that the best news I have is the knowledge that God has, through his Son, made it possible for every human being to be in a covenant relationship with God. We need only say yes to this offer. To not share this news, to not yearn that everyone might share what was given to me through no merit of my own, would be wrong in the deepest and most profound sense. *Christian witness* is the term that I use to describe my being compelled by love to share this news.

I deliberately chose the phrase *Christian witness* over the word *evangelism* for several reasons. First, like the term *development*, *evangelism* is a loaded phrase. Images of street evangelists yelling through megaphones and of crusade evangelists exhorting stadiums full of people come to mind, neither of which fits the idea of transformational development very well. Second, and more important, evangelism tends to be used in the limited sense of referring to the verbal proclamation of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I need a phrase that includes proclamation, but that is not limited to it.

I understand Christian witness to include the declaration of the gospel by *life*, word, and deed. By *life* I refer to the fact that Christians are the message. We are the sixty-seventh book of the Bible. People read our lives and our actions and listen to our words as their way of determining what being a Christian means. By *word* I refer to the need to say what the gospel story is and to invite others to make it their story. By *deed* I refer to the fact that the Christian faith, at its best, is an active faith, engaged with the world and seeking to make it more for life and for the enjoyment of life.

There is an important nuance here. There is no such thing as not witnessing. Christian development promoters are witnessing all the time. The only question is to whom or to what? Their deeds, both what they do and how they do it, declare in whom or in what they place their faith and also

demonstrate the moral content of that faith. The way they live their lives declares whom they love and on whom they depend. And, if they are truly living lives that demonstrate their love of God and their neighbor, then questions will come to which the gospel is the answer and they will witness with the words that provide this answer.

THE PROBLEM OF THE MODERN WORLDVIEW

I have already mentioned that one of the primary characteristics of time in history has been the belief in the West that the spiritual and material domains of life are separate and unrelated. This dominating assumption controls almost every area of intellectual inquiry, including development theory and practice. The result is a tragic pair of reductions. First, poverty is reduced to a merely material condition having to do with the absence of things like money, water, food, housing and the lack of just social systems, also materially defined and understood. Second, development is reduced correspondingly to a material series of responses designed to overcome these needs.

Since the search for a genuinely biblical and holistic understanding of poverty and transformational development is the focus of this book, I believe it may be helpful to explore the nature of this modern blind spot more fully before going on. Why do we need the word *holistic* in the first place? What is the nature of the problem we are trying to solve by using such a term? There must be something that is not holistic.

The great divorce: Separating the spiritual and material realms

The place to begin is the way we understand and interpret the world in which we live, something anthropologists call our worldview. Our modern worldview is like a pair of glasses through which we see and make sense out of our world. Unlike glasses, however, our worldview also includes our assumptions about how the world works. Our need for holism has its roots in our modern worldview.

As the foundational paradigm shift of the Enlightenment has worked itself out in Western culture, one of its most enduring features has been the assumption that we can consider the spiritual and physical realms as separate and distinct from one another. On the one hand, there is the spiritual or supernatural world where God lives and acts, along with other cosmic Gods like Allah. This is the world of religion. On the other hand, there is the real world—the material world where we hear, see, feel, touch, and smell. This is the world of science, technology, and development.

Sadly, this is not just a problem for Western folk. This dichotomy, or absolute separation, between the spiritual and the physical is a central tenet

of what some call modernity, and modernity is rapidly becoming a dominant overlay on the world's cultures. Modernity is deeply embedded in the modern economic system and in contemporary information technology, both of which are being extended wherever Coca Cola is sold. This same culture of dichotomies is taught in every classroom where the curriculum is based on Western educational models. Thus, every non-Western professional has imbibed this worldview as an unspoken part of his or her professional training.

This framework of separated areas of life is also deeply embedded in the Western part of the Christian church, in its theology, and in the daily life of its people. On Sunday morning or during our devotional or prayer life, we operate in the spiritual realm. The rest of the week, and in our professional lives, we operate in the physical realm and, hence, unwittingly act like functional atheists. Simply being Christian does not heal our dichotomous understanding of our world.

The dichotomies of the modern worldview

Lesslie Newbigin (1989) has shown how the modern separation of the physical and spiritual realms explains a wide range of the modern dichotomies that are prevalent in the modern worldview. For example, the spiritual world is the arena of sacred revelation, in which we know by believing. The real world where we hear, see, feel, and touch is where scientific observation allows us to know things with certainty. Faith and religion are part of the spiritual world, while reason and science provide the explanations in the real world. The spiritual world is an interior, private place; the real world is an exterior, public place. This means that values are a private matter of personal choice, having no relevance in the public square where politics and economics reign alone. Publicly, we only need to agree on the facts. Sadly, the church has also succumbed to this modern worldview and has allowed itself to be relegated to the spiritual world, while the state and other human institutions assume responsibility for what happens in everyday life.

Spiritual	Material
Revelation and believing	Observation and knowing
Faith	Reason
Religion	Science
Private and personal	Public
Values	Facts
Church	State

Figure 1–1: The dichotomies of the modern worldview.

Separating Christian witness and social action

Modernity's separation of the physical and spiritual realms is part of the explanation for how we have come to understand Christian witness, and specifically evangelism, as being unrelated to community development. Loving God is spiritual work, and loving neighbors takes place in the material world. So evangelism (restoring people's relationship with God) is spiritual work, while social action (restoring just economic, social, and political relationships among people) is not. In the final analysis this false dichotomy leads Christians to believe that God's redemptive work takes place only in the spiritual realm, while the world is left, seemingly, to the devil.

This two-tiered understanding of the world explains another curious phenomenon. As carriers of modernity, Western governments and most secular development institutions separate religion from development. They accept modernity's assertion that church and state must be separate because they deal with separate realms. Because the church understands evangelism as an activity appropriate to the spiritual world, while social action—if it is an appropriate activity for the church at all—is the appropriate response in the physical world, the church goes along with this imposed separation of what the gospel suggests is inseparable.

The Christian development agency is not immune to the phenomenon. We express our captivity to a modern worldview when we say that holistic ministry means combining evangelism (meeting spiritual need) with relief and development (meeting physical need) as if these were divisible realms and activities. Then we make it worse by insisting that the church or the evangelism part of our organization do the former, while the development agency does the latter. A number of serious and thoughtful Christian groups are organized this way. By so doing we declare development independent of religion, something most of us do not really believe.

Separating word, deed, and sign

Paul Hiebert has developed a very helpful framework that compares the worldviews of modern and traditional cultures. He portrays the modern worldview as two-tiered, with the physical and spiritual worlds completely separated. The traditional worldview is holistic, with the spiritual and material worlds interrelated in a seamless whole. The world of high religion is occupied by the great gods that should not be bothered or disturbed. The interrelationship between the seen and unseen worlds is mediated by shamans, sacred books, spirits, and others who have access to both worlds. This is the world of curses, amulets, charms, and other attempts to bargain with or "handle" the unseen world.

While the modern world has something to say about high religion and about the physical world, we have nothing to say to the world of folk religion. We suffer from what Hiebert calls "the excluded middle."
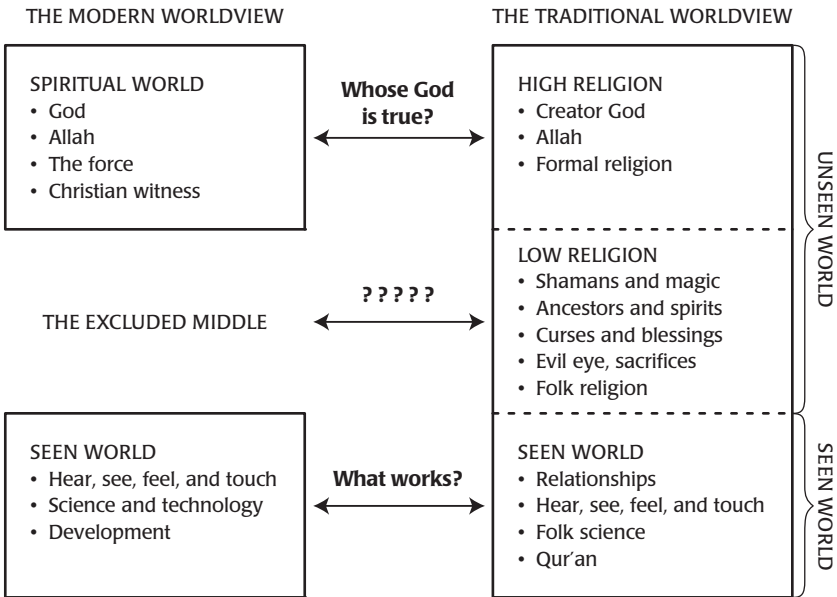
THE MODERN WORLDVIEW   THE TRADITIONAL WORLDVIEW

SPIRITUAL WORLD   **Whose God**   HIGH RELIGION
• God   **is true?**   • Creator God
• Allah   ←——————→   • Allah
• The force   • Formal religion
• Christian witness

                                           LOW RELIGION
                                           • Shamans and magic
THE EXCLUDED MIDDLE   **? ? ? ? ?**   • Ancestors and spirits
                        ←——————→   • Curses and blessings
                                           • Evil eye, sacrifices
                                           • Folk religion

SEEN WORLD   **What works?**   SEEN WORLD
• Hear, see, feel, and touch   • Relationships
• Science and technology ←——————→   • Hear, see, feel, and touch
• Development   • Folk science
                                           • Qur'an

UNSEEN WORLD

SEEN WORLD

Figure 1–2: Modern and traditional worldviews.
(Adapted from Hiebert 1982)

We in the West no longer believe in ancestors, spirits, demons, and un-
seen actors. That's all superstition and ignorance, after all. Yet, most tradi-
tional cultures spend a lot of time being concerned about this unseen world
and locate cause and effect there. The impact of this excluded middle from
a development perspective is a blind spot. We fail to hear the community's
story about the unseen world, and we fail to have answers that, in their
minds, adequately take this world into account.

For Christians, it should be humbling to note that, while in no way the
same, the worldview of the Bible is closer to the worldview of traditional
cultures than it is to the modern worldview. The biblical worldview is ho-
listic in the sense that the physical world is never understood as being dis-
connected or separate from the spiritual world and the rule of the God who
created it. Moreover, Christ—the creator, sustainer, and redeemer of the
creation—is both in us and interceding for us at the right hand of God the
Father. The fact that the Word became flesh explodes the claim that the
spiritual and physical can be separated meaningfully.

A clarification is needed. Having noted the holism in the biblical
worldview and the fact that most traditional worldviews are holistic is not
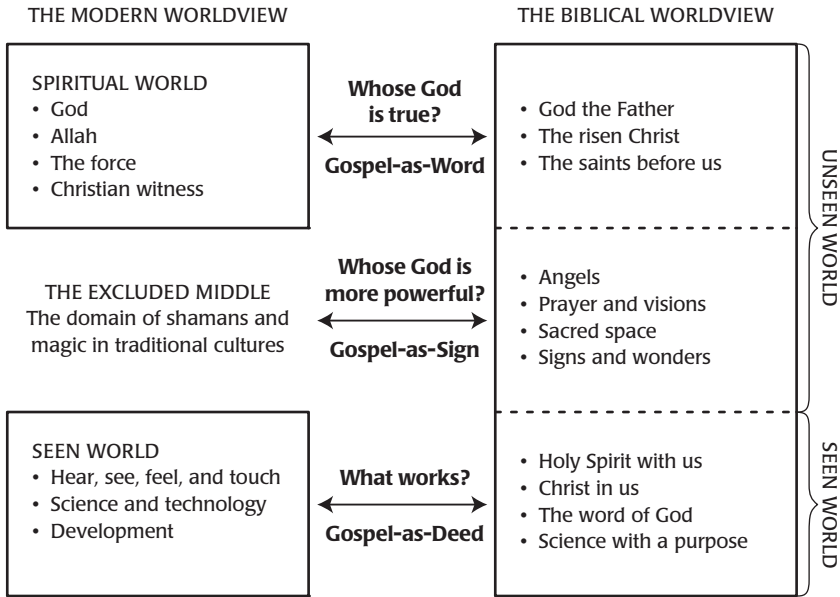to say that the biblical worldview is animistic. The biblical and animistic

THE MODERN WORLDVIEW   THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

SPIRITUAL WORLD	**Whose God**	• God the Father
• God	**is true?**	• The risen Christ
• Allah	← →	• The saints before us
• The force	**Gospel-as-Word**	
• Christian witness		

UNSEEN WORLD

	Whose God is	• Angels
THE EXCLUDED MIDDLE	**more powerful?**	• Prayer and visions
The domain of shamans and	← →	• Sacred space
magic in traditional cultures	**Gospel-as-Sign**	• Signs and wonders

SEEN WORLD	**What works?**	• Holy Spirit with us
• Hear, see, feel, and touch		• Christ in us
• Science and technology	← →	• The word of God
• Development	**Gospel-as-Deed**	• Science with a purpose

SEEN WORLD

Figure 1–3: Contrasting modern and biblical worldviews.

worldviews are quite different, as a comparison of Figure 1–2 and Figure 1–3 makes clear. There is only one God in the biblical worldview; all other spiritual beings are both part of the created order and fallen, just like human beings.

This worldview comparison also calls attention to the fact that the critical questions change depending on the level at which one is functioning. The gospel addresses the question of truth with gospel-as-word, the truth about God. The gospel addresses questions of power with the gospel-as-sign; the power of the Holy Spirit. At the material level of empiricism, the biblical worldview answers the question "What works?" with good deeds that express the love of God.

This reveals another level of the problem modernity poses to Christian mission. When we separate the spiritual from the physical, not only do we separate evangelism from development, but we separate gospel-as-word from the gospel-as-deed, and provide no home for gospel-as-sign. In the spiritual realm, the critical question is, Whose God is the true God? and the answer is an idea. This frame allows us to reduce the gospel message to truth in the form of propositions, even a set of "spiritual laws." Christian witness is reduced to words and speaking.

At the level of the physical world, the question is, What works? The answer comes in the form of effective methods and good technology. Deeds

are the real thing. We then reduce the gospel message and evangelism to working for justice or saving God's creation.

Separating gospel-as-word, gospel-as-deed, and gospel-as-sign has serious consequences. In cultures in which words have lost their meaning, as is often the case of the West, deeds are necessary to verify what the words actually mean. Saying we are Christian is ambiguous, since almost everyone in the West claims to be Christian. If we want to know what people mean when they say they are Christian, we look at the quality of their lives. The way we live and act declares to others what we mean when we say we are Christians.

In other cultures deeds can be ambiguous. Whether we speak or not, people receive a message. Discovering water in the desert is a miracle, and animist cultures often interpret the technology that finds it as magic and witchcraft. Research done by Bruce Bradshaw (1993) has discovered this repeatedly in World Vision's development work. In the view of local villagers World Vision has outstanding diviners and powerful shamans on its staff. Development technology, without accompanying words to interpret its good deeds, can result in glory being given to clever or "magical" soil scientists and hydrologists, rather than to God.

We should also note the inadequate way the modern worldview deals with signs. Because there is no place for the appearance of the supernatural in the physical world, there is no home for signs and miracles. For most animists, the existential question has little to do with truth; it has to do with power. Since cause is located in the unseen or spiritual world, the critical question is, Whose god is more powerful? The fact that charismatic and Pentecostal folk have an answer for this question is a major part of the reason they are the fastest growing expression of the church today. The inability of the modern to deal with signs and miracles makes it very difficult for carriers of modernity, such as development practitioners, to carry out meaningful conversations with people who hold a traditional or animist worldview. The development practitioner thinks people are sick because of germs and dirty water, while the people believe they are sick because of curses and witchcraft.

Therefore, in dealing with the gospel message, we cannot separate word, deed, and sign without truncating our message. Words clarify the meaning of deeds. Deeds verify the meaning of words. Most critically, signs announce the presence and power of One who is radically other and who is both the true source of all good deeds and the author of the only words that bring life in its fullest.

Limiting the scope of sin and the gospel

Because we have tended to accept the dichotomy between the spiritual and the physical, we sometimes inadvertently limit the scope of both sin

and the gospel. If God's concern is only for the spiritual, then we reduce our understanding of sin to something personal that separates people from God. This in turn tempts us to reduce the scope of redemption to the spiritual or personal realm alone. This makes it hard to understand the impact of sin in the material world of economics, politics, culture, and the church as an institution, and even harder to believe that God's salvific and redemptive work extends to this messy, sinful world. Yet this is the world in which the Christian development agency works.

By limiting the domain of sin to a person's soul, we inadvertently limit the scope of the gospel as well. We need to transform this way of thinking. God's rule extends to both the spiritual and material; the redemptive work of Jesus Christ is needed wherever sin has penetrated. This means we must redefine our understanding of salvation to be more inclusive or holistic without losing its meaning in terms of restoring our relationship with God.

Revelation and observation

The dichotomy in the modern worldview creates problems in terms of how we know things. Revelation is the way we know things in the spiritual realm, while observation and reason are the accepted ways of knowing in the physical realm. The modern dichotomy between revelation and observation conceals some interesting things.

First, the source of knowing is different. Revelation comes from God to us. Observation and reason we do for ourselves and, if we are not Christian, without any reference to God. Christians who separate the physical and spiritual realms tend to be God-centered in their spiritual lives and human-centered when they think and act in the physical world. For our spiritual work, we turn to the church and our bibles; for development work, we turn to the social sciences. This goes a long way in explaining why development practices of Christian development agencies often feel "secular."

Second, prayer, fasting, meditation, and other forms of spirituality are spiritual activities relegated to knowing things about the spiritual world. We then fail to see spirituality as a tool for knowing or working in the real world. Few Christian development workers understand that spiritual discernment is a key element in program planning and in monitoring and evaluation. Few development workers understand prayer and fasting as tools for human transformation or for working for justice. At best, prayer is either a personal, inner communion with God or a request to God for an extracurricular, "hit-and-run" intervention in the real world. On the other side, God and God's revelation is not considered germane to our social analysis, and we are left to interpret our world for ourselves.

Having explored the problem that modernity presents for the Christian practitioner who seeks to promote transformational development, it should be easier to understand why this book follows the path that it does. In every

chapter, from the biblical account to principles and practice, I have attempted to overcome this blind spot and either suggest answers or point to further work that needs to be done.

THE PATH OF THIS BOOK

The evolution of the idea of development

Chapter 2 begins by tracing the emergence of the idea that our world is something that we can improve. There was very little change in the world in terms of population, wealth and health until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Life was hard. The world was an unsafe place where survival was daily task. Almost everyone was as poor as those in the poorer parts of the South today. The idea of improving the material part of the human condition did not exist.

With a radical change in the trajectory of economic history around 1800, a wide range of new ideas emerged—creating wealth, markets as systems, ordinary people as creative contributors, and the idea that God's world could be improved by human creativity. Science and technology emerged as ways to create wealth and increase human well-being. In the West, material improvements in the human condition were rapid. More recently, China, India, Brazil, and Indonesia have assumed this same trajectory. Sadly, this is less the case for Africa and Central Asia. While this process was wildly uneven and some benefited a great deal more than others, the fundamental historical shift that took place at the beginning of the nineteenth century is a historical fact that resulted in the creation of the idea that we now call development or poverty eradication.

The idea of development as poverty eradication directed at poor nations emerged in the aftermath of World War II, largely a product of Western nations facing a Cold War world. For decades, development meant becoming like the "modern" West and was measured in terms of economic growth. By the 1990s this economic model of development was being enlarged to include social development as well.

Chapter 2 then summarizes the current major voices in the development conversation as it is taking place within the United Nations and among governments and international NGOs. The stage is currently dominated by the predominantly modern frame of Jeffrey Sachs and his *End of Poverty* (2005), the more postmodern frame of William Easterly and his *White Man's Burden* (2006), and the more eclectic and pragmatic package of solutions offered by Paul Collier in *The Bottom Billion* (2007). I also present three important voices from the South. Amartya Sen, a Nobel Prize–winning development economist is responsible for shifting the global development conversation from economic growth alone with his book *Development as*

Freedom (1999). Hernando de Soto is an influential Peruvian economist who has written two seminal books: *The Other Path* (1989) and *The Mystery of Capital* (2000). Muhammad Yunus is a Nobel Prize winner for his pioneering work in microcredit and author of *Creating a World without Poverty* (2009). These offerings provide approaches for the eradication of poverty that are secular and materialistic, resting on the assumption that human beings can save themselves. Nonetheless, they are shaping the development conversation today and influencing donor priorities, and so we need to be aware of them.

The biblical story

Before getting to a conversation on poverty and then development, we stop for a chapter on theology. If transformational development is to be biblical, then we need to develop a biblical framework that informs the following discussions on development theory and practice.

Chapter 3 begins with a reprise of the conversation relating to poverty, development, and social justice in two Christian traditions—evangelical and Roman Catholic. The evangelical conversation—mostly American—on social justice and the poor is marred by an almost fifty-year silence between the modernist controversy of the 1920s and the reemergence of evangelicalism's historical concerns for the poor in the 1970s. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church's tradition of Catholic social teaching began in 1891 with Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum.* Over twenty documents, mostly papal encyclicals, have been written over the last 120 years as Catholic theologians have updated and extended their thinking in a rapidly changing world. There is a wealth of wisdom that we evangelicals need to know and appropriate.

The chapter then shifts gears in search of an evangelical theology of poverty and development. Traditional approaches to theology of development have tended to be propositional in nature, drawing on the Exodus account for an understanding of oppression and liberation, the psalms and the prophets for evidence of God's concern for the poor, and the gospels for examples of how Jesus responded to the poor and taught his disciples. All of this is very helpful and is still important.

In this book, however, I attempt to shift the perspective to a narrative account of the biblical story. I have done this because this perspective better fits and supports what I believe is a very helpful framework for setting the context in which development takes place: the convergence of stories.

The poor already have a story before the development agency arrives. It is both their immediate story and the story of their people. Furthermore, God has been active in their story since its very beginning, whether the people have recognized God's involvement or not. When development promoters arrive, they bring their story, both their personal story and the story

of their development agency. Then, for the life of the program, the community and the promoters share a story.

Viewing the transformational development process as a shared story invites us to question what our stories are for, where they are going, and whose story is the true story. The biblical story provides a very helpful framework for seeking answers to these questions. The biblical story explains how every community's story began and why their stories are full of pain, injustice, and struggle at the same time that they are full of joy, loving relationships, and hope. The biblical story provides the answer to how the stories of the community and the development promoter may need to reorient themselves to the story intended by their Creator and describes, in the metaphor of the kingdom of God, what the best human story is like. The biblical story also tells us how all our stories will end. Most important, we can learn what our stories are for: the worship of the one true God.

What is poverty?

The way we understand the nature of poverty and what causes poverty is very important, because it tends to determine how we respond to poverty. Articulating what poverty is and what causes it helps us determine the source of much of our understanding of what transformational development is and how it should be practiced. The purpose of Chapter 4 is to try and integrate the best of what people have been thinking about the nature of poverty and its cause.

We must begin with ourselves. We need to work hard to discover our assumptions and our preconditioning regarding poverty and the poor. This is particularly true for Christians, because there have been a variety of views of the poor, depending on one's Christian tradition.

Chapter 4 then reviews the changing views of poverty as a way of showing that understanding poverty is a never-ending task. In the early days of development many assumed that poverty could be explained by the absence of things. This was followed by adding the absence of ideas or knowledge to the mix, and then, as the systemic nature of poverty became clear, absence of access to power, resources, and choices became part of our understanding of poverty. In the 1980s a systems view of poverty emerged with Robert Chambers's proposal that poverty is a system of entanglement. In the early 1990s John Friedmann added to the discussion by describing poverty as the lack of access to social power. Later in the 1990s Amartya Sen argued that poverty is more the result of a lack of freedom than the lack of money. More recently, community psychologists Isaac Prilleltensky and Geoffrey Nelson have argued that poverty is the result of oppression that diminishes personal and relational well-being.

Weighing in from a Christian perspective, Jayakumar Christian, building on Chambers and Friedmann, describes poverty as a system of

disempowerment that creates oppressive relationships and whose funda-
mental causes are spiritual. Finally, I introduce Ravi Jayakaran's holistic
framework of poverty as a lack of freedom to grow.

The chapter then explores the causes of poverty. I look at the interplay
between the physical and social causes of poverty as causes largely external
to the poor. I then explore the largely internal contribution to poverty re-
sulting from mental and spiritual causes. Drawing heavily on Jayakumar
Christian, I propose that the nature of poverty is fundamentally relational
and that its cause is fundamentally spiritual.

The poor are poor largely because they live in networks of relationships
that do not work for their well-being. Their relationships with others are
often oppressive and disempowering as a result of the non-poor "playing
god" in the lives of the poor. Their relationship within themselves is dimin-
ished and debilitated as a result of the grind of poverty and the feeling of
permanent powerlessness. Their relationship with those they call "other" is
experienced as exclusion. Their relation with their environment is increas-
ingly less productive because poverty leaves no room for caring for the
environment. Their relationship with the God who created them and sus-
tains their life is distorted by an inadequate knowledge of who God is and
what God wishes for all humankind. Poverty is the whole family of our
relationships that are not all they can be.

The relationships of the poor don't work for the well-being of the poor
because of spiritual values held by others and by the poor that do not en-
hance and support life. Selfishness, love of power, and feelings of ordained
privilege express themselves in god complexes. Loss of hope, opportunity,
and recognition mar the identity of the poor. Racism, ethnocentrism, and
ostracism erode the intended blessing of having many cultures. Fear of spirits
and belief in gods that cannot save obscure the offer of the God who desires
to save. At the end of the day, the causes of poverty are spiritual.

The final section of Chapter 4 focuses on the poverty of the non-poor.
They too suffer from a marred sense of identity and vocation, only in a
different way than the poor experience.

Perspectives on development

Having developed a holistic framework for thinking about poverty, Chap-
ter 5 surveys a number of ways of thinking about what development is and
how it should work.

I begin by exploring where our ideas of development come from. The
central question is, Who will save us? This is important because there are
competing stories in this century, all of which offer salvation. Some believe
we will be saved by science and technology. Others rest their faith on free
markets and globalization. Still others put their faith in human ingenuity
and the idea of inevitable human progress. The Christian view of salvation

points to the cross and the resurrection as the only framework that can truly bring us home.

I explore a range of proposals for thinking about development. For evangelicals, the conversation started at a Lausanne consultation, Wheaton '83, at which theologians and practitioners moved beyond the debate as to whether evangelism and social action were both legitimate Christian activities and began the search for a biblical framework for understanding development. Of particular note was a paper by Wayne Bragg, then of the Wheaton Hunger Center, in which he proposed the phrase *transformational development* as a holistic biblical alternative to Western modernization.

I describe the *people-centered development* proposal of David Korten, in which he calls into question economic growth as an engine for sustainable development and insists that the environment and the limitations of "spaceship earth" become more central to development conversations. I explore John Friedmann's view of an "alternative development" that focuses on expanding the political and social power of poor families by supporting grassroots democratic practices and building civil society. I describe the proposal of Isaac Prilleltensky and Geoffrey Nelson, two community psychologists, that views development as enhancing personal, collective and relational power. I summarize Robert Chambers's proposal of development as responsible well-being, built on the principles of equity and sustainability and pursued by means of increasing the livelihood, security, and capabilities of the poor. Finally, I introduce Amartya Sen's proposal that human freedom is both the goal and the means to development.

I then spend a fair amount of space exploring the work of Jayakumar Christian and his idea of development as a kingdom response to the powerlessness of the poor that exposes the web of lies about the identity and worth of the poor and the god complexes of the non-poor to the transforming truth and demands of the kingdom of God.

Toward a Christian understanding of transformational development

With these three pieces in place—a biblical framework, a holistic understanding of poverty, and a survey of development thinking—Chapter 6 attempts a synthesis that pulls many of the pieces together into a proposal for a Christian understanding of transformational development. My proposal begins by stating the obvious: the transformational development journey belongs to God and to those who are on it, not to experts, donor agencies, or development facilitators. Whatever our framework or our methods, we must be willing to set them aside and let the poor discover their own way, just as we have done.

The first question a development program must answer is, What is the better future toward which it is pointing? This presumes that we have

answered the more fundamental question of what human well-being is. The biblical narrative and our theology provide the answer. The best of human futures lies in the direction of the kingdom of God and toward Jesus Christ as the person who offers the way to become part of God's kingdom. Because poverty is fundamentally relational, I then articulate the twin goals of transformational development as changed people and just and peaceful relationships. By "changed people" I mean people who have discovered their true identity as children of God and who have recovered their true vocation as faithful and productive stewards of gifts from God for the well-being of all.

These twin goals of development transformation apply to the poor, the non-poor, and development facilitators as well. The human search for meaning and purpose is a universal and never-ending quest. It is only the nature of the struggle that is different. The poor suffer from marred identities and the belief that they have no meaningful vocation other than serving the powerful. The non-poor, and sometimes development facilitators, suffer from the temptation to play god in the lives of the poor, and believe that what they have in terms of money, knowledge, and position is the result of their own cleverness or the right of their group. Both the poor and the non-poor need to recover their true identity and their true vocation. Everyone is poor in God's world, and everyone is in need of transformation.

I then explore the implications of these twin goals for transformational development in terms of framing a process of change. Neither revolution, nor evolution, nor accepting the status quo is acceptable. I describe a process of change that affirms the joint roles of God and human beings, the need to focus on restoring relationships in all dimensions, and the need to keep the end in mind and to recognize that there is an adversary who actively works to defeat any genuine transformation. I point out the importance of seeking truth, justice, and righteousness, and also beauty, art, and celebration. Finally, I address the importance of addressing the causes of poverty, of expressing a bias toward peace, and of affirming the local church or churches as critical and indispensable partners in the process of seeking sustainable change.

The chapter closes with a brief exploration of the four dimensions of sustainability—physical, mental, social, and spiritual—and some reflections on the different ways in which we need to think holistically about transformational development. In particular, the section on social sustainability explores the dynamics of oppression by proposing a new synthesis of Christian's idea of disempowering systems and Ann Cudd's proposal for understanding the dynamics of oppression.

Principles and practitioners

Chapter 7 moves to the practice of transformational development with a focus on the kinds of principles and the characteristics of people that will be

needed to pursue the Christian understanding of transformational development proposed in the foregoing chapter.

I begin by reiterating the basic affirmation that the ownership of the development process lies with the people themselves. They have a history that we need to hear and respect, while still affirming that God has also given us something to offer them. We need to overcome our modern blind spot in terms of the spiritual world so that we can hear their whole story, including the fact that they believe that many of the causes of their current situation and the dominant influence in terms of their future lie in the unseen world of spirits, gods, and ancestors. I also remind us that they already know a great deal and that this indigenous knowledge needs to be allowed to surface and to be respected. The poor already know how to survive. Any journey of transformational development needs to begin with this significant fact.

The chapter continues with a discussion about moving from participation to empowerment. Participation is not an end in itself, and hence the quality of participation matters. When people change by becoming less passive and more the primary actors in their own development, participation has become empowerment. It is changed people who change people. Finally, participation that fails to build a stronger sense of community is also flawed.

The chapter then moves from the principles to the practitioners of transformational development. Development is mediated through people and relationships. The attitude, knowledge, and behavior of the holistic practitioner are all critical to any chance of seeing any genuine transformation. The mindset of the practitioner must be holistic for the program to be holistic. If the holistic practitioner treats people as if they are made in the image of God, then the people can come to believe that they are truly children of God and are not god-forsaken. If the holistic practitioner believes people have gifts and a contribution to make, then people will make this discovery, too.

A profile for holistic practitioners is offered. Holistic practitioners must be Christians with a truly biblical worldview. They must have Christian character—acting, thinking, and working as holistic disciples. Holistic practitioners must be development professionals who are able to take advantage of the best the profession has to offer. Holistic practitioners must know the whole of the Bible and be lay theologians who understand that there is a fine line between doing development and doing theology. Finally, holistic practitioners must themselves be part of an ongoing process of professional and spiritual formation.

Designing programs for transformation

Chapter 8 begins with a discussion about how a development program is designed. The traditional role of design, monitoring, and evaluation tools

to complete a logical and linear program plan packaged neatly in a Logical Framework is described. I then explain why this traditional management-by-objectives approach to development program planning is not well suited to planning change in social systems. Social systems are counter-intuitive and dynamical (a technical term meaning non-repeating and nonlinear). Social systems do self-organize, but they are not particularly amenable to management and control. I conclude by arguing that, rather than "planning our way to transformation," we and the people with whom we work will be better served by "learning our way toward transformation." Thus the emphasis is less on goals and milestones (except in the short term) and more on vision, values, and regular monitoring and evaluation. The role of the spiritual disciplines in this process is briefly explored with the help of my wife, Lisa Myers, who has been doing group spiritual direction for more than twenty-five years.

The chapter then moves on to some thoughts about what happens to our development response when we move from needs analysis to social analysis. It describes the way this is done using the vulnerabilities and capabilities analysis of Mary Anderson and Peter Woodrow. The Livelihood Security approach is introduced as a program-design framework followed by a brief introduction to community organizing. The chapter then focuses on one of the major development research and planning tools of the 1980s and 1990s: Participatory Learning and Action (PLA). The tools in the PLA toolkit "put the stick in the hands of the community" so that the research, analysis, and planning method itself becomes potentially transformational. The chapter goes on to introduce Appreciative Inquiry, a more recent development in participatory research and planning based on the work of David Cooperrider of Case Western Reserve University. Appreciative Inquiry's assumption of health, vitality, and life-giving social organization in even the poorest communities holds particular promise for helping the poor recover their identity and discover their true vocation.

The chapter then reports on some research investigating how development programs might end in a transition to sustainability. A framework for program transitions is introduced as well as proposal for critical success factors for successful transitions. One of the changes that occurs as programs mature is that issues of advocacy, policy, empowered citizenship, and good governance tend to emerge as central concerns of the community. This is explored briefly.

The chapter closes with a brief exploration of a number of other program-design concerns. What is meant when we speak of the community, and who is speaking for it? How do we ensure that we are listening to women and children? What is the appropriate pace for a program, and who decides? How do we let the spiritual worldview of the poor come through?

Learning toward transformation

This chapter, written with the expert help of Dr. Frank Cookingham, chief evaluation officer of World Vision International, begins by defining monitoring, evaluating, and reflecting. We observe that in today's development world monitoring is undersold, evaluating is oversold, and reflecting is ignored.

We begin with the fact that, if development programs aspire to change the dynamical social systems of the poor that do not lend themselves to neat, linear, and logical plans and actions, then the unexpected is the norm and possibly most important. Communities carrying out programs do unexpected things and change their minds. Bed nets given away free to prevent malaria end up being used as window screens; a new water supply goes unused out of a fear of the spirits of the old water supply. So monitoring and evaluation that tries to assess faithfulness to the original program design embodied in its Logical Framework will cost money and miss much that is important. If we must learn our way into the future in a development program, then impact evaluations become significantly less important, while consistent monitoring and reflecting on the expected and unexpected become the keys to this social learning.

Chapter 9 examines other critical questions relating to monitoring and evaluation. What is it for? Who is it for? What changed? Who changed? What do we observe and measure?

The question, Will it last? speaks to the concern for sustainability. Mental and social sustainability are explored briefly. Because this book seeks a Christian perspective on poverty and development, I spend more time on the topic of spiritual sustainability and explore what can be observed and measured that speaks to the quality of our Christian witness.

Again with the help of Lisa Myers, the chapter ends with a brief reflection on how spirituality and the spiritual disciplines must shape the assessment of development programs

Christian witness

The book closes with a chapter on Christian witness as it is seamlessly expressed in the context of doing transformational development. It begins by exploring both the necessity and the problem of Christian witness for the Christian relief and development agency. We must witness because witnessing is a central feature of our faith commitment; it is not an option. Yet how we witness raises a difficulty and a challenge. The difficulty is that everyone—Christian or non-Christian—is witnessing all the time anyway. The only question is to what or to whom are they witnessing? There are no "value-free" development facilitators. The challenge is to discover a framework for thinking about Christian witness in a way that is consistent with the principles of transformational development.

The chapter presents a framework derived from the work of Lesslie Newbigin. Doing development and living our lives in ways that result in the community or some of its members asking questions of us to which the gospel is the answer unites gospel-as-life and gospel-as-deed with gospel-as-word. This approach places the initiative for inviting witness with the people and the onus of responsibility for effective witness where it belongs—on the Christian. Our witness depends on our living lives so that the Holy Spirit may evoke questions to which our faith is the answer.

Using this framework of provoking the question, the chapter then discusses issues relating to holistic witness, including the need to tell the whole biblical story; the interrelationship of life, word, deed, and sign; and the need to avoid making a dichotomy between evangelism and discipleship.

The chapter goes on to explore issues relating to ensuring that our understanding of Christian witness is consistent with our framework for transformational development. 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.

This section goes on to present an organic or integrated understanding of the gospel as *being with* Jesus so that we may *witness by deed*, *word*, *and sign*. The Christian message is an embodied message, carried by living witnesses. The clarity and attractiveness of this message is dependent on the quality of our life with Jesus and our willingness to give expression to that life through word, deed, and sign. A warning is then presented that we must avoid separating evangelism and discipleship. This is a false dichotomy, and overcoming it is critical to overcoming our concern for the kind of Christians that are resulting for our witness. The section concludes with a call to be sure that, when we witness, we do so in a way that sooner or later shares the whole biblical story. It is the whole biblical story that carries the account of who we are and what we are for, that declares the lordship of Christ over all of creation and all our relationships.

The chapter moves to the issue of how we must witness. It begins with a call for Christians to live eloquent lives, the key to provoking questions to which the gospel is the answer. It goes on to remind us of the importance of carrying out our Christian witness with a crucified mind, not a crusading mind. I take note of the importance of helping the community—and ourselves—discover the fingerprints of God in our history, in creation, and in development interventions. I point out that questions about meaning and purpose hold the most promise for changing worldview and changing the view the poor have of themselves and their future. This section includes a brief discussion of how we can interpret technology so that it points not to its own efficiency but to the activity and character of the God who made it

possible. This section concludes with a reminder that we need to avoid being apologetic for being Christian and thus be willing to say what we believe.

At this point the chapter shifts to the importance of the Bible to the process of transformational development. The argument is made that the Bible, as the living word of God, must be released from its spiritual captivity to Sunday morning and personal devotion and be allowed to be active in the development process. The chapter challenges us to find ways to let the Bible speak for itself. The Roman Catholic frame of the Pastoral Circle is introduced. I then share the examples of Scripture Search and the Seven Steps in which the Bible is being used in development programming. I also briefly describe the New Tribes Mission innovation of Storying the Bible and make a suggestion as to how it could be made more holistic and thus more applicable for use in the development process.

The chapter on Christian witness closes with discussion of the focus of Christian witness. The central focus for Christian witness must be on the twin goals of transformation: changed people and changed relationships. The poor, non-poor, and the development practitioner (and his or her agency) must work together in seeking their true identity and recovering their true vocation within the context of just and peaceful relationships. The section then discusses how this can happen as a result of Christian witness and worldview change. The section closes with the question, Who changes? The answer is that everyone must change. Transformational development is a journey that everyone is on and that everyone must seek.