CHAPTER 4

A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON KEY ASPECTS OF POVERTY ERADICATION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

4.1   From Relief, Development, Transformation to Sustainability.

The focus of this chapter is on the various major perspectives that have shaped our thinking in terms of how the Church should deal with poverty eradication in its witness. These viewpoints have been part of the mainstream thinking of those engaging in the global struggle against poverty. The universal church, as part of the global community, has also contributed to the development of these standpoints, over time. Therefore, as Christians, when we reflect on our mission in a context of poverty, are influenced by these positions. Theologians have gleaned insights from those trends in responding to their call as witnesses in this world. We do not engage in ministry in a closed world but in a vibrant world that is constantly changing, also in its thinking. These ongoing changes may be either good or bad, in terms of our value systems, ideologies, and structures that influence our thinking and customs. Our missiological concepts will also reflect certain influences that were dominant in the trends of a specific era. This does not necessarily mean we uncritically accept all the progress that has been made in our society. When facing the challenges of poverty in we can opt to just accept the status quo and live with poverty. Or we may choose to participate in the struggle to eliminate poverty, focussing on either relief, development, transformation, or sustainable development with the goal being empowerment. These are four of the predominant trends in poverty alleviation thinking in most of the disciplines that focus on improving the quality of life of people. Missiology has also been influenced by these trends when it reflects and acts on the human phenomenon of deprivation. I shall explore these four perspectives of poverty eradication within the framework of missions.

4. 2 The Aspect of Relief

4.2.1 Definition of Relief

Caring for the poor is seen as relief. Relief is a strategy that deals with the immediate and pressing needs of people in distress. It is any form of material and non-material assistance you offer to people in dealing with their immediate survival needs. According to Voorhies (1999:589) defines it as follows: "Relief aims to address the emergency needs for victims of war, famine, disasters and often prolonged injustice." People sometimes experience misfortunes that deplete their resources temporarily so that they need assistance. These people previously succeeded in fending for themselves without external support. "Relief tends to be a stopgap measure filling a short-term need for human survival. There are times when this is absolutely necessary, and one should not shy away from meeting the needs this way"(Cheyne 1996:115). But in our country we see people who have been in chronic poverty for years. Christians who minister amongst the poor face a scenario where poverty is not a temporary setback. Absolute poverty creates situations where people are vulnerable and are exposed to serial disasters. Shacks may catch fire or be flooded, exposing their owners to health hazards such as harsh weather conditions. These people are already poor, but they continue to suffer seasonal disasters. The complexity of poverty and the uniqueness of its survivors cause us to approach relief differently. Sometimes relief is more than just a provisional act of mercy, and it lasts longer than a few days or months. A question, which is currently being debated sporadically throughout society, is whether social grants should be extended to all people who are facing chronic unemployment.

Relief is just a temporary aid to the poor; it is not a development initiative. Sometimes people confuse relief efforts like soup kitchens, temporary shelter, food parcels and clothing distributions with development initiatives. These are important acts of mercy that can make a serious contribution and provide immediate support in times of need. This is an area where the church, over the years, has been making a significant contribution. Voorhies (1999: 589) noted,

"Christian organizations have launched massive relief efforts, but these efforts only bring temporary help and must not be confused with development. Relief primarily focuses on what the outsider must do to help the victim, not what the people must do for themselves. Such relief efforts can be viewed as detrimental if prolonged, because they take away the incentive for local production and development."

In an ideal world, we would expect relief programmes to be contingency mechanisms that offer people backup for a limited time when they have experienced calamity. We do not expect people to be in relief programs for an extended period of time as this might create a culture of dependency and entitlement. It is often said 'when you give a fish, you feed them for a day, but when you teach them how to fish you feed them for a lifetime'. "Relief prevents starvation today. Development brings self-sufficiency. At least in principle-in an ideal world. But we live in the real world where many fishponds are owned and controlled by small groups of powerful, wealthy persons… If one is to fish for a lifetime, must have a share in the fishpond" (Sider 1993:138). The complexities of these social problems challenge your paradigms about relief initiatives. Prolonged injustice continues to marginalize people, turning them into clients of philanthropic ventures. Sometimes one looks at a number of unemployed men, standing at busy street corners, who tender their trade each morning, looking for a daily job. They might be fortunate to find a job for a day or week, or there might be nothing at all. These people do not wish to be dependent on any relief project but the unpredictability of job opportunities in their trade as they wake up daily makes their lives a precarious one. There is a need to transform our social, economic and political system that perpetuates their lack of productivity.

As Christians, relief is where we start when we meet people who are destitute. The Scriptures encourage us to respond generously in sharing with the poor until their immediate needs are satisfied (Deut. 15: 7 –8). We must show sensitivity when we assist them in their desperation in obedience to the Word of God. Relief is not just dispensing goods without showing compassion to the needy receiving them. "But not all forms of charity are equally compassionate. Taking our cue from the compassion that is the

character of God discovered in Jesus, we can identify compassionate charity as resident, committed, and creative"(Stone 1996:104).   Our attitudes and actions in ministry amongst the poor must undoubtedly show that we care for them genuinely as human beings. Even when we assist the destitute to cope with the challenges of deprivation, we must not contribute to their dehumanisation. The Scripture says, "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing"(1 Cor. 13:3).   Christian generosity to the poor is not a noble witness to the poor if it is not embedded in love. "A paradigm case is that of the Good Samaritan. As usually interpreted, the parable suggests that Jesus was encouraging his disciples to meet the acute human need wherever they saw it" (Elliott 1987:12). This Samaritan man went out of his way; delayed his journey, endangered his life and sacrificed his ride on the donkey and paid for the medical cost of a wounded stranger. All this indicated genuine attitudes and deeds of love by a person who was even despised by the very community the wounded man belonged to. In the same way, Jesus expects us to genuinely love the poor among whom we do God's ministry. Furthermore, we have to know that relief is not the end of our witness, but only the beginning. Engstrom says, "Christian relief is never complete in itself. It must, biblically, eventuate in a ministry of development on behalf of the peoples being assisted"(Elliston 1989:xiii). It means we must continue to have dialogue with the poor in our fellowship so that we can begin a journey with them, working together to find lasting solutions to their impoverishment. There are no certainties and guarantees about the final outcome of that journey together. You can only know the consequences as you travel that road together in solidarity. Even though relief must be followed by development, it must not be undermined. Christian aid is an essential service to the vulnerable because it saves their lives. Without it, many of the destitute will suffer and ultimately die of hunger, disease, and exposure to the harsh elements of nature. The poor rely on it for their immediate survival. It gives them hope when they find relief temporarily from their setbacks; it enables them to live another day to continue their struggle to fight poverty.

The concept of relief is based on the biblical principle of giving or charity. The Scriptures in many instances highlight the principle of giving. Paul even speaks about the

blessedness of giving being greater than that of receiving (Acts 20:35). The Scriptures encourage us to be generous, to help people who are desperate (Deut. 15:7). We must be prepared to do humanitarian deeds without compulsion, but enthusiastically. This is the kind of life that we believe is Christlike when we selflessly assist those who are suffering. Paul writes, "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4). This should be a way of life for Christians, whose relationships should not be based on self-interest, but on mutual concern for one another. "Jesus modelled servanthood, self-sacrifice, and special concern for the poor and the neglected. And he also cared for people's spiritual needs"(Sider 1999:33 –34). We should also emulate Christ in how we relate with others, especially those who are downtrodden. We must continue to encourage others in our community to be charitable to those who are disadvantaged, even when in our time those who have ulterior motives have misused charity. Stone (1996:104) says,

> "But simply because charity can be distorted does not mean that it should be rejected altogether. Charity really can be an avenue toward the restoration of the image of God – both in the giver and the receiver of charity. Given the context in which we find ourselves today, where increasing numbers of people lack even the bare minimum for living life humanly – much less leading it with dignity – charity is an essential first step toward eliminating poverty and oppression."

It would be improper to reject humanitarian acts geared for helping the poor even when we know the limitations of these acts. They also form part of the answer in response to the complex problems of poverty that are created by injustice in society. In spite of its inadequacy in addressing the underlying problems of poverty, relief has its place in the multi-pronged approach to poverty alleviation. Relief assist those who are desperate to continue surviving whilst the struggle to eradicate poverty continues.   People who are hungry, sick, and homeless need relief immediately whilst strategies that would address their problems at a macro-level, are formulated.

4.2.2   Critique of Relief

Relief can be used unscrupulously when we proselyte or steamroll people into our own faith. Our evangelisation must not violate poor people's rights in response to our witness. According to Voorhies (1999: 589 – 590), "Relief assistance must never be conditioned on one's beliefs or on having to hear the gospel. Relief must be given freely in love without condition, just as Jesus gave love freely without condition (Jn 13:34 - 35)." We must respect the desperate and guard against becoming insensitive to their needs, when we want to get them to accept our faith. Again, sometimes people lose perspective of the fact that relief helps people to cope temporarily with poverty whilst they seek long-term solutions. Wagner says, "Relief treats the symptoms. It comes after the fact"(Elliston 1989: 122). We give aid so that people can survive, can be kept alive, energetic and hopeful to confront the challenges of their impoverishment. We must use it as a strategic tool to buy time to explore lasting responses. As witnesses, if we lack the capacity to deal with macro issues that compound the situation of the poor, we must engage other stakeholders who are more empowered to help develop strategies that would make the poor self-reliant.

Furthermore, we must note that charity is not justice. However essential and appreciated charitable deeds that offer the poor a lifeline may be, they must not hamper us in our vision for the creation of a just society. We must still continue our struggle to ensure that we reverse the legacy that has turned people into charity cases. "The rich Christians, the rich churches, rich nations, were prepared to give charitably of their abundance; they were not prepared to look critically at the economic and political structures which kept the poor people poor, and which ensured that major beneficiaries of their charitable giving were the non-poor"(Elliott 1987:52). Those conditions that entrench the powerlessness and dependency of the impoverished must be remedied. We must not allow ourselves to fall into the trap of allowing any actions of benevolence to make us lax in the face of oppression. "At the beginning of this century the missionary diaconate was by and large regarded as an auxiliary service. It took the form of care for the poor, expressed in orphanages and hospitals and of relief after natural or man-made disasters.

The changing structure was hardly ever contemplated"(Bosch 1980:213).   Relief initiatives should not just become secondary services that are negligible in priority in our witness. They should be part of our ministry, which should also seek to change the conditions that create the need for relief amongst the disadvantaged. The poor should not become perpetual beggars when they should be empowered in a just dispensation to be self-sufficient. Therefore all the social barriers that inhibit their capacity building must be uprooted. Scott identified as one of the reasons that there has been no consorted effort on the part of those in mercy ministry to pursue structural transformation in society. "Most evangelical ministries of mercy claim to be apolitical. This of course is an absurdity. We may not be consciously political, but in fact our relationships with governments – or, alternatively, our identification with the oppressed communities within a nation – are political stances" (Samuel & Sugden 1987:213). Christians cannot adequately address poverty, which is political, if they shy away from dealing with the political dimension of the prevalence of poverty in society. As a Christian witness in a context of deprivation, our ministry amongst the poor will have political connotations and consequences that it would be fruitless to deny.

In addition, relief can be limited by donor fatigue. People who are desperate to obtain relief aid depend on the compassion and the generosity of those who have to share with them in their impoverishment. Sometimes aid workers lose their sensitivity in helping the poor. Campolo says, "When we lose our compassion in the context of overexposure to the images of the suffering poor, we lose sensitivity to Christ himself" (World Vision 1996:29). Sometimes when we live with human suffering, we become so desensitised that we cannot have compassion anymore for those who are crushed by their circumstance. We become callous, and we accept poverty as a way of life and a normal part of our society. Again, relief may lopsidedly emphasize meeting the needs without ultimately focusing on tackling problems that are breeding those needs. In practice, the bias is towards solving immediate needs, which is admirable due to their urgency. "It is always easier to provide relief to people in need than it is to enable them to solve the problems which create the need. Good project planning shifts from helping people primarily in terms of giving them something, to enabling people by empowering them to do

something"(Cheyne 1996:115). We should look at ways and means to identify and work on uprooting the causal factors of deprivation. We must intensify our efforts to deal with the underlying sources of destitution. "If you are not helping to solve the problems creating the needs, you may be creating a new need"(Cheyne 1996:121). We may be compounding the problem of impoverishment by creating new expectations that inculcate the culture of entitlement.

Also, in implementing the relief strategy, there is a tendency to reduce human needs to a single variable. Relief agents tend to reduce human needs to either the physical or the spiritual. The inclination is to prioritise the material needs above the spiritual. Sometimes relief agents would only deal with the physical needs. "A humanistic response to human need can never substitute for the whole need of men and women because it is one dimensional. In the same way, if the only aspect of human need, which is met, is a relatively minor part of the whole human problem, i.e., the physical part, it may be correspondingly difficult to presume that one in any way ministered to the broader spiritual needs"(Cheyne 1996:29). We cannot exclusively concentrate on meeting the physical needs, and ignore other essential requirements like the spiritual needs of the poor. The physical and spiritual needs are intertwined since they are essential elements of human reality that should not be separated. We also have to show sensitivity in engaging the poor to define the needs appropriately. Naïve benevolence can offend people by offering them an inappropriate response to their problems. "Charity can be a cheap, painless, and even condescending substitute for liberating involvement with those who suffer"(Stone 1996:102). Some well-meaning witnesses have previously offered people food and clothing that were not suitable for the destitute. Sometimes they have been guilty of communicating with people in an improper way in terms of their context. Therefore, this unsuitable response became an obstacle to helping the disadvantaged and satisfying their needs.

Finally, in addressing the needs of the poor, we must not only focus on problems, but also seek new possibilities for empowerment. We must move, "beyond apparent needs to potential opportunities" (Cheyne 1996: 29). We must open our eyes to see and our ears to

hear in order for us to become aware of the vast possibilities that are present for the poor to improve their conditions even in situations of abject poverty. The marginalized world does not have to be a closed world in which the poor are irreversibly condemned to deprivation. It is a world in which there are prospects of a better life. The gospel teaches that all things are possible for those who believe (c.f. Mk 9:23). As witnesses of Christ, we ascribe to a faith that anticipates new possibilities and that may transform detestable conditions according to the promises of God. This faith is a gift of God's grace that enables us to have hope in adversity. Therefore human life should not be statically trapped in inequality, oppression and lack. It should be dynamic, and offer prospects for change into equality, freedom and prosperity for all. We are inspired by God's promise in our struggles for a just society, not by our romantic and conceited dreams.

4.3   Development

4.3.1   Definition of Development

Caring for the poor has been described by many as development aid. I shall look at traditional as well as contemporary definitions of development, statements that have influenced the concept of missions as development. The theology of development has evolved through various debates, and I would like to explore the various meanings attributed to the word 'development':

> In simplistic terms, "according to its etymology develop means 'to uncover, to unfold or unroll'…Development reveals the hidden reality and potential in all creation and especially in human beings. To ignore this potential is to deny or withhold enormous powers for good of all humanity and all creation"(Bruwer 1996:26).

Development is a process in which the untapped abilities of people and creation are stimulated, so that they may live up to the real power that is embedded in them. This means the challenges that are faced by humanity and creation can be overcome only if their latent creative energies are unleashed strategically to mould their social reality in terms of the vision that is driving them according to the revelation of the Word of God

upon their lives. All the solutions that we need in order to deal with our current challenges lie unrecognised within people and creation. This means that our society has the potential to deal with the poverty that is surrounding it. People just need to be encouraged to follow a path of development; to accelerate their advancement and realize their full potential, whether it be economic, political, spiritual, and social.. Coetzee says, "Toward maturity or full growth; the process of growth; spiritual formations. The word development therefore carries with it the connotation of a favourable change; moving from worse to better; evolving from simple to complex; advancing away from the inferior"(Coetzee & Graaff 1996:139). Development implies a straightforward movement from the basic to the sophisticated, from the backward to the improved state of affairs. It refers to people moving from a barren quality of life to a far better life in terms of education, housing, health, employment, and political and spiritual conditions. Development is a "change which improves the living standards of people and enables them to act in a way conducive to self improvement and the betterment of their living conditions in terms of their own priorities, aspirations and needs"(PRISA 2001). This change comes when we intervene in society, removing all the disruptive variables that stifle growth amongst people and creation, when we create an environment that is conducive to expanding the capacity of people and creation. Some of the situations that human beings live in are not appropriate for their meaningful development. These adverse conditions hinder their proper advancement towards realizing their full capabilities. Miller says, "Development is a process by which people gain greater control over themselves, their environment and their future, in order to realize their full potential of life that God has made possible" (Sider 1981:19). Therefore, there is a need to break the shackles of these disruptive factors among people and creation. The poor need to realize that they are free to grow and reach their maturity to the full extent of their God-given abilities.

4.3.2   The Origin of Development Theory

The theory of development emanates from the West. It was built on the experiences and the influences of European economic history that was nurtured by capitalism and the

industrial revolution. It is also a by- product of the Western Enlightenment (cf. Deist 1984:53). It is a Western idea that is a product of modernization. Modernization emphasizes increased industrialization, urbanization, and economic growth in societies. "Economic growth became the central theme of modernization theories and strategies of development in the 1950s and 1960s"(Ajulu 2001:149). The concept of development was strongly emphasized after the Second World War. The war had brought massive social, economic and political destruction over Europe. It even changed the political landscape of Europe in creating new states and powers. This implied that Europe had to be rebuilt from the ravages of the war. In short, they needed development. "Instrumental in this development – or rather reconstruction – was the massive aid programme from the US, the Marshall Aid [Plan]. This programme had the double purpose to get the world economy working and to contain communism"(Hettne 1990:46). In addition to it being a counter measure against communism, it provided the desperately needed resources for the rebuilding of Europe that had been devastated by the war. One should also realize that it was not tied to the subjugating demands that are presently part of the Foreign Aid packages offered to the countries of the South by the countries of the North.

The Second World War also had serious implication for the colonized world. The aftermath of the war created new superpowers. This meant the creation of new colonizers and the vehement move from the colonized to demand emancipation. "From the reconstruction of Europe there was a straight line to development in the new nations, known by many names: as backward, underdeveloped, emergent, poor, less developed, developing, etc. 'Colonial economics' became 'development economics'"(Hettne 1990:46). The West as a developed entity came to see itself as a source and model of development for the underdeveloped or developing world. Development also became a Western propaganda tool to fight the expansion of communism amongst the poor countries that the West could no longer control as colonies. Communism was just another form of imperialism imposed on the so-called 'developing' world. The developing world became a battlefield for the clashing ideologies of the Western (led by the USA) and the Eastern (led by USSR) blocks that were intruders into their living space. Bragg (1989: 64) states, "Development was derived from the Cold War politics of the U.S.A. and

Europe. Helping the poor nations become viable would make them less susceptible to the [then] rising tide of communism, it was theorized, since poverty creates more revolutions than ideology."

The end of the Second World War had created a world with two superpowers – the United States of America and the Soviet Union. The USA represented capitalism and Christianity whilst the Soviet Union became a symbol of communism and atheism. The West felt threatened by the Soviet Union, which had to be kept in check to prevent it from expanding as a force to dominate the whole world. Thus poor nations became a sphere where the struggle between the West and the East was intensified. Some of the current problems of Africa, like poverty, wars, and coups stem from that era. Some of the African governments that contributed to the looting of national resources and creating instability in Africa were puppet regimes propped up by either the West or the East. They governed without the sanction of their own people, serving themselves, their families and cronies, and offshore powers that legitimised their establishment.

4.3.3   The Changing Concept of Development

The traditional view of development equates development with economic and technological growth of the advanced and sophisticated societies of the North. It is not a biblical concept, even though it may be used in Christian circles. Bragg (1989: 64) points out in his observation that:

> "The very concept of 'development' arose in a specific historical socio-cultural context, it is hard to separate the ideas of development from the source… The contemporary developmental movement is predicated on the Western scientific and technological revolution, asserting the ultimate goal is to increase production and economic growth which will raise standards and provide a better life for as many as possible."

It was assumed that if underdeveloped communities could be introduced to 'appropriate' economic systems and technological insights they could be salvaged from the doldrums of poverty. "A common belief was that the newly emerging, less developed nations were

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backward and underdeveloped, and hence needed an urgent flow of experience and resources, especially capital, from developed countries – and that lack was constraining development"(Ajulu 2001:149). They could be turned into economically and technologically advanced societies that would enjoy a higher quality of life if there was foreign investment by the developed world. If their poverty problems could be eradicated through the intervention of the expertise of the developed world, then they would be placed on a more predictable path of growth, like these more advanced societies of the North. "Countries in need of development are therefore often described as suffering from market limitations; shortage of savings capital; from a lack of working (overhead) capital; from high human reproductive figures leading to serious obstacles, from serious misdistribution of social benefits; from insufficient training or educational services; and from restricted political participation"(Coetzee & Graaff 1996:139). The kind of development that the West envisaged, was geared for economic growth, seeing Africa as a sort of junior partner to the more developed Western economies. But many structural barriers continued to hamper cooperation between the North and the South.

This concept of development views human progress as occurring in a straight line from being less developed to becoming more developed. It is more of an evolutionary process of change towards more advanced societies with less social problems. "The implication is that, as a result of the introduction of intervening variables like industrialization, new agriculture techniques, urbanization, large-scale education, rationality and the specialization of functions, the movement of a specific society from one end of the continuum (traditionalism) to the other (modernity) can be speeded up"(Coetzee & Graaff 1996: 139 – 140). The assumption is that people can always scientifically control all social factors, and transform them according to their visions of development. Thus social change is viewed as a product of a carefully planned process of manipulating certain societal factors to get desired outcomes. An example is transferring the technology that is used by developed Western economies to the less developed countries in the South. Bragg (1989: 64) says, "Modern medicine, farm equipment, fertilizers, hybrid seeds, irrigation, and so on were seen as the panacea for the 'backward' or underdeveloped Third World. With this transfer of technology, the economic gap would

be closed." It was assumed that they would ultimately catch up in development with the developed countries of the North. It ignored the context of people of the South that was not identical with the situation in the North. "Because technology transferred is largely geared for Western cultures and seldom adapted to meet the indigenous needs, so the arguments run, it is not likely to appreciate the real needs of the population"(Ellingsen 1993:28). We need to come up with development models that take into cognisance the uniqueness of the situation of the poor. We cannot impose the tailor-made solutions of so-called experts on their situation, only because these solutions have proven to be successful somewhere else. The socio-political-historical and spiritual situation of the South is different from that of the North. It would also be arrogant to portray all the systems, technologies, and ideologies developed in the North as if they should be taken as a 'Bible' for the development of the societies of the South.

There has been a shift away from a technocratic and economic view of development to a more human orientated form of development. Coetzee declares, "A different definition of development, then, will include components that will allow for the personal growth of every individual… This is the basis of the human-centred development: a process that includes all aspects of life within the a community and in people's relationships with other people"(Coetzee & Graaff 1996:141). Development has to address all aspects of human existence that makes life meaningful. It must not dehumanise people but should contribute positively and significantly towards their humanness. Missions that embrace development must note these concerns about factors that may limit evangelisation. Charles Elliott (1987:21) says,

> "Suffice it to mention at this point that the Churches, perhaps inevitably, acquired from contemporary discussion a notion of development that was heavily economistic, materialistic, technocratic and centralistic. Development was all identified with economic growth, and the assumption was that economic growth could be secured by manipulation of a few economic variables, such as savings, investment, and exports."

These are the perils of an uncritical integration of the concept of development into missions. We know from experience that our well-planned interventions do not always

have the intended outcomes. We do not know the future, and it is difficult to predict results accurately. Some technocratic developmental forecasts have turned out to be flawed.

4.3.4.   Whose Development?

As Christian witnesses we can be involved in community development initiatives that bring development from either above or below. Development from above is when we as development agents assume the total ownership and control of the development process. Communities just become recipients of development projects. They are nothing but beneficiaries of benevolence. They are not recognized as stakeholders in the development projects. They do not have control of the development process. What is demanded from them is an attitude of gratitude for the delivery of essential resources and services given for their welfare. This kind of development denies people's participation in the reconstruction of their lives and society. It is a kind of development practiced by many charitable agencies, donor countries and governments. Those condescending attitudes ignore the critical contribution of those in need towards their own development. Such attitudes perpetuate the powerlessness of communities in need.

We should instead look at the option of development from below. The development practitioners should be working very closely with communities that are benefiting from development initiatives. Those communities need to own that development process. They should be involved in its facilitation and control, since development will have an impact on their preferred lifestyles. Development has cultural implications, too, for the way of life of a specific people targeted by development initiatives. Coetzee says,

> "Development can therefore be defined as directed change that brings about economic growth, increasing political involvement and social reconstruction. This process of change finds an important stimulus by linking up with the convictions of those involved. That is it takes place in terms of their definition of needs and within the boundaries of acceptability"(Coetzee & Graaff 1996:157).

It is not advisable to impose our own perception of development on communities that are served by us. Our experience of life and our perspective of reality are different from theirs. Thus we cannot determine all the questions and the answers to all their social problems. Social transformation is a complex issue even though some social problems may appear to be simple. But only when they are analysed in partnership with communities, will we begin to understand the real issues.

4.3.5 The Vision of Development

When its champions articulate their vision of development, it is often with eye-catching phrases and pungent sound bites. When you see and hear them communicate they appear very impressive. Below are some of these marketable words and phrases used to convey the objectives of Development:

- Seek to improve the quality of lives of people
- Address the basic needs of people
- Empower
- Educate
- Skills development
- Reform social structures
- Create employment
- Build social unity
- Good governance
- Culture of human rights
- Self reliance
- Self worth /realization
- Opportunities for participation
- Favourable change
- Spiritual realization / salvation/ blessedness.

The packaging of the vision of development is desirable, because all of us wish to live a decent life in a decent society. But the fundamental principles and assumptions behind

the imported Western concept of development are flawed. Some of those flaws will be highlighted in detail in my critique during this discourse.

4.3.6   The Challenges for Development

Development has never been problem free, its agents have faced lot of challenges in real life. On paper it is an easy ride to easy solutions to combat poverty. History, however, has painted many portraits of development initiatives that have been derailed. Any human enterprise is dynamic, and none can be programmed to flawlessly reach desired outcomes. Historical forces are shaping results, and we are to trust God to guide us in our witness as we struggle to overcome poverty. The following are some of the challenges faced by developers:

- Resistance to change
- Bad reputation/ history of lack of integrity of development agents.
- Poor communication or consultation of stakeholders
- Shortage of funding
- Insecurity – fear of loss of power base of stakeholders.
- Vandalism of property.
- Leadership – poor planning and coordination.
- Creating community ownership.
- Misguided social analysis/perception
- Partisanship

These are the real challenges that we cannot wish away. It is part of our struggle as Christians in our ministry in a situation of poverty. They are part of the context in which we are witnesses, a world of sin.

4.3.7   A Critical Response to Development

The Church cannot respond passively to the concepts and practice of development in our society it has to take a stand. According to De Beer (1998:16), "Development in itself is not negative. The negative connotations are as a result of the historical trends, the

exploitation of indigenous people by developers, and the fact that developers almost always got richer and the poor got poorer. This requires a new approach." In the past some Western missionaries that were involved in community ministry were agents of Westernisation, Colonialism and Globalisation rather than of development that would produce social renewal. It was assumed that countries in the South were backward compared to those of the North that had made progress on all fronts. Thus it was believed that impoverishment of countries in the South could be obliterated if they were propelled on a path to development by advanced Western knowledge, technology, and systems. "It was not recognized that poverty was not just a result of ignorance, lack of skills, or moral and cultural factors, but rather it had to do with global structural relationships"(Bosch 1991:434). Therefore eradicating destitution will take more than just dealing with perceived backwardness, one has to deal with national and global structures that pauperise the South. Some development agents, probably without intending any malice, were not aware of this shortcoming within the development paradigm. They were trapped in their Western theological, economic, social, educational and political bias as they worked amongst the so-called underdeveloped communities. They were limited by their paternalistic culture that made them to readily associate the Western concept of development with societal renewal. According to Friedmann (1992) is the writer of a book entitled 'Empowerment: the politics of alternative development.' There is a need to explore the use of alternative terminology that is not tainted by any undesirable historical baggage. De Beer (1998:30) suggests using the term 'transformation' as an alternative, without negating development as a legitimate term and process. A suitable phrase might be 'a process of transformational development'.

The objective of this transformational approach is to challenge the status quo that has created an environment that is conducive to the prevalent societal problems. Development in many instances has ignored the practice of injustice, oppression and exploitation of the vulnerable communities. Bosch (1991:434 - 435) observed that,

> "Poverty would not be uprooted by technological know-how into poor the countries but by removing the root causes of injustice… The Third World peoples have to take their destiny in their own hands and liberate themselves through a

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revolution. Development implied evolutionary continuity with the past; liberation implied a clean break, a new beginning."

Furthermore, development must be freed from its bias towards economic growth, the tendency to reduce to the kind of economic growth that promotes a Western form of consumerism and market systems. "Development therefore is equated with a universal process of modernization where Western values, production systems, technology and consumption patterns have to be simulated by poor countries in an attempt to modernize the societies along capitalist lines"(De Beer 1998: 132). Thus some Christians, especially those influenced by liberation theology, prefer the paradigm of liberation to that of development. They think that development initiatives are not compatible with the aspirations of the poor. Instead, the paradigm of liberation encapsulates the vision of the disadvantaged appropriately against any form of oppression. "For those who read Friere and Gutierrez, 'development' became a term associated with modernization, reformism, gradualism, with the continuing domination of the US multinationals, US culture and US military might; with the insidious and irreversible effects of capitalism and class structures"(Elliott 1987:89). In terms of liberation theology the quest is for a radical and abrupt change, and this cannot be accommodated in the present Western concept of development. This is a kind of development that makes missions to extend Western neo-colonialism whilst poverty persists. According to Bosch (1980:213):

> "During the Church and Society Conference - Geneva, 1966, in particular a definite alternative to the theology of development was advocated. The solution was to be found in revolution, not in evolution. The relationship between the West and the Third World was not one of development versus under-development, but one of dominance versus dependence, or, more specifically, oppressors versus oppressed."

Poverty and its underlying problems will not be eliminated unless this relation of disparity is transformed into one of parity. This requires drastic measures that will overhaul societal systems such that they are orientated towards justice.

Some of the developmental approaches that have influenced social activists and missionaries are developments from above. They place the responsibility of development

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on the hands of the clergy, technocrats, government bureaucrats and experts from development agencies. This is what Ajulu (2001:151) had to say about this issue:

"The technocratic model thus took the reins of the development process through bureaucratic control of the scientific experts or technicians involved… As such, much trust was placed in the technocrats' ability to plan and implement projects and to apply virtues of the planning process by using systems and statistical analysis. With these tools, the technocrats were meant to foresee trends and problems of the future and hence remove such obstacles to progress as uncertainty and wasteful resource allocation. This they would supposedly accomplish by carefully forethought and timely action."

Since it was observed that people probably lacked essential resources, skills and knowledge they were not significantly involved in development projects throughout the life cycle of the projects. Therefore they could not participate meaningfully in combating poverty in their situation. There is a kind of condescending attitude towards the poor. Myers (1999b: 579) says it is an attitude that, "The poor are passive recipients, incomplete human beings whom we make whole." Some community development proposals indicate community participation, but on the ground there is no significant participation of the poor, other than to be mere beneficiaries. First, this is a paternalistic attitude that undermines people's dignity as shapers of their own destiny. Therefore being deprived should not be so dehumanising that the poor should not be decision-makers about their plight. As Myers (1999b: 579) indicates, "Second, our attitude about ourselves can become messianic. We are tempted to believe that we are deliverers of the poor and that we make their lives complete." We have to watch against this professional or evangelical arrogance that causes us to think that we are the ones who have solutions to all the problems of the poor. The poor have survived many years without the intervention of many of these development agents.

It is also a fallacy that implementation of Western development technology, knowledge and models to end underdevelopment in the South would not affect the values of the people. Sometimes we were made to believe that science has no cultural bias. "Thus in addition to importing Western technology, underdeveloped nations will also import the

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social values of the West or socialist bloc associated with this technology. The result is that underdeveloped nations may compromise their unique social fabric and receive in its stead the maladies of pollution, consumerism, alcohol abuse, and the like"(Ellingsen 1993:28). In essence it meant the poor people in the South had to convert into the culture entrenched in the solutions they were adopting to deal with poverty. They were being uprooted from the very foundations of their identity as a people in the South. Gittins (1993:xiv) says,

> "The Gospel must challenge culture, but it must not crush it; to crush culture is to maim its people… This means that a task of mission is an encounter: a respectful engagement and dialogue with people wherever they are. And if people are not where we are, we must go with the spirit of Jesus and seek them, not to make them like we are, but to offer them a glimpse of Jesus and to invite them to follow him."

Importing Western models of development meant getting economic advancement in exchange for losing your human identity. Our mission is not a license for allowing our culture to manipulate the communities in which we are witnessing. "The neo-colonial dynamic created by the importing of technology leads to the same outcome as did the older version of colonialism" (Ellingsen 1993: 28). The poor become colonized in their minds to think like people in the North when they deal with the complexities of deprivation. Instead of looking for solutions within their own community they have to import systems for education, economics, politics and even theology at a price. Some of these solutions are acquired at a great expense and continue to pauperise poor nations. This creates an attitude of dependency on external forces to solve personal and national problems. But this may be changing: "In a very real sense, those providing the technology now are not the initiators of development, for a fundamental tenet of the new models is that developers must cultivate self-reliance and self-initiative on the part of the underdeveloped nation"(Ellingsen 1993:29). We must never import solutions to the poor that may retard their growth, self-determination and resourcefulness.

This concept of development was once trapped in naïve optimism. It painted a picture of development modelled on the path taken by Western Societies. It was the line of the least

resistance, and yet promised enviable progress. Agents had too much confidence in Western technology, knowledge, systems, institutions and cultures. They believed that they would work magically, also in an African context. Robbinson and Mountjoy purport, "Optimism was still expressed in the possibility of finding shortcuts in the long historical process of development experienced by developed economies, and achieving desired results, especially improved results quickly"(Ajulu 2001:150). It would be improper to assume that poverty-stricken African countries could achieve the same development that the West accomplished, without going through the same historical processes of development. The development of the West was propped up by a history of slavery, colonialism and imperialism that resulted in the looting of Africa by the West. That terrible legacy has sown the seeds of the present instability, poverty and chaos in some parts of the African continent. Some of the problems persist because that legacy has disadvantaged Africans on the world stage. In reality there is no easy route to poverty eradication that is not just a journey in self-deception and disappointment. There is no innovative planning by the Church, governments and development agencies that can come up with instant solutions to our plight of deprivation.

Also, the standards set for a better quality of life brought by this development was based on Western norms that emphasize materialism. The standards whose foundation is based on imported values that are inappropriate for our African nation. Bragg (1989:64 – 65), in pointing out the shortcomings of development, said:

> "Underlying this approach to development is an assumption that progress is basically materialistic. This assumption is one-dimensional and ignores the whole non-economic side of life; the human and cultural values in some cases that are much more advanced than those in the industrial north… It ignores traditional economic systems that have worked for millennia and which might be better than participating in the world of monetary systems."

These Western norms are not compatible with the African way of life. What the West proposes is a life that is not sustainable because it is in conflict with nature. It is life of extravagance and self-interest with poor stewardship. It is the kind of success that creates the false hope that everybody amongst the poor will end up living in a decent Western

type house, electrified and with all the latest technological gadgets, with fancy food that clogs the arteries; and driving a trendy car.

Another flaw, is in the implementation of economic growth is that it ignores contextual realities. It was assumed that if economic fundamentals were in place, political and economic players could lead a society on a good path towards economic growth, just like in the Western countries. Agents reasoned that if appropriate socio-economic and political policies were implemented to create a climate for development, then economic revival would happen. These ideas in essence ignore the fact that those societies have previously been engineered to create their marginalization. Stiglitz says,

> "Economic growth does not help the poor much in countries where distribution of wealth is highly unequal. The poor in these countries do not enjoy the benefits of boom times, but they do shoulder the costs of collapse. In societies of high inequality, growth allows the poor to keep their heads above the water. When it falls they sink"(Goldewijk & Fortman 1999:19).

Disparities that entrench deprivation will remain, unless there is a societal structural alteration of all the systems that legitimise inequality. Wealth will be generated, but it will still be unequally distributed. The poor will still be paid survival wages and they will be the first to be retrenched if there is an economic downswing. The lives of people will continue to be characterized by discrepancy and this would be scandalous. The majority of the poor will continue to live in squalor even when there is prosperity in the land and they have been giving inputs towards its realization. Meanwhile the minority of the wealthy will continue to amass wealth beyond their ability even to consume it. The poor do not always benefit from development initiatives, as the powerful seek to use developmental opportunities to further their own selfish interests. Furthermore, the Western concept of development creates an impression that the only human reality that is significant, is economic. Sine says,

> "Modern development theories tend to talk about human personality, human activity, and human goals in largely economic terms – such as human resources, beneficiaries, and so on. Therefore, modern development activity tends to foster a

reductionistic view of the human personality and activity, often ignoring the areas of cultural, and relational development"(Samuel & Sugden 1987:7).

The experiences of human life are broader than just the economic aspect, even if it does significantly affect human life. Therefore finding better economic solutions is not guaranteed to be a panacea for all the societal problems that people face. Thus as Christian witnesses we must not reduce our gospel to only address economic issues.   We should rather be holistic in dealing with all aspects of human reality.

4.4   The Transformational Approach

4.4.1   Definition of Transformation

Not being satisfied with the concepts of relief and development, scholars during the last decade of the 20th century, preferred to promote the idea of transformation. Transformation became the goal of Christian mission, as well. Bosch in his reflection in a paper 'Toward Evangelism in Context,' says,

> "Transformation has been part of the Christian mission and influence in society right from the beginning… The early church was on the periphery of society. It found its adherents among slaves, women, and foreigners – people who had no special influence on the shape of society… So Christians did not expect to transform the social fabric of a powerful empire…Yet although the Christian influence in society in those early years of persecution was subtle and often unrecognised, it was to provide a true transformation in the next two millennia"(Samuel & Sugden 1987:180).

In our witness we should look at the gospel as a proclamation and mediation of redeeming deeds of transformation through the power of the Holy Spirit within society, groups and individuals. "Evangelisation involves persons and communities working for the transformation of their respective life situations. To participate in the transformation of one's life situation implies, first and foremost, having experienced God's grace, forgiveness, restitution, and liberation for service"(Costas 1989:30). The aim is to shape our deeds, so that they should be in line with the values of the kingdom of God.

I look at the various definitions of transformational development: First, I shall reflect on the meaning of transformation in a way that is closer to its Biblical roots. From that perspective transformation would be perceived as:

> "The change of shape or form; *metamorphosis*: a continuous series of changes in the process of maturation; structural change: fundamental change (addressing the root or cause); recreation: complete change, recreation in the image of God… It is a more radical, fundamental process of change than mere development and renewal. It is about structural re-arrangement, *metamorphosis*, complete re-creation, i.e. transformation" (De Beer 1998:16).

Transformation implies a progressive form of change that alters the structure of entities or circumstances significantly from the original form. This change obviously brings radical improvement, yet without the connotation of any abrupt discontinuity. It is not just a quick fix approach to societal, group and personal renewal. One of the lessons that is drawn from Wheaton 83 is that:

> "According to the biblical view of human life, transformation is the change from a condition of human existence contrary to God's purposes to one in which people are able to enjoy the fullness of life in harmony with God (John 10:10; Col 3:8-15; Eph 4:13). This transformation can only take place through the obedience of individuals and communities to the Gospel, whose power changes lives of men and women by releasing them from guilt, power and consequence of sin, enabling them to respond with love to God and towards others (Rom 5:5) and making them new creatures in Christ'" (2 Cor 5:17) (World Evangelical Fellowship – Wheaton Conference 83; Cheyne 1996:220).

In terms of this view of the transformation of human life, we must pursue an in-depth understanding of biblical values, since we seek to bring that life to be in line with God's will, so that people may continue to live life as God envisaged it. We should not allow human life to just conform to the prevailing ideologies of our time in any abhorrent situation. Rather human life should be shaped according to the Christian ethics and principles that enhance the quality of life of humans who live in peace with each other, and the rest of creation, reconciled to God. We should assist human beings to be changed

in their humanity, so that they may avoid the wrong influences of sin and live in obedience to God's Word, fulfilling their calling in accordance with God's mandate for them.

Secondly, we understand that God is at the centre of transformation in our cosmos. God has a vested interest in the transformation of our lives and the world. Through the Scriptures God has provided some insights into how we can transform our societies. Therefore I echo Escobar's words that:

> "Transformation is part of God's continuing action in history to restore all creation to himself and to its rightful purposes and relationships. Sin…has distorted God's original design and purpose for creation. This is visible in the way every dimension of life has been distorted from the original design of the Creator. Oppression and injustice, racism, alienation, and exploitation in the structures of communities and nations are the results of idolatry and disobedience from God… God had a purpose in creation and when man turn to Christ, a process begins in them by which they grow in the fulfilment of the original purpose of God" (Samuel & Sugden 1987: 39).

According to this perspective God is the source of socio-political, economic, and spiritual renewal in society. As the principal actor in history, God is engaged in reversing the damage caused to our social reality and human life by the Fall. God as the Creator did not abandon human beings after the Fall to pursue their self-destructive ways under the influence of the evil one without restraint. The Fall did not take God by surprise. God knew how to salvage His creation from the clutches of darkness. Evil, that manifests in the world as segregation, poverty, wars, oppression and marginalization may still be present after the Fall, but it will not determine our destiny. Satan might have turned human existence into a nightmare, but God has a plan through Christ to ultimately destroy the destructive power of evil that causes us to sin. The life, ministry, death and resurrection of Christ are God's plan to restore his creation to the state of bliss it had known before it was corrupted by sin. Jesus' coming marked the beginning of the end of the reign of evil in human society, which will culminate in the *Parousia.* The negative

forces of evil prevent creation from reaching its fullness, hindering its intended growth. Mott points out that:

> "The goal of transformation is that God's purposes must be realized, as it is revealed in the Old Testament concept of *Shalom* – harmony, peace, health, well-being, prosperity, justice – and in the New Testament image of the Kingdom, which is both present and coming. Transformation seeks to repel the evil social structures that exist in the present cosmos and to institute the mission of the church, the values of the Kingdom of God over against the values of the 'principalities and powers' of this world" (Samuel & Sugden 1987:39).

All of creation exists for the glory of God, thus it finds its fullness in God's purpose. It reaches its wholeness only when it continues to live in harmony with God's purpose. We should not live our earthly lives with an agenda that result with us being alienated from God.

Thirdly, our focus is on God's partnership with His people in the renewal of their world. God invites humanity into the mission of transforming their world according to his purpose and values. Bragg says,

> "Transformation is a joint enterprise between God and humanity in history, not just a mechanistic or naturalistic process. It involves a transformation of the human condition, human relationships, and the whole societies. The so-called 'developed' modernized world needs transformation to free itself from a secular, materialistic condition marked by broken relationships, violence, economic subjugation, and the devastation of nature; and the 'underdeveloped' world needs transformation from the subhuman condition of poverty, premature death, hunger, exposure, oppression, disease and fear "(Samuel & Sugden 1987:39 – 40).

God invites human beings to participate in His cosmic enterprise, and to use their creativity in changing the world according to God's mandate. Such a radical change is needed by both the societies of the North and of the South. Bragg states, "Whereas 'development' tends to be a term that the West applies to the Third World, transformation is equally applicable to both the 'overdeveloped' and the 'underdeveloped' worlds" (Samuel & Sugden 1996:40). Both the people of the North and of the South need

transformation because sin knows no boundaries. It is a fact that some of the problems of the South have been created by the historical sins of the North in its exploitative transactions with the South. Therefore, both should become joint participants with God in the activity of changing our world. It is a kind of change that cannot be predicted or manipulated according to the usual human models. It is transformation in which God works through his servants doing new things, opening up new possibilities. Transformation is a profound process, which Bruwer (1996:79 – 80) elucidates as follows:

> "This is not development, a predictable growth from old roots, but a radical change, a transformation… Transformation is also a restoration or re-creation. It restores a growth disrupted by sin. Nevertheless, the growth is from one's own roots, from a specific seed into a specific plant, or perhaps from a less than perfect person into a fulfilled and fruitful one… Christ's transforming power can create in us a new way of thinking, a liberated mind."

Our efforts should not just result in cosmetic change that does not disturb the prevalent undesirable state of affairs. Rather it calls for far-reaching changes to the previously adverse conditions and the creation of a new state of affairs. But in this transformational grid humans are not just puppets hanging on God's providential string, just passively doing what they are told without any input of their own. God, who is the Creator, is a God of love who promotes human freedom in this world. God has called humanity to be co-creators with him. But as humans exercise this gift of freedom, they are not a law unto themselves. They are accountable to God in how they realize their freedom. God does not expect them to use their freedom destructively towards other people and the environment. Scripture says, "You, brothers [sisters], were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love" (Gal. 5:13). Human freedom is accompanied by human responsibility before God. It cannot be used to generate chaos, rob life, and destabilize relationships and societies as we see happening nowadays. This is not how God intended us to use our freedom. God's children should learn to submit their self-serving tendencies to the rationale of love that makes them value others above themselves; and to be committed to acts that promote human rights, security, prosperity and peace.

Fourthly, there is a view that approaches transformation only from a socio-economic-political perspective. This view of transformation only targets these structural components of a society. They become the point of departure in bringing desirable change that would benefit people. According to Nkwiti,

> "Development is transformation of social and economic relations through political actions and processes and by mobilizing and organizing community resources to effect a shift in the balance of power between the developed elite and the developing and the underdeveloping majority of society" (Davis 1993:39).

According to this view, transformation should be geared for curbing the disparities that exist due to unequal distribution of power. Transformation then seeks to eradicate the anomalies that were created in the past when one group dominated over another, to the latter's disadvantage. The proponent focus is on the members of society whose lives are characterized by vast discrepancies in the accessibility and utilization of resources that are essential if they are to survive politically, socially and economically. The socio-economic-political perspective is a narrow view that excludes non-material aspects of human life that are also essential for human existence. Voorhies (1999:588) says of Christian transformational development:

> "It is 'development' because it refers to the intentional process of facilitating change throughout the community or region. The idea of 'transformation' speaks of change in the whole person – material, social and spiritual as well as in the community – economic, social and political. It is 'Christian' transformation because there is a vision of people throughout the whole communities being changed to be like Christ, 'being transformed into his likeness'" (2 Cor.3: 18).

We cannot put the different aspects of human life into unrelated compartments. Although we can analyse various aspects of human life independently to enhance our understanding, we ultimately have to integrate them. Human life is not divisible, or if you do divide it, it loses its integrity. Samuel says, "Transformation is to enable God's vision of society to be actualised in all relationships, social, economic, and spiritual, so that God's will may be reflected in human society and his love be experienced by all communities, especially the poor" (Samuel & Sugden 1999: Coverpage). Transformation

should not be a mission to change individual aspects of human reality that have been compartmentalized and detached from the wholeness of human life.

Finally, transformational development spares us from the perils of thinking personal and social change is a straightforward affair. Rather these are complex issues that do not change immediately. It is a time-consuming affair to seek to change people's perceptions, attitudes and actions, and their life-world. "I use transformational development to reflect my concern for seeking positive change in the whole of human life materially, socially and spiritually. The adjective of transformational is used to remind us that human progress is not inevitable; it takes hard work, and there is an adversary who works against our desire to enhance life"(Myers 1999a: 3). If our aim is to bring about fundamental change in people's lives and circumstances we cannot rush the results. If we are in a hurry we are going to get cosmetic changes that would not have lasting positive results. Sometimes when we work with donor funds in our ministry amongst the poor, our donors want to see progress. Meyers (1999a: 3) says,

> "Transformational development is a lifelong journey. It never ends. There is always more before us. Everyone is on this journey: the poor, the non-poor, and the staff of the development agency… The goals of this journey of transformation are to recover our true identity as human beings created in the image of God and discover our true vocation as productive stewards, faithfully caring for the world and all the people in it."

The hit-and-run strategy does not work in the case of transformational development. When we serve the poor, we are called into a relationship as Christian witnesses, that is going to challenge both of us to change in our perceptions, attitudes, and actions. Our misconceptions about each other are going to be challenged. One hopes and prays that the change will be for the benefit of all, promoting harmony and prosperity.

4.4.2   Why Transformation?

Transformation is a biblical concept referring to socio-political, economic, and spiritual change and ecological management.   Unlike other concepts of societal change and

people's development, it is closer to our theological foundations. It inspires us to embrace a ministry amongst the poor that seeks to challenge the status quo that creates poverty. It enables us to share the good news with the poor in a way that will encourage them to be reconciled with God and members of their community; and to assist them in dealing with empowerment issues so that they may be set free from impoverishment. Elliston says,

> "Developing contextually an appropriate social transformation ministry is important for three key reasons. (1) To evangelize with no intentional concern for the social or physical situation will result in a truncated evangelism and disobedience to the command of the Lord to love our neighbours. (2) To do development without intentional concern for discipling the nations will likely lead to a disobedience to the Lord's command in the Great Commission. (3) And to disregard the context – social, physical, and spiritual – will lead to dysfunctions with both the evangelistic and cultural mandates" (In Gilliland 1989:199).

 The concept of transformation development makes it possible for us to have a balanced approach in our Christian witness in a situation of deprivation. It enables us to fulfil our evangelisation mandate concurrently with our social responsibility. According to Costas (1989:30),

> "The gospel is saving power - that is, the historical and transcendent energy of the kingdom of God, which is neither a theory nor a subjective ideal but rather God's efficacious and transforming action in the world and beyond it (cf. 1Cor.4: 20)… Christians live by the spell of the Spirit. They need to demonstrate the power of the Spirit's presence through a new lifestyle of freedom, service, justice and peace."

In our mission to enlist the poor to be the Disciples of Christ, and in partnership with them, we also seek to transform their community to conform to kingdom values through the help of the Holy Spirit.

The goal of transformational development is *shalom*. In our quest for transformation development, we are inspired by the dream to realize God's peace in our societies, nations and world. Elliston in his exposition on transformation said,

> "The goal for Christian social transformation differs sharply from any other goals. While Christians will see intermediate goals, such as improved economics, roads, water systems, social structures and justice deserving of their best efforts and support, they will also see the issue of reconciliation with God as having eternal significance. Three kinds of relational goals distinguish a Christian's perspective: relations with God, relations with others, and relations with the environment" (In Gilliland 1989:204).

Shalom is about the restoration of relationships that have been distorted by sin in society. Sin has caused people to live in rebellion against God, to oppose God's will and selfishly pursue their self-destructive agendas. The outcome is alienation from God and alienation from others. Human beings live in a cat-and-dog relationship with each other, characterized by enmity, oppression, domination, segregation, tension and injustice. Ultimately it leads to people recklessly promoting their enterprises in a manner that destroys the environment. Meaningful relationships are essential in facilitating real change in society. Elliston says,

> "Right relations with others facilitate not only one's growth but the development of others as well. Much attention is given in the Scriptures to the matter of relations with others. Good relationships are not to be maintained at any cost, that is, at the cost of integrity or one's faith; but just, merciful, peaceful, and loving relationships are a key element in our own and others' development… Development can never be fully understood without considering the relationships within the context" (In Gilliland 1989: 205).

Certain contexts create relationships that are based on fear, disrespect, inequality, suspicion, hate and exploitation. Yet as Christians we are supposed to encourage blissful relationships. Humans need to live in harmony with God, each other and their environment. We also need to grow in a way that is not destructive to our habitat. We are to be responsible in our use of natural resources, as it was God who entrusted the world to our care. Elliston says, "A steward is accountable for utilizing the resources appropriately to accomplish the objectives of the owner (Matt 25:14 –30; Lk 16:2; 19:11 – 27) for enlarging the resources of the owner and for any waste." (In Gilliland 1989:209). God wants us to use these resources to maintain *shalom* in our society. We should not hoard

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them self-indulgently, to serve our self-interests, because that will destroy community. In a world where competition and consumerism reign we see others as rivals in our scramble for these essential resources.

4.4.3   Elements of Transformation

There are many intertwined factors that form an integral part of any society, and that should be taken into account when we consider transformation. These cut across the human, spiritual, political, economic and social sectors of communities. "Transformation of one sector cannot be achieved without simultaneous changes in other sectors". (Burkey 1993:48). We cannot afford to look at transformation in a lopsided way, limiting it to a single aspect when society is multidimensional.   We have to look for links between all the sectors that characterize human life. "Transformation is an all embracing and wholesome idea, dealing with spiritual realities as well as the physical world. Transformation in the Biblical sense has indisputable spiritual roots, but it is also existential…. A life in transformation bridges the gap between a life in the Spirit and real life"(Bruwer 1996:79). Obviously when we seek to change aspects of our societal reality we look at it from a Christian perspective. "In taking account of the concrete forms of social reality, mission evangelism needs only to consider these basic elements that require transformation in the light of the gospel of salvation" (Nacpil 1999:19). The gospel informs our position when we deal with critical issues regarding social transformation. Our witness is grounded in the good news of Christ.

Human Transformation

Transformational development has a bias towards people. A desire to change the apparently desperate state of people and promote their welfare motivates transformation. It has a personal or human dimension to it. Voorhies (1999:590) indicates that some of its fundamental principles are, "To recognize the value of people. Respect and value people in the context of their local culture. Understand and respect local culture. Yet discern that while each person is intrinsically valuable, every culture has both positive and negative

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aspects that may or may not be compatible with biblical teaching." Ministry amongst the poor is not just to proclaim the gospel without taking into cognisance the background of the people. First, it must be approached from an attitude of genuine appreciation and affirmation of their humanity, no matter what the state of their existence is in terms of our living standards. Kia says, "People are more important than things; the person is more important than the activity" (Elliston 1989:91). Even when poverty might have denigrated them, they are valuable people before God. We must also respect their way of life, institutions and beliefs, no matter how backward we might consider them to be. God is concerned about changing the human condition that continues to exist contrary to His will. Our role is to contribute to the renewal of the individual's life through the power of the gospel. Transformation is more than just meeting the basic needs of people and changing the social structures, and reordering society. "Transformation moves into and then beyond the immediate need to discover and minister to the underlying problems – spiritual, physical, or emotional which create the need"(Cheyne 1996:xxi). Without a significant human change in people, structural change is limited and not sustainable. All changes that happen must add value to people in their relationship to God, themselves and creation.

Any meaningful venture to deal with social issues has to address personal change in the players that are part of the issues. This vision of transformation, if it has to thrive, must be incarnated in people who have aligned their lives to match the envisaged transformation. "It takes transformed people to transform society… To be valid a transformational approach must be people-centred, rather than being program- or project-centred, and must recognize the importance of deliverance from every form of bondage that would inhibit or preclude the reconciliation of the whole of life"(Cheyne 1996:68,70). It is a fallacy that people who have been socialized in circumstances that perpetuated certain societal problems can be expected to just embrace the transformed situation. Sometimes those who were the beneficiaries of these social problems subtly subvert change to protect their self-interest. "Unless the motivation comes from within, efforts to promote change will not be sustainable by that individual. The individual remains under the power of others". (Burkey 1993:35). People must be introduced to the

prospect of personal renewal in Christ in order for them to develop capacity for a more enduring transformation. Yet this change cannot just be imposed on them, least of all on the poor, who have been subjected to a life of degradation. They need to have their dented identity restored, so that they may truly know that they have been created in the image of God and that it was unjust for them to be forced to live in circumstances not befitting their status as God's children. "No transformation can be sustainable unless this distorted, disempowering sense of identity is replaced by the truth. Healing the marred identity of the poor is the beginning of transformation" (Myers 1999a: 115). People must recover their human dignity if it has been undermined. They must not have any sense of inferiority or a devaluing attitude. They must believe that they are valuable before God and that they have been richly endowed with divine blessing to be able to make a meaningful contribution in society for the good of all, according to their calling. "Building self-confidence and self-worth means breaking down walls of dependency that limit realization of people's aspirations and that bind them to prescriptions of others interests." (Davis 1993:40). Meanwhile those who are rich should abandon the attitude of superiority that makes them act in a manner that marginalizes the weak and makes them live in alienation from them. Rather, they should pursue relationships that entrench equality and abolish domination.

We must not subscribe to a purely idealistic and romantic view of development that excludes human aspects. People have both strengths and shortcomings that can either enhance or restrict the course of transformation in society. "Humanistic development plans often fail when those implementing them are self-limited by human greed, power politics, graft, or just plain lethargy. Real transformation calls for wholeness" (Cheyne 1996: xx). Sometimes great development initiatives crumble in communities, because of undesirable human habits, perceptions, attitudes, characters and traditions. What is required is a need for the transformation of these lives, as we push for social transformation, a need for people's lifestyles to be transformed so as to be aligned to God's purposes. "For transformation to take place there needs to be an inner incentive as well as an outside incentive. People cannot develop themselves without an incentive to

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change" (Bruwer 1996:85). Thus, we have to approach human development in a way that shows the rewards of transformation. We should not focus on just social or economic; or political or spiritual rewards separately; but on a holistic view. In this regard Voorhies (1999:590) wants us to, "Realize that poverty includes both the physical, material, spiritual and social dimension. Involve the whole person – mind, body and spirit, in any development effort." Transformation is about the personal development of individuals in communities so as to take responsibility for their lives. It is about restoring their identity as God's children who should live their lives to the fullest. Voorhies (1999:590) urges us to, "Believe in the person's capacity to contribute and determine his/her future. Help people meet their needs with dignity and self-respect. No matter how poor, every community and every individual has something to contribute."

People must be challenged graciously to believe in their ability to solve their own problems even when they are given assistance. They should not be made to have self-doubt and a sense of inadequacy. They need to be motivated to leave the sidelines of human deprivation and sinfulness and to aspire to a life that is praiseworthy to God and society. This cannot be achieved instantaneously at a quick fix workshop. We should have a long-term view of genuine human development. Burkey (1993:35) indicates that, "It is a process by which an individual develops self-respect, and becomes more self-confident, self-reliant, cooperative and tolerant of others through becoming aware of his/her shortcomings as well as his/her potential for positive change. This takes place through working with others, acquiring new skills and knowledge, active participation in the economic, social and political development of their community."

People are more than just recipients of charity, social grants, and development. They are 'beings' worthy of God's love. They deserve the dignity afforded to them by God despite their desperate circumstances. Our transformational efforts must cherish the value of human life.

Spiritual Transformation

Social transformation has spiritual implications. Transformation addresses all life that is within the cosmos, in its spirituality the way God created them. "It has spiritual overtones, but it makes a real difference to real people in real life. Like a plant growing from seed, a transforming life undergoes the inner, spiritual process of growth from one reality to another, but retaining the unquestionable links with both realities" (Bruwer 1996:79). You cannot adequately address transformation issues without addressing spiritual issues related to society. This spiritual transformation has both a personal and structural dimension to it. There is a spiritual change that has to be orchestrated both on the individual and societal front. "Spiritual transformation must begin in the individual but must spread to encompass the transformation of all society, indeed, of all creation"(Samuel & Sugden 1987:47). All people are intrinsically spiritual. It is a part of our human reality, an integral part of all the other aspects of our lives. It is imperative that we should reflect on aspects of human spirituality in our quest for societal transformation. Bacik (1986:5-6) describes it as follows:

> "Spirituality is a rich and suggestive word which points to various aspects of lived experience. Traditionally, Christian spirituality has manifested a Trinitarian character. It has to do with responding to the call of our Creator to help humanize our culture, with putting on the mind of Christ in order to transform our world, with the promptings of the Holy Spirit in order to bring unity to our fragmented society. A genuine spirituality involves the imperative to improve these relationships and to make them more fruitful. We must learn to find God in and through all relationships, which constitute our lives."

Christians know that at the core of our social problems there is a problem of sin, which creates spiritual complications. This has been the failure of people throughout history, their inability to follow the purposes and principles of God, in their development as societies. The force of sin has continued to spread evil in society. Societies have persisted in fostering attitudes, practices, systems and ideologies that have distorted meaningful human relationships. This has created a bitter legacy of poverty, inequality, segregation, conflict and hatred. Bragg says, "The power in society of sin, both individual and

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institutional, is a basic deterrent to positive change. Many 'development' programs have failed because of human greed, power politics, graft or plain lethargy" (Samuel & Sugden 1987:46 - 47). It is imperative that we should address the individual and structural aspects of spiritual transformation that calls for genuine conversion amongst individuals and redemption of social structures. When individuals change positively in their natures, characters, minds, deeds/habits and relationships then they make social transformation possible. They can then participate constructively and cooperatively in the creation of a just, equitable, peaceful and prosperous society.

We must highlight the fact that God is the source of transformation necessary to snowball any social renewal. God's Spirit precedes us in our mission within disadvantaged communities. I quote the concluding remarks of the Wheaton' 83 Statement that states:

> "Finally, we confess our utter dependence on God. We affirm that transformation is, in the final analysis, His work, …work in which He engages us. To this end He has given us His Spirit, the Transformer par excellence, to enlighten us and be our Counsellor (John 16:7), to impart gifts to us (Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 12), to equip us to face and conquer the enemy (2 Cor.10: 3 –5; Gal. 5:22 –23). We are reminded that our unconfessed sins and lack of love for others grieve the Spirit (Eph. 4:30; Gal. 5:13 –14)" (Samuel & Sugden 1987:265).

Our mission is God's mission; we have been enlisted to this mission by God to be God's witnesses amongst the poor. God has also graciously empowered us with capabilities to fulfil our ministry. God is the one who orchestrates our witness amongst the disadvantaged. Voorhies (1999:590 – 591) says transformation requires that you "recognize that God is already at work in the community. Part of the external facilitator's task is to discover what God is doing and support what may already be happening as a bridge to how God wants to use the external resources and revelation." In entering any community struggling with poverty we must embrace God's work that has been there prior to our entry into those communities. Even when we might not find an established faith community in the area, God is still at work in those circumstances. As Voorhies (1999:591) suggests, "Recognize churches as foundational for sustained and abundant transformation. To strengthen existing churches, or to plant new ones where none exists,

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forms a powerful community of transformed lives empowered by God with hope and kingdom values." The social evils that persist in society cannot only be eradicated by just legislation and equitable redistribution of resources to empower those who have been disenfranchised. The intricacy of the nature of social evils and problems calls for more than just an economic, political, educational, and social reconstruction plan. It requires the application of certain spiritual principles to invoke God's intervention and blessing upon the transformation process. "We must recognize that only Christ can create the change necessary within individuals and through which participation in the transformation can be successful…"(Cheyne 1996:xxi). We must approach spiritual transformation as an integral part of social transformation to avoid dualistic tendencies that may cloud our faith.

Political Transformation

Transformation is about creating a new political dispensation that will be characterized by freedom, justice, human rights, democracy and peace. It is clear that certain political systems experience perpetual conflict, poverty, suffering, subjugation and demonization of communities. The issue of unequal power relations is at the core of most of the social problems, whether it be within the family, community or nation. According to Samuel and Sugden (1987:41),

> "Equity is essential to transformation because all people are God's children, with the same needs and potential. As shown in the jubilee laws and the prophetic teaching, God has a special concern for the have-nots – the poor, the defenceless, the weak and the marginalized, the sick and the hungry… If social progress is to be equitable, the advantages must reach the most needy."

Therefore it is important that we should also aspire to transform the undesirable political order that entrenches the misery of communities. Sometimes communities have great democratic institutions but inefficient bureaucratic structures that hamper any effort of providing essential social services for the welfare of the people. Complacent civil servants, through their intransigence, retard the transformation of marginalized communities. In certain instances the noble intentions of politicians for social change are

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derailed by a public service that lacks the capacity to deliver on the adopted transformational agenda. Picard and Garrity say, "Where the public sector is limited in terms of organizational and human resource capacity, priorities must be set and problems addressed in order of importance in small chunks, and in some cases one at a time"(Fitzgerald et. al 1997:75). Some of the transformation bottlenecks have to be removed from our public systems to facilitate the political transformation of communities. It means we must create a dispensation characterized by:

- Creation of legitimate political structures
- Culture of good governance
- Credible participation and representation of communities in all political decision making structures
- Application of ethics to uproot a culture of corruption and mismanagement
- Appointment of competent/trained staff
- Transparency and accountability
- Efficient administrative systems and structures
- Proper service delivery, especially for the poor

Transformation is not complete until people are aware of their abilities, rights and responsibilities in determining their future according to their own aspirations. It is not just about electing political representatives who subscribe to their political, social and economic ideals, then to govern according to their mandate. Rather it is to continue to hold these elected representatives accountable for their political activities. These political leaders should work for a dispensation that will uproot any form of unjust relationships, domination and discrimination. People need to enjoy their God-given liberty in their community, living as responsible citizens. Thus in our witness we must work to create a just dispensation in our society. This should be part of our mission when we serve God in our communities. Looking at "missions as the quest for justice…" Bosch (1991:400) cautioned "although evangelism may never be equated with labour for justice, it may never be divorced from it." The struggle to create a just order in our nation is part of our missionary mandate. We need to show diligence and commitment in making concrete contributions towards strengthening the culture and institutions that promote the values of justice in our nation until all unjust practices are removed.

Social transformation

Transformation has social implications because it affects the life of a group or community in a specific context. Samuel (1996: 148) indicates that social transformation can be defined as, "actions in a given society whereby its life, as a community, or as families and individuals, is changed to establish a society that enshrines, ensures and enacts values of equality, justice, concern and stewardship of resources." Every community has its own ideals, culture, aspirations, systems and preferences. Communities use those aspects to create their own social reality. "The transformational development story belongs to the community. It was the community story before we came and it will be the community story long after we leave. While our story has something to offer to the community's story, we must never forget that, at the end of the day, this is not our story" (Myers 1999a: 112). Transformation affects the way a community will utilize its resources to achieve its goals and promote its interests. It is about how people in a community will harness their group power to change their world to be in line with their God-inspired dreams for themselves and their children. "It refers to investments and services carried out or provided by a community for mutual benefit of people of that community whether as a village, district or nation. These might include health services and facilities, education, water supplies, energy, transport and systems of communications" (Burkey 1993:37). Social change is brought about by group dynamism. It cannot just be imposed from outside a community. A significant group of people within the community must have a common desire for that transformation. "Change must be socially acceptable to a group as a whole"(Burkey 1993:48). People need to organize themselves in terms of their common interest, potentials, dreams, resources and structures to create a social order that they envisaged together. The motivation for transformation must emanate from within a community. They are the only ones who can adequately decide how they wish to shape their communities. Sometimes there is no social cohesion to make it possible for people to have a shared vision for the ultimate benefit of everyone in the community. Relationships might have been disrupted by inequality, oppression, intolerance and religious and political differences. "People need relationships. They need to know that they are special in the eyes of God and their

fellow man [and woman]" (Cheyne 1996:32). Therefore these disrupted relationships must be restored to be just, harmonious and empowering so that we may have a truly transformed society. The fight against poverty is winnable in an atmosphere characterized by reconciliation because then we can harness the contribution of all the stakeholders.

Economic Transformation

Transformation also impacts on the economic front. It must enable people to participate actively in a productive activity. "Productive economic activity involves mobilization and management of some combination of all or most factors of production. These factors are land, raw materials, labour (skilled and unskilled), capital, energy, tools, machinery, plant, management and entrepreneurship"(Burkey 1993:36). People have to have an opportunity to be engaged meaningfully as economic players in a way that empowers their community. They must no longer view and experience economic activity as something that impoverishes their community while only a minority prospers. It is about an environment that promotes entrepreneurship, about communities pursuing viable business ventures, with people being able to use their talents to live profitable lives. "Entrepreneurship represents willingness and initiative needed to identify opportunities, invest capital and risk failure and success"(Burkey 1993:36). We must remove all hurdles that restrict economic transformation. Thus in our community we must ensure that these underlying issues are addressed:

- Skills training
- Access to capital
- Culture of productivity
- Economic growth
- Provision of appropriate infrastructure
- Legislation to redress imbalances/inequalities
- Stewardship
- Challenges of globalisation
- Business ethics
- Innovation.

It is imperative that economic prosperity must not become an elusive dream to the multitude who have only known poverty, despite their productivity. According to the Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economic of January 1990, "economic power can be concentrated on the hands of a few people in a market economy. When that occurs political decisions tend to be made for economic reasons and the average member of society is politically and economically marginalized"(Samuel & Sugden 1999:341). Our conscience must not allow us as God's people to dispassionately watch people live in subhuman conditions. In our society when people talk about economic growth they usually refer to the impact on the country's GDP on macro enterprises and big conglomerates that compete on the global market. Voorhies (1999:588) says,

> "Economic growth is often determined through increase in macro-economic measurements, such as higher per capita income and / or improvements in balance of trade. In the recent past the World Bank and IMF (International Monetary Fund) have led economic development programs by providing loans on the basis of nations agreeing to 'structural adjustments.' In general structural adjustment involves: a balancing of the budget against its tax base, lowering government expenditure, which usually means laying off government employees and selling government businesses, a liberalization of the currency and economic policies."

These measures adversely affected the significant participation of the poor in the economy, because with the movement towards mergers and acquisition, privatisation and downsizing, jobs were lost and employment opportunities disappeared. We have to promote initiatives that will draw the poor into the economic sector and encourage them to start viable small and medium enterprises. Voorhies (1999: 588) says, "Simple efforts by ordinary people bring about marvelous changes in their own societies." We must promote productive activity at grassroots level, involving people who might have been excluded from the mainstream economic sectors.

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4.4.4   Critique of Transformation

As Christians, we recognize that many societal institutions that are the drivers of economic, political and social transformation have their shortcomings. These societal institutions have in certain instances introduced novel policies and initiatives to bring about transformation.   The various charters in SA for banking, mining and energy generation promote the principles of equity and black economic empowerment. Although these strategies are still at an early stage of implementation, cracks have begun to appear, as almost all the serious empowerment opportunities in those fields are snapped up by the same few black elite. The majority of the poor have not directly benefited from those empowerment deals. The institutions that are supposed to facilitate real transformation seem to pursue an agenda that does not necessarily improve the quality of life of the poor. Rather it is a kind of empowerment that creates a new minority class of wealthy Black people. It seems difficult for societal systems to imbibe kingdom values of justice, peace and freedom without the vigorous engagement of the church with them. Myers (1999b: 580) says,

> "The world cannot and will not transform political, economic, and social power into something that is pro-life, pro-poor and pro-kingdom. Sustainable change will not come through community organizing, political processes or more education. Challenging the poverty-creating nature of power demands the transformational power of the gospel. It is personal and social sin. Only the good news – all of it – contains the hope that the poor will someday be able to build homes and live in them."

A number of transformational strategies have been proposed but processes have been dogged by corruption, community infighting and self-interest, which have derailed some of the developmental initiatives. I think the church should increase its participation in initiatives of social development – as has been done in instances where the government has worked in partnership with Faith Based organizations to pay out children's grants. This has led to some significant success in alleviating poverty.

4.5.   The Concept/Factor of Sustainability

4.5.1   Definition of Sustainable Development

In modern thinking about poverty eradication, development and transformation, the issue of sustainability has come to the fore as one of the important factors. The most commonly used definition of sustainability is the one coined at the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Morris 2002:8; De Santa Ana 1998:65). People, as they enjoy prospects of a better life today, should not jeopardize the opportunities of those who will be their successors. The coming generations must be given a chance to inherit an unspoiled natural environment. They should not find themselves living on an uninhabitable planet, which they would continue to harm, like their forerunners. According to De Santa Ana (1998:5),

> "Sustainability implies concern for the well-being of the future generations and their right to a fulfilled life. While each generation constructs its own life and alters the face of the earth, no generation should change the quality of the conditions of life on the planet so profoundly as to deprive future generations of possibilities to build and construct their life and alter the face of the earth in their own right."

There is consensus that some human activities have had a detrimental effect on the environment, endangering their previously unspoiled habitat. The coming generations might be denied a chance of living in an immaculate environment. If the present environment continues to be exposed to such desecration, the quality of their lives will be compromised and their survival will be at stake. An ecological disaster is looming if human actions towards the environment continue unabated in their current destructive form. According to Dommen, "Priority to the poor according to this definition overrides-intergenerational considerations"(De Santa Ana 1998:65). The habitat might be negatively impacted in such a way that the non-renewable resources would be damaged irreversibly, and coming generations would be dispossessed. This in turn might throw

global climatic conditions in disarray, resulting in a plethora of problems such as disease, and scarcity of essential resources in such great proportions as to create fierce competition, making us vulnerable to a host of unprecedented self-destructive behaviours. We must wake up. "The recognition that the 'fate of the earth' is our fate as well, that the piercing of the ozone layer pierces us too, does not even provoke self-interest, much less create a new, more communal consciousness"(King & Woodyard 1999:4). God, who commands us to be good stewards in our earthly enterprises, has declared that his commandments have multigenerational implications. Therefore all generations are expected to live in obedience and faithfulness according to God's directives.

4.5.2   The Key Aspects of Sustainability

We must monitor our witness in the community lest our ministry activities spoil our good intention by creating a culture of dependency and entitlement within the communities. We should guard against helping people to their detriment instead of contributing towards their desired empowerment. Our mission is to afford desperate people the support they need with the goal of enabling them to ultimately stand on their own feet without our backing. Our mandate is not to create a society of beggars who will always receive handouts and help from outside without developing personal and community capacity to handle their own challenges.   Below I cite some essential elements of the concept of sustainability.

Creating Awareness

Our sustainable development ministry begins with an effort to raise the level of people's understanding of issues that are currently prevalent in their situation. This implies that we have to purposefully build their awareness of their environment. Despite human ingenuity that is evident in our advancement in technology, and our economic-political-social systems we have not fully woken to the devastating consequences of our actions for our ecological system and ourselves. Therefore it is imperative that our awareness of that reality should be heightened. It would be catastrophic if we allowed this current state of

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affairs to persist. "That is a process of discussion, reflection, questioning, and analysis – being aware of their own world and how it works"(Burkey 1993:73). Through dialogue communities must be conscientized to understand the nature of their social problems and how their situation is linked to their relationship with the natural environment. We must not assume an intellectual and spiritual superiority that precludes dialogue with communities where we do community ministry. It is through dialogue that people can identify their needs and voice the solutions they seek. Freire says, "Conscientization means a stimulation of self-reflected critical awareness in people of their social reality and of their ability to transform that reality by their conscious collective action"(Burkey 1993:55). People need to understand all fundamental factors related to the spiritual, economic, political and social challenges that are present in their communities. They have to be aware that they can do something to change their plight. Freire says, "By looking into oneself and using what one hears, sees and experiences one begins to understand what is happening in one's own life"(Burkey 1993:55). The poor need to define, analyse and consolidate issues that compound their struggle towards sustainable development.

Sustainable development is difficult to attain when people do not have an awareness of issues that characterize their situation and are not willing to collaborate to eliminate those problems. Sometimes people are so overwhelmed by the challenges of poverty that they do not recognize the available alternatives and opportunities for them to improve their fortunes. Even when they know they have rights they do not seem to use them to their advantage to realize their freedom from marginalization. Therefore they cannot rise to the challenge of participating meaningfully in creating a better life for themselves and others. Thus they continue to appear helpless and hopeless due to lack of awareness. This then seems to justify the intervention of consultants and other development experts who move from being just facilitators to being controllers of sustainable development amongst the poor. Wilson says,

> "Sustainable development… requires, among other things, a massive educational effort so that the citizens are aware of the need to manage resources wisely… not only to fulfil their own needs today, but those of their children tomorrow, and of future generations. It is a concept which is in harmony with deep-seated African

cultural values concerning the continuity of the dead, the living and the yet unborn"(De Santa Ana 1998:63).

We need to live in this world knowing that the continued existence of future generations depends on our respect for the environment and that we should not use it selfishly. We must manage it responsibly to perpetuate their existence in a healthy natural environment, so that they will regard us, once we have passed on, with admiration, respect and gratitude to God.

Capacity Building

Sustainable development is about building people's capacity to face the challenges that they confront in their context. People have the potential to formulate their own solutions to current problems. Cook says, "In a community, development can only be sustainable if the people concerned have the capacity – the capacity and the will to use that capacity – to manage the development themselves"(Fitzgerald et. al 1997:290). As community ministers we must assist them to tap into their potential so that they can solve their social problems. "Capacity building means establishing clear understanding of needs and skills gap in people and then beginning a carefully designed and sensitive process of building up the capacity of these people to ensure that they become better equipped to deal with circumstances in their lives"(Davis 1993:40). It means enabling them to have the power, will and the resources to assume responsibility to resolve the issues of their development. The poor should not be allowed to feel as if they were hopeless, helpless and powerless victims who cannot contribute meaningfully to their progress out of poverty. This implies that we should work strategically with them to develop these areas:

- Conversion
- Empowerment
- Self-confidence and self-esteem
- Acquisition of knowledge and skills
- Vocational competence
- Self-reliance
- Self-realization

- Self- determination
- Leadership

People cannot be objects of charity forever. They have to gradually graduate to doing things for themselves. Sethi says, "All solidarity efforts must be aimed at strengthening their own capacity for independent action"(Burkey 1993:40). We must create an environment that is conducive for the poor to develop their potential. We must not stifle local development with our ministry activities. "People grow in responsibility as they are helped to accept responsibilities. People will never be ready to take over the job until they, along with their leaders, pass through the process of discovering what they are capable of doing"(Cheyne 1996:116). It is imperative that we facilitate capacity building amongst people since it motivates people to be involved constructively in shaping the course of their lives and community. Cooks says, "In principle there is no limit to the extent to which human capacity can be developed, but lack of capacity places limits on performance. Creating performance without building capacity is clearly not sustainable, but simply building capacity without motivating performance wastes that capacity"(Fitzgerald et. al 1997:276). People's capacity must be built to promote their participation in the process of their development. We should not stimulate their potential for self-realization without giving them an opportunity to exercise their acquired knowledge, skill and confidence in their ability to deal with challenges in their situation. The disadvantaged who are benefiting from capacity building opportunities must also be encouraged to use their initiative and be involved in credible and meaningful nation-building initiatives.

Participation

There should be a deliberate attempt on our part to involve people, to get them to use their own initiative and resources and to take responsibility for their own welfare. People are not necessarily so poor that they cannot be involved in making a contribution, that they cannot be part of the solution to their own hardships. Poverty does not mean that people cannot be creative, energetic and industrious. They need "enablement that makes them to be able to participate actively and confidently, being able to be innovative and

creative, being able to recognize and use opportunities, and being able to realize when mistakes have been made and how to correct them"(Davis 1993:40). The poor are not useless or good for nothing; they have the potential to be contributors to their own liberation. Poverty is not a justifiable reason for us to exclude them from being involved in all the processes of their emancipation. We must not use developmental strategies that suppress the self-determination of the deprived. They should be involved in the diagnosis and prognosis of their problems. "Participation is essentially learning by doing exercise – plans are made, action taken, results studied, lessons learned, and new plans and action take place"(Burkey 1993:57). It should not be a cosmetic exercise but a commitment to allow people to participate in all the phases of a project. Also we should avoid fronting in our witness, and engage credible members of poor communities. This kind of participation creates a sense of responsibility, and highlights the obligations, risks, and financial and spiritual implications of community projects. Kia says, "People grow in responsibility as they are helped to accept responsibility… The energy put into community action will be proportionate to the involvement of the community in the planning… Too much help leads to dependency; people should be helped in so far as it enables them to become more self-reliant" (Elliston 1989:91 – 92). Participation must be empowering if it has to be sustainable. There must be some skills transfer and mentoring in the participatory process of development. Participation is useless if it does not add value to the poor who are involved in it. Community participation boosts people's pride and gives them a sense of ownership over the projects. Hiebert says, "Our goal in development is ultimately to help people discover ways in which they can help themselves" (Elliston 1989:92). When people lack pride and ownership of a project, sustainability becomes an illusion. They have to be assisted to develop confidence and the courage to deal with some of their community issues themselves. Lastly, "participation means a breaking of the monopoly of knowledge"(Coetzee & Graaff 1996:146). People's levels of awareness and enlightenment must be enhanced so that they should not remain ignorant about issues at hand. They should also be introduced to the body of knowledge and experience that the intervening experts possess in order for them to develop their own solutions to their community challenges. Any essential knowledge necessary to change people's lives and circumstances must not be a sacred

preserve accessible only to the privileged professional elite. Ordinary people must also have access to information in order for them to determine their own affairs.

Strengthening Institutions

Certain community structures need to be reinforced in order for them to function to their fullest capacity. Sometimes we are called to be involved in structural reconstruction within communities. In some instances, the family unit and leadership structures might be dysfunctional. These institutions therefore have to be strengthened if we are to have sustainable development. We must assist with the introduction or revival of systems that would enable all community institutions to function efficiently and effectively. Some community problems are compounded by inappropriate and inadequate social systems, such as educational systems that prepare students for irrelevant careers, leaving them unemployable. Furthermore, local agencies must be able to sustain the improvements facilitated by outside or donor agencies within their communities. Cook says,

> "Political capacity is defined by the strength of those institutions (such as free press, and a set of commonly accepted political values) that encapsulate the people's will to govern themselves democratically, and by those institutions... which provide channels through which this will may be expressed. In South Africa today, the vigorous will to be democratic has created an informal capacity which has compensated for the lack of formal capacity"(Fitzgerald et.al 1997:277).

People need to use their potential, cultural resources, resident knowledge and experience and local structures to forge ways to their envisaged goals. This would mean that this entire strategic institutional base must be revitalized in order for them to be mobilized to be architects of their own destiny. A power base has to be created amongst those who are key stakeholders in sustainable development. King and Woodyard (1999:40 – 41) explain relational power as follows:

> "Some speak of it as a 'power with' rather than a 'power over.' Relational power will not tolerate any diminishment of the other; indeed, its goal is to empower. And this is a vision of power that is observable in much of nature, both human

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and the nonhuman. Human beings, in their interpersonal relationships, often strive for mutual and reciprocal empowerment… Within the broader reality of nature, symbiotic relationships provide dramatic support for the importance of mutuality and reciprocity. Such relationships do not use and abuse rather build and reinforce."

Agents have to use this power to realize their community objectives that are for the good of all. This power should not be subverted in order to create monopolies, or to sideline and suppress any person or group.

Environmental Responsibility

The problem of poverty is compounded by the unfettered growth of the world's largest economies, the very economies that have contributed to the destruction of the environment, and the irresponsible use of natural resources that cannot be replaced if abused. Humans, in developing their entrepreneurial aspirations, have not been kind to the environment. "A world which once seemed open to almost infinite expansion of human population and economic activity now appears as a world of limits"(Cobb 1992:7). These actions in societies driven by profit, competition, and self-interest have created thriving enterprises that compromised the well-being of the environment. Due to unbridled expansion feeding on greed, we find pollution, depletion of natural resources, increases in toxic waste, and poor settlement solutions. The litany of our misdeeds towards the environment is shocking. Also the deification of science has resulted in many ecological problems that are faced by communities today. (Bragg 1989:58) says,

"The secularisation that has accompanied the scientific-industrial revolution has broken down the holistic, unified view of reality that permeates the more traditional societies, opening the way for the mastery of the physical that would have been unimaginable before, such as putting a man on the moon and other scientific achievements."

Although science has enabled people to come with novel inventions that have improved human life, it has also brought problems. Humans have made science a sphere outside of God's influence, no longer subjected to the ethics of God's kingdom. Thus the

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environment was exploited irresponsibly without restraint. We cannot continue these irresponsible actions that harm our habitat. "The finitude of our planet requires us to work toward a human society that accepts limits and seeks a decent life for all within them. Such a society should live in a balance with other species and primarily on the renewable resources of the planet" (Cobb 1992:7). Our world is vulnerable and may be damaged permanently by humans in their quest for progress. We have to recognize that some of the natural resources are not renewable. If they are exploited carelessly, they may be lost permanently. Those resources, which are irreplaceable, have been given to humanity and are necessary for its survival.

Environmental responsibility is part of our kingdom mandate as God's servants. This is compatible to the biblical concept of stewardship. "The Bible asserts that God, the Creator, owns the earth and all the things in it and has entrusted to human beings the care and the preservation of the rest of creation. Such a stewardship role presupposes that the dynamics and capabilities of its execution is possessed by all human beings" (Ajulu 2001:27). We believe that God, who is the Creator of the entire world, is its owner and we as humans are entrusted with the proper management of this habitat. This is the responsibility of all human beings both rich and poor, learned and those who are not academically empowered. The call to save the earth should not be shrugged of as coming from a few ardent environmental activists. Humans need to exercise due diligence as they pursue their creative enterprises in political, economical, technological, scientific, social, and spiritual fields. Our growth and our search for a better quality of life must be approached in harmony with environmental conservation. Webb says, "The glory of the Creator is manifested in the regency of humankind over creation. Caretaking the rest of creation, or stewardship is the role given to humankind"(Ps 8) (Elliston 1989:54). The level of human responsibility towards the environment is a litmus test for our reverence for God, who is the Lord of all creation. God is honoured if we show accountability in our human activities in relation to the environment. De Santa Ana (1998:18) says,

> "One of the convictions of faith that provides meaning for Christians is the awareness of the sacramental dimension of all creation. Creation speaks about the Creator (Ps 19:1 – 6; 104: 1 –30). This is not 'natural revelation,' but awareness

that, in mysterious ways, the imprint of God and his eternal love and plan are present in creation. Creation is not finished, and Christian communities expect and hope for the fulfilment of God's work, in which they have been graciously invited to collaborate (c.f. 2 Cor. 5:16 – 6:2)."

Therefore as Christians we have a challenge to look at better options of living that are compatible with good environmental management. If we respect God's creation, it becomes another window through which we can discern God and appreciate his mercy towards us. We have to show gratitude to God and be responsible partners with God in preserving our habitat, since God is still at work within creation to bring it to its ultimate fullness.

4.5.3   A Critique of Sustainability

The concept of sustainability is a good concept but it has limitations. Its aims are commendable because it focuses on human beings, poverty eradication, and removal of disparities between groups and nations, peace and effective environmental management. Its efficiency in society depends on people's ability to change their lifestyle, and on how we treat each other and the environment in our interactions. Sustainable development will be difficult to achieve in a world that is driven by consumerism, competition and profit, and that promotes bad economic, political, social and religious habits that destroy the habitat and disrupt blissful relationships. It is a challenge for people to mend their ways and imbibe a sustainable culture. "We recognize in ourselves also a profound resistance to change, so that our freedom is not a matter of simply choice between good and evil. Our self-centeredness distorts our use of freedom" (Cobb 1992:11). Sin is at work in people and in our world, causing our noble intentions to be torpedoed before they bear fruit. There have been campaigns promoting respect for the environment, but it's still being desecrated. People alone cannot change things in a manner that delivers sustainability – not without God. "Apart from the transformative power of grace, there would be no grounds for hope"(Cobb 1992:11). It is difficult to extricate people from the comfortable life that is sustained by behaviours that compromise the principles of

stewardship towards the environment. Our lives have been entrenched in customs that depend on knowledge, technology and equipment that do damage to the environment.

There is a tendency for people as they seek sustainable development to lose sight of justice. The activists of sustainable development are not always the vocal proponents of justice. Even when we are responsible in how we manage our planet, we must not forget those who are still marginalized. According to De Santa Ana (1998:6),

> "Taking seriously the need for a 'common future' represents a particular challenge to the industrial nations, which not only consume a disproportionately high share of resources but also contribute to the destruction of the ecological equilibrium in the South. The quest for sustainability thus exposes a new form of exploitation of the South by the North. A new degree of sharing is required."

It's about us being more compassionate towards each other since all of us are God's people. We have to show care in our manifold relationships, whether in business, education, politics, religion or any other social avenue within our society. We have an obligation to show respect towards each other in promoting shared prosperity, without marginalizing some, as we live in harmony with the rest of creation. It would be a tragedy to see us preserve the environment and pursue our green politics and theology with conviction and self-sacrifice yet neglect equity. "But the primary concern will be with building up communities that witness to the love of both the neighbour and the whole created world"(De Santa Ana 1998:21). When we are eco-sensitive, this must be accompanied by our being very vocal and active to challenge injustice, oppression and exploitation of women, the poor and expatriates. As activists of sustainable development, we must prioritise and value justice so that we may be at peace with our environment. Wilson says, "Much that has been written about sustainable development concerns the natural resource base. It is important to concentrate also on human resource sustainability"(De Santa Ana 1998:63). This should be our balanced approach to sustainable development; we must also highlight the element of empowering human development. It is not just about preserving pristine beaches for the exclusive use of rich tourists who have the power of their mighty currency. It is also about making these beaches accessible to the poor citizens of the land. The poor too have to have access to

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such beautiful resources so that they may enjoy, preserve and be empowered. The destitute should no longer face societal systems, structures and groups that undermine their right to a life, that is fit for humans.

Globalisation creates challenges to sustainable development in communities. The fabric of human existence as rooted in a community is slowly being eroded by globalisation. People are being turned into global citizens in a global village. They get hooked into the impersonal network of global culture, and technology, the information highway [Internet], international trade and so on. "Human beings seek meaning and experience of belonging to associations. With whom they can develop face-to-face and not only 'virtual' relationships" (De Santa Ana 1998:13). They become citizens of this cyber dynasty without strong filial attachments, community or national loyalty. Community cannot be overshadowed by globalisation without serious consequences to human survival. De Santa Ana (1998:13 –14) states that,

> "It is important to recognize the role that different communities play. Though not all persons participate in community life, those who do participate experience a strengthening of their personal identity. This kind of human relationship is more meaningful than that which characterizes life in mass society. In community life people share concerns, mutual support and solidarity. To be sure, human communities are never perfect, but they create a space where dialogue is possible and where life can be more human."

Without respect for community life, sustainable development will remain an illusion. It would be difficult to rally around a vision of sustainability when we do not have social cohesion that would enable us as people to share our purpose of eradicating poverty. Globalisation promotes depersonalisation that endangers community life, and consequently, human life. In a community, people are cared for, outside the community they run the risk of dehumanisation.

The church must resist being swallowed up by the dominant culture of globalisation that drives sustainable development. It should never identify with this ideology. Globalisation has shown the interconnectedness of humanity worldwide in terms of

technology, economics, political systems and other social systems. Some countries have 'multinationalized' some of those institutions to create multinational hegemonies that marginalize weak nations, groups, continents and regions. Maggay (1998:112) says it creates "marginalization of producers of real goods." You find large international corporations investing globally in poor countries due to the availability of cheap labour. They invest in those countries so that they may pay meagre wages (wages that would be totally unacceptable in the labour market of the North) and reap hefty profits. They have the audacity to subject the poor in the South to deplorable working conditions, due to their vulnerability. Thus they continue to pauperise those who produce the goods that create the wealth. Vischer (1998:50) wrote,

> "At the same time, however, the emerging 'unity of humankind' presented a formidable challenge to the churches. The church is now called to manifest its true nature. The creed speaks of 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.'…. Faced with new horizons, faced with the conflicts from the interactions of nations, and above all faced with the mounting impact of empires, the churches had to come together. They have to leave behind their imprisonment within national boundaries and make an exodus into a wider community."

The church has to become what God has called it to be, the universal Body of Christ that is not limited by geographical, cultural, economic, ideological, social and religious frontiers. It must become a real kingdom community that is not restricted by superficial prejudicial human values but founded on kingdom values of peace, love and justice. In this kind of church, all the people of the world would find a home. Vischer (1998:50) says, "The church anticipates in its own midst the community which the nations are destined to achieve. Its witness thus focuses on pointing – through its existence and through its word – to the sources of true communion. It will denounce any deviations to the contribution of the sound development of human community." The church must resist any efforts by those who seek to hijack the move towards global unity, to subject the poor through their monopoly of technology, knowledge, politics, economics, as well as their spiritual and social influence. Thus the church in its catholicity must continue to promote and protect the interests of the disadvantaged. Vischer (1998:51) states, "The churches sought to give a more humane face to the worldwide community." As nations have

bilateral political, trade, educational, cultural, sports and social agreements they should not just be technical covenants that do not promote a culture of caring. They should promote a spirit of solidarity, love, equality and harmony. "The community of faith is one with God in doing justice"(King & Woodyard 1999:40). Such a community ultimately fosters genuine social integration, without the intent to exploit fellow human beings.

Sustainable development needs to shift its focus away from the economy. There is a tendency for agents to put more value on economic development. There should not be an overemphasis of economic development at the expense of other aspects of development. Wilson (1998:62) says,

> "Making development sustainable means moving beyond a narrow, albeit important, concern with economic growth per se to considerations related to the quality of that growth. That is, ensuring that people's needs are being met, that the resource base is conserved, that there is a sustainable population level, that environment and cross-sectoral concerns are integrated into decision-making processes, and that communities are empowered."

Economic growth will not be appreciated by the destitute if it creates unemployment in the name of increasing efficiency and profit margins through retrenchments. Too many have been made redundant, homeless, hungry, and are begging to survive. Wilson (1998:65) adds that, "Once we focus on human resource sustainability, we are compelled to consider issues of marginalization, unemployment, and the whole impact of globalisation. From the perspective of those who find themselves at the painful end of globalisation, how can the process be shaped in such a way that the world of the 21st century becomes truly sustainable?" These are the primary issues that, if not addressed will make the vision of sustainable development unattainable. Economic growth must not disturb the social integration and harmony that must be enjoyed by families, groups and communities. Neither should it promote reckless economic transactions that lure people with promises of financial gain, but that result in the rampant exploitation of the environment. Instead, it must contribute to the wholeness of people. Maggay (1998:116) says, "With the ascendancy of the market, we need more than ever to bear witness that people do not live by bread alone. We must resist the marginalization of human values

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which accompanies the apotheosis of the market as the final arbiter of how life is to be disciplined and organized." Human life should mean more than just being engaged in economic enterprise, swallowed by its spiralling network of bewildering intricacies. People should not be led to think that if they could only master this economic web, they would have mastered life, or that the problems of deprivation could be solved by economic wizardry. Maggay (1998:116) states, "The market is not competent to address problems of poverty and equity. We cannot leave the plight of the poor to the operations of blind market forces." The love of *Mammon* sometimes causes people to be insensitive to the needs of the poor. When people are under the spell of riches, they become prisoners of avarice. They stop being guided by the principles of justice and sharing. Rather they yield to the attraction of careerism, power, and graft. All things are done for self-gain, and not for a just cause.

4.6   The Goal of Development as Empowerment

It is a known fact that poverty alleviation and eradication is a very complex occupation. Thus in our endeavour to deal with poverty we look at it from different perspectives. But the ultimate goal of all our approaches should be the empowerment of people. In our time 'empowerment' is a highly politicised word that is easily misunderstood. Shiffman and Motley define empowerment as "the ability to make informed choices and to have social, political and economic capability of meaningfully contributing to the realization of these choices"(Davis 1993:40). Those who have been disadvantaged must be enabled to use their power to make qualitative decisions that can change the destiny of their own lives and communities in terms of the available opportunities and resources. They should not just be bystanders who let others make choices that affect the quality of their lives significantly, without their input. "Empowering the poor, people of colour, women, future generations, and nature means allowing them to play an effective role in deciding on appropriate patterns of current resource use"(King & Woodyard 1999:43). We should not pursue poverty alleviation strategies that disempower people to the extent that we run their lives for them.   Empowerment has become a hackneyed word with many ambiguities. Oxfam views empowerment as follows: "To give people control over the

main influences that affect their lives and to have greater control, as well as to have access to resources"(Ajulu 2001:188). The poor need to be in charge of their own affairs and must have access to the means to turn their aspirations into reality. They must not become passive onlookers when others intervene to assist them in addressing their needs. According to Action Aid, empowerment is "enabling people to be heard; enabling them to exercise control over their own lives. In other words, enabling people to live in dignity; enabling them to be in control, to have their voices heard, and to exercise choice"(Ajulu 2001:188). Action Aid goes a step further than Oxfam to highlight the fact that the opinions of the poor must be valued. The dignity of the poor, and their right to make decisions that are in line with their dreams, should be respected. The rights of the poor should not be usurped by anyone claiming to act in their interest.

Our witness must not nurture a slave mentality amongst the disadvantaged. The poor should not persist in seeing themselves through the legacy of powerlessness. The poor should not be reduced to mere victims, disenfranchised, dispossessed and dominated by their oppressors. "Empowerment at every level requires a degree of ownership, a voice, and an ability to direct our life-projects with dignity" (Stone 1996:108). Through our transformational development interventions we must work with the poor in such a way that they ultimately become involved, as key stakeholders in the efforts to alleviate their poverty. They must become owners who control the entire process of their emancipation from destitution. Stone (1996:113) says,

> "But liberating action will never take place until the oppressed are able to get a handle on the limit-situations they face. Then they can move to their own liberation. And make no mistake, the oppressed must themselves move toward liberation as subjects, not objects. No one can liberate another person. A minister, can, however, play a crucial role in the empowerment of others through consciousness raising."

Empowerment vision helps us to act as facilitators who assist the poor to discover their role in their quest for freedom from deprivation. They should realize that they are not merely helpless victims. They can become active, creative and constructive participants in changing their bad fortune. Goulet describes the liberation of the poor as:

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> "A victory over privilege, stagnation and dependency. It involves freedom from the internalised psychic paralysis that results from internalising images of inferiority, from political and economic constraints, which block people's creativity, and from servitude to nature and ignorance. The goal is 'to transform hitherto passive human beings into active subjects creating their own history'. In terms of Goulet's view, economic development cannot take place unless the poor are emancipated from their fears and restraints and liberated to the creative solving of their own problems through means appropriate to their own conditions" (Morgan, Wiegel & De Baufie 1989:157).

They could offer meaningful resistance against forces of oppression and strive to transform their present situation to be in line with their vision of a better life in justice, liberty and peace for all.

Empowerment in the Christian context is about restoring the value of human life. Poverty has significantly distorted the people's worth. It dehumanises people to a mediocre level of human existence holistically. Miller (1989: 104) says,

> "The development ethic affirms the sanctity of human life. A person, made in the image of God… Life is sacred and therefore it is to be preserved even in the weakest, most broken, vulnerable, or wretched human being. The measure of development potential in any society is found not in the way its members treat the greatest in that society, but in the way they treat the least."

Being disadvantaged places one in rough circumstances that cause one to be undermined. It is in these horrendous socio-economic conditions that the poor are treated as non-beings. Their human rights continue to be violated by those who are more fortunate than them. Under such inhumane conditions people are socialized to accept dehumanisation and oppression as normal. According to Stone (1996:111),

> "Thus, there is an internalised oppression, a consciousness or attitude that perpetuates or recycles oppression from within. This internalised oppression, as feminist theologian Sharon Welch describes it, 'is being shaped by the values of the oppressor. It leads oppressed people to see themselves as they are seen by oppressor-as less intelligent, less moral, less valuable. It leads the oppressed

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people to act like oppressors even in our work for social change, instituting our own hierarchies, using power over each other.'"

People must be assisted to assimilate new values that entrench their freedom, dignity and life as authentic children of God, not third class citizens. They must break away from the manipulative propaganda ideologies of racism, sexism, classism and repression that legitimised their marginalization. We should ensure that the sanctity of human life is not just a paragraph in the constitution. It must be translated into a better quality of life, not only for the few, but also for all the citizens of the country. Miller (1989: 104) says, "A person bearing the image of God is the greatest resource for development, and as a rebel against God is also the prime hindrance to development." When we affirm their worth, desperate people are encouraged to be optimistic in dealing with the challenges of poverty. It enables them to respond positively to the efforts to empower them. We also have to admit that even the poor often live a life of disobedience against the will of God. They are also prone to self-defeating behaviour that complicates their poverty, and their relationship with God and others is also flawed. Thus as Miller (1989: 105) puts it,

"The development ethic remembers that rebelliousness and acknowledges that the evil is real, personal, and abnormal. Alienation from the other person, from God, and one's environment all result from this rebelliousness. Redemption and reconciliation for all three sets of relationships provide the good news of the Christian development ethic."

 The poor will never fruitfully benefit from any empowerment initiative if they are not properly reconciled to God, neighbour and their habitat.

Empowerment has an element of nation - building in it. Our country South Africa is recovering from a legacy of racial, political, cultural and religious separation and conflict. Therefore there is a strong national vision to heal the rifts that have been rife in our society.   According to the Church and State and nation Building: A Conference Report, Hong Kong 1988, "Nation-building means the articulation and promotion of a just social order for the nation as a whole, in which human life, rights and dignities are respected" (Samuel & Sugden 1999:460). It is about the restoration of a community spirit that has been disturbed by unjust relations in that society. These relationships should be

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normalized so that all people may live together harmoniously without having 'a cat-and-a-dog' relationship of animosity and belligerence. "Empowerment is collective action. It is a collective activity in that a group of people sharing a mutual interest, sentiment or concern, act together and in concert"(De Beer & Swanepoel 1998: 24). There cannot be any collective action in a divided society. These unjust relationships in society have evolved into sexism, classism, racism, and a plethora of other forms of discrimination and repression. This state of affairs is not conducive to societal harmony. Transformation that is empowering stresses that all people are equal, thus fostering social unity. As Escobar puts it, "It is not just a better life but a better way of living among men as whole persons" (Samuel & Sugden 1987:47). No form of empowerment should marginalize women, Blacks, minorities, expatriates or the poor. Their human rights must not be limited or violated. Those who have been domineering in their attitudes, thoughts and actions must mend their ways to live in harmony with their compatriots, without any sense of superiority. This can only be realized if they seek to create a nation that subscribes to the kingdom values of justice, peace, reconciliation and freedom. "It is fundamental that a change in the political power structure in South Africa needs to be infused by a value system which would ensure that the process of transformation and the creation of a new society is of real benefit to all those who live in it"(Wilson & Ramphele 1989:267). We must ensure that the values of democracy, human rights, reconciliation, freedom, justice, and unity in diversity filter through all the components of our society. They must influence all the meaningful relationships, structures and activities in our communities lest we relapse into a society in which the negativity of our apartheid history is stirred up again. Therefore, in our witness, we cannot neglect nation-building, although we should steer clear of the popular ideology of any dominant political, economic and social power in society. The Church and State and Nation Building Conference, Hong Kong 1988, resolved that,

> "As Christians, we participate in nation building as an affirmation of the Lordship of Christ over the whole of life and our need to make a holistic obedient response to it. Since nation building means promoting the welfare of the people, physically, mentally, spiritually and socially, it must include evangelism as the sharing of the

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gospel in its wholeness and applying it to every perceived need in the community"(Samuel & Sugden 1999:465).

 We are not called to remain neutral when it comes to issues that affect people's lives. We can work, in partnership with others, for a society characterized by peace, love, equity and freedom. We can join the struggle to redress disparities, at the same time fulfilling our evangelistic mandate as Christian witnesses in our community.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has been a reflection on relief, development, transformation and sustainability. It has explored various responses of Christians who have sought to deal with the issue of poverty in their witness. All these perspectives have their merits and demerits and can either enhance or limit our witness in the context of poverty. The bottom line is that the Christian witness in the context of poverty will include both evangelism and social action in ministry. *Firstly,* I have looked at relief as a means to promote human survival in times of distress, and how in the long run, it tends to create a culture of entitlement amongst the disadvantaged. "But even this welfare work needs a constant self-critique to make sure that it does not slide into philanthropy, for the dependency thus created, cripples the people being 'helped' so that they continue to seek hand outs rather than finding ways of helping themselves"(Wilson & Ramphele 1989:262). We acknowledge its shortcoming, that relief does not address the underlying cause of poverty that is endemic in unjust societal structures. These repressive structures were configured to perpetuate inequality in society. *Secondly*, I have explored the concept of development, highlighting its Western origins and history. This kind of developmentalism, due to its Western origin and a history that is full of inconsistencies, is contextually inappropriate, and politically and culturally incorrect for any further application outside its context. *Thirdly*, I have focused on the concept of transformation. It is clear now that the perspective of transformation is a more comprehensive and biblical approach to missions when compared with other approaches. "Transformation efforts do not aim to bring relief to people in the trap, but to free them from the trap so that they can gradually improve the situation themselves as free and self-reliant

individuals"(De Beer & Swanepoel 1998:25). These freed individuals are enabled to live in communion with others, respecting their humanity in obedience to God. *Lastly*, I pondered the concept of sustainability, which compares favourably with the concept of developmentalism.   The latter promoted unbridled economic growth, endangered the habitat and compromised prospects of a better life for future generations. We have come to the sobering realization that our habitat is not everlasting, but vulnerable to destruction through exploitative and irresponsible human activity. But it is a fallacy to think we can sustain life without God, the Creator, the Giver and the Sustainer of that life in all its experiences. In our witness we seek to reconcile sinful humanity to Christ, Life-giver and Saviour, in order to have a sustainable existence. I also reflected on the concept of empowerment that has become a buzzword in our community. Whether it is through relief, development, transformation or sustainability that we seek to help the poor, empowerment of all people, especially the marginalized, should be our target. Albie Sachs points to the "idea of rights to empower people psychologically, to strengthen the sense of human dignity, self determination, and self-affirmation, and to instil in people a healthy scepticism about states and political parties. History has shown again and again that those who came to power may subsequently violate other's rights, first of their oppressors, then of persons in their own ranks"(Goldewijk & Der Gaay 1999:52). The impoverished cannot continue to live a life of dependency, whilst they have the creative ability to shape their lives as meaningful participants in society, if only an injustice that sidelines them is removed. All forms of injustice, inequality, oppression and deprivation of the disadvantaged should be obliterated. The ultimate goal is to create a just, peaceful, and liberated community, a community in which people are reconciled to God, each other and the rest of creation. The Church should be a model of such a kingdom community.