

Development Matters: The Kingdom of God

The Kingdom and the Realities of History

The prophet stands in the Temple with a wooden yoke across his shoulders. The yoke represents what Jeremiah understands to be the harsh exigencies of history. History is a yoke laid upon the people by their God. But Hananiah breaks the prophet's yoke. He believes that current history must simply give way to religious ideas. Hananiah believes the tradition shows that since God has protected the people in the past so God must do so again. Hananiah's mistake is that this treats religious tradition as ideology – a constraining mind set – which cannot understand that God may act in this new historical situation in altogether new ways. God is concerned for history – context, for incarnation, for the 'Moment'. Jeremiah therefore returns to the temple, this time with a yoke of iron. History will out!

Religion as Ideology has to make way for the realities of history – we must read the Signs of the Times – for God is sometimes challenging us, sometimes consoling us, and each time within or through the iron reality of history – indeed, of history and geography, the realities of time and place. And given any new history and new geography, God may take us all by surprise and be tempted to do a new thing. God overwhelms our complacency.

In the very next chapter we find Jeremiah writing under God to the exiles in Babylon - to those who had been carried north-east by the relentless historical forces of an increasingly global market and military machine. His message is clear. Make your home in the foreign environment, work for the wellbeing of the city there, even though it is the hated Babylon, and benefit the land in which you now live because on its welfare you yourselves rely. Work alongside pagans – with them grow strong yourselves so that you will one day re-inherit the Promised Holy Land. And as in the previous chapter his letter, once again, includes a strong denunciation of those false prophets who adopt a fortress mentality to history and who can only look inward to the past tradition of the community and not outward to the future.

Something of the same tensions have continued down the centuries for religious communities. After all, you would think that history teaches us that by definition 'a community' must have a boundary to indicate who belongs, and therefore a margin beyond which one does not belong, witness the nation state or the religious denomination. So a kingdom community where boundaries are inclusive or even porous, seems unlikely. Maybe in heaven, but probably not so on earth. So when history challenges us at our very core to look again at what community can mean, do we become a depressing Jeremiah, or a naïve Hananiah? Do we consider the chalice of history half full or half empty?

In the New Testament, in the Acts of the Apostles, it would appear that the focus of the preaching of the early Church is upon the person of Jesus, crucified and risen. Take him for your personal saviour and find freedom and healing for your souls. But the focus of the preaching of the Saviour himself, as evidenced in the synoptic Gospels, is not so much on his own person as on the inauguration of the Kingdom of God – which is, at first glance at least, a societally and historically engaged organisation or framework. At first sight it looks as if you must choose one focus or the other. Either the Apostles' harking back to the ideology of the crucified and resurrected Christ, or the earlier and seemingly more radically dangerous proclamation of the Kingdom. But the biblical canon holds the two in creative tension by including both – and legitimately so, for the Good News is that the person, Jesus

Christ, is also he who is the very embodiment of the Kingdom of God. They are two wings of the same bird – the same Spirit. Preach Christ and you must acknowledge him as Jesus the Kingdom-bringer. Or as Jesus himself puts it, “If I by the finger of God cast out demons then is the Kingdom of God come among you.” (Matthew 12 v 28)

But to forget this creative tension and opt for one or other (simply stated religion as ideology or religion as social engagement) has led to all sorts of problems. Time was when evangelical Christians, so enamoured of converting souls, would shun any notion of making whole by tending to the environment. But there has of late been a radical change of mind. Since Lausanne in 1974 and the Grand Rapids declaration of 1982 evangelism and social action are seen by evangelical Christians as the two “wings of the same bird” – their phrase! The Lambeth 1988 Anglican statement that the 5 Marks of Mission include not only formal evangelism but also caring for the needy, fighting unjust societal structures and tending for our environment – this statement has united those who, in the past, would have argued about the thoroughly pious claim of mission over development. Now it is acknowledged by all thinking and informed Christians that the two are inseparable. You might even suspect that evangelical Christians today lead the field in this and shriek from the rooftops: “Seek the welfare of the city to which I have sent you as aliens.”

And so Christians who have felt the call to Mission have ventured into others’ time and space, into their history and geography, bringing their Gospel of Good News, and when at their best have sought to see their mission as not only the proclamation of the person of Jesus, but also the effecting of societal change through practical action built upon what they perceived as Kingdom of God values preached and expressed in the life of Jesus.

But the complex history of missionary activity through the years, points up our next problem. For when missionaries and developers have arrived, the receiving poor have sometimes been made to feel at the mercy of the evangelistic and missionary fervour. They are not sure where the mission and development leaves them, or whether the missionaries and developers will ever leave them. The story of the Ascension tells of a Jesus, the inaugurator of the Kingdom, as one who departs and leaves all the power for the future in the hands of the indigenous community. This is the Kingdom way, but Empire builders find Kingdom building difficult.

I like to think of Nehemiah as the first Community Developer. The nation has been ravaged by the global forces of foreign domination. The capital city is left in ruins, the people lack vision, cohesion and direction, and the would-be leaders have been seventy years in exile. Nehemiah, the developer, arrives in the city, supported by the capital and administrative machinery of the imperialist foreigner, the Persian Empire, and his first act is to ride around the city with his clip-board at hand. And he does this, he tells us, at dead of night so that the locals may have no notion of what he has in mind for them. He uses his political contacts at the heart of the empire rather than be put off by local politicians, and he motivates the incomers with a sturdy mix of Zionistic racism and family pride. And, he gets the job done. The walls are built and the city is developed. Like every good developer today, he has an ‘exit strategy’ of celebrating publicly all that the people have achieved. But soon after he’s left they ask him to return because they have become over-dependent upon his stern leadership. He returns, blames everything on the women for having married foreign men, pulls their hair out in front of the assembly and asks in prayer that God will remember all that he did. He has acted successfully in accordance with all he understands to be the interest of the people of God and the building up of the Kingdom. Nehemiah, the forerunner of international development?

Community Development

But of course in the latter part of the twentieth century a very different approach was followed. The much more enlightened approach of partnership for development has been cultivated. It was in the 1940s and 50s that Church Missionary societies introduced the term 'community development', a phrase which was then assimilated into British Foreign Office vocabulary and eventually returned to us. It denoted then an understanding that society is, at its heart, good and just, and problems or underdevelopment as therefore merely malfunctions of a basically acceptable social structure. It's an approach which is akin to the Functionalist school of sociology rather than to schools where a more conflictual model of social process is assumed. The intention of 'community development' programmes was therefore to make sure that poor or undeveloped nations could benefit in all sorts of ways from being related into the wealth-creating structures which had been created by the wealthy and industrially-developed nations. It was an expansion of the good empire to include those who were not benefiting from it. And this would be done by developing those poor countries as partners in the development mission.

But much turned upon an understanding of what the nature of that partnership should be. For received culture is like revealed religion in that those who come under its spell believe that they have received something from outside themselves which is a glorious truth to share. Culture, like revealed religion, is something we feel we must honour by enlarging its boundaries – not for our sake but for its sake. This means it is a self sacrifice for those who come as developers to share a hand in the management of the mission with those they come to save. How can they be sure that the gospel imperatives of religion or culture will be adhered to by these underdeveloped folk? Partnership always requires compromise and if that compromise is perceived to erode new purity of the culture, then the self-proclaimed saviour will not want to go beyond resurrection to the mountain of Ascension where power is relinquished.

Our difficulty is made all the more problematical, but perhaps more candid, when the receiving community sees the incoming missionary as eroding an indigenous purity which already existed before the developers arrived. We then have the clash of two revelations, whether those revelations be of culture or religion. The advertising of the benefits of the 'developed' world is so prodigious and ubiquitous that most poor countries understandably clamour to be on the development bandwagon. But as the busy Western powers through their many and various development agencies bring their gospel of plenty, the receiving cultures sometimes find it within themselves to question what they are being asked to import. Is not the import a brutal culture of competition and commodification? Does it not bring with it an unwelcome culture of agnosticism, coupled with kinship and religious fragmentation? Is not the culture of the developed world a culture where the dominant societal methodologies are 'dog eat dog', 'the weakest link' and market domination all in pursuit of growth, exploitation and material wealth? The empirical evidence is that this is the nature of what is being exported by global capitalism and the Western 'Christian' democracies, so these must be their Kingdom of God values, for these are evidently the values which are being inculcated into those cultures which are at the receiving end of this development mission. We'll come back to that.

Moltmann warns us not to rush so excitedly into pondering post-modernism without first acknowledging the present 'sub-modernity'. The 'progress' of developed nations, he explains, has been at the expense of other nations and of nature, and now continues at the expense both of the developing countries and of forthcoming generations. To use his own

words, "The messianism of modern times has been the apocalypse of their annihilation." He retells the story of the seventeenth century. European industrial commodities and weapons were taken to Africa; slaves traded from Africa to America; gold and silver taken from America to Europe (followed by cotton, rubber, coffee etc) And the aggregated profit from this Trade Triangle produced the investment capital for the industrialisation of Western Europe and the increasing spoliation of other continents. To add insult to injury, we have now turned our resultant luxury into their international debt and we utilise the cheap labour potential of the countries we have thus made poor. We have devastated the ecological environment and driven rural populations into the teeming new megacities, so overpopulated that they are quite unable to sustain decent standards of human existence. The poor have to crusade their way into the wealthy countries who in turn fortify their borders and call them unwanted economic and therefore 'bogus' refugees. And of course all this is overlaid with the utmost economic and political complexity, which makes us think ourselves naïve if we should believe that it is really as starkly unjust as I have painted it.

Our Present Predicament

But this audience is better informed than I am of the situation. Like many of you here today I have written descriptions, which have even frightened myself, of just how low the international community has sunk: The cost of one stealth bomber would more than relieve the debt owed by the twenty most heavily indebted countries; international structures creating dependency through the demand to turn to cash crop production; debt-reduction packages which insist on the reduction of spending on social care, education and self reliance. Overseas aid declines while quotas and trade barriers go ever higher. Gender inequality and child slavery are rampant, and corruption and mismanagement are rife. How Mammon prospers.

European agriculture is subsidised and the surplus is dumped on the two-thirds world market. Their shelter, education and health care are increasingly inadequate, And whilst HIV/AIDS makes orphans of us all, violence, born of frustration, is fuelled by Britain's enormous arms trade. Water becomes ever more scarce, communication technology and the media are dominated by the wealthy, and the stranglehold the wealthy have on intellectual property rights is thoroughly unjustified. Western branded products rip off the poor who produce them and the poor who seek to purchase them. Labour rights are minimal and meaningful investment in the two-thirds world for the benefit of the local community and environment is scarce. Yes, any knowing person does not need to be further convinced that for all the proud words of those who uphold the present system and its so-called 'values', it leaves much to be desired.

Increasingly pressure for change is coming on international companies and institutions. 'Local heroes' demonstrate against the 'key players' of global capitalism in Seattle and Ottawa. The Jubilee 2000 Coalition and thousands of other NGOs bring the power of the people to bear upon the injustices. Even the World Trade Organisation, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund begin to acknowledge that they are in need of the sort of reform which would allow more representation, accountability and transparency.

Some NGOs and anarchist groups naïvely demand the return to a state of innocence when no international institutions had power and capital held no sway. But those who are historically informed know this to be nonsense Others rightly acknowledge the true benefits of the market but also point to the dangers of allowing the market unfettered power. Poor countries are therefore wanting more trade control not less, so that the rampant power of

capital in the market-place should not press them to the wall, but should issue in wealth which can be shared and bring about quality of life for the many, not the few. This is why they are often so committed to being at the negotiating table of the WTO. The difficulty is how it all cashes out in reality when the negotiations are at an end for there seems to be a great gulf fixed between the rhetoric of the negotiations and the reality of the deal. So it is that whilst the World Health Organisation in 1995 demands the phasing out of the export of unhealthy breast milk substitutes to the two-third world, the World Trade Organisation enacts a free-trade arrangement by which the export is resumed. And an American President can, at a stroke, countermand a hard won environmental treaty – and he does! For all our talk, the poor nations have good reason not to trust us, and we evidently don't trust them. Given all this, how do people of goodwill continue their struggle to see God's will done on 'earth as it is in heaven'? How do we work for the Kingdom of God development?

In Pursuit of the Kingdom of God

The term 'development' when spoken of by community developers is today taken to denote that the development worker no longer works 'for' the community but works in partnership 'with' the community. This is certainly a step in the right direction. But the more revolutionary stance of Jesus as the inaugurator of the Kingdom of God is radically in advance and thoroughly more challenging than that. It paints the picture of the worker not 'for' the poor, and not even 'with' the poor, but 'as' the poor. This is a model of a God who gets 'down to earth' in a thoroughly incarnational mode as the poor and suffering servant, rather than one who sits comfortably alongside the suffering. It is as radical a model of 'development' as can be configured. It speaks no longer of 'developer' over against 'developed', no longer of 'under-developed' nor 'over-developed', but of mutuality, sharing, and a thoroughly partisan sense of justice. From this perspective it is no longer acceptable to constrain our ideas of human beings and human relationships to the ideology of 'development' as subtle domination but it demands transformation of our ideas of what it is to be human and what it is for human beings to be in relationship. It rattles at all our fears of inclusivity; it demands that we see one another as equal children of the one God; it questions our relationships – those domineering relationship where we stand over one another and over this vulnerable planet. The Kingdom of God, as inaugurated by him who lives not alongside the poor but as the poor, holds the values of western Christian democracy and global capitalism up to the light and looks no longer merely for 'development' but for 'transformation'. It does not ask that the structures of domination, about which we have heard so much this week, be further developed. Rather, it mandates us, by virtue of the holiness of him who demands it, to work with him for the transformation of the relational structures of domination, that we may all have life and have it abundantly.

I am arrested by further words of Moltmann: "We are not theologians because we are religious; we are theologians because in the face of this world we miss God. We are crying out for his righteousness and justice and are not prepared to come to terms with mass death on earth." But he then goes on to say: "But for me theology also springs from God's love for life – the love for life that we experience in the presence of the life-giving Spirit and that enables us to move beyond our resignation and begin to love life here and now. These are also Christ's two experiences of God: the kingdom of God and the cross, and because of that they are the foundations of Christian theology as well: God's delight and God's pain. It is out of the tension between these two that hope is born for the kingdom in

which God is wholly in the world and the world is wholly in God." [‘Theology in the Project of the Modern World’, in *A Passion for God’s Reign*, ed Miroslav Volf. Eerdmans 1998]

Yes, Jesus cries out from the cross: “My God why have you forsaken me?” and we despair with him at injustice. We rage against the unjust global trade in power, wealth and social care. But Jesus also delights in the beauty of his Father’s presence and his Kingdom. He says: “Set your hearts first on God’s Kingdom, and on God’s saving justice, and all these other things will be given you as well.” His message of hope and promise amidst the darkness is sure – all these things will be given to you, because behind the horrors of poverty, of lack of housing, clothing, food and drink, there stands something more fundamental – and that is what will be addressed in the Kingdom of God. Make a priority, says Jesus, of seeking that and then you will see all these horrors as but symptoms of its lack.

Beyond the Symptoms

It is still the case however that a much more narrow view of development sees the eradication of poverty as its main aim and end. This narrow view identifies the growth in GNP or the rise in personal incomes as the royal road to happiness for the underdeveloped nations.

But those who argue that the eradication of poverty should be the sole aim of development forget that wealth is simply a means to an end. Again, they mistake symptoms for cause. Or as Aristotle put it: “*Wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else.*”(Q) Poverty is certainly one way in which we can be deprived of basic capacities but it is not the only way. It is now well documented, for example, that male Afro-Americans living in parts of New York have a lower chance of reaching a mature age than do the much poorer men of China or Sri Lanka and certain parts of India. Money can’t buy you love, nor it would seem can it always buy you longevity. Similarly, before the abolition of slavery in the United States of America, the slaves of the South often received higher incomes than the black urban workers of the northern States. Their life expectancy too was longer. Why is it then that after abolition, the same high wages did not attract the freed slaves back to the plantations? They chose poverty rather than slavery! Likewise in Eastern Europe today, and especially in Russia where male life expectancy has dropped very significantly since the demise of the Iron Curtain, there seems to be no determined voting back in of the Soviet regime, which did after all bring a higher personal and family income than is at present the norm. Conversely, in Western Europe, where we have developed a high GNP, unemployment and all the social exclusion that it brings, seems to be accepted as part of the deal for a certain percentage of our fellows.

So whilst acknowledging how important it is to eradicate poverty, it’s eradication is not the heart of the Kingdom we are searching for. To concentrate only on development as eradication of poverty is to mistake symptom for cause, means for ends, and forget that there is much more to being human than hard cash

Since the Romans were always fond of building straight roads, it should not surprise us that it has been the Roman Catholic Church that has recently invited us all to talk more and more of life being a Journey, a faith journey. The Catholic Church has utilised this concept in its seminal work on catechesis and initiation liturgy and has reminded us all thereby that we must strive to move forward and that we need to move from stage to stage as it

becomes appropriate to our developmental needs and disposition. But two observations about this Journey metaphor are important for us in our consideration of development.

First, as every catechumen has to learn, St Paul says, "we do not know what we shall become." for the mystery of our humanity is still becoming. However, the very use of the words 'developed' and 'underdeveloped' nations will depend upon the assumption that the 'receiving' poor nations are not 'developed', that their culture is insufficient, that there is an end point towards which all cultures should be moving and that the materially 'developed' nations have achieved that end point. But if the mystery of humanity remains in our becoming then to call ourselves complete or developed might be seen by some people of faith as blatant heresy. Call yourself a 'developed' nation and you beg all sorts of questions and you limit the promise of your own humanity.

But there is a second limitation to the picture of life as a journey, and that is that, as every sub-atomic physicist knows, it is after all possible to be in two places at the same time. Life is not a journey as if from A to B because life is not always that linear, and neither is development. This is why Roman Catholics will always have difficulty in understanding the Lutheran doctrine of Grace, for the Catholics will find it difficult to understand how it might be said that we can be sinners and in a state of grace at one and the same time. Likewise, it could just be that although our wealth is not great, we can nevertheless already have those things which the developed nations believe can only be the benefits of wealth development. Some countries which have high economic growth such as Brazil, seem to have had less success in raising the quality of life for the majority of its people. Pre-reform China and Kerala State, however, where there certainly was little increase in economic growth, invested in literacy and health programmes that were a lesson to us all. Once the decision was made by these poor countries to concentrate on wealth production, their prior investment in people lead to quick returns on later capital investments. Japan is another case in point. It is also true that before economic development, investment in people's wellbeing is often much cheaper and therefore easier to provide since education and basic health care are by and large labour intensive, and in a poor country labour is cheap. So, because you can be in two places at the same time a country may be rich and impoverished at the same time. As Spike Milligan said, the only thing that money is sure to do is buy you a higher class of enemy. I do not want to give any impression that I am saying that economic growth is something to be shunned, but I do want to stress that the current over-concentration on economic development as an end rather than merely a means can sometimes take our eye off the ball.

So if money is only a means to an end, what is this end? Let's ask again, what is this Kingdom of God to which we should address our lives and our programmes? I have already indicated that Christians' incarnation as the poor signifies that our answer has to do with the integrity of relationships, but let's look further at that. Perhaps the most influential contemporary answer to the question about ultimate aim is that we should aim to produce the most happiness for the greatest number. It is the old Utilitarian argument, except that today the utility might be redefined as not merely 'happiness' for the greatest number but as 'fulfilment of desire' for the majority. We should do all those things which allow people to choose what they most desire. The problem here is that there are in the minds of many of us certain things which are to be valued more than choice and desire for the majority. There are values which are good values in themselves, not just because they are desired. If today's consumers desire slavery to branded products which in turn enslave a minority, can that be justifiable because it provides to the majority the fulfilment of their desires? Surely not. However, the utilitarian argument keeps us alert to one profoundly important

question. We must always ask in any situation: "who precisely is benefiting here?" And it is a question which produces sometimes uncomfortable answers for developers and helping agencies alike.

Who is Benefiting

All development work relies on the assumption that what is being offered, the target of the development, is at its heart good and beneficial for all. Most of our contemporary development programmes assume western capitalism to be good and beneficial and that under-developed nations need to be incorporated into the trade and economic system so that they too can benefit. The cry of the developer is, "Come on in, the water's lovely." But now amidst the clamour of would-be bathers we also begin to hear the response, "but your water is contaminated, so we don't want your bloody water." Sometimes this antagonistic response is voiced in religious terms, sometimes in political terms, but essentially it is an accusation that the goodies on offer are contaminated by the strings that are attached to them. It is instructive to remember how Jesus responded to similar pressures.

One of the most fundamental relationships of first century Galilee was that relationship which existed between the Land and the water which flowed upon it. The Jewish community went to extreme lengths to make sure that the nature of the relationship was not contaminated. In a culture which believed that water flowed the way it did not because of gravity but because God willed it, they built traditional cisterns (or *miqva'ot*) specially constructed so that for the most important and holy purposes the water still flowed in its natural direction – and this water they called 'living water'. If its course were disturbed then it became contaminated, it became bloody water. Q. The authorities of the Roman Empire, that great global enterprise, could not understand why clean water brought by their mighty aqueducts was a problem for righteous Jews. Jesus goes out with John to the 'living water' of the Jordan to wash in repentant preparation for the inauguration of the Kingdom of God. He later travels through the farms of Galilee where the Romans had developed a suffocating agri-business. Debt ruled the tenant farmers and absentee landlords dominated fruit and grape production. He made his way to the fishing families of the Kinneret, the great Lake of Galilee, where he found fishermen ready to give up their trade to follow him. Fishing on the open sea now had to contend with the Roman introduction of great salt-packing factories in Magdala, which offered the trade tentacles of the global empire salted fish of the finest quality. It was of benefit to all, except those who caught the fish in the first place, together with those who fled from the depleted farms to work in the salt-packing industry of the city. Jesus himself had been schooled in the wretched business of a Nazareth carpentry and masonry shop. No doubt his family had been attracted to the area because of the availability of work as the hated Herod's reconstructed the demolished city of Sepphoris and then, when Jesus was just twenty, the mammoth new city of Tiberias. But even this new city existed only to divert foreign magnates and traders to the west of the Lake in order further to integrate the Galilee of Antipas into the global trade-culture of the empires.

Jesus lived in a Galilee where local culture and traditional economic relationships were now being overwhelmed by global forces and foreign development, and he does not appear to welcome it. Indeed, having earlier benefited from it in the carpenter's workshop he makes the decision to leave the trade and take local fishermen with him into a new relationship with the powers that be, urging the populace to search for a wellbeing for themselves and society which starts from a premise of a more radical nature. And this very word 'relationship' is, as we have said, the key to this more profound premise.

The Quality of Relationships

For poverty itself is but a symptom of poor relationships. Money is, precisely, a symbol of our human transactions – it is a signifier of relationships. If our relationships are unjust then the distribution of money will signify it. As my friend Peter Selby has it, “Money is the crucial test of *koinonia*.” Trade likewise, be it trade in commodities, or trade in skills and time (i.e. employment), be it trade in education, information, or military power – trade is all a matter of the quality or otherwise of our relationships. And the quality of our relationships, says Jesus, is to mirror the quality which we experience in our relationship with God as Abba, our Father. This relationship is a generous and over-powering love which sets free. And this love of the Father for us in turn mirrors the love which binds the Three in One; which renders it possible for the dance of the three persons of the Holy Trinity to be so intimate and mutually deferential that the three are One God. The two commandments given us by Jesus rely on this truth. ‘The Lord your God is One God’ – united by love – and since we are created in God’s image, we likewise should love God and our neighbour as ourselves. John’s gospel never tires of repeating that we are invited by Jesus to enter through him into the intimacy of the love within the Trinity (be in me as I am in my Father) and to reflect that love further into our relationships with our neighbour. To be told to love one’s neighbour, however, is to beg the question who is my neighbour? – and in Jesus’ answer to that question is to be found some of the distinctive qualities of the Kingdom of God as expounded by its inaugurator.

This mirrored Trinitarian love is a love which sets free, and yet the key passage of the Hebrew tradition related to freedom, the Exodus, is not the motif taken up by Jesus nor by the early Church. For Jesus is not advocating freedom as escape. Quite the reverse. Jesus teaches his disciples that they will find their freedom and their salvation in relational engagement. He speaks of the Kingdom community as infiltrating the wider community as salt and leaven – even salt, the very symbol of that empire which had dominated local fishing industry on the Kinneret Lake. Engagement in relationship even with the so-called ‘enemy’ is an essential and astonishing feature of Jesus’ Kingdom message. They are to ‘stay in the city’, be it a new-made Babylon, and ‘seek its welfare’. They are to engage with women and foreigners so that new qualitative relationships should be formed with these outsiders. This is not merely development, this is transformation. This is not merely reform, this is salvation.

The Hebrew people knew God to be with them in the *Shekinah* glory of God which tabernacled with them in their midst. This presence of God in the midst of God’s people continues says Jesus into the Kingdom by virtue of the fact that the Son of God is now with them in the poor and destitute, the outcast and foreigner. And “inasmuch as you have done (a good work) for one of the least of these my little ones, you have done it unto me.” Q. When we come face to face with the alienated and together experience the grace of reconciliation, then we have met God in the midst. The Kingdom has been born in us. There is a wonderful prefiguring of this in the Hebrew scriptures when Jacob meets his alienated brother Esau and finds reconciliation. But this only happens because, even as he awaits Esau’s arrival, Jacob has to wrestle with the presence of God. And in that story of both struggle with God and reconciliation with his brother Jacob recognises God again in the midst and so names the place Peniel because, he says, “I have seen God face to face and have survived.” God in the midst of reconciled relationship. This is the essence of the Kingdom.

Our modern global market pretends to be personal – we even know Bill Gates by his first name, or we think we do. In fact it is not a market where we truly know one another face to face. The provenance of our branded clothing is a mystery to us, just as are our fresh cut flowers from Kenya or our Guinness from Nigeria. (There is a shop in the East End which can sell you exactly that!) We don't know from where or from whom anything is coming any more. Likewise, modern military technology puts impersonal distance between warring human beings, between brothers and sisters under God. Sin today is structural as well as personal – be it in market structures, the military machine, the bureaucratic systems of the World Health Organisation or the IMF or in the structural turmoil of an unsustainable ecological framework. In order to establish right relationships to see one another face to face, it will be necessary to address the structures that divide and connect us, as well as to address the personal sins of human beings.

The Dislocation of our Relationships

Global relational structures which create conditions where justice, compassion and freedom flourish are things such as dreams are made of, but do they amount to much more than fantasy? When Mao Tse Tung first heard the promising words of the Lukan Magnificat, he famously replied, "This is wonderful news. Do show me please where you Christians have achieved all this." We know to our shame even our church structures themselves provide more evidence of institutionalisation than the values of liberation. The wider society is no better. It prizes information at the expense of wisdom, and our economic development often comes at the expense of liberational values. Although we are fascinated by and in awe of the global market and its global reach, those gods don't deliver either. Christians send second hand clothes to Kenya and feel a lot better for expending so much energy on good works, only to find that the Kenyan warehouses in which the clothing is stored are being burnt down by local clothing manufacturers who see this flood of free clothes diminishing their livelihood. Even our very best endeavours seem to retain the stigma of the 'developed' giving of their largesse to the 'undeveloped' and often with strings attached. This must surely adversely affect the psyche of the giver and is certainly detrimental to the self-respect of the recipient. And self-respect is, as John Rawls points out, "perhaps the most important primary good on which a theory of justice as fairness has to concentrate."

[Quoted by Amartya Sen in "Development as Freedom".]

The international market relationships at present pertaining do not seem to be based upon mutual respect but rather reduce whole countries to the point at which they become the objects of their own history rather than its subjects. The prime difficulty however is that even now there appears to be so little awareness of this fact. Those who have eyes to see, through the best information technology the world has ever known, remain blind. This is why Jesus begins his inauguration of the Kingdom by calling all people to new awareness and a sense of repentance: "The Kingdom of God is at the threshold! Repent and believe the Good News." [Mark 1 v....] Whilst the Thatcher era was pleased to chant 'there is no alternative' (TINA) the Kingdom of God is inaugurated on the basis of the adoption of a completely new mind-set. *Metanoia*, usually translated as 'repentance' is better rendered 'opening oneself to a totally alternative mind-set'. Repentance is a conscientisation, an awareness, of how reality has been and is, which in turn demands change and self-sacrifice. This is why Jesus repeatedly performs miracles of transformation of awareness, giving sight to the blind, and tells parables where radical, thought-provoking endings are appended to erstwhile well-known rabbinic stories. Where death would appear to be written

in the fates, the repentant kingdom proclaims an alternative. Once one is aware that development has in the past and may again flatten the genius of a so-called 'under-developed nation', then it is possible to detect that better ways must and can be found for rich and poor nations to be in relationship. If the failure of our present systems are not first acknowledged, if we remain unrepentant, then new awareness will not lead to 'Kingdom' action and all our hopes will remain dreams and fairy-tales.

The implication of repentant awareness of our unjust international relationships is the possibility of creating new face to face mutually empowering relationships between nations and trading partners. Relationships in which the poorer nations share a full participation in information-holding and decision-making. For the partners in such a relationship to be able to engage with integrity and authority each partner must have prior opportunity to form their own values and priorities --and this on the basis of justice and transparency. It is clear that freedom of dissent and political participation must be essential to the just development of these agreed values – values by which a society can operate as a community and interact with other communities and nations. Within a society it should not be only domineering political masters, religious institutions or the heritage buffs who determine priority, but the values upon which decisions are made should be influenced by a whole range of free social interactions and public discussion – and all who choose to participate should have the free flow of information from which they can participate wisely.

Some would argue that such repentant awareness and the democratic freedom to determine the values upon which policy and development should proceed are luxuries which are a waste of time in the face of the great and obvious need in which the poor stand. The experience of women leads us to disagree, for in the earlier days of gender awareness there was a heavy concentration upon alleviating the needs of women by treating them merely as the recipients of charity, but now that there is a stronger concern to promote the agency of women themselves and treat them as partners in decision-making it is to be noted that many of the original aims of the developers are being better achieved. China's attempts to address the problem of their exploding population is a case in point. China's coercive 'one child family' programmes certainly did not seem to work any better than programmes of female empowerment through education, employment, and provision of quality health care. By means of the latter women have been able now to become instrumental in their own salvation on the basis of values they themselves have developed and owned. And they have proved that the solution to the problem of population calls for more freedom and empowerment, not simply more harshly patronising projects. In this regard, it is also interesting to note that no substantial famine has ever occurred in a working democracy, for a government's political will is wonderfully motivated by the possibility of being voted out of power.

And yet I am arguing for more than democracy. To treat democracy ideologically as the only saving panacea is to miss my point. For democracy cannot survive without a supportive civic virtue. If the populace of a democratic nation is controlled by a misinforming media, or are motivated only by greed, or riddled with inertia, then democracy itself will no longer guarantee the freedom of debate and value formation which our Kingdom *metanoia* requires. We must not think that one size fits all – that the Kingdom of God can be equated with any one form of polity – even be it democracy. Different answers must be found for differing circumstances rather than falling into Hananiah's heresy of treating God's response to one situation as the ideology for all and everywhere – we must treat history and geography seriously.

For whilst democracy has an instrumental utility it is more fundamental to the Christian ethic that whatever the polity human beings cannot attain their God-given destiny unless they are allowed to take responsibility. We count it dysfunctional if the child is never able to make the break from parental oversight, for without this freedom from the patron there can be no responsibility and without responsibility there can be maturing to adulthood. And as it is in the healthy relationship of parent and child, so it is in the relationship God asks us to have with Godself, and that we likewise should participate actively in the work of the Kingdom and not assume that we can be merely the passive recipients of grace and spiritual development. Human beings, made in the image of God, must therefore as individuals and as communities or nations, be treated with respect and be released from bondage so that they can become the subject of their own history.

But does a Kingdom of God polity allow each and every group to determine its own values and policies and never for them to be objectively questioned? This would certainly be a respecting and non-judgemental approach to the local but denies that there might be such things as overarching values or objective truths.. Kant argued that a world that accepted the ethic of hospitality would live at peace as a cosmopolitan society. In today's terms this might allow a monarch to become the Defender of Faiths rather than the Defender of any one particular faith. But the difficulty is that the degree to which any of us can live in such an un-rooted and rather abstracted manner is questionable. Heidegger saw lack of rootedness and 'being there' as the ultimate horror. But surely there will be values in a particular rooted location which are simply not tolerated in another. And this creates a Babel of confused antagonism across the board. I know neighbourhoods where incest and homophobia are accepted as the 'justice' of the local culture. This dynamic can be benign, helping the wider society towards higher values, or it can be used and manipulated unscrupulously. At the international level there are some nations whose economic, political or value structures are demonised by the international powers. As David Harvey so eloquently puts it, "space after space is opportunistically demonised or sanctified by some dominant power as a justification for political action." ["Cosmopolitanism and the Banality of Geographical Evils", David Harvey, in Public Culture Vol 12 No.3. Spring 2000] But who is to judge?

When the global confusion of the Tower of Babel is remedied at Pentecost, people from each location hear the Good News in their own language. [Acts 2] So the particularism of the incarnation is continued, each particular time and place, history and geography, are respected, and yet the Good News unites and opens the opportunity for a mutuality across what were the former barriers of location. There is no abstraction here but there is a unity within the diversity. To abstractify ignores the particular, just as do those in development negotiations today who argue for 'agreed common instruments' in international trade and development policy to think that one agreed tool will suit every job denies the realities. But to argue for agreed common ends – the eradication of poverty, environmental sustainability and the protection of human rights – this must be Good News in any language, without abstractification on one hand nor the railroading of local tradition and culture on the other. When Jesus tells his students that they will always have the poor among them [John 12:8] he acknowledges the limitations and particularism of his incarnation. But he therefore makes sure that his every act, whilst inevitably particular, is symbolic and sacramental of the overarching Kingdom. Likewise his parables tell of the possibility of the activity of the Kingdom in every place even in the face of what appears to be unremitting antagonistic forces. The sower still sows, the seed still grows, the individual is still healed even though a million more blind and dumb and poor wait in the wings. And so he brings local and global together, based not on abstract or romantic notions but upon

real local knowledge and down-to-earth involvement – incarnation. One might comment that he was thinking globally and acting locally except that that would simplistically miss the point that his local particular actions actually participated in the global Kingdom – as any inspired sacrament must. So in fact he was acting and thinking both locally and globally, since the best actions operate at both levels.

God's Kingdom Come

And so Jesus begins to create his new community, the new Israel. He points to the values and style of the Kingdom of God, and calls his followers to live 'as if' it is now with them, both as a sign of its dawning and as an earnest of its possibility. Then as now, the majority of his followers were the poor, not living as the poor, but simply 'being' the radically poor. And from this perspective, this incarnational locality, the values of the Kingdom begin to emerge as Jesus bids them, and us, to draw close to the Father God whose Kingdom it is. The poor, as ever was, are well placed to understand a God who gives Godself away – who has compassion for the down-trodden. A God who values every soul. And since God is the Father of all, those who share God's Kingdom in this way seek to become respecters of all other human beings as equally children of God, thereby invested with intrinsic dignity and vast potential. And as God cares, so they care for God's wider creation, cherishing it and nurturing it as another sacrament of God's beauty, majesty and vulnerability. Human beings have the great privilege to share in God's act of creation through their own work. And our human work puts us in close relationship with our environment through production, service or exchange. But these work relationships can become alienated, the land ravaged and the planet put at risk by our warped creativity. The Kingdom demands that these relationships with one another and with creation are no longer alienated relationships but repentant, mutually affirming and empowering relationships.

That is why in our Lord's Prayer the Kingdom is described as a society of mutually en..... repentance. When we pray God to "forgive us our trespasses" it is on condition that "we forgive those who trespass against us" so that the poor forgive the rich as the rich forgive the poor, thus providing the quality of relationship between the two from which new structures of trade, work and community can be built. The "Our Father" prayer begs that the heavenly otherness of the creator be mirrored on earth as it is in heaven, and that the Father's will be done here as there. But for that mystery to be particularised in our time and space the Son brings it 'down to earth' and inaugurates God's Kingdom here on earth and surrounds it with the new community. But for the Father to become incarnate in the Son is the ultimate act of self-restraint and self-sacrifice. This self-sacrifice is then a key mark of the Son and his Kingdom. Status, wealth and power are all held up to the Light and found wanting in the Kingdom, as Jesus welcomes those from the margin and shows that they are actually at the centre – at the centre of God's concerns and so at the centre of all reality. The invitation list to the wedding feast of the Son is therefore quite remarkable and asks significant questions of the present occupiers of key positions around the table in our international structures. No wonder the crowds get angry when the G8 sit down to feast. The life-style of the participants in the Kingdom of God is significant for us all. It signifies the self-sacrifice which God makes to forgive us. The incarnation tells us there can be no way into mutual development towards a true humanity in God without pain and sacrifice for the so-called rich. Our self-sacrifice is necessary if Kingdom values are to reign in our world. And that runs diametrically counter to the consumer ethic and the selfishness basis of capitalism. Capitalism assumes that we must all work for our own best ends so that all can benefit. It seems then that Jesus would not have been an efficient capitalist since he seems to have found it against his nature to work for his own

gratification. He would have left no benefits to trickle down – only his blood. The sacrifice of others' wellbeing, the sacrifice of ecological sustainability and the sacrifice of the wealth of future generations runs counter to Christ's Kingdom ethic of self-sacrifice – but also, oddly, would appear to move national capitalists to run counter to efficiency too. The good capitalist would I'm sure agree that this current way of operating our economic global system, with all its ecological sacrifice, is not even efficient exploitation. . The Brandt Commission sought to prove that even enlightened self-interest would lead to Kingdom outcomes. And I believe Brandt to have been right at least in offering evidence that the imperatives of the Kingdom are in the interests of all eventually. But the Commission was significantly unable to convince those who know more about the true workings of capitalism than do I.

Jesus gave voice to the needs and struggles of the poor in first century Galilee. He attacked the old, crushing ideology of debt, be it religious, political or economic, and he ridiculed the culture of hierarchical power and prestige. So today the Kingdom Community must fight to enable the voice of those marginalised and impoverished by debt to be heard. Geneva must throng with the voices of the poorest member states of the World Trade Organisation, and the cultural motors and symbols of credit and privilege broken open by sacramental action, symbolising altogether other relational values. Our lives at the local and global level, like his, must be distinguished by service to the needy and by acts of mercy, not as fundamental works of our own salvation but as a mark of our witness to the quality of relationship which the Son has with the Father – selfless and true – and which he shares with us.

The new culture of the Kingdom of God, this repentance or 'new-mindedness', for which the Son calls, can only be achieved by the grace and intervention of the third person of the Trinity, the Spirit of Grace. It is the Spirit who blows where she wills who gives life and freedom to the imaginations of those who believe in the Kingdom. This lateral thinking will come of immersing ourselves in the traditions of our people - bible, sacrament, theology, liturgy – and surrounding them with our prayer. The biblical traditions will for example remind us that justice after all can be partisan rather than blind as in the Western Old Bailey tradition. When justice flows like a mighty river crushing all before it, it is not justice as we often picture it as a careful weighing of evidence and argument. Here is justice which will no longer be gainsaid. Biblical justice hears our 'brother's blood crying out from the ground' and comes in vengeance. To create trade agreements so that there is an equal level playing field for all nations when it is clear to all that the poor nations have no chance of competing equally with the rich and powerful, is to offer anything but biblical justice. The Spirit will give us the imagination for more inspired thinking than that. It might incline us to press for a Tobin tax on international transaction in order to offer partisan justice to serve the poor. And why have we not yet suggested an Abrahamic system of investment not for interest but for profit? Islamic banks do it with great success, so why should we continue to run our stock markets on the basis of the casino? And why is it quite evident from repeated BBC interview evidence that most politicians do not understand what a report might mean by the term 'structural racism'? The Kingdom community must engage with fervour in the process of education for awareness – witness the global success of the Jubilee 2000 coalition programme of awareness raising. A true mark of the Kingdom of God is the Spirit's gift of the liberation of the human imagination!

The Kingdom is the absolute future writ large in the present. It is born of hope and firmly based on the fulfilling experience of the Resurrection of him who is the Kingdom's inaugurator. Its eschatological nature pulls us forward into the future for the Kingdom is

now but not yet. Because it is of the future it makes us always ask where we think our present actions are leading or aiming. What is the aim of development and who will bear the cost, now and in the future? Who will benefit and why? The Kingdom provides a sense of a rightness which gives us determination and a quality of power which helps us punch above our meagre weight. We fight to raise political will. It relates us to other brothers and sisters of good-will across the globe. Above all, it is Trinitarian in that it invites us into relationship, with the Kingdom community, its inaugurator, and so many others from whom we have otherwise become alienated.

And in the light of the Kingdom, development is the adventure of seeking to create a quality of relationship across the globe so that there should be the trinity of mutual honouring, of worthwhile self-sacrifice and of liberation for all. The challenge of it is immense, for to engage in Kingdom activity is to seek to eradicate from the globe the injustice and suffering the very injustice and suffering that some believe proves there is no God at all. The Christ of the Kingdom alerts us to the pain of the absence of God's will in our world. So development agents seek to create God's justice, God's perfect society, the Kingdom of God on earth. But in some senses they do it in the face of the facts! And that is the beauty of faith – you will not know whether your work was ultimately futile until the Kingdom comes, or does not come, in all its glory. But the Lord's Prayer bids us respond whole-heartedly to God's will done "on earth as it is in heaven" – and in that we have the privilege of Hallowing the Name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and we work and pray for development as an earnest of the Kingdom of God.

Extras:

1. I lay in bath listening to morning service Litany and wondered who else but Church would rehearse on BBC these values so overtly?
2. **Governance is important to broker between the forces of society – include this in section on incarnation and particularism under Kant and Heidegger.**

City is not only a geographical location so much as a dynamic of people and groups – not so malleable. Each has a subjectivity hopefully in conflict with others. Therefore governance is paramount to broker between these forces. So also on wider plane. It is always in flux and 'becoming'. (Rogers underestimates this in UK) Do the development agencies realise this? (World Bank 2000 report seeks to, and see subsequent World Bank and Habitat +5 initiatives)

Banquet – shaken together, running over.

+ *Laurie Green*