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1. Introduction

The research presented in this thesis concerns the developmental vision and the everyday praxis of American evangelical missionaries working in the global South. It draws on arguments surrounding the ‘religious turn’ of development studies within the last twenty years, a shift in thinking that claims to take religion and spirituality¹ seriously within the development field after decades of sidelining and neglect. While the last decades have witnessed a remarkable increase in cooperation between donors and religious actors with reference to development programming and implementation, current scholarship within development studies and post-secularist theory emphasizes the shallow nature of this engagement and the failure to confront deep-seated and problematic secularist assumptions on the part of donors and development researchers alike. One area where the shortcomings of this supposed ‘religious turn’ become particularly clear concerns missionaries as a development actor. Missionaries from various faiths and denominations are and have been deeply involved in the development sector, especially education, health care, and service provision. Yet – despite the discursive interest in new, faith-based actors – they are largely invisible within development literature, nor have they been significantly involved in donor attempts to bring religious actors within the larger framework of the mainstream development agenda.

In taking missionaries as the subject of my research, the aim of this work is to contribute towards filling this blind spot and drawing attention to this omission. This involves treating missionaries as development actors, engaging with their conceptions of the sacred, and understanding how these conceptions are actualized in their development work. The present research contends that filling these gaps in development studies represents a step forward in a field that is struggling with how to wean itself from a secularist worldview in the face of an increasingly post-secular world. It is also interested in missionaries as development actors who, having not been considered as such, may have avoided the cooptation and donor influence which characterizes other mainstream religious development organizations. Could the content

¹ A note on terminology must be made here. Following Lunn (2009: 937), I recognize a differentiation between the terms ‘religion,’ ‘spirituality,’ and ‘faith’ as follows: “religion as an institutionalized system of beliefs and practices concerning the supernatural realm; spirituality as the personal beliefs by which an individual relates to and experiences the supernatural realm; and faith as the human trust or belief in a transcendent reality.” Additionally, I sometimes follow the current trend in the literature of using the term ‘sacred’ or ‘the sacred’ as a useful shorthand for any and all of the above in contexts where it is preferable to avoid excessive and unnecessary hair-splitting.

of missionaries' approach (or approaches) to development offer an original perspective to a development community in search of alternatives?

1.1. The 'Religious Turn' in Development Studies

In the year 2000, Ver Beek authored an article in which he decries what he claims to have been a central taboo of development research and practice: religion and spirituality (Ver Beek 2000). Far removed from the Westphalian divide which has naturalized the confinement of religious or spiritual sentiment to the private sphere in the Western context, he argues, people living in the South engage daily with questions of spiritual relevance, questions which are central to the ways they structure their lives and their communities. And yet, upon reviewing sixteen years' worth of publications (1982-1998) from three leading development journals², he finds that there were only paltry references to religion, no references to spirituality whatsoever, and that not a single article took either concept as the main subject of analysis. Ver Beek responds to these omissions, and the taboo within development discourse which underlies them, in the harshest terms: "the failure to provide spaces for people to understand, explore, and ultimately to determine how development programmes should and will affect their spirituality, and in turn their society, is anti-developmental" (2000: 32).

In the intervening years this insight concerning the neglect paid to questions of religion and spirituality in development has been widely accepted. The blame for this blind spot is generally placed on the long-unquestioned assumption of the validity of the secularization thesis, a corollary of modernization theory which predicts, following the European model, that as technological and societal complexity increase, the influence of traditional religious and spiritual thought, practice, and sentiment will fade from the public sphere, if not disappear completely (Ager and Ager 2011; Clarke 2007; Clarke 2008).³ Religious concerns and spiritual needs, then, were at best remnants of under-development in a society, perhaps to be tolerated, in their benign forms, by the development professional, but never to be mistaken as a proper element of development programming.

² *World Development*, *Journal of Development Studies*, and *Journal of Developing Areas* (Ver Beek 2000: 37)

³ Deneulin and Rakodi (2011) add further reasons for this aversion from consideration of religious issues, including the Western anxiety that public involvement in religious affairs might lead to sectarian conflict, and the widely-held 20th century faith in the ability of government and the economy to regulate and mend social needs and fissures.

Ver Beek's argument for a holistic inclusion of religious and spiritual concerns in development thought and programming did not arise out of a vacuum, however.⁴ Even as he was demonstrating the extent of this taboo within academic circles, a process of reevaluation and re-positioning concerning the relationship between faith and development was underway throughout the institutional development landscape, a process which would lead to dramatically increased engagement between donors and religious organizations. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly where this reengagement began, but the World Faiths Development Dialogue, a series of three summits organized by then-World Bank president James Wolfensohn and former Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. George Carey between 1998 and 2002 and oriented around potential synergies between faith communities and development institutions in combatting world poverty, is often cited as influential in the emergence of this trend (Clarke 2007; Clarke and Jennings 2008; Lunn 2009; Marshall 2001).⁵ The World Bank further contributed to the growing interest indirectly through the findings of its project *Voices of the Poor*, a study that collected data from 60,000 people in 60 different countries concerning their views on development whose findings indicated overwhelmingly the importance of religion and spirituality in their everyday lives and the general respect and trust placed in religious organizations engaged in service delivery (Lunn 2009; Clarke 2007). With the presentation of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 and growing thereafter, faith communities were seen increasingly as important partners for their role in "translating them [the MDGs] into the idioms of faith and mobilizing support for organizations and community initiatives that contribute to the Goals" (Clarke 2007: 80).

Governments were soon to follow suit, most remarkably in the case of the United States. The US had already eased its policies concerning government funding for religious organizations engaged in domestic welfare provision in the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, a shift which was consolidated by the incoming Bush administration in 2001 with the Faith-Based and

⁴ Nor was it even necessarily the first attempt to make such an argument. Wilbur and Jameson (1980) published an article covering much the same line of thinking decades earlier. Whereas Ver Beek's work resonated with global trends, however, earlier publications in this direction were largely without impact.

⁵ The legacy of these summits at the World Bank have been institutionalized in the Development Dialogue on Ethics and Values unit, active since 2000, which "aims to improve understanding of, and advise on, links between faith, ethics and service delivery" (Deneulin and Rakodi 2011: 45). The depth of this engagement should not be overstated however; Wolfensohn's original pitch for this unit was labeled as the 'Directorate on Faith' and was struck down unanimously by the Bank's board of directors (Lunn 2009: 941).

Community Initiatives Act of 2001. In the following years, executive orders were issued creating new Centers for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in many government departments, including the US Agency for International Development (USAID), culminating in 2004 with the ruling on ‘Participation by Religious Orders in USAID Programs,’ an internal policy which effectively opened the door to government funding going to religious organizations engaged in development programs provided these programs are separated by space or time from “inherently religious activities” (Clarke 2007: 82).⁶ Between 2001 and 2005, US funding to faith-based organizations (FBOs) nearly doubled (Tomalin 2012).

This relatively new enthusiasm for the nexus between religion and development has spilled over into the academic sector in such a way that Ver Beek’s complaints seem very much a thing of the past. In something of a ‘religious turn,’ numerous studies have been published trying to meet donor demand concerning how best to conceptualize and position FBOs as new partners in development dialogue and cooperation (Jones and Petersen, 2011). Perhaps most notably on this front, 2005 saw a major grant given to the University of Birmingham by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for a five-year research program oriented around religion and development, an investment which has resulted in considerable output on the subject from researchers in the UK (Rakodi 2012; Deneulin and Rakodi 2011).

Clarke (2008) points to six long-term trends which were instrumental in this institutional and academic turn towards religion in the development context. First, following the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 the US witnessed the political rise of the Christian right, led by evangelical and Pentecostal denominations, which created an American exceptionalism to the secularization thesis and which explains why it would be the US government to lead the charge concerning the de-secularization of development funding. Second, neo-liberal economic policies originating in the North during the Thatcher and Reagan administrations and foisted upon the South during the structural adjustment programs of the 1980s caused a widespread withdrawal of government from service provision, creating a gap which civil society organizations (CSOs) – including religious organizations – increasingly filled. Third, the rise of political Islam, beginning with 1979’s Iranian Revolution and the Soviet invasion of

⁶ Clarke (2007) even suggests the 2001 Act gave preference to FBOs, insofar as funding was restricted for organizations offering educational information concerning abortions, a restriction that disproportionately affected secular organizations.

Afghanistan and culminating in (though certainly not ending with) the attacks by Al-Qaida on September 11, supplied a “new” ideological pole in contrast to the secular false choice of Cold War geopolitics. Coinciding with the more violent expressions of this newly politicized faith tradition – though no less influential – was a surge of aid flows from Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia, which were often channeled through Islamic FBOs and helped contribute to a proliferation of such organizations within the development sector. Fourth, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the decline of communism as a compelling ideology helped spur the rise of identity politics, amongst which religious confession and sentiment laid claim to increased consideration. Fifth, the growing organizational capacity of a transnational civil society, in development at least since the societal reorientation of neo-liberal reforms, allowed for increasing displays of faith-based activism; the hallmark example for such a project was the Jubilee 2000 campaign, organized by international faith-based networks around the cancellation of almost US\$100 billion in debt in poor countries. Finally, increased immigration from the South to Europe and North America has resulted in a global constellation where FBOs provide migrants with a spiritual connection to the country of origin.

These long-term developments and the increasing institutional engagement with the idea of a religion-development nexus has led since the early 2000s to a mainstream development position which claims to take the importance of religion and spirituality seriously and places much hope on the possible synergies to be found in cooperation between donors and FBOs. This hope is based on several factors, including a stated appreciation that “sustainable development can be achieved only if it incorporates cultural values and beliefs,” not simply through reliance on positivistic research and economic programming (Lunn 2009: 942); the conviction that religious actors are those best positioned to cooperate in such holistic development (Tomalin 2012: 697); the belief that FBOs are more often closely connected to poor communities and thus both more authentic in their advocacy and successful in their efforts at poverty reduction (Deneulin and Rakodi 2011: 45-6; Lunn 2009; Clarke and Jennings 2008: 3); the assertion that FBOs harness a moral authority which motivates high levels of engagement (Clarke 2007: 80; Deneulin and Rakodi 2011: 46); that the FBO structure is most efficient because of their extensive and effective use of volunteers (Hefferan et al. 2009: 6); and that in many cases FBOs bear a considerable comparative advantage to secular NGOs in many respects of successful development programming (James 2009). FBOs, in short, are said to be the missing piece: they bring new tools to the old project of development and they do the job better.

1.2. FBO Typologies, Growing Academic Criticism, and Missionaries

Mainstream development research, while enthusiastic about the benefits of cooperation with FBOs, has not been blind to the potential risks involved in the undertaking. Religious groups and donor organizations have often failed to see eye to eye on key issues such as gender relations or the role of birth control in combatting HIV/AIDS, but involving FBOs in funding chains and development programming provokes additional sticking points for traditional donors. It is a concern that donor funding might be used for proselytizing activities; that FBOs might discriminate in the realm of employment against those from other faiths; that aid distribution and development programs under FBOs might favor believers over unbelievers; that FBOs might stoke religious conflicts or aid (as in, for example, Saudi-funded Wahhabi madrassas) an ideology linked to terrorism; and that the imbalanced FBO-recipient power relationship might be abused in the interests of the faith (Clarke 2007; Clarke 2008; Bradley 2009).

Because of this situation of perceived risk and reward, throughout the 2000s the academic literature on religion and development was overwhelmingly dedicated to providing donors with a framework for understanding and engaging effectively with this new kind of partner. These efforts met with the challenge that the term ‘faith-based organization’ has almost no descriptive content. The term ‘FBO’ is frequently defined as “any organization that derives inspiration and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of the faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within the faith” (Clarke and Jennings 2008: 6), while Clarke (2008) provides the only slightly more concrete and concise explanation of ‘FBO’ as an umbrella term for faith-based representative (denominational or apex) organizations, charities, development organizations, missionaries, and terrorist groups – not to mention those actors which straddle two or more of these categories.⁷ These basic sub-groupings are then divided and linked by any number of categorical schemes, ranging from the degree to which an FBO actualizes its professed faith in organizational structure and programming (for example, in

⁷ An example of one dissenting voice to this categorical inclusiveness is that of Lunn (2009: 942-4) who complains that the term ‘FBO’ contains too much diversity to be useful. She prefers the category ‘religious organization’ which, while perhaps more direct than the jargony label of ‘FBO’, does nothing to reduce the extreme diversity meant to be covered by the term.

Clarke (2008) along a continuum from passive, active, persuasive and finally exclusive⁸), to the theological content of the organizations' beliefs (Thaut 2009), to the position of an FBO in the aid food chain (Bradley 2009), among many others.⁹ It is not important for this paper that the list of typological strategies found in the literature be complete. Rather, what is important to emphasize is that researchers, in seeking to make categorical sense out of a sector of newly-deemed importance, employed whatever metrics they found most fitting, but did so almost universally in answer to the assumptive question of determining which faith-based actors were compatible with donor aims and which were preferably to be avoided.

It is Jones and Petersen (2011) who make this point most forcefully. The impetus towards engagement with religious and faith-based organizations, they argue, originated with donor organizations responding to long-term trends; the research which followed this move was thus also oriented around donor needs. The relevance of this point is not merely chronological. Rather, Jones and Petersen argue that research surrounding FBOs throughout the 2000s, while going through the motions of taking religion seriously, actually presented an image of religion which was instrumental, narrow, and normative: instrumental in that it was interested in using religion to advance pre-existing donor aims; narrow in that its focus lay on institutionalized religious actors, most notably FBOs, to the exclusion of softer or more spontaneous forms of religious expression or organization; and normative in the essentialized image of religion – often bearing a strong bias towards the experience of religion in the Western context – which was at the heart of donor-oriented analysis. The 'religious turn' in development studies is revealed to be not a true reevaluation of development strategies and priorities, but rather the attempt to harness a new tool to “do development ‘better’” (Jones and Petersen 2011: 1291).

This was not the first time that the strong instrumental aspect of the religion and development agenda was brought into consideration; Clarke, for example, notes how “donors actively seek

⁸ In the spirit of levity it is here noted that Clarke himself admitted the insufficiency of this model, pointing out that the various arms of Hezbollah simultaneously occupy every step of this continuum (2008: 34).

⁹ Smith (2016) provides a literature review of a remarkable number of attempted FBO typologies. The criteria used by the studies he covered include: affiliation; formality and geography; beliefs and ideology; faith pervasiveness; faith permeation; integration of faith into practice; and self-professed religiousness. Additionally, many studies featured a focus on a particular context of the institutional landscape, including FBOs working only within certain aid sectors, those recognized only by certain institutions, or those active only within a certain geographic area. Clarke and Ware (2015) have compiled a similarly robust literature review of the positions of various FBO typologies with reference to the relationship between FBOs and NGOs.

dialogue and partnership with FBOs but such organizations must adapt to fulfil their expected roles” (2007: 81) and that many mainstream FBOs have responded to donor incentives by becoming almost indistinguishable from secular NGOs (2008; cf. Green et al. 2012). But the way in which Jones and Petersen (2011) pair instrumentalization on the part of donors together with a narrow institutional focus and an essentialized understanding of religion on the part of researchers, however, is emblematic of an increasing body of work which has arisen in the last decade challenging the assumptions and findings of donor-driven research into religion and development. Far from the enthusiastic findings of the early 2000s, this new research “suggests instead that religion is being brought into development in ways that reflect Western perceptions of not only the nature of development processes but also understandings of and attitudes towards religion” (Tomalin 2012: 696), and insists that religion “has to be engaged with in its entirety and not only to the extent that it is conducive or detrimental to pre-defined development goals” (Deneulin and Bano 2009: 6).

The specific criticisms leveled at older research cover a wide range. It is pointed out that, in practice, donor engagement with FBOs has involved significantly more funding going to Christian organizations (Rakodi 2012a) and that, reflecting implicit assumptions about the structure of religious organization based on the Christian model, attempts to engage with areas where these assumptions do not hold true often prove problematic or uncomfortable (White et al. 2012). One concrete extension of this line of argumentation is that the very differentiation made between secular NGOs and FBOs, while it might make sense to donors located in Western countries, is considerably less coherent in many environments in the South where this distinction does not exist to nearly the same degree (Tomalin 2012). Others interrogate the assumption that religious values can be mobilized in support of development goals such as fighting corruption, arguing that religion is not simply a cognitive function; rather, “it is impossible to disentangle religion from the social, economic, and political contexts in which it is lived,” and the decisions that affect behavior are beholden to the entirety of those intersections, not religious values or convictions alone (Rakodi 2012a: 626). Additionally, Tomalin (2012) expresses skepticism towards claims concerning the distinctiveness and comparative advantage of FBOs compared to secular organizations, noting that there is insufficient evidence to support such claims and calling for increased context specificity in future research.

Finally, there is an increasingly visible trend in current scholarship concerning religion and development towards reflexivity. Part of this is to be found in calls for the adoption of an interpretivist or hermeneutic method of approaching religion in the South which allows “the religious values and beliefs held by adherents, as well as the meaning of rituals in which they participate and symbols they use, [to be portrayed] through their eyes as far as possible” (Deneulin and Rakodi 2011: 52). Elsewhere, however, this reflexivity is represented by a robust post-secularist critique which pointedly challenges development researchers to interrogate their implicit assumptions regarding religion and secularism (to be discussed at some length in the chapter on theory below). In the humanitarian sphere as well as that of development, the secularist tendency to claim the supposedly objective high ground is here depicted as problematic in that it either causes the two “worlds” of liberal materialism and faith to remain distinct or that they be brought together only in small, co-opted overlaps where by-products of faith such as community cohesion or social capital serve material needs. The assumption that religion is epiphenomenal to underlying material factors risks the very possible oversight of real needs and concerns of people in developing countries and, insofar as the relegation of matters of faith to the private sphere is foreign to those populations and societies, it represents a neo-colonial imposition (Ager and Ager 2011). Nor is this only an issue for recipients of development aid: Ager and Ager (2011) provide several examples of how humanitarian workers find it difficult to be confronted by the spiritual needs and attitudes of aid and development recipients because of the heavy secularist content of their professional training and socialization, even if they themselves are religious.

In summary, scholarship over the last decade has targeted both the donor-driven narrative about religion and development as well as the earlier research aimed at informing its implementation, an attack which represents a more or less total deconstruction of the myth that FBOs represent the ‘missing ingredient’ in development projects. This work has not argued for a reversal of the religious turn in development research, however, rather encouraging a deeper engagement with the topic, including greater context sensitivity, a more involved, sensitive attempt to understand what religion and spirituality means to people in the developing world, and a post-modernist appeal to step back and reexamine Western assumptions about secularism and how they impact development cooperation.

One aspect of this deeper engagement which recent research has brought to the fore is a reevaluation of development actors. This is the argument made most forcefully by Smith (2016), who points out that, despite their contributions in the development sector, missionaries continue to be sidelined from discussion within development studies: “missionaries and development workers operate in the same space and face similar challenges, a fact which can no longer be overlooked in the contemporary turn to religion in development” (Smith 2016: 1). Rather than viewing missionaries – with their explicitly religious perspective – as irrelevant or even as inherently harmful to development processes and outcomes, Smith urges instead for a common framework that goes beyond secularist assumptions and seeks to position “religious and secular actors including missionaries according to how they integrate beliefs and values into their practice of development” (2016: 1).

1.3. Research Objectives

The aim of this research is to contribute to the discussion surrounding religion and development by examining American evangelical missionaries as development actors. The present argument understands missionaries in the developing world as being involved in development work and thus of putting into practice a more or less conscious and concrete vision of what ‘development’ means. This subject is under-researched and, insofar as missionaries who have embraced the title have distanced themselves from the pressures that accompany donor funding, there exists the potentiality that this vision brings something new to the table. This research, therefore, will be oriented around two primary questions: **how do American evangelical missionaries conceptualize or understand ‘development’ in their work? And how do these missionaries bring together material needs with spiritual or transcendent concerns in their everyday praxis?**

It is important to be clear that this research is not intended as an apologetic for missionary projects. Faith-based actors, including missionaries, are more than capable of dubious, insensitive, and/or reprehensible behavior and programming, and like any other development organization must be held accountable. “Faith needs the scrutiny of reason,” to quote Ager and Ager, but it is also the case that “reason needs to be informed of the true nature of faith” (2011: 460), which is sorely lacking in the literature concerning missionaries and development. Nor does this research aim to provide an overly starry-eyed and romanticized view of missionaries

as being somehow more authentic and more spiritually connected to the needs and desires of the poor. Development involves an intersection between sacred and secular interests and concerns, both for missionaries and for the development workers of secular organizations alike (Smith 2016); the difference lies in the fact that the specific constellation of these interests is considerably better documented in the latter group than in the former.

1.4. A Brief Outline of the Argument

The argument presented here is constructed straightforwardly and in a manner that builds on itself. The following section will examine post-secularism as a frame for understanding religion in development: pointing out flaws in the secularist assumptions that would suggest religion is an inappropriate object of inquiry for development studies; exploring how religion might be theorized on the ground in the global South and what impacts this might have on development approaches; and suggesting how the delineation between religious and secular actors might be reconceptualized in response to these observations. Attention will then be turned towards theorizing missionaries – and American evangelical missionaries in particular – as development actors, justifying the special attention paid to them in this research. Only after this theoretical groundwork has been laid will the argument turn towards an analysis of the empirical material collected for this project, first presenting an overview of the methodological decisions which informed the collection and processing of data and then proceeding to a presentation of the empirical findings and analysis.

2. Post-Secularism as a Theory of Development

The present research is based on a theoretical constellation that I term post-secularism. As the name suggests, this framework responds to the long-standing thesis that religion and spirituality are inappropriate or irrelevant objects of inquiry within development studies on account of a conflation of secularism with modernity. Post-secularism draws on elements of thought from the sociology of religion and post-development theory, as well as the empirical evidence of continuing religiosity despite – or perhaps alongside or in response to – decades of globalization and the diffusion of European values of modernity throughout the world. Taking as its basic premise the idea that religion, in all its nuances, variations, and interactions, is an integral part of the project of studying how development actually works and the way it affects people's lives, proponents of post-secularism insist that the omission of critical attention to religious beliefs, actors, and movements constitutes not merely a quantitative oversight (similar to the fudging of significant digits) but rather a value-laden, qualitative choice that at the very least should be made consciously and communicated explicitly.

This chapter is devoted to understanding this theoretical framework by exploring its development and by outlining its ramifications for present and future research. To this end, the content of the preceding paragraph must be turned on its head and a very wide question needs to be posed: to what extent, and in what way, is religion relevant – theoretically speaking – to development studies? The importance of formulating the question in this way – as well as the importance of coming up with a convincing answer – is to allow the researcher to step back from the very practical implications that religion has on the current development landscape. Indeed, as Jones and Petersen (2011) have so successfully pointed out, interest in faith-based organizations (FBOs) has brought religion to the heart of much recent research, but chiefly towards the end of harnessing the intangible yet thoroughly worldly side-effects of religiosity – such as moral legitimacy or social capital – in pursuit of doing development “better” and advancing existing agendas. With the waters so muddied by debates concerning instrumentalism and cooptation, there is a real need to approach religion in its own terms and to consider the question: why should research in development studies be interested in religion in the first place?

2.1. The Secularization Thesis

The starting point for this discussion has to be an outline of the debate within sociology concerning the secularization thesis and its impact on development theory and practice with regards to religion. A touchstone of sociological theory since the days of Weber, Parsons, and Durkheim, the secularization thesis consists of the generalized assumption that “religious institutions, actions and consciousness lose their social significance” with time and as societies go through a process of modernization (Wilson 1992: 49). The exact cause of such a development varied, at least in terms of emphasis, from theorist to theorist. For some, the effects of secularization were most closely linked to that process of modernity famously termed by Weber (2004: 30) the “disenchantment of the world”: as scientific acuity and technological prowess increase, people begin to exercise more control over their physical environment, are better able to combat sickness and injury, and to make predictable and measurable in nature what was once inscrutable and mysterious (cf. Deneulin and Bano 2009: 53). Such a rationalized world bears little need for supernatural explanations.

An additional bulwark to this line of thinking is drawn from an analysis of the structural changes undergone by a society in the throes of modernization. These changes are described as a kind of differentiation of societal spheres, such that the political, the social, the judicial, the cultural, the economic, and the religious are increasingly organized and operated independently of one another, as separate loci of meaning and importance within society, instead of being concentrated in one or a handful of tightly intermeshed institutions (Casanova 1994). The result of this differentiation is that religious institutions suffer an enduring loss of relevance, being reduced from a position of more far-reaching, practical importance to one strictly of spiritual intercession and other-worldly encouragement.¹⁰ Whatever the precise mixture of disenchantment and differentiation goes into secularization, however, the result for the modernizing society was the same: it was generally understood that as nations accepted the Enlightenment principles inherent in secularism and consistent with a pattern of political and

¹⁰ It should however be noted that more contemporary supporters of the differentiation variant of the secularization thesis, such as Casanova (1994), are eager to stress that such a process does not imply that religious institutions are happy to go gentle into that good night, nor that they are content to remain there; such developments, rather, often set the stage for a counter-struggle.

economic systems of ‘modern’ nations, religious practice and belief would subside and eventually die off (Dalton 2013: 162).¹¹

The implications of the secularization thesis for the world of development have been widely noted (see, for example, Ager and Ager 2011; Clarke 2007; Clarke 2008). Because development work, especially in its early decades, was so closely tied with modernization theory,¹² and secularization was a key feature of the modernization process, there was no reason for development initiatives to engage with religious institutions or sensibilities as relevant factors in project design or implementation. Clarke (2007:77) speaks here of “secular reductionism” and “materialistic determinism”: the first downplays the intangibles of religion and spirituality in favor of a focus on more positivistic social categories such as race, gender, and class; the second disregards the impact of non-material considerations on behavior and decision-making. In this way – following the early, poetic critique of Goulet – development professionals approached their work as “one-eyed giants...[who] analyze, proscribe and act as if man could live by bread alone, as if human destiny could be stripped to its material dimensions alone” (1980: 481).

There is nothing necessarily wrong with adopting such a rationalized, materialist posture, provided the assumptions of the secularization thesis hold true. But the confidence with which these assumptions are asserted has in the last three decades been savaged by the apparent resurgence of religious movements and sentiments that have become an active and vocal part of public life throughout most parts of the world. Two of the most obvious manifestations of this resurgence were already underway at the time of Goulet’s writing, with the success of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 – resulting in the establishment of the Islamic Republic in repudiation of the Shah’s Western-oriented mixture of modernization and brutality – and the rise of the religious right in the United States, whose election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 made

¹¹ Dalton presents a good composite position of the supporters of the secularization thesis. That being said, there were (and still are) variations in the vehemence with which such views were held. Wallace, for example, states aggressively that “the evolutionary future of religion is extinction...Belief in supernatural powers is doomed to die out, all over the world, as the result of the increasing adequacy and diffusion of scientific knowledge” (1966: 264-5); Goldstein (2009), on the other hand, presents the very different argument that theorists never understood secularization as something so overly simplistic as unstoppable linear movement.

¹² For an example of highly influential work done in modernization theory within the field of economics, see Rostow (1990); for the same in the field of sociology, see Inkeles and Smith (1974).

the peculiar and unexplained American exceptionalism¹³ more difficult for secularization theorists to ignore. The coming decades would only continue this trend (cf. Barnett and Stein 2012: 3-4; Clarke 2007; Deneulin and Bano 2009: 53-54; Gorski and Altınordu 2008: 56). Pentecostalism has swept the global South, while the Catholic and Orthodox churches have done much to reassert their cultural and political influence throughout Russia and the former Eastern bloc. Political Islamism has made huge advances since 1979, whether that be through electoral victories for Hamas and Hezbollah, the bitter and often bloody conflicts over secular state projects in Algeria, Egypt, or Turkey, or as part of the jihadi fundamentalism that culminated in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Nor are such developments limited to the Christian and Muslim worlds: politicized religion plays a large role in the workings of Israel, India, and parts of Southeast Asia. By the end of the last millennium, Peter Berger – a longtime supporter of the secularization thesis – felt compelled by the empirical evidence of religious resurgence throughout the world to abandon the theory, stating ruefully that “the world is as furiously religious as ever” (1999: 2). This is not to say that secularization has been declared dead in sociological circles,¹⁴ but the weight of history no longer appears to give cause for unbounded confidence.

It is the insights of post-modern theory, however, that added finality to the rupture of the faith placed in the secularization thesis by development professionals. After all, modernization theory as a whole rests upon a master narrative that universalizes the European historical experience and links the adoption of Enlightenment values and European institutional forms to the achievement of modernity and the end goal of development (Beyer 2013; Dalton 2013). The practical observation that taking the West as a developmental metric dooms developing countries to perpetually fall short¹⁵ by comparison is here beside the point: far more problematic

¹³ American exceptionalism here refers to the observation that the United States occupies an anomalous position within the group of highly developed, industrialized countries, in that it maintains a high degree of religiosity.

¹⁴ Though the title of Stark’s (1999) “Secularization, RIP” suggests just that. The argument concerning the secularization thesis is far from settled, however (for a more detailed discussion of contemporary debate, see Gorski and Altınordu 2008). One particularly interesting recent reformulation of the secularization thesis is that presented by Norris and Inglehart (2011), who locate the decisive factor for secularization not in rationalization or societal differentiation but rather in material security. According to this view, religion declines when the individual enjoys a level of material security high enough to meet all their needs and basic wants, as such a situation minimizes the perceived need for meaningful connection to transcendental concerns. The problem of American exceptionalism is here explained away with reference to the high inequality found within the United States.

¹⁵ A concrete example: “Egypt has been involved in a modernizing project since 1800, almost as long as the United States has been in existence. And yet, the United States is seen as always already modern while Egypt is

is that within modernization theory – that is, within the operational reality in which the secularization theory was actualized in development practice – this master narrative “became not only a description of reality but also a prescription” (Dalton 2013: 162; cf. Casanova 1994). This prescriptivism was passionately attacked in the 1990s by theorists such as Escobar, who denounces the universalized development discourse as “colonization of reality” and calls for “a general investigation of Western modernity as a culturally and historically specific phenomenon” (1995: 5, 12).¹⁶ The empirical resurgence of religion in public life may have been perplexing to development workers and theorists who anticipated its progressive obsolescence, but these post-development criticisms undermine the very justifiability of adherence to the assumptions of the secularization thesis as they have so often been applied in development practice. Religion suddenly appears as a relevant and, as such, as a long-neglected factor in development.

2.2. Making Sense of Religion in Development

With the retreat of the secularization thesis, the development world has become acutely aware of the relevance of religion in the lives of the majority of people throughout the global South. “For most people of the ‘South’ spirituality is integral to their understanding of the world and their place in it, and so is central to the decisions they make about their own and their communities’ development,” argues Ver Beek (2000: 31), a message that has been strongly supported by the findings of the World Bank project *Voices of the Poor* (Lunn 2009; Clarke 2007). This has drawn development researchers and theorists into an academic debate at least as tangled as that surrounding secularization: what exactly do we mean when we talk about religion? The importance of this debate, however, is far from abstract. This is because, as Deneulin and Bano (2009: 63) point out, “the way religion is defined has important consequences for its treatment in development thinking and practice.” In other words, it is not enough to understand *that* religion is relevant in development work; it is vital to understand *the ways in which* religion is relevant, and in order to do that, the researcher has to have a credible

always still precariously modernizing, despite all the declining figures and ambiguities exhibited by the former” (Agrama 2012: 6); in the same vein, Meinrad Hegba laments the Africans’ “eternal juniority” in the eyes of the Western world (1962; quoted in Agar and Agar 2011: 463).

¹⁶ More recently, theoretical alternatives such as Eisenstadt’s (2000) “multiple modernities” have endeavored with considerable success to show that it is possible to discuss the themes of modern reality while preserving cultural and institutional specificity.

perspective on what religion is in the first place. The following is a brief summary of such perspectives and their ramifications for development practice.

Perhaps the most intuitive place to begin this discussion is with the suggestion that religion consists of a set of beliefs about transcendental reality and our place in relation to this reality. What this definition lacks in terms of sociological precision it makes up for in straightforwardness and relatability to a Western audience. Nor is this formulation – taken in broad strokes – wanting for vocal academic support: no less an anthropologist than Clifford Geertz, after all, defines a religion as

(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men [sic] by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (1973: 90).

Taken with the further clarification that symbols are fundamentally “extrinsic sources of information” (Geertz 1973: 92), the picture emerges of religious adherents as those that accept the validity of certain beliefs or axioms that have meaning in and of themselves. The implication for development professionals is clear: to take religion seriously means to understand the beliefs of adherents and the consequences of these beliefs in the world. The work that lends itself most readily as a paradigmatic example of such an approach is Weber’s (2001) famous thesis concerning *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Here, Calvinist theology regarding predestination is argued to have resulted in behavioral patterns of accumulation and reinvestment that proved instrumental to the emergence of capitalism. Understanding the dynamics between religious belief and worldly behavior is thus key to appreciating and responding to the role that religion plays in the larger developments within a society.

This understanding of religion is quick to crumble in the face of multiple criticisms, however. Ironically, part of the inadequacy of defining religion as a set of beliefs stems from the very ease with which such a model can be grasped by a Western worldview. This is because, as critics point out, such a view of religion is highly contingent on and informed by the European historical experience and makes very little sense outside of this context. Originally referring to communal or public spirituality rather than to something distinct from the rest of political or social life, “religion” as a modern concept in the Western sense emerged in the seventeenth

century amidst the bloody struggles surrounding the Reformation and subsequent confessionalization: “seeing Christian life as a set of beliefs which people subscribe to, and which would not influence one’s loyalty to the state, came to be the solution for peace in Europe” (Deneulin and Bano 2009: 60).¹⁷ Critics thus raise serious concerns about any attempt to apply this comparatively narrow and specific understanding to a foreign context, arguing that “throughout the developing world, it is implausible to believe that the religious factor can be isolated from life’s general context” (Haynes 2007: 14). The dangers here are twofold: on the one hand, that Western outsiders, misunderstanding the context in which they are working, might miss links between religion and the material world that are obvious and vital to locals; on the other hand, that those manifestations of religion that are belief-centric or privatized and thus more easily relatable to Westerners might be targeted with privileged treatment while others are neglected. One additional issue arises, however, from the way that this view of religion interfaces with development, in that there exists an implicit assumption that the two are distinct. A religion theorized as a number of transcendental propositions can only interact indirectly with the processes of this-worldly change. Without expanding their definition of religion to include a more holistic vision of worldviews, behaviors, and practices, development practitioners – no matter how well-intentioned – are necessarily limited to instrumental approaches when engaging with religion.¹⁸ Any research that has the goal of taking religion on its own terms by avoiding a relationship based on instrumentality must therefore concede that defining religion in such a limited manner is counter-productive.

Responding directly to Geertz’s characterization of religion as a symbolic system of extrinsic meaning, Asad offers a very different explanation of how religion should be understood. For Asad, the notion that religious belief is somehow extrinsic to the believer and delivers pre-packaged meaning does not hold any water. Instead, the meaning of religious symbols is deeply embedded in the behaviors, practices, and disciplines which are part of a particular historical

¹⁷ Religion here assumes a role which is essentially private. In this way, the Western conception of religion emerges from the same historical developments as, and in complement to, the modern idea of secularism (cf. Dalton 2013: 159).

¹⁸ This is, of course, a complaint leveled directly at the consequences of such a propositional view of religion as it relates to development. There are wider criticisms to be made beyond this narrow focus, however; as Asad points out, for example, “thoughtful Christians will concede that, although theology has an essential function, theological discourse does not necessarily induce religious dispositions, and that, conversely, having religious dispositions does not necessarily depend on a clear-cut conception of the cosmic framework on the part of a religious actor” (1993: 36). Even within its own historical context, the Christian understanding of religion as something cognitive and belief-centric doesn’t stand up especially well to close interrogation.

context: “religious symbols[...]cannot be understood independently of their historical relations with nonreligious symbols or of their articulations in and of social life, in which work and power are always crucial” (1993: 53). So understood, religion is so entwined with historical contingencies that “there is nothing *essentially* religious, nor any universal essence that defines ‘sacred language’ or ‘sacred experience’” (Asad 2003: 25; italics in original). Any project undertaken to define religion in a general sense is bound to fail because religious experience or meaning – while real and distinct from the practices surrounding it – is so closely linked with those practices that any variation in historical parameters creates incommensurable diversity, such that it is impossible to speak of religion at any level of abstraction. Since this renders any comparative element of religious studies meaningless, the primary task of a researcher interested in a given religion lies in “unpacking the comprehensive concept which he or she translates as ‘religion’ into heterogeneous elements according to its historical character” (Asad 1993: 54).

Development thought has approached the very particularistic attitude towards religion represented by Asad from two different angles. Post-development thinkers – ever critical of the universalizing discourse surrounding development and of power wielded against indigenous discourses and epistemologies (Escobar 1992) – are especially receptive to an articulation of religion so far removed from Eurocentric models. The atomization of religious discourses here guards against outside cultural imperialism and the silencing of non-Western experiences. Such an emphasis on the particularisms of religious discourse fits well with a post-development argument for

re-valorisation of vernacular cultures, the need to rely less on expert knowledge and more on ordinary people’s attempts at constructing more humane and culturally and ecologically sustainable worlds, and the important point of taking seriously social movements and grassroots mobilisations as the basis for moving towards the new era (Escobar 2006: 448).

Understanding the unique and specific constellations of spiritual life articulated and practiced by indigenous cultures and preserving them against all outside imposition is thus of central importance to this perspective. Similarly, but relying more on mainstream development approaches and institutional economics instead of discourse analysis and critical theory, some argue that development must grow out of the particular religious and moral values of the target population. Proponents of this view put forward the pragmatic argument that any other approach can only be “self-limiting” and potentially destabilizing: “development must build on

indigenous religious values because the preservation or growth of the moral base is central to development” (Wilber and Jameson 1980: 475).¹⁹ One notable example of such pragmatism rooted in appreciation for religious particularism is the branch of institutional economics, which criticizes the purported universalism of classical economic theory and urges the researcher and development practitioner to take serious consideration of indigenous institutions, both formal and informal (North 1994). Such institutions – which naturally include religious bodies and practices – are argued to construct the very workings of a society in constellations that are invisible or inscrutable to outsiders. The centuries-old system of water temples on the island of Bali, for example, is presented as a religious institution but also as the locus of a highly sophisticated system of irrigation; the integrated nature of these functions, totally unappreciated by Western professionals, meant that the disruption caused by the marginalization of priests in favor of foreign experts during the efforts to rationalize agricultural production as part of the Green Revolution proved to be disastrous (Lansing 1991). The avoidance of outside assumptions and the adherence, as far as possible, to the particularisms of indigenous institutional forms and functions is thus here presented as the hallmark of good development practice.

The emphasis on avoiding any essential definition of religion in favor of asserting the limitless multiplicities of religious practices and experience, while certainly preferable to an approach to religion based on instrumentalism, nonetheless carries with it certain shortcomings. The obvious criticism to be made of the pragmatic variation of this argument is that, in valorizing local religious forms and institutions to such a large extent, there is a failure to present any coherent theory of how change occurs. Because exogenous change is unsustainable or destructive, indigenous religion is presented as strangely static; endogenous development is conceded, but its functioning is insufficiently theorized and there’s no indication as to why influences from outside a community or society might not have a lasting impact. Further – and this is of special interest to the present research – the specific focus here given to indigenous

¹⁹ The distinction here between an instrumental use of religion and a more integrationist approach is fine but of great importance. The instrumentalist views religion as an efficient means towards a preexisting end; Wilber and Jameson (1980) encourage reconciling development ends to indigenous religious values because anything else is unsustainable. This is not to say that all research in this direction stays on the right side of this line. Boettke et al., for example, pursue a similar approach but from a Hayekian perspective, arguing that “any path to progress with a reasonable probability of success must ultimately be rooted in indigenous institutional [e.g. religious] order” (2008: 354). While their appeal to religious (and other) particularisms serves as an argument against market-distorting government interventionism, their ideological commitment to neoliberal structures suggests that such appeals are a means, not an end.

religion does not extend the same interest to religion as a global concept that might affect the views and motivations of actors outside the developing community in question, making this approach uniquely inappropriate to discussing development actors such as missionaries who both hold and actively seek to share elements foreign to the “moral base” of the community. The post-development approach naturally does a much better job of covering these theoretical concerns, ably discussing the hybridization of identities and the power dynamics of various discourses. But here there remains a distinct feeling of postmodern paralysis:²⁰ the particularization of religions into an infinite “multiplicity of voices” (Ramazanoglu 1996: 19), rather than being helpful to understanding how religious experiences affect development, ironically leaves very little of concrete interest to be said on the subject. Finally, in one last objection which applies to both of the variants discussed above, there is the argument that the very premise of these positions – the indefinability of religion – overextends itself in its own zeal. Is the necessary response to the observation that religion is historically embedded really to throw out the idea of “religion” as anything more than a label of convenience? As Deneulin and Bano (2009: 61) point out, just “because languages are historical products in continuous evolution this does not mean that one cannot grasp what a language is and how it is constituted;” why should this not also be the case for religion?

This is a question that requires an answer carefully balanced between two extremes, an answer that avoids essentializing and the universalization of historical specifics but also provides a workable model. To this end, Deneulin and Bano (2009: 61ff) put forward a definition of religion that consists of four broad but critical elements: a truth claim concerning transcendental reality; a group of behaviors and practices that operationalize this truth claim in the world; a human community or identity group positioning itself in relation to the truth claim and its attendant practices; and finally some kind of regulatory institution.

Such a model has a number of advantages. First of all, it manages to cover a multiplicity of ways that religion and religious meaning are constructed and experienced. Religion is here understood not simply as a system of belief but rather as a much more complex phenomenon, a dense matrix of social interactions, cultic ritual, moral injunction, exchange, debate,

²⁰ This term originates, to the best of my knowledge, with Joan Hoff (1994), who characterizes the obsession with post-structural criticism as reducing feminism’s material or political demands to a paralyzing debate about epistemology. A more nuanced response is found in Ramazanoglu (1996).

discipline, and growth, all oriented around a transcendental discourse. Secondly, it provides a set of criteria that set firm limits to the object of inquiry but maintain the flexibility to characterize the diversities of historical experience in a coherent manner. Reference to transcendental discourse rather than to a God or gods allows the Abrahamic faiths to stand alongside traditional animist beliefs, the heterodoxy of Hinduism, or even the transcendental atheism found in Buddhism; regulatory or disciplining institutions might be of a hierarchical nature, as in the Catholic church, or they might display a more horizontal character as in Islam, or indeed anything in between. It may be argued that even the considerable flexibility of such criteria poses undue limits and privileges certain historic contingencies, but it is also fair to concede that a religion that exceeds these boundaries – perhaps an individual religion lacking community and thus necessarily also institutions; or a religious community that somehow avoids completely any practices that might betray the group’s existence – would constitute a qualitatively different kind of phenomenon. Lastly, it is important to note that this model avoids essentializing religion by allowing considerable room for historic change and ideational development at various levels. This is because the locus for religion’s “true” identity is not confined to any one rigid or static element, such as a catechism or an institution, being instead conceived as a multi-level argument over time concerning the actualization of a transcendental worldview, the dynamics of which are affected by both the inertia and evolution of history. In short, religion is not axiomatic, static, or essentially unknowable, but rather “a lived expression of an encompassing world view” given weight by its connection to the otherworldly, enacting “in ordinary life the meanings and values that make sense in the context of particular life worlds at any historical moment” (Dalton 2013: 163).

From a development perspective, this understanding of religion as something lived, concrete, debated, and evolving requires a more nuanced analysis. Whereas under the premises of other definitions it was sufficient to draw out potential synergies or conflicts between religious beliefs and development goals, or to simply protect and attempt to support existing indigenous institutions, development researchers following this model have to deal with a phenomenon that is considerably more expansive and dynamic. Research efforts in this direction must then attempt to

understand how the religion’s fundamental agreement and teachings are embodied in certain social practices, how certain social and historical processes have led to that particular embodiment, and how the religion itself redefines this embodiment in the light of the new social context (Deneulin and Bano 2009: 63).

Appreciating the embeddedness of a religion within a particular society thus requires a multi-dimensional appreciation of both the religion's present constellation and its variability and development over time; in other words – and in contrast to the approaches of post-development or institutional economics – research in religion must not overlook dynamism and change.

One concrete direction for such an analysis lies in the recognition of the role that religious values play in the dynamics of societal debate and change as factors of societal self-determination and empowerment. Following this train of thought, Deneulin and Bano (2009: 45) suggest a high level of compatibility between their definition of religion and the “capability approach” to development put forward by Amartya Sen. This approach is so named because of its emphasis on the “expansion of the ‘capabilities’ of persons to lead the kind of lives they value – and have reason to value” (Sen 2000: 18). For Sen, the substantive freedoms (or capabilities) of individuals take on a double importance: on the one hand, they are of value in and of themselves, an intrinsic metric for the quality of human life; at the same time, they are of instrumental value insofar as they support and empower the acquisition of further capabilities.

This dynamic of freedom as both a means and an end is valid for the individual, but it takes on a special significance at the level of community or society, where “capabilities can be enhanced by public policy, but also, on the other side, the direction of public policy can be influenced by the effective use of participatory capabilities by the public” (Sen 2000: 18). It is here where religious values become relevant within Sen's model,²¹ as these values – and the complex social phenomenon surrounding them – can constitute a significant element of the public and participatory debate concerning the way a society chooses to develop their freedoms and express their self-determination. As cited above, there does exist the caveat that individuals and societies must “have reason to value” the freedoms and strictures they choose for themselves – a requirement aimed at ensuring that development is exposed to critical reflection – and as such

²¹ It deserves stating that Sen himself does not explicitly reference religion as playing an important role in his capability approach; in fact, to the extent that he mentions the term at all when describing the general outlines of his model, it is in relation to fundamentalist religious groups limiting the substantive freedoms of the populations under their rule (2000: 32). That being said, the notion that religious (or other cultural) values play a role in shaping the collective development of a society is logically consistent with Sen's ideas concerning participatory capabilities, and even in the passage cited above, the fundamentalists are subjected to a critique no more scathing than that aimed at cultural chauvinists, both Western and local.

there is the expectation that individuals in a society have access to education in order to foster such critical capacities (Sen 2000: 32-3).²² Upon meeting this basic requirement, however, Sen's model proposes that a society and its members are best served and have the best development outcome when they are free to shape and direct the collective future of the society through broad-based participation and debate, even if (or, in the case that a society's moral center is rooted in religion, especially when) religious values play a primary role in political process.

It is here that a transition must be made in the argument. Having explored several ways that religion can be understood in development research, the position held in this paper follows that of Deneulin and Bano (2009: 4-5) that, for the people on the ground, "there is no separation between religion and development. Development is what adherents to a religion do because of who they are and what they believe in." Seeing religion as a complex social phenomenon that tries to actualize its vision and values in the specificities of historical circumstance disallows its consideration as an analytical category meaningfully distinct from development, and development models that seek a holistic understanding of religion in development, such as the capability approach, are much more helpful than models that try to artificially differentiate the two into separate spheres.

Important as this insight is to the argument at hand, however, it is not the whole story. While the secularization thesis has been discarded and the case has been made that religion, properly understood, is a matter of deep relevance and interest for development theory and practice, there remains the question of what role religion should play when it comes to the personal backgrounds and interests of development workers and agencies. This question arises out of the considerable discomfort that some sociologists and development researchers display towards the supposed "ease with which some post-secularists move from observations on the social role of faith or spirituality to intellectual *endorsements* of faith-led perspectives on social life"

²² It is difficult to know exactly how to respond to this particular requirement. On the one hand, the need for critical reflection is inherent to the theoretical consistency of Sen's model of development as freedom. Without such a measure, the model has no way of confronting the abuse and manipulation of those lacking the capacities to see beyond the limits of their own oppression. At a practical level, however, this requirement is full of unresolved tensions. In particular, the question of when an individual or a group is sufficiently informed to be granted discursive agency, especially when that agency is used to submit to existing hierarchies, is not new; nor are the criticisms of asking such a question in the first place (cf. Spivak 1988).

(McLennan 2007: 859; emphasis in original). Secularization may be a defunct prediction, but *secularism* is here understood as a vital center of the objectivity necessary for good development practice. “Yes, religion has to be taken seriously both in research and in policy related to development,” concedes De Kadt; and yet, when it comes to the religious beliefs of development workers themselves,

...researchers and policy-makers had better also remember that the stronger those religious beliefs, and *the more convinced the believers are of their total truth*, the more likely it is that, on balance, they will not have a positive effect on the chances for development (2009: 786; emphasis in original).

The discussion must therefore turn in response to such sentiments to an analysis of secularism and its place in development work.

2.3. Functional Secularism and Theorizing the Sacred

Attempting to make sense of two distinct theoretical phenomena drawing nominally from the same root, Torpey (2010: 281) points out that, while secularization describes a process interpreted according to a certain sociological framework, “*secularism* is an ideology, a set of beliefs about a possible state of affairs that one seeks either to bring about or defend.” The importance here of adding emphasis to secularism’s ideological content lies in the observation that such content is most often overlooked. Indeed, the general telling of the secularism narrative argues the exact opposite: in the face of the brutal European Wars of Religion, secularism emerged as a pragmatic, ideologically-neutral arena in which groups with different beliefs could resolve differences through an appeal to common norms (Jakobsen 2010, Dalton 2013). Following Jakobsen’s formulation,

Because secularism is not expressive of any particular religious voice, it can provide the framework for general interaction, interaction that in moral terms is undertaken through the protocols of universal reason. Public deliberation and debate, then, can take place under terms that can be universally shared[...]and interaction can take place peacefully (2010: 34).

This understanding of secularism as something principally neutral, a unifying force above the fray of ideological conflict, carries an idealistic quality with it that has allowed it to maintain relevance while secularization as a prescriptive modernizing phenomenon has faltered. As such, works such as Taylor’s imposingly-titled *A Secular Age* can historicize those parts of the secularist narrative which no longer hold up to post-modern critiques, embedding the concept in historical context and pointing out the ways that the secular “modern social imaginary” shapes and constricts expressions of religious identity; and yet, secularism is nonetheless

presented as an “immanent frame” which in modern society is principally neutral, “without ideological distortion” (2007: 550), giving preference to none and perhaps even exceeding in fairness all previous models by allowing equal footing for the irreligious.

The appeal of such a purportedly distortion-free approach is clear. The ideal of maintaining distance and neutrality in order to respond as objectively as possible to the myriad challenges of development work – even simply to shelter oneself as much as possible from criticism – presents itself as a comforting contrast to the blindly committed belief which causes De Kadt so much concern. And to be fair, as Ager and Ager (2011: 458) point out, a secularism strictly conceived “as a social model that seeks to provide a basis for common purpose amidst plurality” is an aspirational idea. But critical research stresses that this aspirational understanding of secularism is far removed from its actual functioning. At the practical level, this is made clear by the concrete observation that, far from being something neutral and, therefore, universally applicable, the actual application of secularism in different settings throughout the world is complex and varied, deeply tied to cultural and historical context. Many theorists speak increasingly of “secularisms” in the plural and make note that the way secularism is understood and institutionally implemented varies greatly even between Western countries, with the USA and France, for example, betraying markedly different approaches (Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2008; Mapril et al. 2017: 6ff). Agrama goes so far as to suggest that secularism, to the extent that the term is practically relevant for the modern world, is more of a problem-space than a specific program: that is, the “ongoing, deepening entanglement in the *question* of religion and politics” (2012: 29). The answers to this question will vary, and to attach expectations to the way that secularism looks in practice – for example, that it necessarily displays total neutrality towards religion – is ideological rather than idealistic.

It is the theoretical problems with functional secularism²³ that are most troubling for development studies, however. This is because of the appeal made within the secular model to what Jakobsen terms “the protocols of universal reason.” The troubling consequence of this appeal is that knowledge claims that are *not* founded in empiric observation are termed invalid:

²³ “Functional secularism” is a term used by Ager and Ager (2011) to refer to secularist discourse within the humanitarian and development spheres, so as to distinguish it from an idealistic vision of what secularism could or should be in theory.

by appealing to reason as universal, secularism exhibits a specifically *materialist* character; that is to say that only that which is materially verifiable is deemed reasonable. Materialism – generally in the form of liberal materialism – thus becomes the determining ideology of functional secularism. Indeed, it may be represented as a *fundamentalist* ideology to the extent that its users assume its universality and self-evidence. (Ager and Ager 2011: 459; emphasis in original).

Thus, religious perspectives – which as a rule are non-rational²⁴ and empirically unverifiable – find themselves within functional secularism to be structurally disadvantaged rather than on any kind of an equal footing with a materialism whose validity is taken for granted. What is more, it is precisely this assumption of self-evidence that obscures the ideological content of secularism. Far from being a neutral arbiter, functional secularism “bears a *decision* to assess value in materialist terms” (Ager and Ager 2011: 460; emphasis in original), and the inability of many researchers and practitioners to acknowledge this active choice both speaks to the power of functional secularism as an ideological discourse as well as to the danger that materialist values, unconsciously held, might be uncritically imposed upon the populations that development workers engage with.²⁵ In this way, taking religion seriously is not merely of interest to development studies insofar as it interests the lives and worldviews of the recipients of development assistance, but also means challenging the assumptions about religion that development agencies and workers carry in their professional lives. This does not amount to an imposed “endorsement” of religious perspectives, as McLennan seems to fear, just as it does not imply that the assumptions of liberal materialism are necessarily incorrect. Instead it means simply that, for the development professional, no position on religion is safe: all sides are carrying ideological baggage, and all paths, traveled uncritically, can lead towards damaging development outcomes.

The recognition of secularism as an ideological project is important to the present research because it demands the exploration of new theoretical models. Under the assumption that secularism is essentially neutral and objective, religion in developing countries can be taken

²⁴ The positioning of religion as an irrational foil to science, materialism, and Enlightenment rationalism is often as widespread as it is inaccurate (cf. Torpey 2010: 279). Rationality and logical consistency are of course integral to religious perspectives, albeit that the premises upon which most religious thought is based are immaterial and thus untestable. This distinction is reflected in the use of the term “non-rational.”

²⁵ Ager and Ager go so far as to underscore this danger by accusing functional secularism, to the extent that its practitioners assert its discursive hegemony over other voices, of being a neocolonial imposition. In one great ironical insight, they lend this accusation concrete weight by noting that “in the most acute of turnarounds, ‘pagan’ African culture, once weaned onto Christianity, must be weaned again, now to secular ‘modernity’” (2011: 464).

seriously but the judgement of religious development organizations is viewed with suspicion, at least to the extent that such organizations do not adopt certain standards of materialist rationality. Questioning the discursive hegemony of functional secularism collapses any special claims it had, but this alone leaves little in the way of theoretical clarity. If secularism carries the same ideological weight as any other religious perspective, what distinction is to be drawn between the two? To what extent do the two – the religious and the secular – operate together or influence one another? And how is such an operation to be understood?

Barnett and Stein (2012) contribute much towards answering these questions by offering a model based on a much older sociological idea: Durkheim's concept of the sacred. For Durkheim, the absolute distinction between the sacred and the profane is one of the primary characteristics of religion: everything in the world, both physical and immaterial, is divided between these two poles, where the sacred is "regarded as superior in dignity and power to profane things" and is that "which the profane must not and cannot touch with impunity" (Durkheim 1995: 35, 38). The sacred is separate from the mundane, the everyday, and the banalities of "the real world of profane life" (Durkheim 1995: 424). The exact configurations of what exactly is considered sacred and how or whether that which is profane can become sacralized is here beside the point; of central interest here is that, for Durkheim, religion is always concerned with and defined around the delineation and management of this bipolarity.²⁶

This focus on the sacred may at first glance appear to be simply semantic, a word game where "sacred" is used instead of "transcendent" or "immaterial" or some other arbitrary term designating the focus of religious life. But what sets this approach apart, and what makes it so useful here, is that Durkheim holds the sacred to be a relevant category not just for religion, but for secularism as well. Going against a Weberian model where the religious and the secular exist as polar opposites and where movement in the direction of the secular amounts to inexorable disenchantment and profanation of social life, Durkheim argues that the secular

²⁶ Durkheim offers the following as a general definition of religion: "When a certain number of sacred things have relations of coordination and subordination with one another, so as to form a system that has a certain coherence and does not belong to any other system of the same sort, then the beliefs and rites, taken together, constitute a religion" (1995: 38). The obvious flaws with this definition – "A 'certain number'? Neither he nor anyone else has identified that magic number" (Barnett and Stein 2012: 17) – led to its exclusion from the section discussing definitions of religion. The categories of sacred and profane are, despite this, of continuing interest and utility.

maintains connections to and develops new relationships with the sacred²⁷ (cf. Barnett and Stein 2012: 28; Cladis 2001: xxxv). What this means in concrete terms is that instead of religion and secularism existing in separate worlds, a shared point of reference in the sacred allows their relationship to be understood much more fluidly: by emphasizing the sacred, “we blur the boundaries between the secular and the religious in the humanitarian [and development] world, and beyond” (Barnett and Stein 2012: 16).

With reference to development research, this model thus focuses on processes of secularization and sanctification, recognizing that “sanctification processes can alter the character of the secular, and secularization processes can alter the character of the religious” and that both phenomena are “multilayered, multidimensional, and nonlinear” (Barnett and Stein 2012: 9). The direct consequences of such an approach are the dissolution of essentialized narratives of what is or is not religious and the exploration of how and why development actors deploy such processes in their everyday praxis. In and of itself, the distinction between secular and religious organizations loses its value: a religious development agency may undergo processes of secularization that leave it indistinguishable from a secular organization; a purportedly secular organization may advance a sacralized principle that takes on a religious character. The questions asked by the researcher must therefore go deeper. It is not enough to ask who a development actor is in order to make a judgment about the appropriateness of their work in the development field. It is instead of paramount importance to examine what the actor *does* and how their actions function to position themselves with reference to their stated identity. It is the recognition of the value of these questions that stands at the center of the theoretical approach adopted by this research.

²⁷ In an introduction to *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Cladis gives several examples of how the flexibility of Durkheim’s religious model allows for the sacred within even the most secular of modern social institutions: “This modern cult [of moral individuals] has all the religious attributes of traditional cults. It possesses robust, sacred symbols that express collective sentiments; it reaffirms and protects itself by means of both positive and negative rites[...]Moral individualism provides a moral framework for what can be referred to as liberal democracy’s civil religion” (2001: xxviii). And elsewhere: “facets of science itself have assumed a religious quality. The spirit of free enquiry, a self-conscious elimination of bias, a commitment to objectivity – these guiding scientific ideals have acquired a sacred status” (2001: xxix).

3. Theorizing Missionaries as Development Actors

We have seen that a post-secular approach to the nexus between religion and development goes beyond the nominal organizational attributes of religiosity or secularization to ask questions about how a group or an institution relates itself to the sacred or the profane and how this relation expresses itself in the work done in the development field. Attention must now be turned to the background of and underlying theoretical assumptions surrounding the more particular subgroup of interest in this research: American evangelical missionaries. Having established that the theoretical scope of development research can be extended beyond the materialist limits of functional secularism, and that religious actors should not be discarded from analysis under out of hand charges of partiality, lack of seriousness, or some other inherent incompatibility with development aims, it remains to examine why and how this subset of missionary workers is worthy of the interest afforded them by this research.

While many of the questions surrounding religion and development deal directly with the role of religion in the developing world and the attitudes, rituals, and values concerning the sacred which are held by populations in the global South, post-secularist theory has also allowed for recent focusing on the global North to dispense with the assumptions that “development is material and religion is non-material,[...]religious communities are somehow more ‘authentic’ than other development actors,[...]and religious actors can choose to be involved in development, instead of development being a part of their core beliefs and teaching” (Smith 2016: 6). Much of this research has involved reexamining institutions and actors in the development sector in a new and different light, including some reappraisals of the work done by Christian missionaries stationed in foreign countries. It is generally acknowledged in development literature that missionaries have been involved in what can be described as development work since long before ‘development’ emerged as an international agenda. It is sometimes even noted that “missionary organizations remain important actors in development contexts, as providers of social services and as witnesses to the struggles of the poor” (Clarke 2008: 37). Despite the lip service paid to missionary contributions, however, missionaries themselves tend to be almost invisible in the literature surrounding FBOs and the religion-development nexus. Smith (2016) surveys 48 different typological studies of FBOs published since 2000, analyzing how they have chosen to categorize the organizations and how missionaries are positioned within these categories. In the overwhelming majority of cases – 38

in total – missionaries were entirely ignored, while of the ten studies remaining, half adopted the presumptive position that missionaries are inherently damaging to development work.

This is all to say that, for a number of reasons, the subject of missionaries as development actors is markedly under-researched. Nor are development researchers alone in this omission. Indeed, Christian mission appears most often in historical work as a colonial phenomenon, where interest precipitously declines following national independence. Hearn (2002: 43), for example, points to Etherington's literature survey from 1983 which covered fifteen years' worth of historical research into African missions, noting that out of 250 books and articles only twelve percent dealt with the period after 1960 (that is, after decolonization had been completed in most of Africa). Even within this limited real estate, some missionary groups were able to garner more academic attention than others, with European mainline Protestants getting pride of place even as global trends were shifting towards the predominance of North American missionaries: "As a result," remarks Etherington, "our image of the missionary continues to be shaped by Victorian and Edwardian examples" (1983: 129; quoted in Hearn 2002: 43). These observations may be somewhat dated, and time may mercifully have rendered them less accurate than when they were written, but they nonetheless betray the idea that the heyday of Christian missions is over and that the missionaries that do still exist today are antiquated remnants of a time that has passed.

This idea is not supported by the data however: missionaries are more numerous than ever, with Hearn going so far as to call the present moment "the greatest missionary era" (2002: 32; cf. Carpenter and Shenk 1990: xii). There are today about 400,000 Christian missionaries serving in foreign countries, a percentage of the total population much greater than in 1900; by 2025, that number is projected to increase by over 25%, surpassing half a million (Johnson et al. (2015: 29; see Table 1). While beyond the scope of interest for this research, it is of similar interest to note that the number of national missionary workers has undergone an even greater expansion, and that all of the statistics cited above do not take into consideration the phenomenal success of the short-term mission movement within the United States, where "there is good reason to believe that more than one and a half million U.S. Christians travel abroad each year" for an average of 10-14 days to engage in mission work (Priest et al. 2006: 432-3). Nor is this of little relevance to the development sphere, as in addition to the traditional

missionary activities of education and health care provision many large evangelical missionary agencies present themselves as being involved in relief and development work (Smith 2016: 3).

Table 1. *Statistics on Participation in Christian Mission Globally*²⁸

	1900	1970	2000	Annual trend (%)	Mid-2015	2025 (projected)
Foreign Missionaries	62,000	240,000	420,000	-0.32	400,000	550,000
Foreign-mission sending agencies	600	2,200	4,000	1.63	5,100	6,000
National workers (citizens)	2,100,000	4,600,000	10,900,000	0.64	12,000,000	14,000,000

The role of evangelical Christians in this missionary explosion is of particular interest here as it informs the research interests of the present work. Diverse, iconoclastic, and displaying the American penchant for splintering when the decisions of church hierarchies go against the convictions of one's own conscience, evangelicals changed the face of Protestantism both at home and abroad. The split between evangelical and mainline Protestantism²⁹ is often crudely drawn along the fundamentalist-modernist fault line, where mainline Protestants follow a liberal, cosmopolitan trajectory more or less comparable to their European counterparts, while evangelicals tend instead towards biblical literalism, millenarianism, and skepticism toward or even outright anti-intellectualism. This depiction does the disservice of pigeonholing both sides of the debate, glossing over the way that social and theological conservatism has left its imprint also on the mainline American Protestant denominations, as well as the diversity that may well be the hallmark of evangelicalism. This diversity – there is no organization or even set of organizations which can claim to represent evangelicals as a whole, just as there is no single

²⁸ Adapted from Johnson et al. (2015): 29.

²⁹ Carpenter and Shenk (1990: xiv) note that prior to this split in the early part of the 20th century, the terms “evangelical” and “Protestant” were synonymous, an identity that is preserved to the present day in the German-speaking countries, for example, where the cognate of “evangelical” is used for what Americans refer to as Lutheranism.

creed that unites them – makes their success as a movement all the more impressive, but also makes the movement difficult to define.³⁰ For the sake of this research, however, the suggestion is put forward that a firm definition of evangelicalism is less helpful than the evidence of action that corresponds with evangelical self-denotation itself. Rather than as a creed or a structure in the first instance, evangelicalism can be understood as an ethos animating the pre-existing American Protestant theology of self-professing evangelicals with a self-confidence powerful enough to defy the skepticism and caution of mainstream Western materialist culture as well as the conviction of a calling deep enough to mobilize resources at an appropriate scale (cf. Hearn 2002: 40). From a missionary perspective, the developments of the last century are a testament to this self-confidence and mobilization.

There are two trends that are important to understand when looking at the continuing propulsive growth of the missionary movement throughout the 20th century and beyond, both having to do with the denominational composites underlying those statistics. The first is that, as in so many other areas, this was an American century: the last hundred years mark the period “when the American contingent among Protestant foreign missions grew from a junior partnership in the British enterprise to the dominant force in virtually every dimension” (Carpenter and Shenk 1990: xiv). North American Protestants made up half of all Protestant foreign missionaries worldwide by the early 1950s; by the early 1990s they represented about 60% of the same (Hearn 2002: 37; see Table 2). The second notable composite figure here is that during this same period, the makeup of American Protestant missionaries shifted massively from the mainline denominations in favor of evangelicals. Composing by far the minority of American Protestant missions prior to the end of the Second World War, by the 1950s the evangelicals had pulled even with their mainline counterparts. This growth was to continue, with

³⁰ Barrett makes a good attempt at a definition, summarizing evangelicals as being “characterized by commitment to personal religion (including new birth or personal conversion experience), reliance on Holy Scripture as the only basis for faith and Christian living, emphasis on preaching and evangelism, and usually conservatism in theology” (1982: 71; quoted in Hearn 2002: 39). But even this definition has holes. As Carpenter and Shenk point out (1990: xv), the first three of Barrett’s criteria can apply just as well to mainline Protestants as to evangelicals, while the fourth is left discouragingly vague. Taken from another angle, both a Methodist and a Baptist would fit well within Barrett’s definition; what descriptive meaning does the term ‘evangelical’ have in this case? Does it describe the common denominator between the two dominations, or is it something separate? Does the term have unique theological content, or is it pragmatic? Similarly, there are examples such as Seventh-Day Adventism – a Protestant denomination originating in the milieu of 19th century American evangelicalism – that fit very nicely in Barrett’s definition but do not generally consider themselves as a part of the modern evangelical movement. Finally, nearly four decades after Ronald Reagan’s 1980 election brought the heavily evangelical religious right into the American public consciousness as a formidable political force, it is worth considering to what extent political aims are some of evangelicalism’s constituent parts.

evangelicals becoming the majority of the collective foreign missions forces by the late 1960s; in 1990, Carpenter and Shenk (xii) would note that “roughly nine out of ten of today’s career missionaries are evangelicals who are not affiliated with the old-line denominational boards.” The irony of the evangelical missions’ explosion, then, is that it largely coincided with decolonization and the concomitant disinterest in missionaries arising in the academy and the public at large. Thus, “although evangelicals have been the most active proponents of foreign missions since 1945, until 1990 there was virtually no examination of evangelical missions as a whole” (Robert 1994: 150).

Table 2. *Growth of North American Missionaries as a Percentage of Total Protestant Missionaries, 1900-1990*³¹

Year	North American Missionaries		Total Protestant Missionaries
	Number	% of Total	Number
1900	4,891	27%	18,164
1925	13,608	49%	28,011
1952	18,576	52%	35,522
1973	35,070	64%	54,500
1990	44,713	59%	76,120

The divergence between the vitality of the international missionary movement and the tepid academic response does not at first glance make very much sense. A number of factors can be cited in explanation for this curious collective omission. First and foremost, missionaries continue to bear the stigma of their earlier complicity with colonial exploitation, especially in Africa, where imperialist penetration is said to have proceeded first with “the missionaries with the Bible, then the traders, and finally, the soldiers with the Maxim gun” (Padmore 1969: 87). As the ideologies of the Cold War fought to win the hearts and minds of nations emerging from the throes of decolonization, academic opinion of missionaries and their connection to an old-fashioned ‘civilizational’ project soured: “by the late 1960s, there was scarcely a work written on American Protestant missions that did not focus on their role in promoting imperialism[;...]interest was either gone or confined to the negative” (Robert 1994: 146). But as Smith points out, while the criticisms of imperial-age missionaries as exploitative,

³¹ Adapted from Hearn 2002: 37.

condescending, ignorant, and even violent are not without merit in some or even many cases, “they were not true of all missionaries in the 19th-century, and may be less representative today” (2016: 2). More recent historical research argues that the colonial-missionary nexus was complex, tension-laden, and dynamic, at times exploitative but also at times empowering to the native populations (cf. Smith 2016: 2; Gibson 2016). It also bears observing that colonial-era missionaries provide a convenient scapegoat and a distraction from the ways that the secular development agenda has often betrayed striking similarities with previous missions (cf. DeTemple 2012). Even absent these arguments weighing out the sins and merits of earlier mission movements, however, the transmission of old stigmas at the cost of a lack of academic interest in a current and dynamic phenomenon can be considered neither fair to the missionaries of today nor wise for those who want to understand the impact of these people on the global South.

It is also a fear for many in the aid and development sector that missionaries necessarily engage in inappropriate or coercive proselytization³², which leads to a more or less blanket dismissal of missionary workers and agencies as serious and reputable development actors. Additionally, missionary organizations are themselves often cautious about too visible or fixed an integration into the wider development landscape, often functioning instead as what Hearn (2002) calls “invisible NGOs”; this choice is based on a context-variable desire to maintain independence and flexibility in the face of many factors, where “their invisibility is also a recognition that the title of missionary is largely pejorative” (Smith 2016: 3). However, a post-secularist framework of analysis suggests rather that a reliance on secularist assumptions has prevented an engagement with these fears surrounding proselytization that exceeds the level of prejudice. Smith points to the confusing secularist oversight that religious proselytism is automatically viewed as dangerous while active and persuasive dissemination of political or other ideological beliefs and practices is treated as unproblematic (2016: 2). He also notes the considerable difficulty that the aid and development community has had reconciling this suspicion towards the active spread of religious belief with the increasing cooperation with faith-based actors. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, for example, forbids the furtherance of religious beliefs through aid provision, but not their espousal; “what is left unclear is how an organization can espouse a belief without furthering it” (Smith 2016: 2). All

³² This of course assumes that it is possible for proselytization to not be inappropriate or coercive, a position represented by this research but often left unconsidered. For example, “some EU aid officials have traditionally seen proselytizing as worse than corruption” (Hopgood and Vinjamuri 2012: 42-3).

of this again must be considered in the light of research that has shown that, while sometimes imposing and coercive, Christian missions are also capable of demonstrating extreme cultural sensitivity. Clarke and Donnelly, for example, report about the missionizing efforts of a chapter of Franciscans in Papua New Guinea in the 1950s: rather than following the prescriptive materialism of the modernization theorists who dominated development thought at the time, these missionaries wedded their spiritual work to a participative development model, adopting such mantras as “thou shalt not be ethnocentric” and “thou shalt consult the people in all projects” (2014: 175; quoted in Smith 2016: 11). This does not mean that all missionary work is to be given a pass, but it is sufficient to show that the reflex to excise missionaries from development research because of their connection to proselytization lacks justification.

A short summary of the implications of the argument thus far is called for at this point, because it represents the core justification for the present research. First and foremost, it is suggested that if the omissions of decades of scholarship and development practice are to be ameliorated then work must be devoted to researching missionaries as more than irrelevant remnants of the colonial past. Missionaries are involved at the individual and organizational level in the same activities as other development workers (Odumosu et al. 2009), they are driven by no more ideological and no more authentic aims than other development workers (Ager and Ager 2011, Smith 2016), and their work – including their proselytization – deserves the same case-by-case consideration given to other development projects rather than invisibility, blanket dismissal, and automatic criticism (James 2009). Research considering American evangelical missionaries, whose relevance has never been met with appropriate academic interest, is particularly called for. Secondly – and this now follows from the logic of a post-secularist frame of reference – the questions asked of missionaries in this research should not differ than those asked of secular agencies. Rather than being normative and neutral, secularization is a blurry line walked in various capacities both by organizations professing religious faith and those that do not; indeed, work needs to be done with both secular and religious organizations that considers how “distinctions between secular and sacred are actually imagined and practiced” (Fountain 2013: 27, quoted in Smith 2016: 7). Missionaries deserve to be dealt with in a shared framework with other development projects and agencies (Smith 2016), and in concrete terms this means that, to the extent that a missions group is involved in the development sector, the qualitative evaluation that must be made is one of development vision, not degree of

secularization in the traditional sense. This insight is the foundational point and lynchpin for the questions asked by the present research.

With that said, there is one further line of argument that remains to explore in this section concerning the relationship between missionaries and the rise of faith-based organizations. This is of theoretical and supplementary interest for the present research in that it suggests something about the nature and relevance of what missionaries might offer to the development world as a whole. It has already been noted that one of the most problematic aspects of the religion-development nexus has been the deeply instrumental approach to cooperation with FBOs adopted by donors (Jones and Petersen 2011). Many FBOs who seek funding from government or international development agencies are deeply influenced by donor policies limiting funding to projects involving proselytization, often opting to eschew explicitly missionary activity in order to present themselves as suitable partners, a process that either functions to draw the organization in its entirety into the functional discourse of mainstream development or to cause the FBO to “arbitrarily separate their religious identity from religious practice in a way that makes them appear schizophrenic” (Smith 2016: 3).³³ The experience of religious organizations in the past twenty years here closely mirrors that of NGOs generally as they have been coopted since the 1980s into the neoliberal donor initiatives characterized by the New Policy Agenda (NPA) (Petras 1997). This is a tension of which the staff of FBOs are fully aware: as summarized by the Director of Policy and Planning of World Vision International,

The donor-driven NPA emphasizes the central importance of free markets, efficient use of limited government resources, a reduced role for the state and the need for good governance in low-income countries[...]As NGOs consider the impact of global trends and their linkages to the New Policy Agenda, a serious complication is the growing incorporation of NGOs into the policy agendas of donor agencies[...]The New Policy Agenda appears to call for NGOs to[...]serve as implementers of public sector donor priorities. (Commins 1997: 141; quoted in Hearn 2002: 34)

³³ It is difficult to make a definitive argument without more data and case studies, but Table 1 is suggestive about this relationship between missionary agencies and FBOs in general. Between 2000 and 2015 – that is, during the advent of FBO growth and prominence in the aid and development sphere – the number of foreign missionaries shrank for the first time since at least 1900, even as the number of missionary sending agencies continued to grow. One plausible explanation that would match this data is that former and prospective missionaries were encouraged by the mainstreaming of religious organizations into the larger architecture of development aid to become development workers outright or even to essentially continue their former missionary activities under the destigmatizing banner of FBO professionalism. According to this explanation, missionary sending agencies could continue to grow because they are able to support foreign missions and separately conduct mainstream aid and develop operations as well, part of the balancing act that Smith terms “schizophrenic”.

Despite these reservations, since the late 1990s public donor money has helped spur the growth and proliferation of religious organizations for aid, development, and the provision of social services, as the loosening of legislation regarding public funding requirements has allowed these newly jargonized FBOs to more readily access government grants without relinquishing their religious character (Clarke 2007; Hopgood and Vinjamuri 2012: 43; Tomalin 2012).

Questions of outright cooptation aside, the large-scale introduction of religious organizations into the greater NGO ecosystem is having lasting effects on those very organizations. Hopgood and Vinjamuri (2012) suggest that this is because the aid and development world of NGOs and FBOs such as World Vision is best understood as a competitive market where development organizations are driven by necessity to maintain or increase their market share. Like in any other microeconomic model, the market for donations, both from public as well as private sources, is limited; to make matters more complicated, it is far from an even playing field, being dominated by what Hopgood and Vinjamuri (2012) call an “oligopoly” of the leading global aid and development agencies – organizations such as Oxfam, Save the Children, Catholic Relief Services, or World Vision International. Within such an environment, “external incentives play a (even *the*) major role in the way humanitarians, whether faith-based or secular, present their identity publicly and privately” (Hopgood and Vinjamuri 2012: 37; emphasis in original). Some, often evangelical, FBOs may limit or even flatly refuse public money to avoid outside impositions and compromises, but unless they can plug that hole with private donations, such a move means a loss of market share and, given the presence of fierce market competition, perhaps even existential risk. Having become normalized elements within the open donations market, religious organizations are faced with the task of positioning themselves not according to endogenous ideals but rather according to branding strategies designed to find the best balance between secular donors and the religious or specialized concerns of the target private donorship.

It is not that FBOs are ill-treated by this arrangement, as the religious elements which they are able to bring into their brand identity, if balanced successfully, bring certain advantages, such as a reliable, motivated, and uniquely loyal donor pool (Hopgood and Vinjamuri 2012: 38). But the market logics that are brought to the forefront in this analysis also mean that, given the competitive environment, the maintenance of funding is a “constant concern” where “significant energy is diverted into activities designed primarily to maximize market share”

rather than towards pursuing good development outcomes (Hopgood and Vinjamuri 2012: 40-1). The gravity of the situation, and its relevance for the study of missionaries as development actors, is easily missed by those overly familiar with the customary methods of analyzing the motives and behaviors of firms in the marketplace. To frame the situation somewhat more provocatively, however: what we see in the last twenty years, since the shift in policy incentives brought on the advent of FBOs as significant actors in the aid and development sphere, is a significant secularization of religious organizations in this sector. Part of this secularization is of no surprise and stems from the conditionalities of government grants, but more subtle and no less important is the secularization that has taken place in the Durkheimian sense. “The emphasis on efficiencies in processes and outcomes, the unrelenting need to calculate costs and benefits, the commodification of suffering, the rationalization and professionalization of staff” (Barnett and Stein 2012: 24) – all represent the creep of the quotidian into the sacred, the infiltration of market logics and branding strategies into no less purportedly sacred a work than the declaration of God’s love through service and witnessing for the salvation of souls. In short, “there is a constant risk, as agencies compete for funding, that the profane will intrude more and more into the sacred and reduce the space for religious vocation” (Barnett and Stein 2012: 24).

The situation outlined above provokes a theoretical question too general not to treat with caution but nonetheless of considerable interest. Those familiar with the contours of development studies are aware of the discipline’s central irony: that ‘development’ itself is a fiercely debated term for which no universal signifier is agreed upon and of which the primary actionable aim in the last 70 years – economic growth in the global South – has been met with failure, criticism, and even flat rejection of its underlying premises (Acosta 2013; Demaria et al. 2013; Seidl and Zahrnt 2015; Villalba 2013). Yet as academics and activists search for alternatives “after decades in which neither state-driven import-substitution industrialization nor neoliberal market-driven policies have been able to resolve the problems of poverty and inequality” (Villalba 2013: 1428), the development world responds with trends – sustainable development, participatory development, faith in development, and so on. “The ‘new’ turns attention away from the ‘old’ (recurring problems, challenges), mobilizes new energy and resources, and inaugurates a ‘fresh’ start; and so the development machine keeps turning” (Kapoor 2005: 1211). There is little doubt that integrating FBOs into the larger development agenda fulfilled just such an aim, and there is little doubt that the goals and ethos of these organizations changed

because of it. What, then, of the remaining missionaries? What of those individuals and organizations who chose to continue with business as usual? What of those who chose not to change for grant money or brand identity, those who have been ignored as the attention of donors and academics focused on the new religious development agencies? To what extent can we learn something from them? To what extent could they provide the beginning of alternatives to the larger problems of the development world as a whole?

4. Methodology

If there is anything that has been made clear in the preceding argumentation, it is that the boundaries surrounding religion and (or in) development are extremely difficult to determine. Not only does a Durkheimian understanding of the sacred require researchers to understand the line between the religious and the secular as fluid and malleable instead of set in stone, but it has also been shown in concrete terms that FBOs – the central organizational focus of development’s ‘religious turn’ – is anything but a neatly definable term.³⁴ Even missionaries are drawn by proximity into this debate. Some FBOs contain missionary elements; are all missionary organizations FBOs? Where are lines of distinction drawn, and how do they reflect on the question of a missionary development vision?

This research chooses to avoid this definitional quagmire by placing its focus on individuals rather than organizations. Missionaries, it has been argued, are development actors, and as such should be evaluated not by their degree of secularization or by their willingness to bend themselves to donor interests, but rather by their vision of what development means and how they attempt to implement that vision. This attention to both the ideational world and practical implementation missionary development work is thus better served by an investigation of individual actors, where development vision and practice are unmediated by inhibiting organizational directions. Towards this end, this research was conducted following the methods of Grounded Theory, consisting of semi-structured qualitative interviews with American evangelical missionaries selected via a process of theoretical sampling.

4.1. Grounded Theory

The social scientific methodology of Grounded Theory is a flexible process where the purpose is “to investigate individual and social practices by taking individual findings to a higher level of abstraction and developing hypotheses and/or middle-range theories that are empirically grounded” (Peters 2014: 6). Research projects utilizing Grounded Theory may choose to work inductively, drawing as much as possible from empirical data alone and attempting to avoid the influence of prior experience or theoretic modelling, or they may allow for a heuristic framework to be drawn from previously existing research and theory (cf. Peters 2014). The

³⁴ Reference is again drawn here to Smith’s (2016) analysis of dozens of attempts at FBO typographies.

choice is dependent upon the needs and aims of the specific project: larger projects might have the capacity, access, and ambition to build social theories as much as possible from the ground up, whereas for smaller research designs or those with a clearly-defined focus it would be more valuable to combine Grounded Theory with prior scholarship. Given the modest ambitions of this research proposal with regards to time and scope – as well as the particular contingencies presented concerning interview partners – the latter option was here adopted, and post-secular development theory has played an important and formative role in data collection and analysis.

Data analysis in Grounded Theory consists of moving from context-bound description towards the development of abstract concepts. For the practitioner of Grounded Theory, “concepts are developed through constant comparison, interpretation, and abstraction of data segments, and they eventually form the building blocks of an empirically grounded theory” (Peters 2014: 7). Key to the definition of these concepts is the application of coding techniques: the researcher approaches the collected data – in this case in the form of transcribed interviews – and systematically generates thematically appropriate codes from the various data segments. The codes lead the researcher to a higher level of abstraction; they connect disparate data segments; they allow for abstract comparison; and they provide categories for understanding the text that go beyond the contextual specificity of the original. These categories allow the researcher to return to the field of data collection better informed about the subject of research and better able to ask relevant questions. In this way, Grounded Theory is an iterative process, as the insights drawn from one cycle of data collection and analysis build upon themselves in following cycles. This process continues until the researcher has reached a stage termed ‘theoretical saturation’ – that is, where the analysis of new data no longer provides new impulses towards the understanding of abstract concepts (cf. Peters 2014: 7). The present research has followed this model, moving iteratively and allowing the collection and analysis of data to run parallel so as best to inform one another.

4.2. Qualitative interviews

While the hallmark of qualitative methods remains participative observation, qualitative interviews are of special and growing use for situations where the opportunity or ability to be present in a particular space in an observatory role is not available (Lamnek 2010: 301); given the geographical restrictions of the present study, where the researcher was limited to the

environs of Vienna, such interviews presented an ideal method for data collection. (Again considering questions of geography, these interviews were conducted over the internet via Skype.) That being said, there are a variety of different kinds of qualitative interviews, breaking down roughly along how open the researcher chooses to remain when it comes to theory generation and question formulation (Lamnek 2010: 326). Generally speaking, the aim of the researcher in such interviews is that

mit den völlig offenen Fragen wird lediglich der interessierende Problembereich eingegrenzt und ein erzählgenerierender Stimulus angeboten. [Diese Offenheit der Fragen trägt dazu bei, dass] das theoretische Konzept des Forschers nicht bekannt wird und entsprechend verzerrende Wirkungen dadurch nicht auftreten können. (Lamnek 2010: 333)

At the same time, this process remains variable in context. As already seen in the discussion concerning Grounded Theory, the researcher may choose to remain fully open, a *tabula rasa* with no set theoretical framework and no firm directive with which to prompt interview subjects; the interview itself serves then as material for the generation of new theory. It is also possible that, given a preexisting theoretical model or lens, the researcher may instead opt to be relatively more directed in interview questions, using the responses as a basis for the testing and correction of theory. Following this latter option, the interviews used for this research most resembled the specific method known as *episodic* interviews (cf. Lamnek 2010: 331): drawing on the existing theoretical model of post-secularism, questions were alternately goal-oriented and also narratively open. Even in the former case, however, considerable room for spontaneity was allowed, providing for an atmosphere conducive to open communication.

4.3. Theoretical sampling

In total, this research consisted of six interviews (IV1-IV6, assigned numbers randomly and thoroughly anonymized) conducted with four individual missionaries. Initial connections to interview partners were found using the missionary organization International Teams US (www.iteams.us) as a gatekeeper. This organization was identified as a potential partner because of the clear engagement with issues of material development evident from their website and because of the receptivity which the organization expressed towards cooperating with this research. Further interview partners were identified and contacted via the ‘snowball effect,’ where recommendations and contact information were passed on by those already interviewed.

There can be no question of representivity in the findings of qualitative research. Even with the qualifiers of ‘evangelical’ and ‘American’, it cannot be assumed that the present research has identified a representative bloc of opinion and practice. This is not the purpose of qualitative research, however: instead of searching for representivity and other quantifiable measurements of social phenomena, qualitative research instead attempts to understand complex social structures abstracted from the diversities of individual experience. In practice, this means justifying research choices concerning interview partners following the logic of theoretical sampling rather than representivity: that is, individuals are identified as possible sources of data based alone on their relationship to the specific theoretical research interests (Lamnek 2010: 352).

In the case of this research project, the group of people fitting such a description remained very clear: individuals identifying as American evangelical missionaries, of which, as noted above, four were willing to provide interviews. It is of imperative interest to the qualitative researcher, however, that the absence of any requirement for representivity not lead to a complacent selection of interview partners; rather, it must be carefully examined what strengths and limitations are present in the data set so that the researcher is aware of potential distortions that may adversely affect the resulting analysis (cf. Lamnek 2010: 351). Towards this end, a closer look at this data set is necessary. Because of the focus this research places on the worldview and praxis of missionary workers themselves, rather than the efficacy or impact of their programs, the selection of interview partners allowed for a greater leniency with regards to geographic spread. Thus, no specific region was specified for special interest in this research; in the end, interviews were conducted with missionaries working in both South Africa and Ukraine. While all identified as missionaries, those interviewed had a great diversity of professional background and experience, with half having worked in some capacity in conventional development before becoming missionaries. As is perhaps to be expected given geographic limitations and the contingencies of gaining access to interview partners, all those spoken to were involved in the same kind of approach to development, something they called Integrated Community Transformation and which will be discussed at length in the following section. This of course provides very limited insight concerning what other missionaries unaffiliated or unfamiliar with this approach might do in a development context. Lastly, it is worthy of circumscriptive note that all interview partners were white, and all were men. This fact is not the result of an oversight in the research process; indeed, efforts were made to

mitigate this problem, but only to repeatedly meet scheduling problems which made interviews impossible within the time frame set for this research. As such, all that can be done is to remain conscious of the distortions that such a limitation could pose to the following analysis.

4.4. Reflection on personal role

Research is never objective, as the background, interests, and prejudices of the researcher inevitably color the questions asked of, and the conclusions drawn from, the data. Transparency on the part of the researcher is in this regard of vital importance; some words thus remain to be said about my own positioning as researcher and what that means for the findings of the present research. Of particular relevance here are the facts that I am an American, a Christian, and (to the extent that the terminology is useful) politically a socialist. This particular combination of characteristics has done much to shape the academic interests from which this argument arises. As an American, I have been more aware and appreciative of the continuing relevance of religion in social and political life than my European colleagues generally, as well as frustrated by the relatively shallow level of engagement I have met with the topic in the European academy. Considering my religious and political views, I am additionally interested in the confluence of religion and social change – especially when this change is counter-hegemonic in nature – and in the potential (often present but seldom realized) throughout history for Christian groups to encourage and live out radically egalitarian social forms. This is not to say that I somehow believe this is the rule rather than an exception. Indeed, one of the major caveats and counter-balances that I must add here is that, given my experience as an American, I have had no pre-existing affection for the evangelical churches. Because of their affiliation with political conservatism, the label “evangelical” was a derogatory term in the social milieu of my formative years, and I continue to have strong political and theological disagreements with the public constellation of American evangelicalism as it stands today. In this way, my own personal background, at least insofar as it affects this academic undertaking, is not disinterested but is at least able to strike some kind of balance.

5. Missionaries and Development in Theory and Practice

“If you can’t quantify it that way it’s very hard to find funding. Or even to get people to understand what it is you do! People just don’t understand what it means to be working on community transformation, what it means that your primary job is forming relationships and bringing people together – what is that? What does that look like? They want to hear about orphanages built and clinics made and stuff like that.” (IV3: 13)

As the above quote suggests, the approach taken by the missionaries interviewed for this research – integrated community transformation, or ICT – is difficult to communicate in a development world so often articulated in metrics and the considerably less ephemeral transformation of material, spaces, and bodies. It bears repeating that the present analysis is not interested in the first place in the structure or efficacy of ICT as a development program, both because the dimensions of the data collected for this research fall far short of what would be required to evaluate such a project, and because the research interests lie rather with developmental vision and its translation into practice than with the success or implementation of either. All that being said, it is of importance to the argument that follows that the reader have some outline in mind as to what ICT actually looks like, and to that end it will be useful to provide a sketch of day-to-day operations, to the extent that they have been made clear by the interviews. Following this, attention can be turned towards the real heart of the analysis: the developmental vision of the missionaries working in ICT and how exactly they translate that vision into practice.

5.1. Integrated Community Transformation

Integrated community transformation, as pursued by the missionaries working for International Teams,³⁵ is much more readily summarized than it is explicated. Those interviewed were quick to mention the organization’s “2020 vision,” a sloganistic mission statement crafted to communicating their aims quickly and in a morally sympathetic light: with the goal of

³⁵ Concrete examples taken from official ITeams public messaging and organizational logic are presented here in the interests of achieving an overview of ICT generally. The broader argument is not concerned with an evaluation of ITeams as an organization, however, but rather with missionaries themselves as development actors. While all those interviewed for this research were connected in some way with ITeams, only half were currently part of the organization; on the other hand, all were deeply invested in ICT as a missions and development approach.

expanding operations to over 100 communities worldwide by the year 2020, ITeams missionary workers claim to be “bringing people together to help the oppressed, where no one is invisible and everyone has access to food, freedom, and forgiveness” (IV6: 1; IV2: 2; cf. ITeams US 2017b and 2017c for similar language). Contained within this language are several themes that reoccur often in the work undertaken by ITeams: an emphasis on processual work within the community; an interest in reaching out to those portions of the target population that are commonly overlooked; and an eagerness to address needs both bodily, social, and spiritual.

With all that being said, ITeams as an organization is a strictly bottom-up affair. The individual teams under the ITeams umbrella answer first and foremost to the “needs of the community” and the perceived direction of God rather than to top-down directives; one missionary observed that “in International Teams you don’t have to be in an [ICT] project, even though that’s the vision and the mission of the organization” (IV6: 7). The decision to stray so far from this overarching mission statement is, of course, the exception that proves the rule, but it is worth mentioning in passing because it is suggestive of the organizational independence that is typical of the ICT model. To the extent that there is a set of prerogatives for those involved in ICT, they consist of a three-step methodology captured in a bare-bones summary that can be found on the ITeams website: “Enter...Evaluate and Engage...Expand” (2017a). Given that the first step primarily involves training and gaining the trust of the community while the last step is primarily aspirational (both of which will be of more interest later in the argument), the vast majority of the development work – narrowly understood – undertaken by practitioners of ICT is to be found somewhere in the middle under “Evaluate and Engage.”

Stripped of its alliterative jargon, this middle step translates to extended analysis aimed at getting to know the community well, identifying problems and opportunities within the community based on that knowledge, and finding people within the community who are willing to partner in projects targeted to fix those problems or encouraging those opportunities. “The role that I have...,” summarized one interview partner, “is to be able to look at the community as a whole and assess it as much as possible – these are the strengths, these are the weaknesses, this is what exists, this is what doesn’t exist – and then try to find ways to bridge that gap” (IV2: 7). While appearing schematic and linear when in written form, these processes – analysis, identification, partnership – are in reality much more organic and do not necessarily take place in any set order: talking to people in the community may provide insight into a “root problem”

(IV6: 3) for which community support and partnership needs to be found (IV2: 8), while other times the initiative might originate within the community and feed back into and inform the outside analysis (IV3: 3).

The highly context-dependent, bottom-up nature of the ICT approach to project design and implementation – not only must a problem be present and recognized in a community, there must also be a certain amount of community buy-in – means that different ICT teams are often involved in dramatically differing kinds of projects, betraying no clear theme other than a willingness to engage. Material and infrastructural projects such as ad hoc garbage removal, sewage repair, well construction, and road renovation stand alongside economic proposals such as job skills training, entrepreneurship courses, and plans for a community bank (IV2: 12; IV3: 5; IV6: 3-4, 12). Other projects instead target more personal needs, such as feeding pensioners, providing in-home care for the sick, working with post-release criminal offenders, teaching after-school programs, or running support ministries for orphans (IV2: 6, 14; IV3: 4; IV6: 3, 5). Some programs are developed to attend to acute situations such as internal refugees displaced by the civil war in Ukraine (IV6: 5), while others are oriented around chronic issues such as violence in the South African townships (where efforts include first-aid training, community engagement with law enforcement, and the provision of counselling for trauma survivors; IV2: 6-7) or the long-term marginalization of communities such as the Roma (IV6: 3).

Spiritual-themed programs are naturally a common theme for all of the missionaries working in ICT, but here also, methods vary based on context and personal approach. In Ukraine, most projects are run through the existing evangelical churches and part of the ICT team focuses on coaching churches and running evangelistic events (IV6: 3-4); in addition, there is personnel overlap with youth ministry organizations and with a Ukrainian IT teams franchise which has mobilized over one-hundred Ukrainian missionaries throughout the world (IV6: 1-2). Evangelism amongst ICT workers in South Africa on the other hand tends consciously to be of much smaller scale, perhaps in large part on account of difficulties in finding good partners within a cynical and/or disengaged local church leadership.³⁶ Small discipleship groups and a

³⁶ "Most of these pastors are from out of town...they come in, they preach, they leave. Or they're witch doctors, and they've realized, 'I can get an offering, so I'll be a witch doctor during the week, pastor on Sunday, [and] tell people to come visit my shop!'" (IV1: 12)

deep cooperation with faith-based grassroots community organizations here take the place of flashier evangelistic endeavors (IV1: 13; IV2: 4-5).

Such is a crude but also helpful summary of the ICT work being done by ITeams missionaries in Ukraine and South Africa: crude in that it attempts to summarize an approach to development characterized by a diversity that is difficult to communicate succinctly; helpful in that it is suggestive of the fact that ICT is first and foremost a methodology, “a widespread holistic transformation vision rather than a specific program doing specific services for specific people” (IV3: 13). Going forward, any further enumeration of such programs towards the end of understanding how these missionaries conceive of development can accomplish very little. The real question that remains to be answered is what this “holistic transformation vision” looks like and via what processes it is actuated as specific programs. In doing so, the following analysis will rely heavily on a concept that lies at the heart of ICT, both literally and figuratively – namely, that of community itself. It is the argument of this research that the conception of development put into practice by missionaries working in ICT is rooted in a moral-idealistic vision of community that merges physical well-being with socio-spiritual concerns, and that this vision, while not without its tensions, offers a coherent and at times incisive critique of mainstream development dogmas. The remainder of this discussion will thus be dedicated to an interrogation of this idea of community and an analysis of how it intersects with the larger world of development theory.

5.2. Community as Development

Writing in the early 1980’s, the historian Benedict Anderson popularized the concept of ‘imagined communities’ in an influential study on the origins of nationalism. A response to the seeming paradox found in the coexistence of the extreme virility of nationalism as a political and emotional force in the 19th and 20th centuries, on the one hand, and the “philosophical poverty and even incoherence” of the ideology’s basic tenets on the other, Anderson’s solution was to point out that, even though the notion of a common national kinship be fictitious, the very fact that such a notion exists in the imaginations of millions³⁷ lends the community an

³⁷ “It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 2006: 6, emphasis in original).

incontrovertible reality (Anderson 2006: 5-6). Nor did he limit his analysis, theoretically speaking, to a consideration of nationalism; “in fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined,” an observation from which it follows that “communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (Anderson 2006: 6). Within his own work, it is true, there is often not a great deal of praise left over for imagined communities, or at least not those of a certain scale.³⁸ But what Anderson’s research does illustrate is that the idea of community, properly conceived and effectively formulated in the imaginations of many, is something potentially very powerful, something of much greater relevance than the shorthand reference for a collection of individuals.

Compared to the very broad scope of Anderson’s study of nationalism, the communities with which ICT is concerned are much more concrete. Indeed, a large part of the impetus for designing a community-based model was to escape the exaggerated fiction of national identity that had plagued earlier missionary efforts. One interview partner explained that

back when I worked with this one group we would say, ‘oh, we’ve got missionaries in Russia,’ and we would color Russia in [on the map]. And in reality we had one missionary in one town but yet, for our map we colored it. You know, we had Russia! And so we had all these countries where we had minimal work and minimal results. (IV1: 1)

The solution for the missionaries working in ICT was to focus on carefully defined geographic communities with clear boundaries, coupled with a different approach towards resource allocation: “rather than color in countries, let’s put pins on a map...let’s say ‘we are going deep in this village in Russia where we are putting resources [and] people’” (IV1: 1). This choice of focus functions to signal a commitment to the given community that has effects both inwards and outwards, as the missionaries themselves see it as “a way to take responsibility and ownership and see results,” while those observing from within or near the community are encouraged to contribute and cooperate by the tangible attachment to a familiar locality (IV1: 1-2).

³⁸ Apart from his investigation of nationalism – the imaginative stylings of which are of course criticized for their divisiveness and their role in colonial competition and imperialist bloodshed – Anderson was also a critical voice in diaspora studies, where he argues that diasporic communities are able to stoke, fund, and coordinate conflict in their homeland without having to bear the consequences of said conflict on account of their geographic distance (Anderson 1994).

That being said – and while this decision to focus on clear-cut geographic communities makes a certain amount of sense in theory, at least from the missionary perspective – moving this approach from theory to practice throws up some tensions which remain unresolved. The question that presents itself here is: where do these clearly demarcated communities come from? They cannot, by their very clearly-defined nature, be organic; imposed lines of demarcation, on the other hand, will have to be more or less arbitrary, even if such a process does not follow the worst-case scenario presented by the legacy of colonialism (Miles 2008; cf. Diener and Hagen 2017: 24). If a community is clear-cut only by virtue of arbitrary lines on a map, the consequence will be that special attention needs to be paid that assumptions of homogeneity are not conflated with this geographic fiction. As a means of organizing their work, the interest in geographic communities makes sense, but as we shall see that their interest in communities goes deeper, this tension will remain a constant, and unanswered, refrain.

A second operational approach to ICT oriented around “people-focused communities” was developed later by ITeams that bears no relation to geographic locality and instead relates people in a community based on shared experiences in a way that closely mirrors the approach of diaspora studies (IV1: 1; IV5: 1). Several examples of such people-focused communities were offered by interview partners. In the first case, refugees were given as an instance of a group sharing common experiences but often lacking geographic proximity (IV5: 1). The second case offers Muslims as an example of a people-focused community and is more interesting in that it speaks less to on-the-ground realities than it does to the limitations of ICT missionaries. Muslims are obviously too broad a category to reasonably constitute a community focus group based on common experiences alone. However, ICT missionaries initially attempting to work in smaller geographic communities in Muslim countries where proselytization is restricted were met with far too little community support to be effective; in order to accomplish anything it was necessary to gather and coordinate partners from a larger spread, which in effect entailed abandoning the geographic community model (IV1: 2). In this way, the alternative of people-focused communities allows missionaries to adapt to the contingences of a target group but also to their own organizational limitations. That all being said, this approach appears to be the less common variant amongst ICT practitioners, which makes sense considering the work done with people-focused communities – some of which can number in the millions (IV1: 2) – does not seem to be of a piece with the vision surrounding

geographic communities, where clear, tangible engagement and focused commitment take pride of place. None of those interviewed for this research were themselves involved in outreach to people-focused communities, and as such this approach will not be featured in further analysis.

The organizational definitions of community adopted by ICT missionaries, however, are of much less consequence than the moral-idealistic vision of community of which all ICT programs are only the logical outworking. Within this vision, community is a healthy bond of trust and friendly cooperation that unites disparate individuals in relationship and common purpose, awakening people to their own value and potential and encouraging the mobilization of individual resources towards the realization of communal well-being. Community so articulated is *moral* because it conceives of the individual as answering for his or her actions to a higher power who commands the setting aside of self-interest, and of the community as the product of obedience to these commands. It is also *idealistic* because there is a clear-eyed recognition of the discrepancy between what is and what ought to be in individual and community life, but also a commitment to the idea that both can be improved through engagement, relationship, love, and spiritual devotion. Although this vision of community includes the amelioration of physical needs and wants as well as the awakening and cultivation of human capacities, the spiritual emphasis adds a holistic element that, for missionaries working in ICT, makes work directed towards the realization of this kind of community transformative rather than simply developmental.³⁹

Here we meet for the first time, fully articulated, one of the central tensions of ICT as a development concept. The importance of community is not ICT's invention, as decades of research into community development can attest, but what is unique to the missionary formulation of the concept is the way community is imbued with a sacred aspect. Idealized and

³⁹ Some comment deserves to be made here on the nominal distinction between 'development' and 'transformation.' Those interviewed for this research were divided about the meaningfulness of these terms. Some insisted on a real distinction, arguing that the term 'development' falls short of the holistic ministry and vision to which ICT is dedicated: thus, "we don't want development to be our goal. We want transformation, we want to see lives transformed through the power of God!" (IV6: 11). Others were more pragmatic and instead took the position that 'transformation' "is just a fancy word for development, but it's catchy and so...that's what I used" (IV4: 2). Despite these differences, however, all interview partners believed their work to be deeper and to encompass more than that of secular development agencies, if nothing else at least through the addition of the spiritual dimension. Transformation can thus be understood in the Durkheimian sense as the sacralization of the everyday, material processes of development work, though for the purposes of this argument 'transformation' and 'development' may be used interchangeably.

given a distinctly spiritual aspect, as both transformative agent and object, the sacralization of community under ICT contrasts both with materialist approaches to community development and with the modest and utilitarian nature of the clear-cut geographic communities with which it is now conflated. Thus the tension: is community pragmatic or is it idealized, and how does the answer to this question affect issues of inclusion and exclusion, power and participation?

Beyond this recurring question, much work remains to be done to unpack the particularities of this vision and to articulate what it really means. At root, the ICT decision to put community at the heart of its development vision is informed both by a traditional evangelical conviction in the importance of spirituality in human flourishing and by frustration with the limitations of materialist development policy. With regards to the former, Miller (1993) points out that missionaries from Christian groups putting emphasis on transformation of the spiritual life – such as evangelicals – have historically tended to engage more deeply in the community.⁴⁰ More than an excuse to prolong proselytization efforts to increase converts, ICT workers expressed their spiritual focus through a concern for societal ills more extensive than that of their counterparts in the development sphere:

The concern for the development worker is always, ‘what am I doing?’ and then ‘am I going to make the impact in their life that we want to make, physically?’ Whereas from a missionary standpoint...I’m concerned not only about the fact that you’re going to get health care, I’m concerned that you’re going to be able to live with your wife in peace, that you’re not going to beat your children, that you’re going to understand that there’s a higher being in the world, and that this isn’t all just random. (IV4: 14)

For the missionary, these spiritual concerns are problems that donor-driven development is either unable or unwilling to tackle. After spending years doing development work in Africa with the Peace Corps and then later combatting HIV/AIDS as part of PEPFAR⁴¹, one interview partner describes how he had become disillusioned with a development agenda that defined priorities from the top-down. For him,

as valuable as HIV treatment clearly is, it wasn’t the whole picture...The patients, the communities they’re coming from, they’re broken! People’s lives are in tatters...broken families, orphans,

⁴⁰ „Historically, those concerned about the depth of individual conversions tried to settle into protected communities that could provide a stable context for thoroughgoing spiritual transformation. Missions that, on the contrary, defined their obligation as achieving the widest possible dissemination of ‘the Word’ without regard for the actual course of individuals’ inner experiences were far less likely to concern themselves with community building” (Miller 1993: 46).

⁴¹ The U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

fatherlessness, alcoholism, drug abuse, no food on the tables, people living in shacks...And yet, we couldn't really use our funds for anything so distantly related. (IV3: 2)

These less high-profile social miseries, often unquantifiable in economic or materialist terms, were unable to justify funding under donor priorities. Seeking to avoid this development myopia and to implement their concerns for spiritual well-being, ICT missionaries instead opt for holistic approaches at the community level.

The community, while a traditional target for mission work and a natural focus for those tackling wider social problems, remains unromanticized in the missionary mind. Instead, interview partners are keenly aware of the deep clefs that exist in the communities they work in and the experiences that have scarred the individuals therein. The reality of community life is described as broken, as embattled, as distrusting, and as exploitative (IV3: 2, 6; IV1: 9; IV6: 12). One interview partner observed that the impact of social problems on a community often causes some to have difficulties trusting the people around them, explaining that "because of drug and alcohol abuse, because of domestic abuse, all of these things, the idea of community isn't necessarily a good thing...[it] really messes a lot of people up" (IV1: 3). In another example drawn from the survival mindset prominent within the South African townships, a frequent partner from within the community described the social atmosphere as one where "nobody trusts each other, and everyone is always trying to make their neighbor fall" (IV2: 13). In this way, missionary voices are in keeping with secular efforts in community development who point out that communities are often "plagued by endogenous sources of incivility" (Keane 1998; quoted in Mathie and Cunningham 2011: 184). This contrast between the lived realities of community life on the one hand and the vision of missionary workers ambitious to effect and support widespread change through focused community engagement on the other informs the central question for ICT practitioners in their day to day work: "how do you bring people together to do development?" (IV4: 3).

The answer to this question lies in the process-oriented and idealistic aim of a community united under a shared sense of purpose. For ICT workers, "what creates a community truly is a sense of...shared vision,...people who believe in coming together for the better good and respecting one another, loving one another, reaching out to help one another" (IV5: 1). This focus on unity marks the first hard break between ICT missionaries and the development mainstream, or even

modern Western thought generally. Unity is not generally paid anything more than lip service within modern systems of thought where individualism plays a crucial role. Thus, conventional development models tend to hold individual self-determination sacrosanct and conceive of community in aggregate.⁴² Indeed, consensus-style politics is (often rightly) criticized by academics and activists from the left as an obfuscation of real, fundamental conflicts (cf. Demaria et al. 2013; Žižek 2016). But this is not to say that this idealistic missionary call for unity deserves dismissal out of hand; in fact, it echoes one aspect of *buen vivir*, a nominally indigenous development model widely and enthusiastically discussed within development research, in which consensus-based decision making within communities is the norm (Villalba 2013: 1431). Unity is also a central interest in secular models of community development such as asset-based community development (ABCD), where both shared meaning and a sense of community and commitment are held as central principles (Mengesha et al. 2015: 166, 169). There as here, community consensus is a vision articulated along accepted development ideals, even as it parts from standard development methods: rather than being a method of silencing opposition or of universalizing particular interests, building a united community is seen in the context of ICT as fostering community ownership, reducing dependencies by relying on community resources, and empowering the community in such a way that change cascades outwards.

This idea of unity is not intended to be transplanted from the outside by missionaries themselves; rather, it is held to exist already in nascent form in visionaries within the community, the “heroes that are rising up with next to nothing and trying to make a change locally” (IV3: 8). Here the missionaries involved in ICT draw on insights won from studying

⁴² This observation is such a truism – and that at both ends of the political spectrum – that it is difficult choose representative samples as evidence. Neoliberalism and thus all market-based development solutions are of course based on a severe philosophical individualism that views human nature as essentially self-interested and larger societal change as the aggregation of discrete and atomized market interactions (Ptak 2008). Marxist thought, on the other hand, rejects liberal claims concerning individualism, arguing instead that humans are naturally interdependent; this natural state, however, has been warped and altered by the relations of production under capitalism such that liberal individualism, while not natural, is very real. It follows that “genuine community and full individual development will become possible only when we regain control of our economic and social relations” (Sayers 2007: 95), until which time talk of unity and consensus fly in the face of a reality of class conflict where even class identity is drawn just as much from self-interested recognition of one’s own objective social relations as from any moral communal interest. One example of a Western development initiative that avoids neoliberal and Marxist orthodoxies but again demonstrates a primary interest in individuals as vectors of change is the human rights development approach, which aims to empower individuals by improving their access to legal systems and by educating them about their inalienable human rights (OHCHR 2006).

the long histories of missionary and development intervention. One of the main lessons won from this soul-searching is a reluctance to bring too many assumptions about what people need: instead of maintaining the standard Western posture that “you poor people, you don’t have anything, we have things, so we’re going to give you what we think you need,” those interviewed explained that “if you build from within...it’s going to last much longer, it’s going to be much stronger” (IV2: 3-4). Such a stance is mirrored by secular criticisms of classical community development projects which took the essential neediness of the targeted communities in question as an assumptive starting point (Mathie and Cunningham 2011: 177). This realization informs the heavy strategic reliance of ICT work on community partners, as the mandate to build from within shifts the focus from proposing external solutions for internal problems towards recognizing people already committed to serving their communities. One interview partner summarized his contribution by saying that

my heart is really to look...for people that are already very proactive in their communities [and then to ask] – how can we work together with them to support what they’re already doing and build on it? And to help them almost become agents or centers of transformation, that have an impact bigger than the scope of the services they offer? (IV3: 4)

This insistence that the vision that unifies the community is drawn from within the community itself follows current development best practices regarding project sustainability and ownership, as the missionaries themselves are quick to point out: “To have authentic, sustainable development...in a local community, they need to be the instigators...They need to be the ones carrying out the work for that sense of ownership and pride and felt stewardship” (IV3: 10), a recognition of the auxiliary role that missionaries play in a development process the trajectory of which is driven largely by internal resources.

That being said, there is little in the way of consideration concerning who exactly within the community is the generator of such a vision and how exactly that vision impacts the community at large. Put differently, there is a continuum between the particular and the general interest that is flattened by the discursive focus on a moral-idealistic community, and it is within this continuum, hidden from view, that such an approach “runs the risk of neglecting the class and power relations that are embedded in the social relationships at the community level” (Mathie and Cunningham 2011: 184). If their focus is placed on a united community as the locus of general good, rather than pursuing an analysis of power relations among atomized, self-interested actors, then the missionaries are asking to be afforded two articles of faith: first,

somewhat philosophically, that they are interested in the general rather than a particular good and can be trusted, when provided with all relevant information, to work only with those grassroots organizations whose vision is truly fixed upon such a goal; and second, much more practically, that they are familiar enough with the local context to be able to tell the difference between an interested and an altruistic party. It may be that those local “heroes” trying to make a change are easy to find – or perhaps not. Either way, by placing their discursive focus on aiding the efforts of a unified community, ICT missionaries lay claim to a fair amount of trust that may or may not be deserved.

The recognition that communities are the site of potential untapped resources for development is another area in which ICT parts ways with many other development models. This is because the consideration of spiritual qualities allows ICT missionaries to orient their work around resources rather than weaknesses in environments where the latter seem to outweigh the former. Lamenting the tendency for the development world to label some communities as being resource-poor, one interview partner exclaimed “I think that’s an utter lie! There are plenty of resources in communities, and they reside in the people themselves” (IV3: 10). The resources and strengths may be difficult to recognize from within the community,⁴³ but part of the task that ICT workers set for themselves is to bring them out into the light. “That doesn’t just mean people’s skills and their knowledge,” explained one missionary, “

but think about less tangible things like patience, perseverance. I mean, people have that in these communities. They have learned how to persevere and to have patience and to overcome hardship... You know, long-standing faith, that perseverance, that character, hope – all of these things are actual resources that are invisible. (IV5: 6)

Nor are these words of praise for the riches of character mere empty pleasantries. To the contrary, they are reflections on the part of ICT practitioners of a deep-seated skepticism about and aversion to bringing outside resources – especially outside funding – into a community in large quantities. Aside from several small donations and the occasional offer of assistance in writing a request for funding, the ICT workers I spoke with had not been involved in the distribution of outside funding or resources apart from their own personal efforts at community building. The argumentation behind this skepticism is threefold. First, it is felt that the

⁴³ Recounting a common experience of engaging with community members, one interview partner noted: “I met with all of these different organizations,...I’d be like, ‘so what do you think are the strengths [in the community]?’ And they’re like, ‘Oh, there’s no strengths.’ ‘Well, what about this?’ ‘No, no, there’s no strengths’” (IV2: 11).

incentives connected with outside funding are disruptive to the integrity of vision in grassroots community organizations: “they end up doing something that they didn’t set out to do because that’s where the money was, and it actually destroys these tiny entities” (IV3: 8). Second, because so much of the job of ICT missionaries consists of building partnerships with active members of the community, the perception that they as Westerners and outsiders are purveyors of vast amounts of funding only serves to make that job more difficult, as it is seldom clear whether prospective partners are truly dedicated to the community or are rather interested primarily in personal gain (IV2: 6; IV3:7). Finally, it is a concern that access to outside funding, when unaccompanied by a proactive vision around which the community is unified, brings with it the danger of turning people into “passive recipients” (IV5: 7); that is, until internal transformation has been achieved, outside resources are actually held to be disempowering.⁴⁴

This is a critical point, because it is precisely empowerment that a unified community is intended to achieve for itself. To be sure, ICT missionaries talk about their work as being obliquely empowering in its own way (IV1: 14; IV4: 7; see discussion below concerning the role of mission), but the true empowerment that is the goal and the essence of the ICT vision comes from the community understanding itself as a moral collective with resources and goals. As one interview partner explained, empowerment is the logical extension of unity:

People need to wake up to the truth of who they are, as created in God’s image...They need to be transformed in their minds as to what is truly possible, what they are capable of, and what they already have in themselves and with one another in their local communities...One of the most powerful things we can catalyze in development is unity. People simply coming together and working together towards a common vision...When you help people wake up to who they are in Him, and they start coming together toward a common vision, they are empowered not only to work on a specific project but to work on anything! (IV3: 10-11)

This understanding of empowerment as the reflection of internal transformation within a unified community explains the personal and processual nature of this kind of development work. ICT missionaries are in the business of changing hearts and minds, of facilitating the perception of challenges internal to the community “through a lens of hope rather than through a lens of despair” (IV2: 12). It is this abstract and relational interpretation of what affects proximate and sustainable change – in effect, an emphasis at first instance on the potentialities of the personal

⁴⁴ Intriguingly, one interview partner pointed out that this was even the case at the level of evangelism: “churches building big teams to go do a ministry...you’re all coming from the same church and you go out and do what you do, and it’s outreach...but how empowering is that?” (IV3: 8).

rather than the limitations of the structural – that drives ICT workers to pursue empowerment through process rather than program.

This also helps to explain the means by which the expansion of a unified community is meant to move from aspiration to reality. By working to support grassroots visionaries – by connecting them to one another and by exposing others to their vision – ICT missionaries hope that the spirit of community service will cascade beyond its initial dimensions as people encounter the kind of empowered, positive engagement of which they themselves want to be a part. This hope is summarized by the idea that “transformed lives transform communities, and transformed communities transform lives” (IV2: 14). All interview partners have stories of these kinds of transformative encounters. One example describes how a man from the South African townships went through a skills-training program offered by a grassroots organization, after which he was moved to volunteer at an after-school program; “seeing people care for his community...seeing kids from the after-school program start to look up to him and call him brother...he really took on this role and this responsibility,” a change which put him on a path towards studying law and “focusing on giving back to his community” (IV2: 15). These stories are small-scale, concrete, and personal, but they contain a vision which is greater, a vision where ICT missionary workers see their role as “waking people up...and increasingly stepping back” (IV5: 7) as an increasingly unified and increasingly self-confident community builds on its strengths, evaluates its weaknesses, and develops a common way forward.

In many ways – as mentioned in the paragraphs above – ICT is very similar to secular models such as asset-based community development, which also sacralizes the community as the locus of meaningful engagement and direction in development initiatives. ABCD also presents itself as an alternative to donor-driven development models; it also focuses on the assets which are latent in the community itself, including relationships and personal talents; it places a strong emphasis on grassroots organizations and what is termed “inside-out” development (Mathie and Cunningham 2011; Mengesha et al. 2015: 168). Even the obvious tensions present in ICT at this point in the argument – questions about the occlusion of power within a discourse of idealized community, first and foremost – are present in ABCD as well (Mathie and Cunningham 2011: 184). In this way, approaching ICT from a post-secularist perspective (where ICT missionaries are not immediately removed from consideration because they are missionaries) reveals that the individuals involved in ICT work are, to a large extent, working

in parallel to current alternative development models – perhaps even advancing beyond them in their critique of the effects of external resource dependencies on development outcomes. Interestingly, Mathie and Cunningham (2011: 183) note that, for NGOs pursuing ABCD, the most problematic aspect of the process is trying to redefine the organization's role in a situation where development programming is being driven by the grassroots. Here the ICT missionaries, representing a very different organizational structure, plot a very different path. It is in the interest of exploring this path that the argument now turns towards an examination of the self-understanding of the missionary role.

5.3. Role of Mission

Having outlined the ICT understanding of community as a moral-idealistic driver of change, it is worth considering how missionaries work to actualize this vision and to bring it into everyday practice. Framed more provocatively, the question needs to be addressed: if the community is understood as having the potential to drive its own development, and ICT workers are bringing little to no outside resources to assist with that process, then what are these missionaries actually bringing to the table? How do they justify their engagement in these communities so foreign to them? And how – if at all – do they understand their identity as missionaries to be reflected in development work?

The answer to these questions, in broad strokes, is that ICT missionaries see themselves as advisors and helpers legitimized by sincere relationship. This advisory role is multi-faceted and requires a bit of unpacking. It will be helpful, then, to begin instead with the subject of relationship. Relationship is viewed as absolutely central to the work and mission of ICT practitioners; more than any other organizational task or project, interview partners described building trust and relationship as the foundational element of their contribution to development in the community: “it's really just building personal relationships. I believe that's one of the foundations of development anyway – it's all relational, and if it's not, you're not going to get very far with ultimate impact” (IV3: 4). This focus on relationship begins even before an ICT worker enters a community, as initial connections are sought with grassroots organizations which eventually leads to these workers getting personal permission from community members to be active in the community (IV1: 2); the idea of trying as some other agencies do to run development projects from outside the community, forgoing that level of personal engagement,

is dismissed as hypocritical (IV2: 4). Once they are within the community – especially during the early months when they are trying to familiarize themselves with the needs and resources on site – ICT workers are primarily involved in getting to know as many people on the ground as possible. One interview partner described his first six months in a South African township, explaining how “I was around with these guys...I’d meet their sisters who had been raped...I’d hear about their family members who had been killed, I’d see the flooding in their shack,...the wires going through puddles...these live puddles!” and how he initially gained a reputation as a drug dealer for his tendency to spend time with people in disreputable shacks (IV2: 11). These interactions of course serve to inform the outsiders about the prevailing conditions within a community, but they also function as the bedrock for future engagement. One missionary illustrated this point by indicating that “most of what I’ve done has just been through relationships and connections,” even going so far as to claim the number of relationships he has built as perhaps his primary quantitative metric for measuring the impact of his work (IV3: 8, 9). This is because the trust that is gained through relationships – even over and above its personal value – allows ICT missionaries to be perceived as legitimate actors in a milieu rightfully suspicious of outsiders both for the abuses of earlier missions and the corrosive failures of past development interventions (IV3: 13; IV4: 10). Relationships thus represent a chance to “win the right to be heard” (IV4: 14), an important precondition for all of the missionary contributions that follow.

The argument may of course be brought – and needs to be considered – that relationship is perhaps not the most suitable ground on which to base your legitimization: that the focus on relationship further muddies the waters around the question of power dynamics within a community by making the missionary an interested party, or even that what the missionary interprets as friendship is in fact subject to an imbalance of power which gives the missionary undue influence. Such a criticism naturally returns the discussion to the question of how much faith we place in the individual missionary’s judgment and honesty. While this tension must remain unresolved in the context of this research, however, it is worthwhile to consider this issue in light of the fact that, unlike many other foreign or even domestic NGOs and development organizations, ICT missionaries do not bring much in the way of outside resources, whether financial or technical. Thus they are, comparatively speaking, short one means of leverage or influence, which may lend plausibility to the notion that they must win the right to be heard via relationship-building.

Of the contributions that grow out of these relationships, the one that is most recognizable and most accessible to rest of the development world – or most alienating to the culturally non-interventionist post-development or institutional economics approaches (see chapter on theory) – is that of the evaluative strength of an outside observer. Having won the trust of the community through the fostering of relationships and demonstrated commitment, the outside perspectives of ICT missionaries concerning the strengths and weaknesses within the community take on an added value. Importantly for community members themselves (at least according to the way the missionaries tell it, which leaves room for cynical skepticism) this value does not stem from any perceived authority of these missionaries as Westerners or as development experts, but rather from their status as friends whose position as outsiders allows them a more objective view above local divisions.⁴⁵ ICT workers present this privileged advisory position as a key strategic contribution to fostering unity within the community, pointing out that “sometimes it takes someone from outside to help unite local vision, because there’s so many little divisions in that community” (IV5: 6). One interview partner gave concrete form to these considerations by describing how

programs are often competing for resources, competing for attention, competing for publicity...If you have somebody who kind of knows all the players and doesn’t have complete...not loyalty, but submission to just one person, it makes it much easier to look and connect people and be like, well hey, you’re doing this, these guys are doing this, I know somebody here in town who’s wanting to get involved in this same thing – can we come together and maybe figure out something that we could do? (IV1: 11)

The outsider perspective is also presented as a contribution in that the missionaries are able to appreciate and enhance those strengths and resources within the community that are routinely taken for granted (IV2: 11; IV5: 5-6). ICT missionaries also take it as a responsibility to provide feedback and to assist with the expansion of the community vision in order to more fully utilize existing capacities to cover unmet needs, especially of those who are often overlooked. A project that begins exclusively focused on skills might thus be encouraged and coached to grow its capacities to be able to extend services to the disabled, to distribute food parcels to those

⁴⁵ This is not to say that the cultural lens through which missionaries see can be lifted, merely that the capacity in which they speak is one of earned friendship rather than assumed expertise or cultural superiority. ICT missionaries are also well aware of the cultural lenses through which community members are staring back at them: one interview partner ruefully described how being white in South Africa at times gave him undeserved credibility, while at other times – especially outside of the circles where he had already fostered relationship – his whiteness caused everything he touched to be regarded with intense suspicion and even hostility (IV1: 9, 14).

who cannot work, and to offer counselling (IV1: 12-13). Similarly, a coworker was described in one interview as having the ability to come in and find

somebody with the smallest bit of vision...and he helps them really think it through – ‘what does that mean? What is your plan? What is your actual end goal?’ And by the time he’s done the vision is [much bigger] and there’s a plan and there’s all these things. (IV1: 14)

Supporting grassroots organizations in becoming more than they originally dared to envision is thus an area where missionaries draw some of the clearest gratification regarding the impact of their labors. Finally, after a unified community has been built sufficiently to be able to start identifying, from a position of confidence rather than dependence, needs that cannot be met internally, ICT workers then see themselves as a bridge to those resources, helping connect people to funding in an informed, sustainable way (IV2:13). In this way, ICT missionaries are engaged in this regard with many of the same commitments and considerations of ABCD workers doing advisory work focusing on building civil society in poor communities, albeit with a strong relational emphasis (Mathie and Cunningham 2011: 182).

Moving into a contribution that is much more uniquely missionary in nature, however, ICT missionaries also describe their commitment to living as role models of good morals and healthy relationships as a major contribution – and responsibility – in their development efforts. This interest in the communication of lived moral norms is of course rooted in a Christian – and particularly an evangelical – worldview, but it is also related to a conscious critique of conventional development workers and even a concern for development outcomes: thus the perspective of non-religious development professional is characterized as

‘We’re here to do a job, and we can live our lives how we want to, because we’re not accountable to anybody for our actions, so no matter how we live it’s not as important as what we did.’ Whereas, from a Christian perspective, what you did was equally important [as] how you live, and how you live – if it [is] not a reflection of your walking with Christ – [is] going to be equally damning...to what you’d call success, as to if you’d actually do bad development. (IV4: 13)

This connection in the missionary mind between moral uprightness and development outcomes logically follows from the notion of development as the outworking of a moral-idealistic community. ICT workers are therefore heavily aware of their perceived responsibility to demonstrate and foster an upstanding character. In practice, this emphasis in various areas, each being more or less personal and more or less culturally specific, apparently varying according to situation and personality. One interview partner explained (after emphasizing his own flaws)

that “for the people that do work closely with me...I think by walking in a spirit of humility and learning and seeking other people’s wisdom and really being open to correction as a leader, it speaks volumes” (IV3: 14). For others, invitations to community members to spend time in more personal settings, such as meals or visits to the missionary’s home, were seen as opportunities to model healthy or moral behavior (IV1: 5; IV4: 8-9).

It goes without saying here that the mention of having moral influence is enough to make all but the most unreflective development worker uncomfortable, evoking as it does the uncomfortable memories of colonialism’s ‘civilizing mission’ (cf. Smith 2016: 3). While much of this discomfort is appropriate and unavoidable, there is also ample and refreshing recognition on the part of ICT workers of the dangers of conflating the moral with the cultural. Various means are used to defuse potential landmines in this regard: time and patience are reserved for the extended discussion of disagreements;⁴⁶ as many questions as possible are asked about culture in advance of any sensitive discussions (IV1: 5; IV2: 13); and missionaries try to implement an understanding that God has imprinted value and moral guidance upon all cultures (IV1: 5). Perseverance and learning from mistakes is also stressed in the face of inevitable failures (IV4: 10). When conflicts do arise between the moral convictions of ICT workers and cultural norms within the community, the missionaries try to maintain a dialogue to find a common ground that is consistent with biblical principles. Interview partners presented these conflicts as necessary and criticize other development workers for avoiding them. Thus in one example of such a situation, missionary engagement in a village where hierarchies are a dominant cultural factor might stop to interrogate the moral standing of the leaders they’re cooperating with; if they detect “a sense of sin and separation in how they should be treating others, [they’ll] try to deal with that” instead of saying “oh ok, we can let that go...we’re getting our work done and we don’t care how he treats his staff” (IV4: 10). More often, however, the particular constellation of morality and culture modelled by ICT workers does not lead to open conflict or debate, instead either being adopted by community members or ignored. This is especially the case where the value or moral being represented does not affect material interests but instead speaks to a perceived internal need. Modelling “healthy emotions” in men who have lost a friend or loved one to street violence goes against the masculine norm, but its psychological effects are advantageous and the cultural stakes are low (IV1: 14); more

⁴⁶ “What we typically in the U.S. think would be one conversation, you have to expect internationally with culture and so forth it’s going to be three, four, five conversations...It’s going to take a lot longer than you think” (IV4: 10).

uncomfortably for mainstream development but responding to a situation of social turmoil in the South African townships, ICT missionaries take great care to protect the holy evangelical institution of the family by modelling “healthy culture” when it comes to marriage and parenting (IV1: 5; see discussion concerning ICT and gender below). In this way, following an interpretation of societal suffering that stresses the brokenness of social relations on a moral and personal level, missionaries understand their presentation and living out of healthy or biblical norms to contribute substantively to development efforts.

Lastly, ICT missionaries understand themselves as contributing to development in the community simply by way of their being missionaries. This is because, in their mind, mission and development, properly understood, are two sides of the same coin.⁴⁷ There is a totality to this understanding that is difficult to capture; even some of the slogans used by interview partners to explain it – “we don’t separate the compassion of Christ from the mission of Christ” (IV6: 4), for example – fall short, suggesting that compassion and mission are two distinct components that can be separated or united as the situation demands. Indeed, such an understanding is standard in development research and easily verifiable in reality, yet it does not reflect the full vision of mission that emerged from the interviews conducted for this research. Instead, ICT missionaries were very clear that they see “development as part of the Gospel, part of the outworking of what our faith is, and we want to make sure that the deed and word are both going together, rather than apart” (IV4: 4). This of course means that the meeting of human needs is at the heart of ICT, but coextensive with that goal is the desire to reach people for Christ. This outreach can take different forms, but what is important to understand is that

⁴⁷ There is arguably a shameless artificiality built into the way this discussion has been structured, in that this unified conception of mission and development is being discussed here – as one of the ways that missionaries see themselves as bringing their vision of development into practice – instead of as part of the earlier section concerning this very vision. This choice requires some justification, for which three arguments will be provided. Firstly, while the understanding of development as the growth of a moral-idealistic community is consistent with the position that mission and development are identical, it is by no means necessary; it is theoretically possible that the latter position might be held without the former, making the former of more immediate interest. Secondly, while this research is critical of a secularist discourse which attempts to separate the spiritual from the material, such is the dominant discourse of development research. This would not be of compelling argumentative value but for the third and final point, which is that failing to make any differentiation between mission and development in this research would be to endanger the reception of the ICT model with secularist readers, which would do it a disservice. It bears repeating that the secular and the religious are not a binary; ICT has materiality and valid things to say to even the most materialist development researcher, and that although it is also deeply spiritually-oriented. The decision regarding the structure of this argument is thus painfully compromising, but hopefully productive.

instead of being an addition or a supplement to material development, it is of a piece with the latter within a larger development vision.

This becomes clearer in light of the fact that, for ICT workers, the central element of mission, too, is relationship. This focus – founded on the theological argument that “Christianity is a relationship first” (IV1: 12) – is exemplified by a method of discipleship based around the ideas of invitation and challenge. Rather than making material programs conditional on participation in evangelistic meetings or discipleship workshops, ICT workers live out their faith in their everyday lives, helping others and thereby establishing relationships (IV2: 16). When these relationships bear fruit, the missionaries are prepared to give people from the community extensive relational access, “an invitation into their life,...an invitation into our lives” (IV2: 16). People are taught to read the Bible, they are taught to pray, they are empowered to live a mature and discerning Christian life (IV1: 12). In the missionary mind, this discipleship has transformative effects that are in no way relegated to the spiritual dimension. Instead, the natural response to such empowerment is a challenge: to ask yourself the question

what is God saying, and what am I going to do about it?...The Lord is always mobilizing us to do things for Him...So when you engage people spiritually – and not everybody – but I think the natural expression of wanting to get busy and do things for the Lord is trying to figure out ways to plug into the community and see that transformation take place. (IV2: 16)

In this way service leads to relationship, relationship leads to discipleship, and discipleship leads to service in a self-sustaining development dynamic. To remove any one element would logically be to destroy the sustainability of the process. Mission without service removes the door to people’s inner lives that is opened when their physical needs are met; mainstream development programs that do not involve an enhanced relationship to God and to one another lack the means of establishing a challenge to drive personal engagement and sustainable change.

Not that the developmental vision of ICT missionaries is necessarily so mechanical. One interview partner chose to quietly communicate his worldview along much more theological lines: “to me, the meaning of development is...you’re actually increasingly developing into the fullness of the image in which you’ve been created. And that applies to whole communities and to whole cities” (IV3: 11). ICT workers believe that by helping community members to know

God and to meet their needs, they are also helping them to understand the fullness of this image. For them, that is contribution enough.

5.4. Tensions and Connections

Up until this point, the discussion has revolved around answering the research question, narrowly defined: that is, what kind of understanding of development do missionaries engaged in ICT have, and how does this inform their own everyday activities and practices? What remains to be integrated into the analysis is a critical look at the tensions within the ICT development vision and then what potential compatibilities, if any, can be drawn between this vision and other development approaches. In short, it must be argued how ICT is relevant to the larger world of development research.

At the outset it will be useful to briefly discuss the most obvious tension – shortcoming, even – of the ICT model, both because it is the easiest to dispense with and as it will provide some kind of model for the analysis that follows. This tension is of course that the vision behind ICT focuses almost exclusively on the personal rather than the structural. Rather than addressing larger, external, structural problems such as global trade imbalances, the exploitative nature of neoliberal capitalism, widespread government corruption, dysfunctional legal systems, and destructive historic racial, social, or gender hierarchies, ICT, it might be said, follows the age-old missionary tradition of fetishizing the cultural super-structure and offers with its obsession with internal resources, communal unity, and spirituality a myopic self-help program at best, a perverse blaming of the victim at worst.

Even setting aside the post-secular arguments which undergird the present research, such a charge is short-sighted on two fronts. First of all, it drastically underestimates the value of collective unity. As Bradley points out, “collective identities bind communities, enabling them to act together at times of crisis and suffering,” an observation to which is appended that “it is this collectivity that may offer an alternative to western development models” (2009: 107). To talk down the contributions of ICT because it does not combat larger, somehow realer issues – as defined by Western experts – is to fundamentally misunderstand what its missionary practitioners are bringing to the table. But even beyond this point, such a criticism falls into the

trap of assuming that the solution to development problems is to be found in an either/or scenario. On the contrary, Smith (2016) argues that the language of comparative advantage needs to give way to a more inclusive interactive framework where in any given field the work of all development actors – missionary, faith-based, conventional, etc. – needs to be taken together and their complementarities explored. It is true that ICT missionaries cannot do much of anything to affect the broader structural problems behind historic poverty and social misery in South Africa or Ukraine, but they are making other contributions where they can, and that in a reflected and sensitive manner. What then can be learned from their approach, and how can their successes be coupled with other approaches towards other development ends? Following this line of interrogation, the discussion will now turn to an investigation of the tensions and opportunities for connection within ICT as regards gender, market liberalism, and the attitude towards politics.

5.4.1. Gender and ICT Family Values

The subject of gender tends to be the most frequent site of hand-wringing and friction between the world of conventional development and faith-based actors, as the tendency towards sometimes deep-seated gender hierarchies in religious communities conflicts with the secular commitment to gender mainstreaming (Diaz 2013). The incompatibility between these two approaches is often mutual. Secular development practitioners express a justified concern that an overeager and uncritical embrace of the viewpoints of religious stakeholders could mean that

the painful journey...to mainstream development gender equity objectives into overall development strategy...is being sidelined, often to the detriment of women within faith communities in developing countries who rely on international standards as a platform on which to base their own struggles for equality within their respective faith communities. (Pearson and Tomalin 2008: 47)

At the same time it is sometimes noted that Western NGOs and development initiatives that attempt to speak over the heads of local religious beliefs concerning gender often fail to engage with the target population and can even contribute to further marginalization of women (Deneulin and Bano 2009: 25, 155). And while Pearson and Tomalin (2008) stress that no religion is a monolith and that gender sensitivity will vary among the members of a faith community no matter what the religious leadership lays out as the orthodox line, the tensions surrounding the implementation of gender mainstreaming in development by and amongst faith communities remain.

Such tensions are readily apparent amongst ICT missionaries. Without exception, interview partners seemed well-prepared for questions concerning gender; their answers, however, revealed an engagement with the topic far more consistent with the women in development approach, where women are consciously integrated into existing development practices and strategies (Koczberski 1998), than with a more thorough and multi-level gender analysis⁴⁸ such as that provided by gender mainstreaming. ICT workers speak admiringly of women, noting the immense responsibilities which they are willing to take on themselves. “Women step up, when they need to they will step up,” noted one interview partner; “we see in families too...the vast majority [of families here are] mother-led households...The mother is working, the mother is taking care of the kids, and women just in this culture have more drive” (IV1: 5-6). No effort was made to establish structural causality for this cultural phenomenon. Far from it, in the South African townships it is a point of pride that women make up about a three-fourths majority of skills-training courses offered by ICT workers and partners, an observation in keeping with the fact that women overwhelmingly outnumber men in terms of employment (IV1: 5, 7). This same overrepresentation of women, indicated another interview partner, is to be found among the leadership of grassroots community organizations in South Africa. This was again tied back to “the fatherlessness problem”: because men aren’t around to take responsibility, women “have to carry the weight of whole families, and...as a result they end up mothering whole communities, and they’re the ones that often start things” (IV5: 4). In this way, while the truancy of men causes much concern (see below), the talking point most often referred to by ICT missionaries with reference to gender is admiration for the initiative shown by women in the community and satisfaction with the own role in integrating their participation into the broader process of development.

This is not to say that a gender analysis, rather than just a focus on women in development, is absent from all of the work done by ICT missionaries. This is especially true when it comes to the emphasis placed on invisible sections of target communities. Thus in the Ukraine missionaries are concerned with the gender dynamics within Roma communities where “barons” conduct exploitative loan practices with other men in which their daughters’ financial

⁴⁸ A gender analysis is here understood as an investigation of how gender is socially constructed and negotiated in a given setting, how gender roles inform and affect the agency of individuals, and how power dynamics are influenced and (re)produced around questions of gender in a particular social context.

futures as recipients of state child care payments are used as surety (IV6: 12). A great deal of gender sensitivity is displayed in the South African townships surrounding the issue of pervasive violence, where both the violence itself and the shame and stigma attached to victimhood are carefully depicted as gendered phenomena:

Your trauma victims of rape and abuse...that is an incredibly shameful thing to have happen. Guys brag about doing it, but girls, if it happens to them, they are seen as...a prostitute or, you know? And even young boys, who get raped, it's like, 'oh, well, you're gay, or you wanted it...'" (IV2: 10)

This appreciation for the gendered nature of violence is then reflected in efforts to provide trauma counselling; while these programs are visited primarily by women "because of the perception of what counselling is, and what trauma is" (IV1: 6), ICT missionaries are also proactive in offering and encouraging these services for children (IV2: 7) and men. Especially with this latter group, interview partners were eager to emphasize the importance that challenging cultural constructions of masculinity has in defusing future violence (IV1: 14).

At other times, however, the inclusion of gender analysis in missionary development work is startlingly absent. In some cases, this omission is inexplicable, such as when one interview partner described the problem of human trafficking as "a cultural issue, it's a heart issue, it's an economic issue, it's a geographic issue" (IV2: 1), while somehow overlooking how the channeling of women and girls into the sex industry could be an issue of gender. Most often though, gender does not emerge as a relevant category for ICT missionaries because they have firm beliefs concerning gender roles generally and interpret problems through those lenses rather than with reference to a model where gender is something socially constructed and therefore situated within a set of power dynamics which need to be critically reflected. The clearest example of this is can be found by returning to "the fatherlessness problem" of South Africa, where the pervasive male abandonment of familial duties is mirrored by the disproportionate resilience and initiative of women taking responsibility for their family and community. Articulating a very standard element of evangelical faith, one interview partner illustrated clearly how a belief in ideal gender roles reframes the entire situation in moral terms:

God's design was for the man to be the leader, the provider, and I think men just in general all over the world continue to fall short of that calling....I think that's probably responsible for a lot of the drinking, a lot of the drugs, a lot of the just guilt and shame, you know, for not [living up to that calling]...and a lot of them don't even realize that's their God-given right. (IV1: 5)

In this way, men are depicted as embodying a morally-articulated self-fulfilling prophesy where a general negative assessment regarding their ability to live up to their role serves only to perpetuate this very failure. This is not to say that there is not some truth to this idea: the point is rather that by assuming fixed gender definitions closely linked to moral beliefs, so much is occluded from the larger analysis. There is no apparent consideration for how internal power dynamics affect this state of affairs or continue to be perpetuated – “men hold the majority of the government spots in the community, they hold the actual decision-making spots,” for example (IV1: 7) – nor is there an appreciation of how other factors can interact with perceptions of gender in ways that make the static definition of the latter potentially destructive. One is tempted in this light to wonder whether the gendered economic expectation that a man be “the leader, the provider” of a family might be poorly suited to a community such as those found in the South African townships, wracked by the effects of neoliberal market policies, material poverty, and economic precarity.

There are elements of the ICT approach to gender that are more palatable to non-evangelical audiences and that serve to soften the overall tensions. One interview partner, for example, voiced his interest in running programs for families and explicitly tying the idea into the conception of a unified community central to the ICT vision, the rationale being to increase engagement with men in the community without perpetuating the division that comes with running separate programs for men and women (IV5: 4-5). This idea would of course be linked to the family-centered gender constellation favored by missionaries, but it would at least be holistically connected to the communitarian ethics that make ICT so appealing. Any number of easy points of connection to and palatabilities with conventional development will not change the fact that missionaries are committed to – and committed to promoting – a divinely-sanctioned gender hierarchy within the family, however. As Deneulin and Bano (2009: 156) point out, this is a situation where “the development work of a faith community cannot be separated from its identity as a worshipping faith community, with all that entails.” This does not mean that cooperation between ICT missionaries and conventional development actors is impossible, but it does mean that that cooperation must be founded on open, honest, and respectful dialogue between the two parties, conscious that both have differing ideas concerning development and the proper way to organize and live a good life. Such a process is not comfortable, as concerns are justified and disagreements go deep, but the alternative to such dialogue “risks being either a secularization of religious traditions (forcing them to abide by the

secular vision of development) or their marginalization” (Deneulin and Bano 2009: 163). As has been argued in the theoretical framing for this research, both of these alternatives are philosophically unsatisfying, and the history of the twentieth century has shown that missionaries have outlived marginalization and incentives to secularize. The question for mainstream development actors is whether they seek cooperation in dialogue or throw away the potential that ICT missionaries bring to the table.

5.4.2. Neoliberalism and Faith in Markets

It is hardly a surprise that one of the major tensions running through any American evangelical missionary effort would have to do with neoliberal capitalism. Since at least the 1980s, arguably the most influential force in American politics has consisted of an “evangelical-neoliberal resonance machine” (Connolly 2011: 650), a fusion of two not obviously complementary or even especially compatible ideologies, emerging from the particularities of the American political system, that “has bonded neoliberals motivated by hatred of government intervention in economy and society with religious conservatives motivated by a desire to foreground religion in public life” (Hackworth 2012: 3). United and embodied in the small-government, born again figure of Ronald Reagan, what began as political expedience has over the decades – at least for the evangelical contingent within this alliance – been forged into an apparently single but inherently strained ideological identity, where methodological individualism and boundless trust in free markets become enmeshed and confused with Christian ethics and piety.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ The position taken here regarding the philosophical compatibility of neoliberalism and Christianity is one of reserved skepticism. Without making any claims about what the Bible “actually” says, there are at the very least numerous historical examples of Christian groups who have drawn conclusions very much at odds with even the most humane interpretation of neoliberalism; that is merely to say that internal tensions here are to be expected. And yet the empiric evidence of the apparent evangelical total self-identification with the neoliberal worldview cannot be argued away, even when it is taken into account, as Hackworth (2012) argues, that the religious right has at times blunted neoliberalism’s most cruel and inhumane features. Any full explanation for this most American of phenomena must take into account not only religion and politics, but also psychology, class, and gender analysis. Connolly (2008: 34) makes the following attempt: “The radical Christian right *compensates* a series of class resentments and injustices produced by the collision between cowboy capitalism and critical social movements by promising solace in the church and the family; it then cements (male) capitalist creativity to the creativity of God himself, fomenting an *aspirational politics* of identification by workers with men of prowess and privilege; these self-identifications and compensatory entitlements then encourage those sweltering in the pressure cooker to demonize selected minorities as nomadic enemies of capitalism. God, morality, and civilizational discipline.”

The way that American capitalism has become second nature to many evangelicals is also no secret to the world of development research, which since at least the late 1990s has commented on the way that FBOs further neoliberal agendas abroad as well as at home (cf. Hearn 2002). Part of this furtherance is found in the way that the privatization of social services under the umbrella of civil society complement a neoliberal rollback of the state, standing in to fill the holes where public responsibility has been relinquished (see section on politics below). But just as important is the way in which Christian ethics and beliefs concerning the right configuration of society have come to correspond with market interests with regards to labor. Drawing on qualitative research concerning the domestic American FBO Jobs for Life, Purser and Hennigan provide one example of how evangelical programs focused on “biblically-based job training” can naturalize and even spiritualize market imperatives and the exploitation of a cheap labor force (2006: 112). Rather than combatting poverty and existing power imbalances, such training “individualizes the problems of poverty and unemployment,” emphasizing “the sacred character of and Christian imperative to work in ways that bolster the neoliberal project of enforcing market- and work-compliance” (Purser and Hennigan 2006: 113, 130). Though perhaps not without any benefit and presumably well-intentioned, the uncritical manner that Jobs for Life – and other evangelical organizations like it – interface with questions of economic life and organization obscures rather than opposes unequal social relations and structural injustices.

Much of the same criticism applies to the work done in jobs training by ICT missionaries as well. Indeed, while the biblical content of such training programs is much less aggressive than that employed by Jobs for Life thanks to the more relationship-oriented ICT approach to evangelization, jobs and skills training is a major focus for all of the missionaries interviewed for this research. To their credit, this is understood to be a major need within the community. In the South African township where one interview partner is active, for example, poverty is universal and unemployment is at around 80% (IV2: 12). Here the missionaries and their community partners offer “work-for-a-living” training that aims to bolster individual employability by explaining “what employers are looking for, kind of these basic things that...a lot of people in the culture don’t really know”: hard work, timeliness, hygiene, and so on (IV2: 14). By all missionary accounts, the programs are successful, securing a 60% employment rate for graduates. But at the same time, this comes at the cost of participation in the “contemporary preoccupation with employability,” a neoliberal discourse that “tethers questions of equality

and human development to an instrumental capitalist obsession with growth and renewal that may aggravate marginalization, exploitation, and stigmatization” (Chertkovskaya et al. 2013: 713). That this discourse is much less advanced in the periphery of South Africa than in the centers of global capitalism – showing up to work on time and not smelling bad is a much lower bar to employability to clear than the constant pressure for optimization and diversification of skills placed on labor in the global North – is beside the point. By participating in a discourse that articulates work as a privilege to be earned via self-discipline rather than a set of relations based on mutuality of respect and responsibility, ICT adopts a stance here that for critics of neoliberalism must be labeled as regressive.

Other courses offered by ICT missionaries aim to stimulate entrepreneurship by instructing community members in marketable skills such as carpentry, sewing, or beading (IV1: 7; IV2: 12). In South Africa these programs – or at least those directed at men – have met with markedly little success, a result that, among other things, has prompted a frustration amongst the missionaries that is revealing in its pro-market biases. This frustration takes two forms, the first of which is the general lamentation that people in the townships seem to have misplaced their natural entrepreneurial spirit. One interview partner complained that

I know in other African settings people are just natural entrepreneurs – they’ll do what they have to do to try to make money. And here, I just don’t see a lot of that. This entrepreneurial training we’re trying to do...it’s like pulling teeth trying to get people to participate! (IV3: 12)

There does exist a real recognition that history plays a large part in this attitude – especially the legacy of apartheid – but also very little in the way of any reflection on the structural features of capitalism that might make community members skeptical. Secondly, ICT workers were quick to condemn an unhealthy attitude of dependence on government, bemoaning that “people think the government is the only answer to their problems, and that generates anger and frustration and...I don’t think that’s healthy” (IV5: 3). Again historical factors are taken into account (IV2: 13), but the conclusion for ICT missionaries remains that people in the community have the need and ability to take responsibility for themselves and the betterment of their lives. In this way, the uncritical acceptance of and faith in capitalistic forms for personal advancement and development (i.e. entrepreneurship) and a general distaste for reliance on government handouts illustrate that many of the missionary assumptions regarding material development are based on neoliberal models. Especially taken in combination with the ICT stance on employability, this constellation of neoliberal elements is suggestive enough to

undermine even the most idealistic elements of the missionary approach: after all, Purser and Hennigan (2016: 125) also use the word “transformation” in their analysis of Jobs for Life, linking it not to empowerment, but rather to “submission to the market as means of glorifying God.”

This picture becomes much more complex when taken within the wider context of the ICT vision for a moral-idealistic community. This is because there is a fundamental contradiction between the idealistic communitarianism at the heart of this vision and the radical, fatalistic individualism animating the neoliberal worldview which has become the naturalized and operating assumption of American evangelicals generally. In effect, ICT missionaries are unconsciously carrying banners for two entirely different sets of ideals: on the one hand, a communal vision of cooperation and solidarity in which “the people need to be empowered to be what the church is, and that’s small bodies that are actually working together,...pooling resources, pooling talents, and looking to see how they can change things” (IV4: 8); on the other, a capitalist utopianism where individual grit and merit contribute to a dynamic of change founded on market competition, and community welfare is derived from the sum of society’s atomized, self-interested moving parts. Crucially, interview partners never actually spoke about this second set of individualistic ideals aside from passing descriptions of business-focused community programs, in contrast to the fervor in which they spoke of fostering community spirit. This is not to say that this neoliberal worldview is not deeply held by ICT missionaries – quite the contrary – but it does suggest that unlike their theological ideals, this worldview is unconscious and critically unreflected, a cultural artifact of an American society where individualism is deeply rooted, highly diffused, and largely unquestioned.

This suggestion is made not in the interest of causing cheap embarrassment on the part of the missionaries but rather to draw attention to the observation that the tensions between these two sets of ideals become considerably more unstable in the peripheral areas where ICT workers are active. Unlike in America, where reaction to the course of deindustrialization, peripheralization, and increasing inequality has been softened by a tradition of individualism and the living memory of when late capitalism was still linked with widespread prosperity (cf. Mandel 1976), areas such as the townships of South Africa bear instead the cultural memory of village community and have never been on the winning side of capitalist social relations. The townships present a case of definitive capitalist paradox, a population physically and culturally

removed from its traditional roots of “very pure community” yet structurally detained at the margins of the “business focused” urban center that has profited from the benefit of cheap labor (IV2: 12); in other words, a this-worldly purgatory. For the missionaries, this cultural mixture produces a baffling interpretational puzzle:

Everybody looks back on and longs for [the rural community]. But then here in the townships it's very very individualistic, it's very, 'I am...barely getting by'...So we were asking [a community member] some questions, and we said 'well, what is something that you love about your culture...?' And he said, 'well what I love is that in the township we're really...we don't have the big walls that you guys have, we don't have big fences,...we know all of our neighbors...we're talking with our neighbors, we're knowing who they are, we're seeing everybody, there is this sense of community.'

And then we said 'ok, well what is one thing that you wish your culture could do differently?' And he said, 'we don't really trust each other and we're always trying to tear each other down. When somebody's succeeding at something, it's more common for someone to go to the witchdoctor to ask them to curse that person than it is to take that money [and ask to invest in the business venture].' (IV1: 3-4)

The interview partner delivering this story recognized that the paradox it presented is significant and, prompted to reflection, followed the story with the question “what is our role in that?” (IV1:3). The question was clearly posed in context with an eye towards how missionaries could respond to the pain and disunity in the community; but it could have been asked just as well whether and how missionaries perpetuate this situation. From a materialist perspective – not that such is any more objectively valid, but there are unquestionably material forces at play here – the situation in the townships is easily explainable by its position in the capitalist periphery, where the survival mentality of physical poverty unites with the ghost of old communal values in resentment at the exploitative, empty promises of neoliberal individualism.⁵⁰ The paradox that the missionaries puzzle over is in other words the exact same tension that they carry around, invisible to themselves, between their hope in a unified community and their faith in market individualism. The vision of a moral-idealistic community and that of self-interested capitalism are hardly compatible even in theory, and in practice a sense of community can only be soured in combination with a neoliberal system that concentrates wealth in limited hands and spaces and actively creates dependency and underdevelopment (Harvey 2005; Irogbe 2005).

⁵⁰ Sachs (1992: 3) summarizes this position somewhat less prosaically: “The campaign to turn traditional man into modern man has failed. The old ways have been smashed, the new ways are not viable. People are caught in the deadlock of development:[...]Shunned by the ‘advanced’ sector and cut off from the old ways, they are expatriates in their own country; they are forced to get by in the no-man’s-land between tradition and modernity.”

What is to be expected to come from these tensions? There are several possibilities. The first is that ICT missionaries take stock of how their own philosophical views are in internal conflict and make efforts to respond to this issue. This does not seem to be a terribly unlikely option: Smith (2016: 11) notes that missionaries “do have a history of reflecting on how their values and beliefs are embodied in actions,” and interviews with ICT workers in the South African townships made it clear that the details of the situation are very present in their minds. Furthermore, an emphasis on community separated from the ballast of neoliberal assumptions would provide missionaries with a strong point of resonance and connection with those populations where communality remains a living and fondly cherished memory. If ICT workers are not to be separated from their American affinity for religious neoliberalism, however, it will remain for other critical development actors to take the lead in determining how the missionary blueprint of a community-centered development process oriented around unity and relationship can be complemented by projects designed to deobfuscate and work to change the structural parameters of neoliberal market policies.

5.4.3. Neoliberalism and Politics

If neoliberalism is best summarized, as Hackworth (2012: viii-ix) suggests, as the convergence of hyperindividualization, the fetishization of the free market, and the hostility towards any government large enough to interfere in the workings of that market, then it is to be expected that ICT missionaries – having already exhibited an unconscious receptiveness to the first two axioms – would bear a strained relationship to the topic of politics. Within the evangelical-neoliberal resonance machine, rolling back the welfare state is directly tied to the expansion of faith-based, non-governmental aid services as a replacement. Indeed, this is one of the central synergies at play in this ideological fusion: religious organizations benefit from increased exposure and influence in public life, while small-government neoliberal policies are made more palatable by the idea that the scuttling of public social welfare systems will be compensated for by private religious actors (Hackworth 2012).⁵¹ The long-term impact of the small-government discourse in American political life has been deep and has often entered the mainstream, as evidenced by the expansion under President Obama of Bush-era funding for domestic FBOs, at the unveiling of which the president placated anxieties linking fiscal restraint

⁵¹ This argument is founded not on plausibility but rather on optics. As Hackford explains, “disparate religiously oriented private institutions with no government funding will never be an actual replacement [for a publicly-funded social safety net], but the *notion*, the assertion, that they will, or could, be has gotten a lot of political mileage” (2012: ix; emphasis in original).

with religiosity by affirming that ““there is a force for good greater than government”” (Zeleny 2009). This is not to say that evangelical actors have necessarily internalized the entirety of the neoliberal rationale and resolve regarding the role of government – in fact, Hackworth (2012: 2) argues further that evangelical supporters tend to balk when neoliberal reforms move from the notional to the implementation stage – but it does underline a profound skepticism and suspicion of government (and of politics generally) which has become the norm amongst American evangelicals.

It is this picture of skepticism that emerges most clearly from the attitudes towards government adopted by ICT workers, where interview partners had a difficult time placing exactly what they felt their relationship to government was and how to differentiate between those problems of political life which are intractable and those which are context-specific. Examples of outright opposition to government welfare programs were rare but existent, albeit presented in a manner that did little to explain the reasoning behind them. One missionary described a ministry which had grown up around community support for orphans, relating how the community had been galvanized to work with children of all ages in a number of orphanages – holding abandoned infants, playing with toddlers, tutoring school-aged orphans, and so on. Coming at the end of this description, almost as an afterthought, it was added that “we also understand that...supporting the institutions is not the priority. The priority is closing the institutions so there’s no need for them” (IV6: 5), reuniting some with parents and directing others into foster care. The logic used here is dense and includes multiple additional elements such as the lionization of family and an idealism regarding the prospects of community action, but the main statement is clear: government institutions directed towards the amelioration of social needs are inferior in comparison to the efforts of the private sector, which (it is suggested) can also respond more adequately to the service of higher ideals.

In the majority of cases, however, the attitude towards government was more reserved and reflected. For many interview partners, the government plays a circumscribed role in their development vision precisely because of the value placed by ICT workers on community empowerment and transformation. Thus it was argued that “the role of government is to create conditions for prosperity, not to do all of it themselves” (IV5: 2), itself a very ambiguous position that nonetheless leaves considerable room for individual initiative. Similarly to the situation discussed above, there is also the general sense that dependence on outside assistance

“compromises the spirit of community and the power people can find in themselves and one another” (IV5: 3). While these positions display a typical neoliberal skepticism towards government interventionism, however, it is important to note that they are based on a criticism arising from the ICT vision of the moral-ideal community rather than absolutist neoliberal axioms. Indeed, multiple interview partners did express a willingness to work with government, but in the light of circumstances on the ground and the limitations of their own experience up to that point were not sure how or whether to try such a thing (IV1: 9; IV5: 3, 4).

Foremost amongst these circumstances on the ground is the problem of corruption in government. Time and again ICT missionaries explained the concrete problems with government corruption experienced by themselves and the communities they work in: the statement of one interview partner working in the townships of South Africa, who noted that “the government is incredibly corrupt and just doesn’t help with a lot of stuff” (IV2: 13), is a representative case. Situations abound where government money allocated for the needs of a community dissipates almost completely – “taken out from the top down” (IV1: 8) – by the time it reaches its intended beneficiaries. At other times, the missionaries see no use in working with government because officials cynically provide little to no assistance only to crow about their contributions if a project turns out to be a success (IV5: 3; IV6: 4). But even beyond questions of material aid and corruption, it is often unclear whether cooperation with local government is more of a benefit to ICT efforts than it is a liability. In this vein, one interview partner pointed out the risk involved in trusting political leadership, especially for outsiders who are unfamiliar with local perceptions:

There are a few councilors out there who are heroes, they love their communities, they’re really there to serve, but others are there with different motivations, politics, their own wealth...And you can end up destroying your reputation with the community because maybe none of them like this guy! (IV5: 3)

Cooperation with government here is seen as jeopardizing the credibility of missionaries at the grassroots level, and thus as antithetical to the ICT vision. In one final example illustrating the limitations surrounding missionary interactions with government, it is even possible that working with government can put the missionaries themselves in harm’s way, either because certain politicians have an interest in preventing them from drawing attention to budgeting irregularities or because of resentment from a community hostile to the idea of foreign meddling in government affairs (IV1: 8; IV4: 10). Corruption, public perception, and caution in the face

of personal danger thus all play a role in ICT considerations concerning strategic involvement with government.

In cases such as these, the ambiguous relationship of ICT missionaries to government rests far more on realities on the ground than it does on neoliberal attitudes; that is to say, whatever skepticism American evangelical missionaries bring with them about the role of government, most of the time the issues informing their reservations in the field appear to be concrete and grounded in the political dynamics common to the developing world. It is also important to stress that interview partners expressed willingness to work with government “in an ideal sense....[Because] you need that support. You need the backing of the country itself, and the buy-in, ultimately” (IV5: 3). Ambivalence is thus the attitude that best characterizes the relationship of missionaries to government, the tensions that are present here being to a large extent context specific and perhaps no greater than would be found in any foreign grassroots organization navigating the treacherous waters of community development.

The same, however, cannot be said for the position that ICT missionaries take towards political life generally. Whereas government is treated with reserved but tacit acceptance, the attitude towards politics at large is unambiguously hostile. Politics is described as a “cutthroat” business where people will do anything to get ahead (IV1: 8). Once in power, politicians manipulate the masses for their own interests; citing experiences from the South African townships, one interview partner related how such mobs would act in petty, irrational, and violent ways, responding to the instigations of politicians by targeting a grassroots community center with Molotov cocktails, arson, and rioting (IV1: 9). Another missionary condemned politics from a different angle as incompatible with the values at the core of the ICT vision, arguing that “the political spirit is a divisive one. It’s manipulative, and that works against the spirit of unity and community” (IV5: 3). Countering this spirit and building up a unified community is thus pursued along depoliticized lines: “to this point we’ve just been staying out of it, and we just try to reinforce, we’re here for the community, we love the community, we try to impact the things that we can” (IV1: 9). To be sure, there were moments in the interviews for this research where missionaries voiced a certain degree of uncertainty regarding this approach – “politics confuses me,” admitted one, “...I wish we had a better answer” (IV1: 9) – but the clear position of ICT workers was that the conflictive and particular nature of political life and engagement

made it an unfitting means towards achieving the vision of a unified, moral-idealistic community.

This bears some resemblance to the idea of neoliberal depoliticization, which is itself simply the logical corollary of the assertion that government should be small. Within the neoliberal ideal, the unimpeded functioning of the free market is held as sacrosanct and beyond the realm of political debate. To say that government must refrain from intervention into the market's workings means necessarily that politics – understood nominally within a democracy as the organization and direction of government according to the popular will as mediated by public institutions – must not be tempted by interventionism; thus the latter must be erased as an option from the political imagination.⁵² This kind of depoliticization betrays a telling compatibility with the aversion expressed by ICT missionaries towards politics. That being said, the fact that ICT workers are hostile towards politics generally, rather than only towards market interventionism, suggests that this may not be the only element at play. Thaut (2009) provides one plausible explanation with reference to theology, arguing that different interpretations of core Christian beliefs lead to different kinds of humanitarian and development engagement. One important (particularly Protestant) strain of Christian thought discussed here – she calls it “Evangelistic-Humanitarianism” (Thaut 2009: 339) – places special emphasis on the corruption of human social life through the effects of sin, a corruption that is only reversible through the transformative power of Christ. It follows that efforts to improve the social condition through human institutions – such as politics – are bound to fail unless accompanied by spiritual renewal, a contention that bears striking similarities to how ICT missionaries articulate their development vision.

What is important to stress here is that the various elements at play in the missionary hostility towards politics – be they neoliberal, religious, or otherwise – are resonant, perhaps even mutually reinforcing to a point, but they are not identical with each other; lacking identity, they

⁵² Ptak (2008: 69-70) offers a pointed summary of this logic: “Für die Neoliberalen bildet die Demokratie insoweit eine potenzielle Bedrohung, als zumindest theoretisch die Möglichkeit besteht, dass die Mehrheit gewillt und in der Lage wäre, die Grundpfeiler der marktwirtschaftlicher Ordnung, Privateigentum und Wettbewerb, in ihre Schranken zu verweisen oder gar zu überwinden...Demokratie ist aus neoliberaler Sicht so lange akzeptabel, wie der Marktprozess in seiner Substanz unangetastet bleibt...Das Hauptaugenmerk der neoliberalen Demokratiediskussion gilt deshalb der Rechtfertigung und Durchsetzung einer ‚beschränkten Demokratie,‘ also einer Entkernung der Demokratie von ihrem materiellen Gehalt und ihrer sozialen Substanz unter Beibehaltung ihrer legitimatorischen Funktion.“

are susceptible to tensions that bring with them unintended consequences. In this case, these tensions emerge when the depoliticized portion of the ICT missionary vision collides with its emphasis on community empowerment. While it is true that ICT workers express an antipathy towards politics that is in character with American religious-neoliberalism, the concept of political life that is criticized is exceedingly small: politics is corrupt city councilors (IV1: 8), it is cynical elected officials (IV6: 4), it is broken campaign promises (IV5: 2) and expectant welfare recipients (IV2: 12-13); politics is all the broken institutions of liberal democracy in a development context. Yet if politics is defined using wider parameters – if a wider spectrum of life is understood to have political relevance – than the accusation that ICT missionaries are agents of a depoliticizing vision evaporates. An inexact but helpful parallel is here presented by Tuğal (2009) in his study of Islamism in Turkey. Initially drawing on New Social Movement theory to point out how “movements can lead to social change by focusing on culture and society” (Tuğal 2009: 423), it is argued further that just because such movements target civil society instead of the state does not preclude that the change they bring out carries a significant political dimension. Instead, he demonstrates that, within Islamism, “the *reorganization of everyday practices is interwoven with the transformation of the state...through denaturalizing everyday life and constituting an alternative everyday routine*” (Tuğal 2009: 429; emphasis in original). While the movement itself might not mobilize in the street or tout an overtly political agenda, to the extent that it is “*formative of actors*” (Tuğal 2009: 430; emphasis in original) who are embedded in a certain perception of the world and a certain way of organizing life an ostensibly culture-focused movement carries great political weight and importance.

Setting aside the important differences between evangelical missionaries and social movements, Islamist or otherwise, it is difficult to see how the vision behind ICT can be understood as anything other than the formation – or transformation, in missionary parlance – of such actors. The very idea of a moral-idealistic community, unified and empowered to mobilize resources towards self-defined development goals, is inherently political, whether the missionaries embrace that or not. In a sense perhaps different than the one intended by the missionaries themselves, the biggest contribution to this politicization made by ICT workers may indeed be unity. As the missionaries work to bring grassroots community organizations together in networks (IV3: 3), as they make efforts to stimulate cooperation between atomistic and competitive NGOs (IV1: 10), as they work to “transform” individuals from recipients of community support to involved participants in this support (IV1: 14), they are fostering a sense

of community identity with a political potential beyond that which they envision today. The implications of such work for conventional development is clear: not only does missionary work provide a possible model for others looking to build this community identity, but the results of ICT work could provide a resource for complementary development work by fostering community agency to a degree where more overt political aims, such as the correction of larger structural problems, might be achieved.

6. Conclusion

The present research has attempted to argue that missionaries, long sidelined from consideration as development actors, bear reappraisal within the world of development studies. In part this is because their sidelining – originating as it does in secularist assumptions which dismiss religious actors out of hand or compel them to pay obeisance to the logics of materialism – only serves to obscure, rather than clarify, a more complete understanding of the actors and processes active in development contexts. Of additional and perhaps deeper interest is the potential that these missionaries have, precisely because they have been ignored for so long, of offering new and original outlooks on and approaches to development that go beyond the dogmas of growth-oriented, liberal materialism.

Development studies has increasingly invested time and resources into exploring alternative models of development. The impetus for this exploration is clear: in the seven decades since U.S. President Truman urged the industrialized world to “embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas” (Truman 1949), the modernist vision behind these words has by all accounts failed. Relations of wealth and power between the global North and the formerly colonized South have nowhere reached parity. Neoliberal structural readjustment programs throughout the world have not resulted in consistent growth – with or without equity – to the point where even the International Monetary Fund admits that

the increase in inequality engendered by financial openness and austerity might itself undercut growth, the very thing that the neoliberal agenda is intent on boosting. There is now strong evidence that inequality can significantly lower both the level and the durability of growth. (Ostry et al. 2016: 40-1)

Beyond economics, critics of development lament that the very concept implies the “Westernization of the world,” as the diversity of billions is reduced to the simple category of underdevelopment, where “catching up [is] declared to be their historic task” (Sachs 1992: 3). Far from an act of benevolence, the crimes of which development stands accused include that it “impedes thinking of one’s own objectives,[...]undermines confidence in oneself[,...]clamours for management from the top down, [...]and] converts participation into a manipulative trick to involve people in struggles for getting what the powerful want to impose on them” (Esteva 1992: 8). Mainstream development may go through trends and fads (cf.

Kapoor 2005), but insofar as the central tenets of development aims and policies – i.e. industrial growth and political/economic liberalization – remain in place, the criticisms will stay the same.

To this end, alternatives such as *buen vivir* (Villalba 2013), sufficiency economics (Isager and Ivarsson 2010; Kaewthep 2007), and Degrowth (Demaria et al. 2013) have been celebrated, discussed, criticized, and evaluated for potential upscaling as models for what development *could* look like. All of these three dispense with the progress-oriented development model and attempt to describe radically different ways of living; all stress to greater or lesser extents the vital importance of community; all minimize the call for outside direction, assistance, and resources in favor of strong, often communal self-determination; at least in theory, two out of three is united around a common moral or transcendent vision.⁵³

The parallels here to the vision of development offered by American evangelical missionaries working in ICT is striking. Development for them is understood as the growth and cultivation of a moral-idealistic community focused on unity through relationship. It is a departure from the helplessness and dependence of atomistic capitalist relations towards the empowerment of a community assured of its self-worth and capabilities. It is the recognition that change can be aided by outside resources, but first that the direction of that change must be determined and organized by those it will affect, cooperating out of trust built from relationship rather than synergizing in aggregate. And yes, for them it is the hope and expectation that their faith might find expression through community organizing in such a way that both physical needs and spiritual hungers are served. The vision is not without its tensions, but also presents opportunities for complementary cooperation and connections. And though it treads a path with uncomfortable precedents – one of the biggest reasons that *buen vivir* has been so exciting and influential in development research and debate is of course that it is based on indigenous cosmologies instead of those forcefully exported from the North – it does so with a mind to empowerment rather than interventionism; this is of no little importance, as even the most

⁵³ Degrowth is here the odd one out on several fronts. Originating in the global North, it bears strong traces of functional secularism instead of any appeals to higher ethics or cosmologies. Though not at all lacking in utopian spirit – advocates suggest that in a Degrowth society “everything will be different: different activities, different forms and uses of energy, different relations, different gender roles, different allocations of time[...]and different relations with the non-human world” (Asara et al. 2015: 377) – Degrowth struggles with the functional problem of trying to sell a structural critique without a moral vision; that is to say, it is difficult to define what exactly the movement actually wants.

forceful opponents of colonial-era missionary work expressed admiration for missionary contributions if and when they served as the foundation for indigenous agency.⁵⁴

Buen vivir and sufficiency economics, for all of the buzz they generate in journals and debates, have yet to be successfully scaled up as alternative development models. To a large extent, this is because the symbolic importance of these projects from the global South has far outweighed the buy-in that the larger development world is prepared to give their ontological premises (Gibson 2015); to celebrate an indigenous Andean cosmology is one thing, but to live by it is another. Secular, liberal materialism has won its perception of universality with time and violence, and the particularities of this or that small group are not going to endanger its dominance over development culture and discourse. The story could be different however, if many particular groups – sharing sufficient commonalities – were to enter the discussion. For the development researcher interested in alternative development models, every voice is a contribution towards the attaining a critical mass of dialogue about and between such groups. In this light, above and beyond the correction of historical omissions, it is well worth the time taken to give heed to what missionaries are saying and what they are accomplishing in developing contexts throughout the world today.

⁵⁴ To give one such example: “The cases where Padmore was willing to give full approval to the impact affected by missionaries were moments which moved beyond missionary agency and instead focused on African agency: instead of focusing on what the missionaries did for the Africans, these cases demonstrate how missionary efforts provided a foundation for African initiatives for self-empowerment” (Gibson 2016: 18).

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8. Abstract (English)

This paper examines American evangelical missionaries as development actors in South Africa and Ukraine. Despite their ubiquitous presence in development contexts and their involvement in development projects, it is argued that missionaries generally – and American evangelical missionaries in particular – are under-researched in development studies. In doing so, the argument draws on a post-secular theoretical frame that advances the ‘religious turn’ in development literature, emphasizing not only that religion must be taken seriously among the populations of the global South but also that development actors from North and South should be analyzed as development actors not conditional on their adoption of secularist norms but rather according to their development vision. Following individual missionaries in their work in Integrated Community Development, it is argued that missionaries put forth a vision of a moral-idealistic community which, while not without its tensions, offers valuable insights and parallels for study in alternative development models.

9. Abstrakt (Deutsch)

Diese Masterarbeit untersucht amerikanische evangelikale Missionare als Entwicklungsakteure in Südafrika und der Ukraine. Obwohl sie in Entwicklungskontexten und -projekten durchaus präsent sind, wird hier argumentiert, dass die Arbeit von Missionaren im Allgemeinen – und amerikanischer evangelikaler Missionare im Besonderen – in der internationalen Entwicklung sehr mangelhaft erforscht wurde. Dabei verwendet das Argument einen postsäkularen theoretischen Rahmen, der die ‚religiöse Wendung‘ in der Entwicklungsforschung weiterbringt. Dabei wird nicht nur betont, dass Religion unter der Bevölkerung des globalen Südens ernstgenommen werden sollte, sondern auch, dass Entwicklungsakteure aus dem Norden und dem Süden als solche nach ihrer entwicklungstheoretischen Vision analysiert werden sollten und nicht insofern, dass sie säkulare Normen akzeptieren. Einzelne Missionare werden in ihrer Arbeit in ‚*Integrated Community Development*‘ untersucht, und es wird argumentiert, dass diese Missionare eine Vision von einer moralisch-idealistischen Gemeinschaft vertreten, die nicht ohne Spannungen dasteht, die aber wertvolle Einsichten und Parallelen zum Forschen in alternativen Entwicklungsmodellen anbietet.