

Wholly Living:

A new perspective on
international development

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CAFOD is the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development, the official international development and relief agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. It is a member of the worldwide Caritas Internationalis federation, a network of Catholic agencies across the world.

Together with local partner organisations in more than 50 countries, CAFOD works to build a better world for people living in poverty. In emergency situations, CAFOD provides immediate relief and stays on to help people rebuild their lives.

CAFOD and its partners challenge governments and institutions to adopt policies and behaviour that promote social justice and tackle the causes of poverty. In UK schools and parishes, CAFOD raises awareness of these issues and encourages people to campaign and fundraise.

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We are Christians passionate about the local church bringing justice and transforming lives – overcoming global poverty. We work directly in response to disasters and in partnership with organisations in more than 50 countries, working alongside or through networks of local churches. We comply with the best practice principles of humanitarian work and we hold ourselves accountable to those we serve, giving aid regardless of race, religion or nationality.

We aim to restore relationships, working for spiritual and material transformation, church engagement, gender equality and child development. We reflect the following principles in all we do: compassion, justice, cultural sensitivity, empowerment, service, participation, sustainability.

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foreword

Integral human development...requires that people are rescued from every form of poverty, from hunger and illiteracy...it calls for active participation in economic and political processes and it recognises that every human person is a spiritual being with instincts for love and truth and aspirations for happiness.¹

The present model of economic globalisation, with its emphasis on financial profit and the pursuit of individual, corporate and national self-interest, has long assumed that the desire for economic growth at any costs eclipses all else. In this scenario, those values deeply held by religious traditions, such as love, justice, equality, shared responsibility and solidarity are viewed as important only within the sphere of family and community. Indeed we have been led to believe they have no place in policies regulating the behaviour of the market or international financial institutions.

The last ten years' extraordinary economic growth has lifted many people in countries such as India and China out of poverty. But this growth, which ended in global economic crisis, has been accompanied by increased fuel and food instability, greater inequality, and environmental damage. Currently, for poor people to get a bit less poor, rich people have to get very much richer and in the process consume more and more natural and mineral resources.

As rich governments worldwide pick up the pieces of their broken economies, it is time to call upon them to fashion a new market model that generates a much more sustainable pattern of growth while creating the social conditions in which people can flourish. We cannot continue as we have done for the last 30 years – we must call for change. Social scientists have shown us that beyond a certain level of economic income and security, people do not become significantly happier. In the UK as economic growth has risen, well-being has flat-lined, social capital has declined and inequality has increased.

Underpinning the work of faith-based aid agencies is the integrity and dignity of every life, at whatever stage of development, of whatever social class, or gender, or race, or religion. Global systems such as economics and business, and politics, must serve people, not the other way around.

This report hopes to stimulate the debate on the need for a fundamental break from both the failed economic policies of the past and our modern reliance on misleading financial indicators of prosperity. We believe there is not only a need for change but a desire for a new democratic global green economy with human and environmental sustainability at its heart. This ongoing crisis has ripped open the global economic systems at their weakest points. If now is not the time to look beyond material indicators of well-being to an inclusive economic system that improves the quality of our relationships and embeds the practice of virtue in its intellectual and religious forms - then when?

We believe an economy re-stitched with the old, failed concepts of individualism and self-interest will continue to fail the people. We call for a new fabric which weaves into its global patterns the right social conditions for human flourishing.

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¹ The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, *Choosing the Common Good* (2010)
http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/Catholic-Church/Publications/choosing_the_common_good.

acknowledgements

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executive summary

Too many people around the world are prevented from contributing all they might to the common good. Poverty, sickness, insecurity, ignorance, vulnerability, and powerlessness prevent millions in the developing world from being able to exercise their creativity, productivity and generosity. At the same time, whereas few people in developed countries die of malnutrition, it is increasingly clear that job insecurity, overwork, consumerism, anti-social behaviour and family dislocation prevent the inhabitants of rich nations from living well. We need to rediscover what it means to flourish as a human being if we hope to tackle these major problems.

This report argues that political and economic thought, particularly as it relates to international development, is founded on an inadequate and ultimately harmful vision of what it means to flourish, a vision that is fundamentally *acquisitive*. It contends that we desperately need to regain a fuller, more realistic vision of human flourishing – of humans as creative, productive, responsible, generous beings – if we are ever to address the problems of poverty, inequality and environmental degradation that threaten the world. It is focussed primarily on international development and on UK policies that affect the developing world. It recognises, however, that there are also concerns with the social health of many developed nations, including the UK, and that the need to rethink policy so that it aids rather than damages human flourishing applies just as much to domestic as it does to international politics.

As international development agencies, Tearfund and CAFOD have long worked in countries where a lack of economic wealth is seriously undermining people's wellbeing, leading to low life expectancy, poor health and insecurity. However, we have also seen how resilient communities can sometimes be in the face of adversity and how there is often relational wealth even in material poverty. We also recognise, though, that there are concerns about the social health of many developed nations, including our own, and that wealth by no means equates with happiness.

Wholly Living works from the premise that politics is about more than economics and that life is about more than quarterly growth figures. It acknowledges that there is no such thing as morally-neutral politics, that every significant policy has an ethical content and that, ultimately, our ethics rests on our view of the world. And it recognises that it is no longer possible, if it ever was, to think about national politics in isolation from global issues.

The report is a response to the mounting evidence that the lifestyles and policies of developed nations are both unfair and unsustainable; that poverty, disease and malnutrition destroy the lives of hundreds of millions of people; that economic inequality stands at a completely unacceptable level; that millions of people are effectively excluded from major decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods; and that environmental degradation is threatening the survival of innumerable people, species and ecosystems. It is clear, however, that economic wealth is not the sole solution; while those in developed countries may be at lower risk of malnutrition, they suffer instead from social problems such as job insecurity, overwork, consumerism, anti-social behaviour and family dislocation.

Wholly Living argues that these problems are not superficial, technocratic ones but that they go much deeper. They are rooted, ultimately, in a narrow and destructive idea of what it means to live well: the idea that we must strive to maximise our personal wealth, freedom and choice so that we can decide our own ends. Many politicians, from all parties, recognise this error but, when push comes to shove, the hard-edged demands of economics almost always trump the “soft” concerns of human flourishing.

While recognising that money, freedom and choice are important, the report contends that our obsession with them has resulted in a radical devaluation of the social, cultural and environmental relationships that form us and that enable us to flourish as human beings. Human beings are not disconnected atoms, floating free in society, unencumbered by personal commitments, whose only good is to get the best deal for themselves. To treat them as such is to do them and the planet they inhabit a gross disservice. We need a more satisfying and more realistic vision of human flourishing on which to base our political and economic thinking.

Wholly Living argues that this can be located in the Christian understanding of human nature and of what it is to live well. This is a vision in which *all* humans are intrinsically creative and productive; *all* have the potential to contribute to our common good; *all* are relational, formed and fulfilled by a complex web of relationships; *all* are moral, with an ineradicable responsibility for one another; and that *all* have a vocation to cultivate the natural world conscientiously and sustainably. Ultimately, we flourish as humans when the conditions that allow us to live in right relationship and contribute generously to our common good are met.

The report recognises that much of what makes for this vision of human flourishing is not within the gift of government. Policy cannot make people creative, productive, or responsible, let alone generous. It cannot legislate them into good relationships. But it can clear away the obstacles that prevent them from developing and exercising these qualities and it can help people into a position from which they can exercise them.

Accordingly, it advocates a range of policy ideas, in the areas of economics, environment and governance aimed at encouraging government to help rather than hinder human flourishing. In particular, it calls for a high profile, “Prime Ministerial” commission into human flourishing (or well-being), along the lines of Tony Blair’s Commission for Africa or Nicolas Sarkozy’s “Commission on the Measurement of Economic Development and Social Progress”. This would draw on the considerable work that has been conducted in this area and seek, in the words of the Sarkozy Commission, “to shift emphasis from measuring economic output to measuring people’s wellbeing”. It would explore how a human flourishing approach might be adopted and applied to policy decisions and take the issue of human flourishing from the margins of political debate to its heart, which is where it belongs and where it is needed.

The vision of human flourishing that underpins this report is unashamedly rooted in Christian thinking about human nature. It is derived from biblical study and careful theological reflection. But it is not limited to Christians. Rather, the ideas of human equality, creativity, productivity, relationality, responsibility, and generosity that run through the report cross ideological boundaries.

As innumerable social studies have shown, happiness cannot simply be equated with wealth. Instead, a wide range of factors contribute to our sense of well-being, including the political (e.g. stability, accountability, rule of law, absence of corruption, control over one’s civic destiny), the communal (e.g. interpersonal trust and community participation) and the personal (e.g. marriage, family, upbringing). When our pursuit of economic well-being comes at the cost of these, our overall happiness is diminished.

This message – fundamental to the Christian idea of what it means to live well – is shared increasingly widely across society. Accordingly, the ideas within the report and the policies discussed in the final chapter will be endorsed by many who do not share the Christian faith. It is our belief that the campaign to enable *everyone* to live in relationships of generosity is capable of generating widespread support and action. It is our hope it will.

the state we're in

We have much to celebrate.

The last forty years have witnessed substantial progress in global human development. Millions more people today live longer, healthier lives than did fifty years ago and can expect to see their children survive childhood and enjoy educational and occupational possibilities that were never open to them.

In 1970, 60 per cent of adults in the world knew how to read and write and 48 per cent of school-age children were enrolled in school. By 2007, those figures had risen to 84 and 71 per cent respectively. Child mortality has declined, with the under-fives mortality rate falling from 12.6 million in 1990 to around 9 million in 2007. In the first seven years of the century, measles deaths dropped by 74 per cent, thanks to ongoing immunization campaigns.

Between 1990 and 2005, the number of people living on less than \$1.25 a day decreased from 1.8 billion to 1.4 billion. Between 1990 and 2006, 1.1 billion people in the developing world gained access to toilets, latrines and other forms of improved sanitation. Between December 2006 and December 2007 alone, the number of people in developing countries who had access to antiretroviral drugs rose by 47 per cent.¹

environmental factors

On closer inspection, however, this is only part of the picture. There are also profound problems in our current situation and in particular with the current model of development based on economic growth and faith in markets.²

The most widely-reported of these is environmental. The reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) show, to a very high degree of confidence, that human activities are the primary drivers of climate change and that, if unchecked, they are liable to lead to severe disruption of ecosystems, economies, communities and security. Similarly, the Millennium Ecosystems Assessment process (MEA) has shown that 60% of ecosystems for which adequate data can be compiled are being degraded or exploited unsustainably.

Although resource problems, such as the exhaustion of fossil fuels, overuse of fresh water, and exploitation of forestry and fish stocks are the best known environmental problems, an equally serious one is the way in which we misuse ecological sinks (the parts of the environment that absorb our waste emissions such as atmosphere, soils, oceans, and forests) and ecological services (the “life support” systems such as flood absorption and pollination). Human life depends upon these sinks and services no less than it does on environmental resources, the crucial difference being that whereas we can sometimes find substitutes for depleted resources, we cannot create artificial ecosystem services to replace collapsing habitats and climate stability.

If this were “merely” an environmental problem, in other words if our focus on growth for its own sake had only an environmental cost, it would be serious enough. But it is increasingly clear that it also has a profound human cost. Exhausted environmental sinks and services threaten everyone on the planet but particularly the poorest billion who are disproportionately dependent upon natural assets as a principal source of income. Moreover, climate change will exacerbate environmental degradation, and place even more stress on the poorest, who are often on the frontline, through no fault of their own and without the financial resources to adapt to the threat.

Around one third of the world’s population currently lives in countries experiencing moderate to high water stress, with rainfall patterns being directly and usually negatively affected by climate change. The World Health Organisation estimates that climate change is already responsible for over 150,000 deaths each year, mainly through an increase in cases of diarrhoea, malaria and malnutrition. Weather-related disasters have been increasing in both number and ferocity over recent years, from 1,110 during the 1970s to 2,953 between 1993 and 2002. Similarly, the number of people whose lives have been affected by storms and floods increased from 740 million to 2.5 billion people over the same period.³

The decline in global poverty also demands closer examination. Although there has indeed been a fall in the number of people living in extreme poverty, the numbers are somewhat skewed by China’s rapid industrialisation. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), if one were to take China out of the equation, the number of people living on less than a dollar a day would have actually *increased* by 36 million between 1990 and 2005.⁴ Growth-fuelled development has proved to be a dramatically uneven phenomenon.

Similarly, the growth-fuelled, market-led development model has proved to be dangerously fragile, susceptible to distortions, instability and downturns in the developed world in a way that radically disempowers the world’s poor. The World Bank has estimated that 64 million more people may be living in extreme poverty by the end of 2010 as a result of the 2008-09 financial crisis.⁵

The growth-fuelled, market-led development model has proved to have other problems. The decrease in absolute poverty over recent decades has been matched, and outpaced, by a significant rise in income inequality. Global inequality is currently estimated to stand between 0.63 and 0.66 according to the Gini coefficient, where 0 is a perfectly equal situation, in which everyone has an equal share of the resources, and 1 a situation where one person holds all the resources and the others have nothing. Data show that there has been a marked increase in income inequality over the last twenty years. The ratio between the average income of the richest 5 per cent and the poorest 5 per cent of people in the world is now estimated to stand at 165. Thus, although there has been a fall in the absolute number of people living on low incomes over the last twenty years, it has been at the expense of a massive rise on those living on high ones. By this reckoning, for the poor to become slightly less poor, the rich have to become vastly more rich.

The growth model has delivered growth, but it has done so in an unsustainable, unequal and unfair way.

To some this is not a problem. As long as the absolute number of people in extreme poverty isn't rising, it does not matter if the absolute number of people living in extreme wealth is. To most, however, the idea that some humans are "worth"

hundreds and thousands of times more than others is instinctively distasteful, a distaste that cannot be washed away by the gloss that economic "worth" should not be equated with human "worth" in the more profound sense of the word. Telling the millionaire and the pauper they are really "worth" the same in spite of the vast differences in their wealth is unconvincing, not least because society fails to treat them in the same way.⁶

Economic poverty and inequality also inculcate a profound sense of powerlessness among many in the developing world. Political and economic inequality coupled with an unquestioning faith in markets and a narrow focus on economic growth has commonly meant many developing governments have had to adopt international policies that have undermined their ability to nurture their domestic markets and protect local communities while denying them opportunities to develop by means of free access to developed markets.

Transnational corporations have a global presence that is so powerful that it has created what the UN Special Representative John Ruggie has called "governance gaps...between the scope and impact of economic forces and actors, and the capacity of societies to manage their adverse consequences" which, in turn, "provide the permissive environment for wrongful acts by companies of all kinds without adequate sanctioning or reparation."⁷ In these various ways, developing nations have been politically disempowered, a fact that is compounded by their under-representation at trade talks and climate change negotiations. Overall, then, the growth model has delivered growth, but it has done so in an unsustainable, unequal and unfair way.

measuring what matters

These various environmental, economic and political problems point to a fundamental difficulty with our focus on economic growth. Although growth *is* associated with real gains in well-being, beyond a given level of satisfaction of basic needs for material goods it is subject to diminishing returns, and beyond a certain point, which varies from country to country, there is only a weak, or even no, connection between GDP growth and “well-being”.⁸

A degree of economic growth in developing countries may be necessary for reducing poverty and increasing human well-being but it is certainly not sufficient, and economic growth *ad infinitum* in any country is simply not sustainable.

Although the question of what exactly constitutes well-being or human flourishing is a debatable one to which we shall turn in the next chapter, there are a number of measures that are universally associated with living well, such as life expectancy, health, education and (low levels of) crime. Even adopting these by way of a temporary (if narrow) definition of well-being, there are countless studies which show that there is a fundamental disconnect between GDP and well-being.

For some countries, income per capita does reflect overall well-being. Canada has a GDP per capita of over US\$35,000 per year and, correspondingly, Canadians are educated to a high standard, enjoy long and healthy lives, and experience comparatively low levels of crime. Similarly, the GDP per capita of Namibia, at just over US\$5,000 per year, predicts well the low quality of people’s lives, with life expectancy at around 60 and one out of five people unlikely to live beyond 40.

Other countries, however, show that the equation between income and well-being does not always hold. People in Vietnam live much longer even though they have on average a lower income than people in Namibia. Uruguay has a lower GDP per capita than Saudi Arabia, yet people live longer, women are more literate, fewer children die prematurely, and basic political rights and civil liberties are fully respected. Russia is wealthier than Costa Rica, yet its inhabitants live shorter lives in a more constrained political environment. While Morocco has a higher GDP per capita than Vietnam, its illiteracy and infant mortality rates are higher, as is discrimination against women (female literacy is considerably lower than the adult rate).⁹

This disconnection between wealth and well-being also points to how the focus on economic growth can harm developed countries just as much as it does developing ones. There is ample evidence to associate the culture prevalent in high-income countries, like the UK or US, with high levels of addiction, depression, family stress,

breakdown, lack of trust, childhood anxiety and sexualisation, obesity, and overconsumption.¹⁰ Worryingly, it is children who seem to be most vulnerable to these trends. A 2007 UNICEF report *Child poverty in perspective* analysed forty indicators in six categories and found that British children fared worse than any of the twenty other industrialised countries studied. Last in the “family and peer relationships” and “behaviour and risks” categories, the UK also came 20th in subjective well-being, 18th in material well-being, and 17th in educational well-being. Only in health and safety did it do notably better, although even here it remained in the bottom half of the table.¹¹ Tellingly, the report concluded, “there is no obvious relationship between levels of child well-being and GDP per capita. The Czech Republic...achieves a higher overall rank for child well-being than several much wealthier countries including France, Austria, the United States and the United Kingdom.”

In spite of all the evidence describing the damaging consequences associated with the model of growth for its own sake, it is precisely this model that is being exported to, or even forced upon other cultural, social, political, economic and environmental contexts, with relatively little consideration of its appropriateness in each case.

moral politics

It is the contention of this report that these problems share a common theme, namely that the single-minded pursuit of economic growth devalues the social, cultural and environmental relationships in which we are embedded and on which we depend, and that this single-minded pursuit is rooted in an underlying confusion about what it means to be human. We have, in essence, a narrow and limited vision of what it means to live well, to flourish as a human being, and it is this vision that is leading us astray.

Before we explore this in greater detail, it is important to ask whether it is even appropriate to talk about such things. Isn't the whole system of modern politics and economics supposed to take such questions out of the equation, by not presupposing any vision of the good but allowing people to choose their own ends by means of freely-entered into contracts and market interactions? Isn't economic policy supposed to be a value-free, technical affair, like a natural science governed by laws that operate independent of human moral visions?

It is true that this is the widespread perception of economics, but it is also true that it is a profoundly misleading perception. Economic policy, like any other policy, is a *political* affair which engages people's values and commitments. The idea that some things should be subject to unrestricted market interactions, others, like alcohol, should be limited, and still others, like human organs or recreational drugs, should be forbidden

altogether presupposes some concept of the good. Which goods we tax and which we subsidise, and at what levels, imports significant moral concepts into economics. As the commentator Polly Toynbee has remarked, “every day in parliament, fundamentally different world views do battle. Politics is all about the clash of moral universes.”¹² Given that everyone’s “moral universe” depends on his or her view of the world and, in particular, of human nature, it is not only inevitable that concepts of the good, of what it means to flourish as a human, are introduced explicitly into political and economic debate, but it is essential that they are. The alternative is for certain ideas and beliefs to be smuggled in under the cover of supposed technocratic neutrality.

who do we think we are?

The conception of human good that dominates modern political and economic thought is that of the autonomous, rational, choice-making agent. In this view human beings are independent, capable and in the best position to assess their own wants and needs, and it is thus the task of government to enable them to do so as best they can. Accordingly, “a human being’s capacity autonomously to choose its ends is not just one amongst many equally valuable capacities or features but rather forms the essence of her identity.”¹³

The single-minded pursuit of economic growth devalues the social, cultural and environmental relationships in which we are embedded and on which we depend.

On the face of it this is an extremely attractive vision. Few people speak out against our capacity for “choice” and “freedom”, concepts that have come to dominate popular rhetoric. That rhetoric is not a faithful representation of reality, however. All politics is about limiting and shaping the exercise of personal freedom for a greater good. As noted above, certain substances, such as recreational drugs, and certain practices even when consensual, such as euthanasia or cannibalism, are prohibited. Access to most others is encouraged or limited, according to an overarching vision of the collective or common good.

Even those driest and most technical of affairs, budgets, are grounded ultimately in moral convictions. Thus, the level at which one sets the personal income tax threshold, the cap on housing benefit, capital gains tax or VAT, to take a handful of mundane examples from the coalition government’s emergency budget of June 2010, will all be influenced not simply by what is necessary on account of broader macro-economic conditions, but by beliefs about who should pay, how much and when. On whom should the responsibility (in this instance, of repaying the nation’s deficit) fall heaviest? Precisely the same is the

case of (the rather more obviously moral) issues like married persons' tax breaks, pension allowance, inheritance tax, or the duty on fuel. Politics and economics are ineradicably moral affairs.

A healthy desire for economic growth for the sake of the common good becomes an unhealthy obsession with economic growth for its own sake.

The question, then, is not about whether people should be recognised as rational, moral agents – they should – or whether there should be limitations and directions placed upon the exercise of their moral agency – there is and must be in any society worthy of the name. The question is what understanding of the good, what vision of human flourishing, should inform and shape those limitations and directions.

The current situation is one in which our guiding vision of human flourishing has elevated the self, individual freedom and choice, the satisfaction of personal desires, above and to the detriment of too much else. Growth has become all about maximising our capacity to choose our own ends and, in turn, those relationships in which we are embedded, and whose existence and health are critical to our own, have been silently downgraded and devalued.

The result is that a healthy desire for economic growth for the sake of the common good becomes an unhealthy obsession with economic growth for its own sake. Thus, when a disproportionate emphasis is placed on quarterly reporting and on maximising shareholder value, it can lead to an economic short-termism that ignores the impact of investment decisions on local employees and communities into and out of which large sums of capital flow with unpredictable rapidity. Or when the IMF demands that developing countries undergo a programme of wholesale privatisation, reduction of national debt, and contraction of state welfare services, with the aim of making their economies more efficient, it can come at the cost of making their people less secure, less healthy and less well-educated. Or when governments actively plan airport expansion and refuse to tax aviation fuel, the costs are offloaded onto the environment and those societies unable to protect themselves from the effects of climate change. Or when transnational corporations (TNCs) employ thousands of workers and provide vital tax revenue, there can be an unwillingness to regulate them appropriately, which in turn can lead to poor environmental and human rights records. Or when subsidies and pricing structures make coal-fuelled production of electricity more cost effective than renewable energy, environmental costs are externalised and common “sinks and services” are devalued. Or when there is a desire to centralise and concentrate power in the hands of

a few nations so as to make decision-making processes faster, simpler and more efficient, it leads to impatience with local structures of power and an inclination to impose terms and conditions on weaker parties.

These are all complex problems and each has attenuating details, but at the heart of each lies a focus on economic growth that pays insufficient attention to the personal, familial, communal, social, political and environmental relationships that make growth possible in the first place. And at the heart of this focus on economic growth lies a vision of human flourishing which is narrow, inadequate and concentrated on “me” at the expense of “us”.

chapter 1 - references

1. These data are drawn from the 2009 UN Millennium Development Goals report: http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2009/MDG_Report_2009_En.pdf.
2. By this, and the attendant phrase “growth-fuelled development” we mean a model of development that focuses on economic growth as the main means of achieving progress in human development – decreasing poverty equating to increasing human well-being. Partly as a consequence of this objective, the dominant policy discourse has also been to give primacy to market forces in guiding the economy – reducing interventions by governments and agency/ responsibility of individuals and companies.
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wholly living

Through the years of apartheid, Archbishop Desmond Tutu routinely justified his opposition to the South African government's policy by appealing to the status of human beings as "made in the image of God". Blacks *and* whites, he would be careful emphasise, were all made in the image of God and, accordingly, merited equal respect and honour.

It was an enormously powerful rhetorical device and has been used through history to justify human equality. But what exactly does it mean? We hear in it the idea of equality, of rationality, of respect, of dignity, but is there any more precise way of understanding what it means, and how it can shape our idea of what it means to flourish as a human being?

"the image of God"

The fact that humans alone are granted the "image of God" epithet does not mean that humans are not part of creation. The Christian understanding of human nature begins with the idea that humans, like all other beings, are *created*. We share a "createdness" with other creatures, a "createdness" that means we are material, dependent on our creator, and connected and interdependent with other creatures. We are not other than nature, but part of it. This is an important place to start for, as Rowan Williams has remarked, "one of the underlying, evasive, moral and imaginative questions that arises in thinking about climate change and the wider environmental agenda is...this ingrained tradition of behaving as if we didn't belong, as if we were not part of an interactive system, as if we were brains on stalks."¹

That recognised, human beings are also something more. We may be creatures among creatures, but we are the only creatures dignified by the epithet "the image of God". What does this mean?

the “substantive” image

Broadly speaking there have been three interpretations of what the image of God means. The first is substantive: being made in the image of God means sharing some of His substantial characteristics. It means being endowed with certain gifts, historically and variously understood to be rationality, morality, self-awareness, creativity, or some combination of these.

Historically the most popular of these has been rationality. Human beings bear the image of God in that, like God, they are uniquely rational. However, while this view is seemingly obvious, it is hard to defend it from the biblical story alone. Rather, the substantive definition of the image of God is better explained by different qualities, specifically the qualities of creativity, productivity, and generosity.

The God in whose image humans are made is a creative, productive and generous God. The image in Genesis 1-2 is of a creative God, speaking creation into existence and ordering it in a way that is pleasing to him, an image that is filled out by the New Testament writers. Humanity is made in the image of this creative, productive, generous God. It is this very fact – and not the hope that we actually *are* creative, productive, or generous – that gives to each human his or her inherent, infinite and ineradicable worth. In reality, all of us fall short of the standards of creativity, productivity, and generosity of which we are capable. But it is not the extent to which we discharge these characteristics of the substantive image that guarantees our worth. It is the simple fact that we are made in the image of that God.

the “functional” image

This leads us to a second definition, which is functional: being made in the image of God means we have a particular job to do, a job that is variously defined as “ruling over”, “subdu[ing]”, “work[ing]...and tak[ing] care of” and “nam[ing]” it, or alternatively of “stewardship”. As Rowan Williams has remarked, “the creation stories of Genesis 1 and 2 see the creation of humanity as quite specifically the creation of an agent, a person, who can care for and protect the animal world, reflecting the care of God himself who enjoys the goodness of what he has made.”²

Humans are tasked with a particular duty, one that is intrinsic to who they are. This suggests that the “image of God” is not simply a static quality, such as having creativity but is, rather, a dynamic one, demanding the deployment of these (and other) qualities in responding to God’s mandate to fill, subdue and rule the earth.

“Subduing” is precisely the kind of term that leaves people nervous and leads them to accuse Christianity of having legitimised environmental exploitation through history. While there is undoubtedly some truth in that accusation, it is important to recognise that ecocide is far from limited to Christian cultures – plenty who have never had contact with the gospel have managed to exhaust their resources – and that theological understanding has moved on. The command to subdue cannot be divorced from the command “to work it and take care of it”, or from the model of ruling that is upheld elsewhere. The *true* king or ruler is the servant-king who “speak[s] up for those who cannot speak for themselves,/for the rights of all who are destitute./[Who] Speak[s] up and judge[s] fairly;/[and] defend[s] the rights of the poor and needy.”³

Thus flourishing as a human means not only having the unique gifts of creativity and productivity but also actually exercising them responsibly, for the goodness of all creation. To be human is to be, in a sense, a gardener of creation. “Human beings are created in the image of God and have the special gift and challenge of sharing in God’s creative activity...As co-creators...our acts should reflect God’s own love for creation.”⁴

the “relational” image

The third definition of “the image of God” is relational. Being made in the image of God means existing in relationship to him, to other humans and to the rest of creation in a way that reflects something of God’s own relational nature. In this understanding of the image of God, it is our capacity to form and maintain right relationships with God, with others and with the earth, that marks us out as made in the image of God.

Christianity understands God as existing in relationship, in the form of the Trinity. Thus, in the words of Catholic Social Teaching, “to be human means to be called to interpersonal communion.”⁵ This, it will be clear, stands in contrast to the idea of humans as independent, autonomous choice-making beings.

One axis of that communion is with God, a fact that is important to remember, not least because it intimates how social and political systems are inadequate to the task of achieving full human flourishing. A second is the axis of communion with one another. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI’s recent encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, “As a spiritual being, the human creature is defined through interpersonal relations. The more authentically he or she lives these relations, the more his or her own personal identity matures.”⁶

Living in relationship demands responsibility towards other humans, just as it does towards the environment; hence, the Bible’s repeated emphasis on the socially disenfranchised, in particular the poor, the alien, the orphan and the widow. The biblical

God is described as the one who “upholds the cause of the oppressed/ and gives food to the hungry...sets prisoners free...gives sight to the blind...lifts up those who are bowed down...loves the righteous...watches over the alien/ and sustains the fatherless and the widow.”⁷ To be made in his image is to exercise the same responsibility. This lay at the heart of the prophetic denunciations of the Old Testament⁸ and also of Jesus’ ministry, which is described as one in which “the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.”⁹ It also lay at the heart of the life of the early Church, one in which there was “neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female”¹⁰ and where the first believers “[sold] their possessions and goods, [and] gave to anyone as he had need.”¹¹ Understood in this way, being made in the image of God means living in relationship with one another, insisting that the equal value of all is recognised and respected, and taking care to ensure that no-one falls out of that relationship.

Overall, a reflection on what it means to be made in the image of God and to recognise that image in the other offers an immensely rich, subtle and complex set of interlocking ideas relating to what it is to flourish as a human being. Over and above being created, material, dependent, and interconnected – qualities that humans share with the rest of creation – humans have certain distinguishing characteristics. They are made in the image of God, made to be creative, productive and generous, stewards of creation, living in right relationship with one another and responsible for enabling relational wholeness of the human community, addressing social exclusion, whether ethnic, physical, economic, medical, or spiritual.

made for generosity

This rich variety of ideas sometimes comes together with a particular clarity. One such moment is towards the end of St Paul’s letter to the Ephesians in which he advises his readers how they might appropriate the image of God and flourish fully as human beings.¹² At one point, Paul says, “He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.”¹³

All too often Christian morality can stop at the first clause. For some, morality is about following God’s laws. God says do not steal. So we should not steal; end of story. Paul, however, goes further. We should not steal, not simply because that is a sound ethical stricture, but so that we can “work, doing something useful with [our] hands.” Here we see how we are called to be creative and productive workers, growing and maturing by working with our own hands.

Crucially, though, Paul goes further still. Being creative and productive is good but there is a further purpose: “that he may have something to share with those in need.” The Christian understanding of human identity and how we might fully flourish as humans is founded not on the idea that we should not steal, nor on the idea that we shouldn’t steal because we are made to be creative and productive, but on the idea that we shouldn’t steal because we are made to be creative and productive *and generous*. Our commission is to live in such a way as to exercise our human gifts of creativity and productivity in order that all may participate in and contribute fully towards our common good, thereby sharing in God’s plans and purposes and responding to his love and generosity. The end of our productive work is not just creativity and productivity but generosity. We should use our hands usefully in order that we can give away what we create. We are made not to have but to give.

This idea is articulated with particular clarity in Pope Benedict’s encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, which emphasises how “the human being is made for gift”.¹⁴ The encyclical explores how this idea fits with existing social arrangements. There are, it points out, different kinds of giving. One is “giving in order to acquire”, which is “the logic of [market] exchange”. A second is “giving through duty”, which is “the logic of public obligation”.¹⁵ Both of these are vital elements of our common good, but they do not exhaust the nature of giving. There is a crucial third element, of giving for the sake of giving, or “gratuitousness” as Pope Benedict expresses it, that is fundamental to human nature and to the successful flourishing of any society. We are called to be gratuitous beings reflecting God’s generosity towards ourselves.

Human flourishing is served when all are afforded the freedom to give and to receive in relationships of mutual understanding and respect.

The Christian vision of human flourishing is not about having maximal freedom and wealth so we may choose our own ends. Rather, it rests, ultimately, on the fact that humans, uniquely, are made in the image of God. Christian theology recognises how that image has been tarnished in all of us, how difficult it is to live as we should, and how perfect social arrangements are unattainable on earth, let alone within the gift of governments. Christian social thought is not utopian.

Nevertheless, the Christian vision of human flourishing remains relevant, realistic and inspiring. It insists that all humans have the capacity for creativity and productivity; all are formed by and thrive in relationships; all have a responsibility for ensuring that everyone may contribute to our common good; all have a duty to treat the natural world as something of more than instrumental value and to steward it sustainably; and all prosper

when given the opportunity to be generous. Human flourishing is served when all are afforded the freedom to give and to receive in relationships of mutual understanding and respect. God gives freely and generously, and in response we are called to share justly what has been given.

generosity and economics

Flourishing as a human being is, thus, not simply a matter of respecting people's choice and maximising their purchasing power. Rather, it demands that we recognise, respect and try to realise everyone's capacity for creativity, productivity, responsibility and generosity.

Everyone has something to contribute to society and that needs to be recognised and in as far as possible realised.

This begs a question, however. Is this not “mere theology”? Does it have any significance in the “real” world? In particular, does it have any purchase in the realms of economics, environmental policy and governance? The answer is that it does, although in doing so, a careful process of translation is required. The Christian vision of a world where all might flourish demands increased understanding of the structures and systems that keep us from flourishing,

and a commitment to change them in solidarity with those who are excluded from full participation. Solidarity is not a vague feeling of pity, but a commitment to work together for the common good.

So, for example, in economic terms, the creative and productive elements of human flourishing orient us towards a market system that allows and encourages human ingenuity, entrepreneurship and industry. Starting businesses, working hard and deriving a profit from them is not only legitimate but necessary. At the same time, that affirmation of production and trade needs to be balanced by the demands of generosity, of our responsibility to others and to the natural world. It would, to borrow from *Caritas in Veritate*, be a “composite” economic system “which does not exclude profit, but instead considers it a means for achieving human and social ends.”¹⁶

Accordingly within the economic system there should be a clear emphasis on the capacity and need for *all* to participate in and contribute to our common life in a way that protects and enhances their dignity. This is the concomitant of natural human creativity and productivity. Everyone has something to contribute to society and that needs to be recognised and in as far as possible realised.

This has implications on a number of levels. For example, it is effectively impossible for people to contribute to our common good if they do not have a requisite level of subsistence, shelter, healthcare and education. A vibrant economy and open employment market is not enough, as people who live beneath the poverty line, or are homeless, or cannot afford healthcare, or have been denied educational opportunities are automatically prevented from contributing what they could to the common good.

It also has implications for securing employment conditions in which human dignity and abilities are well served. Work is a crucial element in our human flourishing, allowing us to exercise the creativity and productivity that is central to our flourishing. This points towards the need to aim for as full a level of employment as possible, while also securing working conditions that respect and dignify not only workers, but the families, communities and, as we shall note below, environments in which they operate. No size of profit can justify working hours or conditions that degrade the worker or prevent him or her living a full life with their family or community; nor should a worker be expected to be grateful to take on a degrading job just to have employment. The exercise of true generosity also precludes the abuse or exploitation of others in order to amass the wealth with which to be generous.

In addition to participation and contribution, this Christian idea of human flourishing would place an emphasis on economic equity. All humans bear the image of God and are equal in their worth and dignity. This does not necessitate an aggressive levelling, in which the various God-given gifts that mark each of us as unique are ignored. It does, however, emphasise that the vast income disparities that currently exist within national borders and, even more so, across them are unacceptable. Even if all were brought to a position in which they could use their creative gifts and meaningfully contribute to the common good, it would not be acceptable for some to be (economically) worth thousands or millions of times more than others.

This is part of the relational aspect of the image of God, pointing us towards the duties we have towards one another. If we are to flourish as human beings, we, in particular the wealthy, must exercise our responsibility towards those who have less, and close the gap between us. We need to build not just “relationships” but “right relationships”, that is, just relationships. This is, of course, at least as much of a personal moral duty as a political one. Nevertheless, governments cannot be excused of their responsibility here. This points not simply to making the poor richer in absolute terms, but making them richer in relative terms too, reducing the differential ratio between top and bottom income deciles to an acceptable level.

generosity and environment

Moving from the economic realm to the closely related one of environmental thinking, the Christian vision of human flourishing outlook is marked by similar concerns, but especially by our responsibility to the natural world, the responsibility of stewardship. This attitude to human flourishing underlines the importance of recognising the value of common environmental goods, making use of them in such a way as is compatible with their sustained productivity and the needs of future generations, and of maintaining a long-term perspective on environmental issues that elevates environmental commitment above short-term political concerns. It is crucial to maintain right relationships not only with God and the other but also with the earth and other creatures.

The Christian vision of human flourishing orients us towards an engagement with the environment that recognises it as a gift over which we may, indeed must, use our creative gifts.

It means recognising the true value of environmental goods and services in their unexploited state so as to recognise their full value not only to us, but also, crucially, to subsequent generations. This is not simply a question of stewardship but also part of the responsibility inherent in being created in the image of God and recognising the image of God in others, loving your temporal neighbour as much as your geographical one. The fact that we cannot sign a contract with

“generations to come” does not excuse us from our moral responsibility towards them, any more than the inability of other creatures to enter into a contract absolves us from our moral duties to the environment.

It also means cultivating a long-term attitude that is too rare today in political thinking, an attitude that is marked by the idea of the covenant, an enduring compact outlining obligations and rights and marked by fidelity, trust, mutuality, and commitment. This is critically important when dealing with environmental issues, where human responses need to be atypically patient and sustained. Electoral cycles of four to five years, and news cycles of four to five hours are ill-suited to policies that demand decades of determined action in response to environmental changes that can last centuries. When dealing with environmental action, time horizons need to be lengthened and a sense of corporate identity and responsibility that transcends the immediate, limited and conditional contract between known agents fostered.

The Christian vision of human flourishing also orients us towards environmental participation, in particular the participation of the poorest and most vulnerable in the use of environmental resources. Just as future generations must not be deprived of environmental goods, nor should those currently alive. If human flourishing means

“gardening responsibly”, any system shaped by this understanding would need to ensure not only that the garden was well tended, and protected for future gardeners, but also that all had access to the goods that enabled them to garden in the first place.

Thus, in the same way that an economic system should seek to bring all to a position from which they can contribute to the common good, so an environmental one should seek to secure universal and equitable access to the natural goods that make such contribution possible. This was (one of) the purpose(s) underlying the Jubilee laws in the Old Testament. These served both economic and environmental needs (land and wealth being largely synonymous in agricultural societies) one of which was to ensure that everyone had equitable access to shared environmental resources. The environmental resource that was land was not sold in perpetuity but only according to the number of years until the next Jubilee (technically, usufruct rather than land). This underlined the importance of enabling *all* to partake fairly and equitably in the use and preservation of *all* environmental goods, systems and sinks as well as resources.

Overall, the Christian vision of human flourishing orients us towards an engagement with the environment that recognises it as a gift (not something we can dispose of at our will), over which we may, indeed must, use our creative gifts but doing so responsibly, recognising its intrinsic worth, rather than instrumentalising it, acknowledging our responsibility to one another and to future generations in our use of it.

generosity and governance

Looking, finally, at questions of governance, the Christian vision of human flourishing orients us towards forms of governance that are marked by participation, service and social justice. This is governance that enables people to make a meaningful contribution to the course of their lives, to be “artisans of their own destiny” to use Pope Paul VI’s phrase, rather than treating them as recipients of a distant political “service provider”.¹⁷ It is governance that enables individuals and their communities to contribute meaningfully to debates that are relevant to them, recognising each person’s abilities and identities, and the contribution they can make to our common good through informal as well as formal relationships and structures.

This can point in several directions. One is towards what has been called “complex” political space, a “multipolar” political system, in which power is diffused throughout the system. Here, it is not immediately the case that higher authorities should have power over lower ones, but vulnerable or marginal groups can be protected against the abuse of power by stronger, more socially secure actors, whether that be central government or transnational corporations.

This encourages an attitude in which decisions are made as close as possible to the lives of the people they affect and in which there is genuine accountability for those who make those decisions. It also encourages a culture of transparency concerning the use of resources and power. This idea is familiar to Catholic Social Teaching as subsidiarity, first articulated in a 1931 encyclical, which asserted that, “Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice...to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do.”¹⁸ This emphasis on subsidiarity is part of respecting the creative and productive aspects of human flourishing, putting people into a situation whereby they can exercise some meaningful control over the life of the communities in which they reside.

The Christian vision of human flourishing also emphasises the element of service in governance, not simply as a way of enabling the creative and productive aspects of human flourishing, but also as a means of respecting the human need for generosity in the sense of self-giving. Power should be exercised for the good of other people rather than that of those holding power. It will place particular emphasis on the needs of those who are vulnerable and excluded from local, national and global society, recognising that they often have extra barriers to participation in terms of time, resources and access, therefore special effort needs to be made for their voices to be heard and to orient policies towards their needs.

Overall, a human flourishing approach to governance will seek to address the impatience with local forms of decision making that our focus on growth for its own sake can inculcate, and, while recognising the importance of international decision making forums, will insist on their transparency and accountability so that power, when necessarily centralised, works for the common good rather than those who exercise it.

an outstanding question

The Christian vision of human flourishing is not simply a theoretical understanding of what it means to live well, with no purchase beyond a theology seminar. Rather, it orients us in a number of clear directions when we think about economic, environmental and governance issues.

It directs us towards an economic system that respects the productive and creative capacities of all and seeks to enable *all* to contribute to society. It directs us towards an understanding of the environment that recognises it as a gift, which we must use responsibly, disinheriting neither those living nor those future generations who are unable to speak for themselves. And it directs us towards a form of governance that

permits and encourages the meaningful exercise of power at local levels, which is marked by transparency and accountability and guided by an ethos of service.

When articulated in this way, the possibility for “human flourishing” politics seems more realistic, and we will proceed shortly to explore a handful of ways in which it could be made real. However, before doing so, one important question remains. Is this a vision for all? We have been talking about a *Christian* vision of Human Flourishing, a vision that derives explicitly from Christian ideas and beliefs. Is it not, therefore, comprehensible, limited and applicable only to Christians?

The answer to this is a definite no. It is essential to recognise that all political ideas derive from some specific view of the moral universe. Every society has some, usually many, visions of the good somewhere at its heart. Those views are usually contested and will inform policy to a greater or lesser extent. Some people will share them, others will not. However, you do not have to share the foundations of a policy idea in order to support it. This is just as much the case with ideas based on a Christian understanding of human flourishing as it is with any others. Although deriving from a Christian worldview, the vision outlined above can be (and is) shared by those who do not share that worldview. Thus, the fact that the idea of being made in “the image of God” can be articulated in other, more general, terms – equality, creativity, productivity, participation, contribution, relationships, responsibility and generosity – underlines how such a seemingly specific idea of human flourishing could attract widespread appeal.

So, if being created in the “image of God” and participating in God’s creative work – or, as we have translated it, the human capacity and need to develop and exercise our creativity, productivity, responsibility and generosity, so that all may contribute fully to our common good – if this should inform our policy thinking, it remains to be seen what this might look like in practical terms.

chapter 2 - references

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7. Psalm 146.7-9.
8. See Isaiah 10.2, Jeremiah 5.23-28, Amos 2.7, etc.
9. Matthew 11.5.
10. Galatians 3.28.
11. Acts 2.42.
12. Or as he puts it, "be made new in the attitude of your minds; and...put on the new self, created to be like God." (Ephesians 4.23-24).
13. Ephesians 4.28.
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human flourishing and development

This report has argued that the vision of human good that underlies so much contemporary policy, not least development policy, is of the individual as an independent and autonomous being, fundamentally disconnected from social, cultural and environmental relationships, and whose only absolute good is the freedom to choose.

It has recognised that while this vision of human autonomy has resulted in economic growth that is vital to human flourishing, this growth has come at a great cost. Recent decades have witnessed environmental degradation, massive global income inequalities, and a sense of political disenfranchisement for many developing nations within global governance structures. Development has become synonymous with the overexploitation of natural resources in order to deliver wealth that is disproportionately concentrated in the already-wealthy global North. Not only has this had a devastating impact on the environment and the disproportionately poor global South, but it has also established a precedent, the idea that this route is the only one that brings development. The high-carbon, resource-hungry development pathway appears not simply an attractive but the only serious route out of poverty. As a result, insufficient attention is paid to the unavoidable problem of environmental constraints, or to local structures of power and community that “obstruct” this route and are often treated as problems to be overcome.

A healthy society is a generous society, rather than an acquisitive one.

Although these are clearly wide-ranging problems with complex causes, this report argues that they are grounded ultimately in a narrow and inadequate understanding of what it means to live well. It contends that a vision of human flourishing that is rooted in the idea of being made in “the image of God” offers a more fruitful and accurate understanding of what it means to live well. This is clearly rooted in Christian thought but not limited to those who share the Christian faith. It sees humans as fundamentally creative and productive beings who have a responsibility to one another and for the natural world. It insists that all have a contribution to make to the common good and understands human beings as fundamentally made for the sake of giving and communion, to live in relationships of generosity. A healthy society is a generous society, rather than an acquisitive one.

how now should we live?

This has profound implications in (at least) two areas: how developed governments respond and how their populations respond. This report is focused primarily on the former question, but that cannot be addressed without first examining, albeit briefly, how individuals and community groups in developed countries will themselves face the challenge. It is crucial to recognise that it is precisely their response that will (or will not) create the “space of public permission” in which governments must act.

In one respect, our personal or communal responses to the challenges explored in this report are obvious. If we are consuming more than our fair share, we should consume less. If we are seeking wealth at the cost of relationships, we need to reorder our priorities. If we are failing to discharge our responsibilities to the poor of the world, or we are ignoring the fact that many millions are not in a position to share in the common good, we must refocus and redouble our efforts to highlight their needs and work towards their inclusion and flourishing.

There are numerous movements that seek to enable people to live in this way, such as the “Simple Living Network” or the “LiveSimply” challenge of which CAFOD is a founder member.¹ In much the same way, initiatives like Tearfund’s Climate Justice Fund, operated in partnership with the Church of England, share the same objective of reducing or mitigating that behaviour which destroys the ability of millions to live well.²

Beyond such initiatives, however, there is a pressing need for voluntary and other civil society groups, not least churches, to engage corporately in these activities and to campaign about them in such a way as to slowly change the climate of public opinion.

It has happened before. A number of years ago, Rodney Stark, an American sociologist of no religious belief, sought to explain *sociologically* how an obscure, marginal, and widely despised religious movement transformed the Roman Empire in 300 years.³ His analysis pointed out a number of issues, two of which are worth mentioning in this context.

The first is how the church treated women. Early Christianity was a disproportionately female movement. The reason was that in the ancient world women were viewed as second class citizens, female infants regularly being “exposed” or discarded as worthless. On average in the ancient Mediterranean world there were around 135 men for every 100 women. By contrast, infanticide and “exposure” were explicitly forbidden by the early Church. It was a fundamental article of Christian faith that women were worth as much as men. The church placed an unusually strong emphasis on male fidelity within a marriage. And, unlike pagan widows who were often forced to remarry, Christian ones were commonly supported by the church. In other words, the church was deliberately counter-cultural, doing something (in this case valuing women) because it was right rather than because it was popular or expedient.

A second example is in the treatment of the poor and needy. The Christian church gained notoriety in the ancient world because during the epidemics that regularly decimated urban areas, it tended not only its own sick but also those who were outside its boundaries. Not without reason did the emperor Julian the Apostate complain, “it is disgraceful when no Jew is a beggar and the impious Galileans [i.e. Christians] support our poor in addition to their own; everyone is able to see that our coreligionists are in want of aid from them.”

The rise of Christianity is a large and complex story and not the subject of this report. These short examples are included to show that at least one of the reasons for that rise was, in Rodney Stark’s words, “because Christians constituted an intense community, able to generate the ‘invincible obstinacy’ that so offended [many Romans] but yielded immense religious rewards.” Christian groups valued all, saved infants and tended the sick indiscriminately, against the culture of the age, because they thought it was the right thing to do.

That is precisely the example and the challenge before Christian groups – and indeed others who share the same idea of what it means to flourish as a human – today. Can they form communities of “invincible obstinacy” practising and promoting a fuller understanding of human flourishing in spite of the cultural pressure to do otherwise? Can they live simply, give generously, include widely, act responsibly – in spite of the fact that it may, at times, be impractical or unrealistic to do so? Can they elevate relationships over economics, and live creative, productive, generous, responsible lives, ceaselessly working for the inclusion of the poor and vulnerable in the global common good, even when that endeavour comes at a personal cost?

It should be recognised that, costly as this may be, it is not without its own rewards, and does not demand unfeasible levels of altruism. As the “happiness” studies referred to in the Introduction show, living well offers its own returns. A flourishing life is not a “hair-shirt” life. There is a strong argument for enlightened self-interest to be made.

However, evidence suggests that it takes the determined actions of small groups – “communities of invincible obstinacy” – to reverse trends and to alert people to different, more fulfilling forms of communal life. Christian churches need to lead here, living generously because it is the right thing to do, rather than because it is expedient. The fact that the scale and reach of such Christian networks, even in the so-called secular West, is unrivalled should serve further to encourage their commitment to changing the climate of opinion.

Such communities play a key role in changing a national culture. But they cannot do it alone. Governments cannot compel individuals or groups within civil society to live creative or generous lives, but they can undermine the ability of such groups to live creatively or generously, such as by micro-managing their daily operations, burdening them with bureaucracy, refusing to legislate against anti-social employment practices or failing to secure politically or economically stable environments – all of which create a level of powerlessness or uncertainty that inhibit individuals and groups in civil society from living well and contributing to the common good.

Governments thus do have a significant role, first by simply not undermining the conditions that make for human flourishing – by “doing no harm” – and second, more positively, by shaping the political and economic infrastructure in such a way as to put people in a position whereby they can contribute to the common good. Governments can, in essence, provide people with the opportunity to participate in and contribute to relationships of generosity. We turn now, therefore, to explore, again briefly, the direction of the kind of ideas and policies that such an understanding of human flourishing demands.

CASE STUDY // Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe Orphans Through Extended Hands (ZOE) is a small organisation set up to be a catalyst to mobilise, train and strengthen local churches to respond to the needs of the large numbers of HIV orphans within their communities. ZOE does not provide any substantial resources other than training, but helps communities to see that the primary needs of orphans are relational rather than physical and that regular visits, to demonstrate their love and support for these children, can be the most helpful thing that they can do. Once volunteers build relationships with children, they often find that there are practical ways that they can help as well. For example, church members have come together to raise money to pay school fees and have offered help in repairing a roof or farming land for families who are in need. ZOE is now supporting 3,800 volunteers who have reached over 75,000 orphans and vulnerable children. This network has also been invaluable in recent times of crisis in Zimbabwe. When food shortages reach a peak, food distributions to the most vulnerable are organised and administered by church volunteers.

what might this mean in economic terms?

This understanding of human flourishing reminds us that one economic model doesn't fit all national circumstances. Human development is not simply a matter of economic growth any more than human flourishing is simply a matter of ever increasing personal wealth. True human flourishing is multi-dimensional, involving the exercise of human creativity, productivity, responsibility and generosity. Economic growth may enable such characteristics, but it is not the same as them. Given the different characteristics of economies, the conditions needed for economic growth to translate into better quality of life will be country specific. While a major focus of economic policy in Zambia might be to grow economically in order to invest in public service and provide opportunities for its population to live well, a shift from material growth to quality relationships is more likely to be a priority condition in the UK and other OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries.

Having recognised the need for flexibility and responsiveness to circumstance in economic thinking, the Human Flourishing approach does point in a number of clear directions.

Firstly, we need to design and collect new measures of progress as an alternative to GDP, measures that better reflect the reality of human flourishing. This is not a new idea. Indeed, as acknowledged in the concluding section of this report, there have been (and are) numerous different projects that seek to develop metrics that reflect a truer picture of human progress. Some, like the Human Development Index, have received a high profile but none has yet succeeded in dislodging GDP as the prime indicator of a nation's health. While there is no need to reinvent the wheel, there *is* a pressing need to draw attention to the necessity of a fuller, more accurate understanding of human flourishing than is currently recognised. Hence, this report calls for an official commission, initiated by the highest levels in government, to draw on existing work in this area in investigating a Human Flourishing Index, which would better reflect what it is to live well and explore how such an approach can be adopted and applied to policy decisions. We shall return to this idea at the end of this report.

Human development is not simply a matter of economic growth any more than human flourishing is simply a matter of ever increasing personal wealth.

Second, the Human Flourishing approach entails deploying economic policy in such a way as to support true human flourishing. For example, taxation is a profoundly moral device, and needs to be focussed on discouraging those activities that diminish human flourishing while directing resources towards activities which enhance it. The long-

standing proposal for a tax on financial transactions, such as currency, stocks and derivatives, is a concrete example of this. The idea is that a small sum levied globally would act as a brake on massive, speculative, short-term transactions that can do much damage at ground level, while at the same time raising revenue that could be redirected to international development and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Alongside raising taxes, there is the issue of collecting them. Developing country governments need to build their capacity to collect taxes from citizens rather than simply relying on revenues from resources which can create a lack of accountability and make a government less responsive and more corrupt.

Tax breaks for foreign investors and the ability of multinational companies to avoid taxes can also deprive developing countries of much needed income to finance social spending. According to an Oxfam report, tax havens are estimated to contribute to revenue losses for developing countries of at least \$50bn a year, an amount roughly equivalent to half the annual aid that flows to developing countries.⁴ In this respect it is essential for the UK government to require UK listed companies to disclose payments on a country by country basis and to work to persuade G20 leaders to formally request the International Accounting Standards Board to adopt this new standard, to work to deliver a fully multilateral agreement for the automatic exchange of tax information and to include in any tax agreement a review mechanism to ensure it benefits developing countries.

Thirdly, the human flourishing model seeks to support the sustainable economic activities of the world's poorest. As outlined above, although wealth cannot be equated with human flourishing, extreme poverty can be equated with its opposite. It is unsatisfactory that for the poor to get a little less poor, the rich must get considerably more rich, as this kind of growth not only exacerbates the extreme inequality that is fundamentally inimical to the idea of equal human worth, but because it also has a detrimental impact on our shared environment.

This involves more attention being paid to the distributional and social impacts of growth. The form such economic activities take will depend on the nature of the local economies and their resource distribution. In developed countries like the UK, such activities might include introducing more flexible labour time to enable people to volunteer in the community or have more time for family relations. In developing nations, by contrast, it is likely to involve focusing on directly supporting the economic activities of poor people, for example through investing in rural communities. One example of such an initiative is "Foundations for Farming" (formerly called "Farming God's Way"), which implements an agricultural model through church networks throughout the African continent. It provides better skills for subsistence farmers to increase their yields and therefore improve their livelihoods.

A fourth area is the need to invest in poor people's assets, so that they are in a position to contribute to our common good. This ranges from basic infrastructure relating to human health such as access to drinkable water, working sanitation and health clinics; through to agricultural infrastructure such as irrigation resources and veterinary services; improved physical infrastructure such as better roads and storage facilities; educational and financial infrastructure like schooling, vocational education services and credit; and relational infrastructure, such as the formal and informal networks on which people rely to live their lives well.

All this adds up to a very large agenda – for advocacy, investment, capacity building and service delivery – which can only be delivered successfully if there is sustained and long-term political commitment from developing country and donor governments and civil society – including local churches and other faith groups.

As well as policy change in key areas of economic policy, it is also important that economic agents are enabled, encouraged and even disciplined to act in a manner that promotes human flourishing (a fifth recommendation). This applies, for example, to business. As the influence of the private sector grows, business needs to be accountable to society for social and environmental impacts, as well as financial ones. Consumers and governments need to incentivise companies to act as moral agents, not just as economic machines. This can be done through a range of measures including, where appropriate, regulation. One way of government doing this is through prioritising support to cooperatives and alternative business models where companies subordinate their profits to the welfare of their workers, and decision-making is based on mutual forms of partnerships. "Transforming Business" and the "Transformational Business Network" provide examples of this, as does the Basque cooperative Mondragon, started by a priest in the mid-1950s to create employment on the basis of solidarity, and now one of the largest companies in Spain.

Business can also be made to contribute to human flourishing in other ways, such as through legislation defining minimum standards of conduct and by encouraging best practice. A recent report by Traidcraft to the UK Parliament International Development Select Committee urged DFID to make British companies in Bangladesh comply with a set of "best practices" that did not exploit workers and produce goods in sub-standard labour conditions. Because the UK is the largest investor in the country, the report argued that British companies could be more significant than aid in lifting millions of Bangladeshis out of poverty. Consumers can also encourage better business by acting ethically themselves. A sixth area is that of trade. Trade is a critically important means of serving human flourishing, yet the manner in which it can deepen inequality levels can also serve to undermine human flourishing. On this note, current proposals at the World Trade Organisation would not result in a balanced development outcome to this round of negotiations. Developing countries need to be confident that they can protect their

agriculture sectors from import surges that could devastate the livelihoods of small scale farmers, and could do so, for example, through a special safeguard mechanism and the right to exempt sensitive products from liberalisation.

Low income countries would also need to benefit from the round of trade talks, for example by gaining access to developed country markets for their agricultural and manufactured products by tackling non-tariff barriers and unfair subsidies, and by gaining the temporary right to work in rich countries for their workers in the service sectors. Developed countries, including the UK, need to open their markets to goods from developing countries.

There is an inherent tension between this and a call for decreased and more sustainable consumption and production patterns in the developed world on which developing countries may become increasingly dependent. This does not necessarily mean that there is no benefit in export markets for developing countries but this should be complemented by investing more to make developing countries' domestic and regional markets work, for example by tackling the lack of effective demand (due to poverty levels) and poor institutions.

Overall, the vision of human flourishing emphasises the importance of treating the whole person as an end in all economic decisions; supporting the economic activities of the poorest; investing in their physical, social, and educational assets; promoting good business; and regulating trade so that it aids the ability of all, in particular the world's poorest, to contribute to our common good. This does not, of course, comprise a blueprint for human flourishing economics as it relates to international aid and development but it gestures in the right direction and underlines how such an economic approach is possible.

what might this mean in environmental terms?

A key way in which a human flourishing approach would influence environment policy lies in the proper stewardship of resources through responsible governance of common environmental goods. The "tragedy of the commons" is a long-standing environmental fear, in which "free-riders" over-consume resources that are held in common, thereby creating a free-for-all that ends in trouble, if not ruin, for all. The example often given in textbooks of such a tragedy is that of overgrazing of fields by pastoralists but, in reality, the most striking and serious tragedies of the commons are the product *in our time* of myopic resource use on gigantic scales, both by central state planners, as in the destruction of the Aral Sea during the Soviet period, or by private actors, as in over-fishing by industrial-scale trawlers. Climate disruption is, in effect, a tragedy of the commons on

the largest possible scale, in which a shared natural resource has been overused by a limited section of the global population, which has not only deprived others of resources but burdened them with the costs and consequences of unsustainable consumption.

How one addresses this problem is a long-standing debate. History, while having produced many tragedies of the commons, has also produced many local and regional regimes for resource management that have proved to be sustainable, equitable and ingenious in averting them. The 2009 Economics Nobel Prize winner, Elinor Ostrom, has documented many such common pool resource management systems at community scales in many countries. In effect these are covenants reflecting tried, tested and much-modified local understandings of what makes for wise and fair use of essential resources and of what sustains “ecological capabilities” that underpin human flourishing. These can be shown to work on the basis of a set of rules, governing values and patterns of cooperation and equitable use that transcend particular places and can be applied to problems of unsustainable resource use now.

Climate disruption is a tragedy of the commons on the largest possible scale.

Ostrom outlines eight key principles and design elements for sustainable use of the commons. First, there is a need for **clear boundaries** that describe the system to be regulated and the people involved; second, **locally appropriate rules** that make sense for the ecosystems and societies living in and with them; third, **collective agreement**, as sustainable management of the commons depends on achievement and maintenance of cooperation and consensus; fourth, **monitoring**, meaning clear processes for accountability and checks against “free-riding”; fifth, **graduated sanctions**, in which breaches of the cooperative system are not punished at once with maximum rigour but repeated infringements incur rising penalties; sixth, **conflict resolution mechanisms**, such as means of restoring consensus and dealing with conflicts of interest or interpretation without resort to coercion; seventh, **rights to organise**, as people operating a common-pool management system need the capability to organise themselves autonomously, i.e. not be subject to arbitrary interference by higher jurisdictions; and finally **nested enterprises**, whereby a commons that extends over several scales and boundaries needs to be managed by a hierarchy of networks all respecting the overall goals and design of the management system.

Precisely how one adopts these principles when dealing with global good is a matter for negotiation, but serving the common good demands that they are adopted when we seek to govern the common goods that are crucial to human flourishing.

A second critical task is the need to value environmental goods at their proper level. This could be done in a number of ways. One would be to price in environmental damages,

effectively to include the costs of pollution within the price of goods sold, rather than offloading them onto the environment, local communities or onto governments that have to clean up the mess. Although this runs the risk of instrumentalising the natural world, a mentality that must be guarded against, failing to recognise the value of environmental resources in any way is almost guaranteed to destroy them.

One way of doing this has been through emissions trading schemes which already exist in various national and international contexts. In theory these set a cap on emissions and then allow parties to trade their emissions quotas, in such a way as incorporates the cost of emissions within the trading. However, while carbon trading schemes may appear to offer a way to address emissions, in reality this has not been the case. The carbon market has thus far failed to deliver deep cuts in either the North or the South. Carbon markets tend to export emissions cuts to where they can be achieved at lowest cost but allow “business as usual” emissions in rich countries. Given that globally all countries need to develop in an environmentally sustainable way, exporting emissions through trading does not allow a shift to a whole new development paradigm.

Developed countries must recognise their responsibilities and transition to low carbon economies, leading to large scale cuts in emissions within their own borders. At the same time they must provide the finance, technology and capacity building to help developing countries develop along low carbon pathways and adapt to climate change. Analysis shows that it will be essential to provide major resources, of around \$200 billion a year by 2020, for poor communities for climate change adaptation, mitigation and low carbon development. This scale of action requires a fair, ambitious and binding global deal on climate change, something which eluded world leaders at Copenhagen in 2009. Any global deal on emissions reductions must be fair for poor countries and recognise the greater responsibilities and capabilities of developed countries to act.

It is vital that global greenhouse gas emissions peak by 2015. To do this while securing affordable energy services for all, and making a transition to renewable energy systems, will be an immense task. Policy also needs to focus on climate and energy security for the poor within the rich world and in the developing world. With two billion people lacking access to energy services this is an enormous challenge.

Similarly, there is a need for increased negotiating capability in the South. Inequalities of wealth and power mean that the poorest countries have grossly inadequate voice and scope for representation at international negotiations over climate change (and indeed over trade policy and in international governance in general, as we shall note below). Serving the human flourishing of all necessitates additional resources negotiating capability, enabling developing countries to be represented and supported on terms equal with those of the OECD countries.

These two factors – governing common environmental goods in a way that respects and preserves them and recognising the value of environmental goods to human flourishing – are critical to the environmental aspect of the Christian vision of human flourishing. Two others, which are slightly more visionary, are worth mentioning. One is to situate meetings of decision-makers in locations that will help foster empathy, urgency, learning and humility – in other words in the places and among the peoples that are being destroyed by the current growth model. The routine setting for environmental policymaking is an urban building with no visible connections to the natural world, set in an affluent city, with high-tech home comforts all around. If policy makers are to realise fully the value of our shared environment and the impact that environmental policies (or their absence) can have on people and places, they need to move away from their normal environments and experience the reality. Taking this idea seriously, global summits should be moved away from comfortable Western urban venues to convene in the most disadvantaged and at-risk places compatible with security. This way, unsustainable development and the ecological risks we run can be seen up close and taken personally by delegates, and delegates can see potential solutions in development and action. This is not the normal fare of policy debate, but something like it may be essential if the process of changing hearts, minds and values in the service of human flourishing is to be achieved.

One final suggestion, which is equally ambitious, is for a Jubilee 2050 movement to start now. The Jubilee was a bi-centennial celebration in the Old Testament and although 2050 is several political lifetimes away, it is imperative that the long-term perspective is maintained and pursued for environmental issues. Such a Jubilee 2050 movement could comprise a number of ideas, including, for example, a renewed campaign for a programme of debt relief and forgiveness based on the trade-off of accumulated Western “ecological debt” against developing country liabilities. This could be geared to guarantees of investment by developing countries in low-carbon transition programmes and the protection of habitats and species (including better payment of local people for stewardship of these places and creatures).

These ideas – relocating summits and Jubilee 2050 – are smaller scale but more ambitious objectives than the larger but also eminently realisable objectives of recognising the true value of environmental goods and governing common environmental goods in a way that respects and preserves them. However these four ideas are taken, the underlying point remains that for humans to flourish fully, a great deal more care – time, energy and money – is needed to recognise and respect the value of the gift of creation.

CASE STUDY // India

The Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief (EFICOR) is a national Christian relief and development organisation working in India. Dino Thouthang, their Executive Director, says the following:

When we go to a village to drill for water, we do two surveys. We do a socio-economic survey to find out where the poorest and most marginalised people live – the outcasts or dalits. Then we do the physical survey, to find out where the water is located. If the result shows a water source where the dalits live, we drill the well there. That means that the higher-caste women will have to come to this community to get their water. If we drilled it in the high-caste area, they would fence it off and not allow poor people to touch it. It's a powerful tool. At first these women are quite upset, but they often begin to see that they have to forget their old prejudices.

What might this mean in governance terms?

The human flourishing vision orients us towards a concept of governance in which power should be exercised for the good of all, rather than that of those holding power, and in particular to enable all to contribute meaningfully to the common good. This means enabling people to be in a position to control their own destinies, by means of aid and development policies that are responsible, generous and marked by long-term commitment. Governance for human flourishing means governance that seeks to secure widespread participation; to serve the common good, with an emphasis on responsiveness, transparency, accountability and subsidiarity; and to achieve social justice, with a focus on the most excluded in society.

This points in a number of directions such as, first, strengthening partnerships between developed and developing countries. For aid to be effective and genuinely serve the human flourishing of those to whom it is targeted, it needs to be based on a partnership approach that seeks parity in power relations between donor and recipient governments, and ensures some accountability from those governments to their people.

The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness outlined various core principles for aid effectiveness that would fit in with such a partnership approach, including ownership by the recipient governments, aligning donor support to developing country strategies, and mutual accountability.⁵ Such a partnership approach does not mean that donor governments should not have any views or policies about governance issues in developing countries. However, it does mean orientating funding towards support for national development programmes that allow developing countries to determine their

own programmes and strategies. An effective way to do this can be for donors to give support directly to country government budgets rather than to a range of smaller projects which require separate accountability mechanisms and can over-burden a recipient government's own reporting systems.

Research has shown that this kind of budget support has contributed, for example, to many more children going to school and more people gaining access to health services. In Rwanda it has helped the government to increase expenditure on health, and the use of health services has nearly doubled as a result. Accompanied by capacity building and institutional support, it has also helped to increase government accountability and transparency, to its own people and not just to donors.⁶

These kinds of efforts towards accountability will be most effective when supported by donors and civil society. Efforts to ensure greater transparency of aid and to support civil society to hold their governments to account can ensure that aid is used well while also strengthening the relationship between a government and its people.

Very little aid is currently delivered in this way (5-10% globally) although DFID does rather better with 27% of its total bilateral aid and 39% of its bilateral aid to sub-Saharan Africa being delivered in this way in 2008-9.⁷ More of DFID's bilateral aid programme needs to be targeted towards this long-term partnership approach based on budget support and national development plans. In parallel with this budget support, there needs to be greater funding for accountability initiatives, especially those led by civil society groups rather than external actors, so as to ensure the successful deployment of those funds.

One of the objections to such budget support is that developing country governments can themselves be self-serving and remote from the poor, which drastically reduces the effect of such support. A recent trend in response to this is the growth of cash transfer programmes that provide resources directly to the poor. These have been launched by a number of national governments, including Brazil, Mexico, Nicaragua, South Africa, and Namibia, with considerable success. If developing country governments and international development agencies do the same and act to place resources directly in the hands of the poor, particularly in fragile states, it would circumvent the problem of budget support where there is, in effect, no national government and also avoid the paternalism whereby some institutions design "programmes" that are imposed upon the poor.⁸

Short-termism undermines the relationships and trust that are fundamental to human flourishing, whether at an individual, community or national level. Long-term commitments between the UK and other countries are necessary to build trust and monitor the deployment of aid and the effectiveness of development policies. Such partnerships need to go beyond aid to include a much wider range of factors that directly

and indirectly affect human flourishing, particularly the human flourishing of the world's poorest. It is important that there is partnership in trade and investment and that it is on more equal terms than is currently seen. Similarly, concerted efforts to tackle climate change equitably are part of the idea of partnership, as is an ethical foreign policy.

Partnership and long-term commitment needs to be joined by a second factor, similar to the one mentioned above, namely more relational policy-making which involves a real engagement with all sectors of society. Part of this will include "immersion" where policymakers actually experience the conditions to be alleviated. Even, indeed especially, if it is difficult policy makers should travel to rural or marginal urban areas where statistics have faces and they can encounter the lives of real people with every day struggles.

Policy makers should travel to rural or marginal urban areas where statistics have faces and they can encounter the lives of real people with every day struggles.

Something here may be learned from the Reality Check immersion initiative by the Swedish Embassy in Bangladesh, where in 2007 they commissioned a five-year longitudinal study with the aim of "listening to, trying to understand and convey poor people's reality". This involved a team spending a minimum of four nights and five days in the home of a person living in poverty, allowing them to spend time with a family and hear those voices that are normally excluded, such as the elderly, young or those with disabilities.⁹ Such "immersion" is an important element in the humanising of statistics, making the

issue of human flourishing a real rather than a theoretical problem, and emphasising the responsibility we have to one another.

This point itself relates to a third one, concerning the need to broaden our understanding of what constitutes an efficient return on development programmes and projects and orienting policies towards the most vulnerable. The focus on economic returns can have undesirable consequences for the poorest and most remote as they do not necessarily give the best value for money or the greatest return for any particular investment. Literacy or health education programmes in different languages for rural populations often have extra costs associated with them, such as personnel, transport and communication, as does integrating rural areas into the local and national economy, through developing local markets, technical advice or helping farmers form associations. Participation in the local political process poses particular challenges in rural or marginalised urban areas.

However, these programmes are essential not only for community cohesion but often for the very survival of rural communities. Programmes or policies aimed at serving such concerns and communities may bring low *economic* rates of return for the money invested, but have significant impacts on people's lives in terms of improving their basic

standard of living, combating preventable diseases, overcoming isolation or becoming part of a wider economy. They should therefore be analysed not only in terms of the aggregate number of people who benefit, or the economic rate of return, but how they contribute to social justice as a key component within governance for human flourishing.

CASE STUDY // Cambodia

The Commune Council Support Project in Cambodia is helping to develop the accountability of local government to their people – focusing on building constructive relationships rather than conflict. As a tool to do this CCSP has developed the Citizen’s Rating Report which allows local people to give their feedback on local services and pinpoint changes. The CRR asks people to rate their satisfaction with and ability to access government services such as water provision or education. The findings are presented to local officials and used as a starting point for discussion about how to improve the services. They are also collected from the different provinces and presented at a national level to give the whole government a picture of how people on the ground are experiencing services. The CRR is repeated every year so people can develop a dialogue with their service providers.

A fourth way in which the Christian vision of human flourishing would shape governance policy is to involve and strengthen civil society organisations in governance. CSOs can act as bridges between the national or local government and the most vulnerable populations, helping to organise them and to ensure that these populations are included in policy-making and government programmes. An example of this is the role of the Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia (PFE), a local consortium that raises the issues of pastoralist organisations in national debate as their way of life and livelihood are otherwise often ignored in policy options.¹⁰ In the lead up to the first Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) pastoralism was not being considered as an issue. PFE consulted pastoralist organisations in all regions and their partners and raised their perspectives and particular needs in the PRSP process, which resulted in inclusion of a chapter on pastoralism in the final document in the first and second phases of PRSP in Ethiopia.

In a similar way, in situations of conflict civil society organisations can often act as mediators and peace builders where other organisations have no place.

The New Sudan Council of Churches, for example, was able to play an important role in mediating between opposing factions in the Sudan People’s Liberation Army in the late 1990s as it had strong links that crossed the ethnic boundary dividing people.¹¹ If human flourishing insists that people find themselves in a position whereby they can exercise their creativity and productivity, and maintain some meaningful control over the direction of their lives, the integration of CSOs within governance structures and processes is critically important. CSOs also have a strategic role to play in the rebuilding

of accountable and democratic public institutions which will then be able to be more responsive to the needs of the people.

Fifthly, on the issue of accountability and transparency, human flourishing would place a greater emphasis on increasing the transparency and accountability of the private sector. This can be done in different ways. The Extractives Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) takes a voluntary approach. Comprising a coalition of governments, companies, civil society groups, investors and international organisations, EITI aims to strengthen governance by improving transparency and accountability in the extractives sector. It does this through the disclosure by companies of taxes, royalties and other payments made to governments and by the governments of what they receive from oil, gas and mining companies. Not only does this help improve transparency and reduce corruption and tax evasion, it can help empower citizens in developing countries to hold both the corporations and their own governments' spending to account. Although the EITI has the commitment of 42 of the biggest industry players and over 30 governments, the actual disclosure to date has been piecemeal and varies considerably from country to country.

Voluntary initiatives are, therefore, important but limited. Disclosure can go further. Given the impact that businesses as economic actors can have, the UK Government should build on the 2006 UK Companies Act that broadens the understanding of company responsibility and requires companies to "have regard" to such matters as "the impact of the company's operations on the community and the environment." Reporting requirements need to go further so that citizens have a clearer picture of the social and environmental costs of particular enterprises.

Similarly, the UK can take clear steps to help combat overseas bribery and corruption which can have a devastating impact on poverty and inequality in developing countries. It is estimated that 25% of African states' GDP is lost to corruption each year.¹² Bribery discourages foreign investment in developing countries, wastes public money that could be spent on services such as health and education and undermines effective governance. Therefore it is essential to ensure that there are sufficient resources to enforce the new Bribery Act and prosecute UK companies where there is evidence of their involvement in bribery overseas. This should be accompanied by a comprehensive cross government anti-corruption strategy, including steps to ensure that UK banks cannot be used by corrupt elites to facilitate corrupt flows of money from developing countries.¹³ In both the accountability of the private sector and combating corruption, donor support for institutional reform in developing countries is vital to promote governance for human flourishing. Key support would need to go towards incorporating human rights standards into national laws, strengthening the expertise and independence of the legal system in order to increase access and combat impunity, strengthening business monitoring and compliance institutions, and developing a legally accountable government through strengthening ombudsmen and human rights commissions.

Finally, just as there is a need to integrate civil society within political decision making processes, there is also a need for greater transparency, accountability, scrutiny, and democratisation of international decision making processes. One step for the current round of World Bank governance reform would be to ensure that developed, developing and transition countries have a parity of voice and vote.¹⁴ For the IMF the first step would be to include a formal acceptance of a double-majority decision making system, so that majorities are achieved on both voting rights and number of countries and not on board seats.¹⁵ A similar argument could be mounted with regard to board seats at these institutions. The UK, as one of the top five members, automatically gets its own seat at the executive board of the World Bank and IMF, whereas 47 African countries hold two seats between them. This undemocratic mechanism of representation needs to be redressed.

In the same way, citizens must be able to hold these institutions accountable and voice their concerns. The World Bank and IMF should also respect Article XIX of the UN Declaration on Human Rights, the right to information, which would mean disclosure of all documents and a system of information requests. It should also include the publication of the transcripts of board meetings, and the adoption of formal voting at board meetings, with voting records published.

It should be the UK's priority to use its power within these institutions to ensure that reform is forthcoming. Pushing IMF and World Bank reform could result in some sharing of the formal power currently enjoyed by the UK (in terms of a reduced percentage of the vote), but would lead to a fairer, more participative system of global governance. For this to happen, the UK needs to take a moral lead and to be generous in the arena of international diplomacy, seeing power as something not to be sought for power's sake, but to be fairly distributed and used to promote human flourishing.

This range of ideas – strengthening partnerships with developing countries and maintaining long-term commitments; adopting an “immersion-based” approach to development; broadening our understanding of what constitutes an efficient return on aid; strengthening civil society participation in governance; regulating the private sector; and insisting on greater transparency, accountability, scrutiny, and democratisation of international decision making processes – does not constitute a blueprint for a human flourishing approach to governance, any more than earlier sections did for economic or environmental policy. Rather it, like earlier sections, is intended to indicate in what directions a Christian understanding of human flourishing might direct and reshape these areas, and to suggest that policy ideas, processes and structures that work towards this object already exist in places.

CASE STUDY // Honduras

Christian non-governmental organisation MOPAWI focuses on sustainable development in the remote Mosquitia region of Honduras. MOPAWI has been fighting for land ownership and sustainable development for the indigenous population since 1985 with a focus on sustainable forestry and agricultural boundaries.

In 1991 a logging agreement between the government of Honduras and a US corporation signed away more than one million hectares of virgin forest and put the indigenous Miskito Indian population's way of life in jeopardy. MOPAWI took up the case of the indigenous people, and the following year the government of Honduras overturned the agreement.

In 1998, plans were revealed for the construction of a hydro-electric dam on the Patuca river in the heart of this same region. This would stop the river from flooding, thereby preventing fertilisation of the land and reducing food production. Once again the community mobilised and MOPAWI launched a campaign. In March 1999 the companies involved withdrew from the dam project, citing the level of local opposition.

chapter 3 - references

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conclusion

The Christian vision of human flourishing does not simply call for a political response. Rather, it insists that without personal moral responsibility, an active culture of voluntarism, personal financial generosity, community participation, the responsible use of natural resources, productive and responsible business ethics, and a serious, thoughtful engagement with political processes, no purely political response stands any chance of success. “Voluntary simplicity” is central to the entire enterprise, as is the critical role of those “communities of invincible obstinacy” which are determined to live out a full idea of human flourishing, in spite of cultural pressures in the opposite direction, thereby changing the terms of public debate.

The Christian vision of human flourishing makes calls on personal and community commitment just as it does on political action and insists that churches themselves must play an active role in this.

However, individuals and civil society groups cannot in themselves do everything that is needed, and few are likely even to be able to do everything they can if the political and economic structures work against them. *Wholly Living* has argued that all politics is moral and that there are serious *political* implications within the Christian vision of human flourishing. Policy will not deliver human flourishing but it will certainly make it easier for individuals, families, businesses, communities and civil society organisations to work towards that end.

On that note, and returning to a theme mentioned above, we believe that the single most important political change to be made in the light of this human flourishing thinking is to modify how we think about, and therefore measure, progress.

Gross Domestic Product, or GDP, is routinely used as the master indicator of a nation’s “growth” and a proxy for progress. It shows whether a country has a “healthy economy”, and because, as Michael Sandel remarked in his 2009 Reith Lectures, we have slowly moved from having a market economy to being a market society, having a “healthy economy” is itself often used a proxy for being a healthy society.

In reality, however, GDP is an inadequate measure being essentially a gauge of activity in one area of life. It wraps up in one measure not only activity that genuinely is a sign of living well (how creative and productive we are) but also of activity either that harms us (e.g. smoking), or that is made necessary by such harm (e.g. certain health care costs), or activity that reflects wider social ills (e.g. divorce, locks, burglar alarms, etc). Just as importantly, it fails to take into account those services, both environmental and social, which make such economic activity possible in the first place. Ecological sinks and services are either undervalued or disregarded entirely, and the mass of family, community and voluntary work without which no society could flourish – the “love economy” as it is sometimes called – is completely ignored.

There is much in GDP that is valuable and important. As a measure of human *productivity* it is sensitive to one of the key aspects of human flourishing. But to treat it as the master measure of human progress is inaccurate and ultimately injurious. Accordingly, if GDP is seen as a key indicator that development is happening, we will effectively be measuring the wrong thing and importing to developing countries precisely the kind of mental outlook that has proved inadequate and even harmful in developed nations. It would, in effect, be perpetuating the narrow and deficient understanding of what it means to live well that this report has argued underlies so many of our current problems.

Any vision of human flourishing that seeks to shape the moral foundations of our political and economic activity needs to recognise this and to formulate revised national accounting systems that would take into account the many dimensions of human flourishing that are ignored by GDP. Because we measure what we believe matters, it matters what we measure, and if we seek to inform and shape policy initiatives for the good, it is imperative that we measure those things that reflect and contribute to a proper understanding of human flourishing.

Over recent years there have been a number of suggestions of how to replace or supplement GDP, some of which have been high profile. In 2007 French President Nicolas Sarkozy appointed a Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, which gathered leading experts in the field to examine this question in detail. It concluded that a shift “from a ‘production-oriented’ measurement system to one focussed on the well-being of current and future generations, i.e. toward broader measures of human progress” was needed.¹ Its report focused on three areas – measures of GDP, quality of life, and environment – and was accepted by the French Government in 2009. No such measure has achieved equal prominence in the UK, although there have been no shortage of suggestions, such as the Happy Planet Index, the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare and the Living Planet Index.

The most successful such measure to date is the Human Development Index (HDI) developed by the United Nations Development Programme. This recognises that development is not about material growth but “a process of expanding people’s real freedoms – their ‘valuable capabilities’ – and empowering people as active agents of equitable development on a shared planet.”²

*Because we measure
what we believe matters,
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It will be clear, therefore, that there has been no shortage of work in this area and that there is no need to “reinvent the wheel” by starting from scratch or by trying to design a metric for progress that will perfectly reflect the full vision of human flourishing. Plenty of analysis already exists relating

to precisely the kind of areas – employment, poverty, inequality, education, social capital, volunteering, overseas aid, environmental waste, energy consumption, etc – that typify (or don’t) the creativity, productivity, responsibility, and generosity that are intrinsic to human flourishing. What is needed is to draw public attention to this debate and to move it from the relative intellectual margins to the political mainstream. We propose that this should be achieved through the new coalition government appointing a high-profile Prime Ministerial commission into human flourishing. This would take the form of previous commissions, such as Tony Blair’s Commission for Africa or the Sarkozy Commission on the Measurement of Economic Development and Social Progress. It would draw on the extensive range of existing research in this area, highlighting the inadequacy of current means of measuring progress and assessing potential new ones.

Such a commission would signal the intention of the new government to take seriously issues of human flourishing, or well-being, to elevate it above the battlefield of everyday party politics and to kick-start a national debate about what it means to live well and how we should be seeking to structure our society and, by implication, the way in which we interact with other, poorer societies.

It is our firm conviction that any such commission into human flourishing must recognise the various different dimensions of living well that have shaped this report. To live fully as a human means having the opportunity to exercise our creativity and productivity. It means exercising responsibility for one another in such a way as to ensure all can contribute to the common good. It means taking appropriate care of our shared environment, treating it as something of value in itself, and not using it in such a way as to disinherit future generations. It means living generously, finding fulfilment not in what we have but in the relationships of mutual trust and generosity we cultivate. A Prime Ministerial Commission on human flourishing should, we believe, take all these factors into account.

Accurate and realistic measures pertaining to human flourishing exist but they do not, as yet, have the prominence they need, particularly in the UK. A Prime Ministerial Commission would offer just such prominence, helping to raise consciousness of the whole issue of what it means to live well, and provoke a serious national debate on the subject. This will not, in itself, stop climate change or reverse global inequality, but it will be a big step in the right direction.

Wholly Living has argued that a vision of human flourishing that is based on the Christian idea of all humans being made in “the image of God”, rightly understood, provides a more robust and fruitful vision to guide international aid and development policy. Human creativity and productivity, our relationships and responsibility, our participation and contribution to society, our environmental stewardship, and, crucially, our generosity are all fundamental to flourishing as human beings. We need to recognise this in our personal lives, our communal endeavours, our national thinking, our policies and in how we choose to measure human progress.

conclusion - references

1. Paragraph 13 of Executive Summary. The Report can be found at www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussi.fr.
2. Sabina Alkire (2010), "Conceptual Overview of Human Development", *Background paper* for 2010 Human Development Report. The original 1990 definition read: "The basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives" (Human Development Report, p. 9).

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Wholly Living:

A new perspective on international development

In developing countries, poverty, disease and starvation are a reality for millions. In the developed West, social problems abound. Neither of these contexts represents human fulfilment. Why is it that an existence conducive to human flourishing eludes so many people?

Wholly Living attributes both material and relational poverty to the prevailing understanding that economic growth is the sole indicator of progress. The report advocates a holistic approach that recognises that a society is more than its economy. Our emphasis on personal gain as the ultimate priority has led to a devaluation of relationships, and our image of ourselves as disconnected individuals severely impedes our ability to live well.

The product of a year-long research project into what constitutes human flourishing, conducted by Theos, CAFOD and Tearfund, *Wholly Living* aims to bring the inadequacy of traditional indices of development from the intellectual margins to the heart of public debate, in order that its practical implications for UK policy may be considered. While policy, both domestic and international, cannot make people more productive, creative or relational, its strategic implementation removes obstacles and facilitates a shift in attitude.

While the theory of human flourishing outlined here draws on a Christian understanding of humanity, the resulting recommendations are accessible and of relevance to all those who are concerned about our growth-oriented society.

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