

## Chapter Two: Religious and Secular Actors in the Emergence of Humanitarianism and Development

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### Introduction

The origins of humanitarian and development organisations can be traced to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This was a time of huge social change in many European countries, with industrialisation changing the shape of people's domestic and working lives, colonial expansion bringing much of the world into the European orbit, and competition between increasingly nationalistic European countries leading to frequent wars across the continent. These changes brought with them new social ills – increasing poverty and inequality at home, slavery and poor treatment of the 'others' in the colonies, and increasing numbers of men wounded on the battlefields of Europe. It was in seeking solutions to these new social problems that new ideas about 'cosmopolitanism' and 'humanitarianism' were born and that the seeds of contemporary NGOs were sown (Barnett 2011, Paulman 2013).

The nineteenth century was also a time of new ideas and worldviews. Enlightenment ideas about science and evolution were gaining ground, leading to a 'crisis of faith' amongst many British and European Christians (Helmstadter & Lightman 1990, Watts 2015). Whilst Christianity was still intimately tied up with family, morality and social life, growing numbers of people were struggling with belief and unbelief. At the same time there were a number of evangelical 'awakenings', in which significant numbers of people came afresh to the Christian faith and demanded a more deeply passionate engagement with it in their own lives and a stronger manifestation of its values in society (Bebbington 1989). Thus many of the social reform movements of the time were initiated by evangelical Christians and inspired by Christian values. However, over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries many religious organisations began to downplay their interest in evangelism in favour of improving the lives of others, leading some observers to claim that 'religion might have been instrumental in the establishment of humanitarianism, but it passed the torch to secularism' (Barnett & Stein 2012: 5). Whilst there is much truth to this statement, it does not portray the full complexities of the relationship between religion and humanitarianism and development which evolved through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and which continues to evolve now in the twenty first century.

In order to set a backdrop to the emergence of Tearfund which will allow a clearer understanding of the reasons for its formation and of the field, or fields, into which it emerged, this chapter will therefore trace out a more detailed history of the entwined and entangled areas of Christian social engagement, overseas missionary activity and the growth of secular humanitarianism from the early nineteenth century up to the time that Tearfund was established, in 1968. Many of the issues that Tearfund was to face in later years, as a faith-based development organisation, were prefigured in this period. Whilst it is not a simple case of history repeating itself, understanding this broader history helps to cast a particular light on the contemporary story of Tearfund, and indeed on the Protestant faith-based development sector in general.

## The Formation of Voluntary Societies in the UK

In the nineteenth century industrialisation and urbanisation were leading to increasing poverty and growing inequality throughout the UK. Factory workers were beginning to organise and to protest about their poor living and working conditions, more people were demanding a vote in parliamentary elections, and social unrest was simmering. At the same time the middle classes were expanding and setting up a huge array of voluntary societies to promote associational life in the new towns. These societies carried out activities ranging from the diffusion of science and culture and the organization of leisure to moral reform, education and thrift, and radical discussion groups (Hilton et al 2012). There were also several religious societies, such as the Bible Societies which collected money, organized sermons and meetings, distributed Bibles and arranged local evangelizing (Morris 1983: 103). Several voluntary societies were established with the particular aim of carrying out charitable activities, mainly directed towards devising and operating solutions to the 'poverty problem' in order to alleviate suffering and to retain social order (Morris 1983).

While there were some secular charitable voluntary societies, the vast majority of them were started by Christian individuals and institutions, in particular by nonconformists and evangelicals<sup>1</sup> (Morris 1983). Many of the upwardly mobile urban middle classes of the nineteenth century were indeed nonconformists and evangelicals, particularly in the large manufacturing towns, and many of their chapels supported a varied structure of voluntary societies. For example, in 1800 Norfolk Street Chapel in Sheffield supported a Wesleyan Library, a poor fund for its own congregation and a non-sectarian Benevolent Society. By 1830 there was also a Wesleyan Home and Foreign Mission Society and a Sunday School, and later still a Band of Hope (Morris 1983: 105).

It has been widely noted that the practice of the voluntary provision of poor relief by charitable societies rather than by the state enabled the delivery of welfare to be closely aligned with other objectives, such as evangelism or the advancement of political ideas (eg. Gorsky 1999:19). In many cases volunteers from the voluntary societies would visit the poor to ascertain whether or not they were deservingly needy and, if appropriate, give them charitable donations. This mode of operation led to the societies becoming increasingly involved in influencing the lifestyle of those they helped. For the Christian societies this often meant seeking to turn them into good Christians. Morris reports that in one early nineteenth century Edinburgh society, the visitor was "required earnestly to recommend cleanliness to those he visits... exhort them to attend a place of worship, to send their children to Sunday School, and to ascertain whether or not they possess a copy of the Holy Scripture that they may be supplied" (Morris 1983: 108). This mode of operation created considerable tensions between the different Christian denominations and also with those who believed that charity should be given in a non-sectarian manner (Morris 1983: 108, Gorsky 1999).

By the 1850s most of the charitable voluntary societies were finding that their funds were too small to deal with the widespread poverty that was evident. They began to turn to the state for funds and in the second part of the nineteenth century they increasingly received government grants, particularly in the field of education. Eventually the state began to take over these social actions, providing a more uniform, consistent and effective service. The voluntary societies continued to function and indeed grow, but now within the shadow of the state (Morris 1983: 118). The subsequent emergence of the modern welfare state after World War Two displaced much of this Christian-inspired voluntary action with the detached authority of secular experts and the disinterested provision of welfare (Prochaska 2006). Nonetheless,

voluntary activity continues up to the present and several contemporary UK-oriented charitable NGOs can trace their origins back to associations formed at this time (Hilton et al 2012:13).

### The Growth and Development of Missionary Societies

Whilst voluntary societies were forming at home, significant changes were also happening overseas. The nineteenth century was a time of major expansion of colonial empire. As colonial regimes expanded in Africa, Asia and Latin America, European entrepreneurs and adventurers began to travel all over the world and to send home news of exotic lands and peoples. One result of this was that people's 'mental map' of the world began to change and Europeans became increasingly aware of the existence and exotic lifestyles of 'distant others'. This of course influenced many areas of European society in a great number of ways. For our purposes here it is instructive to look at how it influenced thinking among Protestant Christians.

In the late eighteenth century Protestant revival movements had swept across Europe in what has since become known as the 'Great Awakening' (Bebbington 1989). In these circles there was a renewed emphasis on personal spiritual experience and transformation. Many 'awakened' Christians felt a strong desire to share their experience with others and began to believe that it could bring them salvation. This experience, alongside increasing awareness of 'distant others' overseas, started a theological debate within the Protestant world. Up until then mainstream Christian thinking was that the 'Great Mandate' to spread the gospel had ended with the apostles and that salvation depended on election by God and was not something that could be influenced by worldly activity or personal faith. But in 1792 William Carey, widely known as the father of Protestant missions, wrote a small booklet called *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, which argued that the 'Great Mandate' had not ended with the apostles and that new methods had to be discovered in order to fulfil it in the present (Catalano 2014: 112).

Carey's booklet led to the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) later that year, and to the founding of many other missionary societies in the subsequent years<sup>2</sup>. The London Missionary Society (LMS) was formed in 1795, the Edinburgh and Glasgow Missionary Society in 1796, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1797, the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) in 1804, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in 1813, the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society in 1815, the South American Missionary Society (SAMS) in 1844, and many others. The birth of these missionary societies represented an unexpected and unprecedented development in the Protestant world. As the nineteenth century American missionary Rufus Anderson noted, "It was not until the present century that the evangelical churches of Christendom were ever really organised with a view to the conversion of the world" (cited in Catalano 2014: 108).

It is worth noting that the task of evangelising the world was initiated by voluntary missionary societies, and not by local churches and denominations. It can thus be seen as one sector of the broader field of voluntary associations that was expanding at this time, and indeed operated according to similar principles based on member subscriptions. It was generally lay people, not ordained clergy, who ran these societies, raised funds, and went as missionaries. During the nineteenth century they sought to raise funds and to educate people by publishing information bulletins, with letters and diaries from the different missions. In

this way they mobilised a mass movement in Britain, Switzerland, the German states, and elsewhere, in which people felt called to be involved in the mission enterprise by financially and spiritually supporting their missionaries overseas (Catalano 2014: 118). As we will see, this mode of operation was widely adopted by humanitarian and development NGOs in the twentieth century.

The sole aim of these missionary societies at this time was to spread the gospel and to convert the heathens of the world to Christianity. Preaching alone was unlikely to achieve these goals and thus from the beginning the missionaries used other techniques. One of their most important activities was translating the Bible into local languages and teaching the natives literacy so that they could study the Bible themselves. Thus education was a key tool of the early missionaries. And, as Catalano writes, education served as a means to an end – evangelism – and was not the end itself.

It has been always clear in ... the BMS that schools were to be considered as one of the most effective means of evangelization, instrumental for taking the light of the Gospel to the world. It is clear that the educational enterprise was never an end in itself. Education and cultural formation aimed ever at evangelization (Catalano 2014: 120).

Medical work was also used by the missionaries as a means to secure access to places and people resistant to the missionaries and their message. Whilst the LMS missionaries heading to the Pacific islands already had a medical surgeon among them, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century missionary approaches into China when medical missions truly started to flourish and since then they were used particularly in countries where there was a strong anti-foreign sentiment as a means to open access (Catalano 2014: 124).

Social involvement beyond education and medicine was extremely limited at this time and focused mainly on trying to stop traditional practices which they considered to be anti-Christian and inhuman, such as *sutti* in India (which was understood as the practice whereby widows throw themselves on their husband's funeral pyre), child marriage, the caste system, and the opium trade. Most of their social attention at this time was focussed on the anti-Christian and inhuman behaviour of their fellow countrymen, particularly their degrading treatment of local peoples and the practice of slavery.

In the early nineteenth century many missionaries had been radicalised by what they saw in the colonies. While most of them had not intended to get involved in any kind of political activity, many of them felt impelled to do so after witnessing plantation slavery close up. These Christian missionaries, and their associates back home, were amongst the first to start advocating for the abolition of slavery (Turner 1982, Stamatov 2010, Ward 2000). Missionary and Christian groups drove much of the abolitionist movement throughout the nineteenth century and the formed voluntary societies back in Europe for this purpose. Several contemporary anti-slavery NGOs, such as Anti-Slavery International, can trace their origins to these early societies (Hilton et al 2012:13)<sup>3</sup>. In the process they developed the rudimentary institutional forms of what we know today as 'transnational activism' (Stamatov 2010).

In these early years the relationship between missionaries and the colonial administration was thus often fraught. Colonial officers and trading companies were initially hostile towards the missionaries and tried to keep them away. Missionaries were often imprisoned or expelled, or

limited to work only with the expatriate community (Porter 2004). The core of the tension was that missionaries saw the local people in a fundamentally different way to the colonial officers. While the colonialists saw local people as a source of cheap labour and as little more than commodities, missionaries saw them as potential or actual Christians and thus as fellow human beings entitled to dignity and rights. They thus called for the humane treatment of imperial ‘others’, if only to facilitate their evangelization and conversion to Christianity (Stamatov 2010: 615). Thus the logic of their evangelical and universalist religion, placed in the context of colonial empire, led to many missionaries beginning to develop a growing sense of ‘cosmopolitanism’ – a sense of the common nature and value of every person, irrespective of race, religion or kinship (Turner 2019).

The relationship between missionaries and the colonial administration began to change when the colonialists saw the educational work being carried out by the missionaries and began to think that missionaries could be a useful force for maintaining the social balance in the colonies. From then on relations warmed and missionaries were given freer contact with the local population. This new collaboration between the missionaries and the colonialists was even codified in India in the so-called Pious Clause, an important modification introduced into the Charter of the East Indian Company in 1813 which required the Company to support, from its revenues, a bishopric and three archdeaconries to superintend the British settlements (Catalano 2014: 123).

From then on, and particularly after the 1830s, the missionaries were effectively co-opted into the colonial project and their work expanded. As their calls to end the slave trade increased, the new idea of ‘commerce and Christianity’ arose, in which a supposedly ‘legitimate trade’, not dependent on slavery, could be established in Africa and Asia through a combination of entrepreneurial and missionary effort (Stanley 1983: 76, Haustein & Tomalin 2017:78). Infused with the Calvinist work ethic and inspired by Livingstone’s injunction that ‘we ought to encourage the Africans to cultivate for our markets as the most effectual means next to the Gospel for their elevation’ (cited in Faught 1944: 122), most evangelicals at this time considered their capitalist economic interests to be fully in line with their Christian faith. Put another way, it seemed quite natural to them that religious change and economic development should go hand in hand.

In the course of the 1860s the alliance between commerce and Christianity, however, began to fall apart and many missionaries lost confidence in the redemptive function of commerce. They observed that engaging ‘the natives’ in commerce often failed to support their spiritual development as Christians. Instead it seemed that many people were converting simply to gain improved access to trading possibilities and as a result the quality of their faith was poor and superficial. Thus a growing body of Christian opinion in the later part of the nineteenth century began to repudiate the association with such material matters as commerce, and to reconceive of the missionary task as purely spiritual and focussed solely on evangelism (Faught 1994:122, Stanley 1983: 92).

The most adamant in this were the ‘faith missions’, a new wave of mission societies that had emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century and which will be discussed in more detail below. For most of the classical missions it meant disentangling themselves from commercial activities, but continuing with other activities that might be seen as ‘developmental’, such as education and medicine. They remained a central and complementary part of the colonial enterprise well into the twentieth century due to the many developmental services they delivered in the colonies. Mission stations regularly provided vocational training,

employment opportunities and medical care. Most importantly, they had an unchallenged monopoly on education, as colonial governments only established very few schools in the colonies (Haustein & Tomalin 2017). For many of the classical missions at this time education came to be seen as a lofty goal in its own right, and not just as a means to evangelism

By the early twentieth century these classical missionary societies had grown hugely in scale and resources. In 1906 the CMS, for example, had an annual income of £300,000, and was responsible for 975 missionaries and 8,850 'native agents', 37 theological and training colleges, 92 boarding schools, 12 industrial institutions, 2,400 elementary schools, 40 hospitals, 73 dispensaries, 21 leprosaria, 6 homes for the blind, 18 orphanages, 6 other homes and refuges, and 17 presses or publishing houses (Stanley 2003: 42). This increase in scale led to the voluntarist model of mission being somewhat taken over by an institutional business culture as the mission societies used the methods of secular corporations to manage the whole complex enterprise. Business efficiency and specialist technical expertise became increasingly important, leading to the growth in the power of the home boards over field policy and the professionalisation and bureaucratisation of the whole enterprise (Stanley 2003: 42). These dynamics would later replay themselves in the development NGOs in the second part of the twentieth century.

### *The Faith Missions*

In 1858 there was a second evangelical awakening (the 'Second Great Awakening') and this gave birth to a new missionary movement, initially known as the faith missions, and later more commonly called the evangelical missions (Fiedler 1994). These faith missions were a new wave of mission agencies, with their own, separate revival roots, their own spirituality, and their own missionary concepts. Their efforts were based on the belief emanating from a premillennial dispensationalist theology that those who do not believe in Christ were eternally lost and that Christ would return when everyone had had the opportunity to hear the gospel. Thus for the faith missions evangelism and conversion was urgent and they were driven to bring the gospel to the 'unreached peoples' (Fiedler 1994).

The first faith mission was the China Inland Mission (CIM) started by Hudson Taylor in 1865, and subsequent faith missions were established in the following years, including the Regions Beyond Mission Union (1873), the Livingstone Inland Mission (1878), Sudan Interior Mission (1893), Africa Inland Mission (1895), and the Sudan United Mission (1904). They typically had a single geographical focus, were non-denominational, and their central tenet was individual conversion. As their names suggest, many of these missions focussed their efforts on Africa and sought to reach the third of the continent that had been unreached by missionaries by this time (Fiedler 2010:15).

While the faith missions engaged in some educational and medical activities, they were much clearer than the classical missionary societies at this time that these were a means to an end and that the end was evangelism. Gehman, for example, explains that for the Africa Inland Mission in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries:

Education was always conceived... as a means toward evangelism, an auxiliary in helping them to produce a literate church which could read the Bible. Higher education was never their contemplated goal (Gehman 2004:135).

And indeed, if human history was about to end, what was the point of the traditional missionary concerns of civilization, education and commerce? (Faught 1994: 122-3). Thus in the late nineteenth century, as the classical missions were placing more emphasis on education and medical care in their own right, the faith missions focussed purely on evangelism and only used education and medical care in instrumental ways as a means to this end. They had no interest in commerce and found the idea that ‘commerce and Christianity’ somehow went together totally repugnant.

### *Early Twentieth Century Split Between Conservatives and Liberals*

In the first part of the twentieth century a major split emerged between conservative and liberal Protestants, and accordingly between the classical and the faith missions. While the conservatives insisted on a literal reading of the Bible as God’s word, the liberals developed a new theology which took into account the claims of biblical criticism and placed more emphasis on the role of the church in social life (Bebbington 1989:181-228). These theological differences ultimately led to the separation of conservative and liberal Protestant churches and mission societies into two more or less clearly defined groupings. Following the Edinburgh Missionary Conference in 1910, probably the first and last formal missionary conference in which all the missionary societies participated, the liberals, including most of the classical mission societies, began to focus more on working together across the different Christian denominations, to bring the mission societies closer to the churches, and significantly for our story here, to place a greater emphasis on social action. This was the birth of the ‘ecumenical movement’ that by 1942 had given rise to the British Council of Churches (BCC) and to Christian Aid, and in 1948 gave rise to the World Council of Churches (WCC).

The conservatives, including the faith missions, disagreed with this approach and decided to take a different route<sup>4</sup>. They took issue with the more liberal theology and growing emphasis on social issues and maintained that strict adherence to scripture was important and that evangelism was urgent and primary. They also strongly believed that mission societies should remain separate from the organisational structure of churches. Most conservative evangelical churches decided not to join the BCC or the WCC and the faith missions, now more commonly known as the evangelical missions, remained separate. At this time they had no umbrella organisation of their own – the Evangelical Alliance, which had existed since 1846, was at this time an alliance of individuals rather than churches – and for many years they were fragmented and isolated from wider secular or Christian society. Nonetheless, while their position was weak within the UK, their missionary work continued overseas with great zeal, and with a markedly different approach to the increasingly liberal classical missions.

Throughout the first part of the twentieth century and into the 1940s and 50s missionaries from the classical mission societies became more and more involved in social matters and worked closely with colonial administrations to carry out what was coming to be called ‘development’. A report by the Colonial Office’s Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies entitled *Education for Citizenship in Africa* set out a vision in which missions were to be instrumental in the continuing provision of both primary and secondary education to children in Africa (Stuart 2008: 530). And following the 1940 Colonial Development and Welfare Act, which set out a vision and funding mechanism for the provision of education and welfare in the colonies, the classical missionaries shifted their activities from a narrow focus on education and health to work more broadly on ‘developmental’ activities, such as agriculture and welfare, in order to capitalise on the government grants that were made

available by the Act. And as they sought to win these grants they claimed that their work was modern, progressive and superior to that of colonial officials. They claimed that as religious actors they dealt with the 'whole person', body and soul, and thus had what we would now call a 'comparative advantage' over secular development actors (Hughes 2013: 824). This claim would later be echoed by many faith-based development organisations in the twenty first century.

Throughout the 1950s classical missions such as the LMS and the CMS championed humanitarian development work as an integral part of mission. In 1953, for example, the CMS issued a call for "doctors, health workers, teachers and agricultural specialists to enlist as 'Christian revolutionaries' in Africa" (Hughes 2013: 823). At the same time, however, they wrestled with the degree to which missions should be evangelistic or humanitarian. They reflected on Christ's interactions with humans and concluded that Christ cared for both souls and bodies as he promised 'abundant life'. Thus, they developed an 'incarnational theology' in which they looked to Christ's example as a 'servant' and his ministry of care to the 'whole man', both body and soul (Hughes 2013: 824-30).

The classical mission societies also expanded their promotional work in the UK in order to raise funds, recruit missionaries and garner spiritual support through prayer. Each society maintained its own publishing arm and distributed a primary journal to keep their supporters informed. Both the LMS Chronicle and the CMS Outlook had monthly circulations of around 30,000 each during the 1950s (Hughes 2013: 837 fn20). Additionally, they disseminated pamphlets, promoted films of their work and hosted meetings and exhibitions that were designed to stimulate involvement with missions. They also encouraged their supporters to stay apprised of British involvement in Africa and urged them to express Christian opinions on colonial politics by writing to their MP or contacting the BBC or the press (Hughes 2013: 827). This basic mode of operation was to be followed by many development NGOs in the coming years.

As the classical missions became more and more involved in humanitarian development activities and began to see this as a lofty goal in its own right, the evangelical missions moved in the opposite direction. As the premillennialist theology spread more widely, the belief grew that 'the holy spirit ... was opening the world to Christianity in preparation for the second coming of Christ' (Robert 1990: 31). Therefore the evangelicals focussed their energies on the proclamation of the gospel, and placed much less emphasis on activities such as the provision of education and health care, which they nonetheless continued to do to some extent in order to facilitate evangelism. Their discourse was one of 'bringing the gospel to the unreached peoples' and there was a sense of passion and urgency in this endeavour. Their focus was not on 'development', but on saving souls.

One of Tearfund's first board members emerged out of this environment. Ernest Oliver, who later went on to have several senior roles in Tearfund, studied at All Nations Bible College and in the 1930s went to Bihar, India as a missionary with the Regions Beyond Missionary Union (RBMU), an evangelical missionary society that had been established in 1873 'to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you'. He recalls 'there was an urgency abroad in those days: we should not spend too much time in preparation, we must get out to the place of God's calling as quickly as possible, for the Lord's return was imminent' (quoted in Tiplady 2005: 38). In 1954 he was a founding member of the United Mission to Nepal and was one of the first foreign missionaries to enter that country (Tiplady 2005). In 1958 the Evangelical



Missionary Alliance (EMA) was formed and Ernest Oliver became its first General Secretary (Hylson-Smith 2011).

In the post-war years there was another wave of evangelical mission expansion and many new mission agencies were formed. Many of these initially formed in the US and then later opened branches also in the UK. Several, such as Wycliffe Bible Translators, Open Doors, Youth with a Mission and Youth for Christ quickly grew to become large agencies, representing a new and exuberant generation of evangelical mission.

### The Emergence of Humanitarian and Development NGOs

Another set of developments was also taking place in parallel to these activities during the nineteenth century. Competition about industrialisation and colonial expansion was leading to more frequent and more ferocious wars in Europe. There was mass conscription in many countries, and as news of the large number of battle-wounded spread from the battle-fields to the cities, concern grew. Peace Societies were established throughout Europe and the associated demilitarisation movements flourished. At the same time voluntary associations formed to treat the injured on the battle-fields. Up until the mid-nineteenth century, similar to the situation with charitable societies working in the UK, most of these voluntary associations were run by religious groups<sup>5</sup>. Examples include the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Quaker associations, various Sisters of Charity, and the Committee for the Wounded of the Evangelical Society of Geneva (Dromi 2016: 202, Reid & Gemie 2013: 226). The religious groups sought to bring inner peace and salvation to the wounded, as well as providing medical care when there was hope of recovery.

In the second half of the nineteenth century this association of humanitarianism with religion began to change. And interestingly, it was evangelical Christians who sought to bring about this separation. In 1863 Jean-Henri Dunant, formerly a member of the Committee for the Wounded of the Evangelical Society of Geneva, and four other Swiss Calvinist philanthropists established the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). In contrast to the other voluntary aid societies which treated the battle-wounded alongside providing religious counsel, and which tended to emerge when a war broke out and were disbanded once the war ended, the early Red Cross advocated for humanitarian activities to be recognized as independent and organized in permanent volunteer professional institutions. Moreover, even though Dunant and his fellow founders were all strict Calvinists, influenced by the *réveil* (awakening) movement, they argued that humanitarian care should be separated from religious organisations and provided in a secular manner (Dromi 2016: 198)<sup>6</sup>. This marked the start of the progressive de-linking of Christian missionary activity and humanitarian aid and the beginning of the formation of humanitarian relief as a distinct and secular field (Benthall & Bellion-Jourdan 2003, Krause 2014). From then on 'humanitarian action' came to be seen as a unique endeavour that followed its own independent logic and that should be pursued for its own sake, rather than as an outworking of Christian faith. The modern humanitarian system, and indeed the modern human rights system, can thus trace their origins to these events (Ferris 2011: 608).

During the twentieth century the codification of humanitarian principles and law, accompanied by the institutionalization of humanitarian actors and accountabilities, saw the growth and formalisation of the distinctively secular humanitarian regime (Ager & Ager 2011, Calhoun 2008). In the early twentieth century a host of new humanitarian associations

were formed, particularly in the aftermath of the First World War. Relief work became more professionalised, more secular, and organised around transnational networks of experts, such as physicians, engineers, and social workers. Nonetheless, despite the self-conscious secularisation of the humanitarian field, religious organisations, of course, continued to provide humanitarian relief.

The war gave rise to a renewed sense of internationalism, which led to the creation of the League of Nations and to a new generation of international humanitarian NGOs larger in scale and more geared for practical action than their predecessors. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies was established in 1919 as the League of Red Cross Societies, with the intention of bringing together the existing national Red Cross entities and expanding their activities beyond strictly wartime assistance into also public health and disaster relief (Cabanés 2014:4). In the same year the Save the Children Fund (SCF) was established by sisters Eglantyne Jebb and Dorothy Buxton. Both were devout Christians, but like the founders of the Red Cross movement they set up SCF as an explicitly secular organisation, appealing to universalist discourses of 'humanity' rather than religious inspiration (Jones 2014: 42, Wilson 1967). Like the other 'war charities' that formed at the time, they started by focussing on alleviating wartime suffering, particularly of children, and then later on reconstruction efforts (Freeman 1965:27, Mulley 2009: 98). In 1937 Plan International was founded, initially as Foster Parents Plan for Children in Spain', to help children affected by the Spanish Civil War.

The Second World War acted as a further catalyst for the growth of humanitarian NGOs and led to further transformations of the humanitarian sector. In the immediate post-war years, until the US Marshall Plan started in 1948, it was voluntary agencies that sought to provide relief to the destroyed communities of Europe. Many British humanitarians at this time were seriously concerned with famine and suffering in post-war Europe. In 1942 the Council of British Societies for Relief Abroad (COBSRA) was established, initially as the Council of Voluntary Societies for the Relief of Suffering and for Aiding Social Recovery. It was a consultative committee designed to facilitate closer co-ordination between aid agencies and the state and at this time some 40 humanitarian organisations joined, including the Red Cross, Save the Children and others. Despite the secular rhetoric it is interesting to note that a significant number of the member organisations at this time were religious organisations, including the Friends Relief Service (Quaker), the Salvation Army, and Catholic and Jewish relief organisations (Black 1992: 26, Jones 2014: 49).

Many of the major contemporary aid agencies were founded during this period in response to the Second World War, including Oxfam, Christian Aid and War on Want. All three had some connection to Christianity, but in quite different ways.

Oxfam was founded in 1942 as the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, one of several such committees that had been formed in towns around the UK with the aim of providing famine relief to victims of the UK's war-time blockade in Europe. Although it is an avowedly secular organization now, the two principal organizers of the first meeting of Oxfam in October 1942 were the Anglican cleric Canon Richard Milford and the Quaker-inspired philanthropist Cecil Jackson-Cole. Many of its early staff were Quakers and for many their humanitarian and pacifist motivations came from their Christian values. However, the Oxford Committee could not be described as a 'religious organisation' as such (Black 1992: 23).

Christian Aid was also formed in 1942, initially as a committee of the British Council of Churches (BCC), called the Christian Reconstruction in Europe Committee. In 1949 this committee was combined with another BCC committee - the Ecumenical Refugee Committee - to form the Inter-Church Aid and Refugee Service, which then became a permanent department of the BCC. The stated objective of this new body was to 'provide succour to churches, church institutions, and individuals overseas or from overseas, who are in want'. The organisation initially raised funds in Britain through church networks and sent them via the World Council of Churches to aid refugees in Germany, Austria, Italy and Greece. This marked the beginning of a shift in the ecumenical world from humanitarianism being carried out by mission agencies to it being carried out by church agencies.

War on Want, which was founded in 1952, also grew out of this post-war reconstruction movement. Its founder, Jewish socialist Victor Gollancz had initiated the 'Save Europe Now' campaign in 1945 and founded the Association for World Peace in 1951. Even though it was strongly connected to the Labour movement and had a more overtly secular and political ethos, War on Want also initially relied extensively on Christian support and assistance. One of its founders was the Anglican clergyman Canon John Collins and its grassroots network of local support groups relied strongly on Quakers and other churches (Hilton 2012: 452, Luetchford & Burns 2003).

In 1948 the United Nations was established and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights launched to present a new globalist and universalist view of the world. However, according to Hilton, the inspiration for most of the new humanitarian organisations to relieve human suffering 'owed more to Christian fellow-feeling than it did to the secular recognition of people's universal and inalienable rights' (Hilton 2012: 449). And indeed, the language of rights was almost entirely absent from the publications and policies of Oxfam, Christian Aid and War on Want at this time<sup>7</sup>.

In the 1950s these three organisations, and others like them, began to expand their focus beyond post-war relief in Europe, to first provide aid to refugees in other parts of the world and then to start providing aid to the poor in the newly decolonised countries of Africa and Asia. They thus began to shift from engaging primarily in humanitarian relief to beginning to work in the newly emergent area of 'development'. They ran adverts in national and local newspapers and organised appeals on BBC radio, thus making the British public aware of overseas suffering and raising funds. President Truman's speech in 1949 had widely publicised the notion of 'development' as the idea that the richer or 'developed' countries would help the poorer or 'under-developed' countries in the post-war and post-colonial era. By the late 1950s the new field of 'development' was in place and many of the 'war charities' had now re-positioned themselves as 'development NGOs' (Rist 1997: 70-79).

The new field of development that emerged after the Second World War was, like the humanitarian relief field, self-consciously secular<sup>8</sup>. However, many of its main actors had links in one way or another to Christian ideas, institutions or individuals. Most of the organisations that were working on the ground overseas continued to be missionaries. And thus Oxfam, Christian Aid, War on Want, and many other organisations, initially operated by raising funds in the UK and making grants primarily to missionaries or church organisations overseas to do development work (Black 1992, Luetchford & Burns 200, Manji 2002). As they began to send funds for relief and development work in Africa and Asia, the classical missionaries re-positioned themselves again, this time as providers of (secular) development services and began to downplay their religious nature in order to conform to mainstream

development paradigms (Salemink 2015: 51). Thus by the late 1950s many classical missions had been subsumed into the provision of overseas aid and relief and had adopted an approach and discourse that rendered it difficult to distinguish them from secular agencies (Ager & Ager 2011: 457, Stuart 2008: 537, Thaut 2009).

There were mixed feelings about this in many of the mission societies. While many saw development and the alleviation of poverty as way of living out Christian values of charity and justice, others saw this path of travel as harmful to mission. ‘What need would there be for missionaries’, asked Max Warren of the CMS, ‘if the West’s engagement with Africa emphasised aid and development rather than spirituality?’ (cited in Stuart 2008: 537). The evangelical missions were clearer that they did not want to become ‘development agents’ and they largely kept to their own separate world (Agensky 2013). Thus while a self-consciously secular development regime developed, organizations with varying connections to faith traditions remained strongly active in the field, both at home and overseas, and classical and evangelical missionary agencies positioned themselves quite differently in relation to this emerging field.

### Mission, Humanitarianism and Development in the 1960s

By the 1960s colonial empire had given way and a host of new countries had gained independence. As Maggie Black writes, ‘The rapid pace of change took most people by surprise. Africa was suddenly full of nation states demanding an equal place at the international table... For those in Britain for whom the imperial sway and the responsibilities of the civilising mission had been cornerstones of a worldview and a lifetime of service, the changes were greeted with misgiving. For others, they were intoxicating in their promise of renewal, of a world casting off its chains to find new paths of cooperation on terms which respected the dignity of all’ (Black 1992: 67). The British mental map of the world was changing and ‘distant others’ who had been seen primarily as ‘natives’, ‘primitives’, or ‘heathens’ in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, were now recast as ‘people living in poverty’.

The 1950s had witnessed a rapid spread of television ownership, especially after the Queen's coronation in 1953 and the introduction of commercial television (ITV) in 1955. By 1960 over 70 percent of the British population had access to both channels, as television firmly supplanted radio as the leading medium. And in the 1960s the institutional and technological development of television helped fuel the growth of humanitarian and development NGOs in the UK. News footage of overseas emergencies publicised distant suffering to large audiences, and this in turn encouraged donations to aid agencies (Ogrizek 2008:65). It was during the 1960s that the stereotypical image of a starving African child was elevated into a ‘universal icon of human suffering’ (Jones 2014: 27). The establishment of the welfare state and the increased post-war affluence precipitated a shift in values for many people, leading to greater concern about issues such as the environment, human rights and development (Byrne 1997).

In 1960 the United Nations launched the Decade of Development and the Freedom from Hunger Campaign (FFH). These two campaigns had profound effects on the development NGOs and on British society more broadly. The NGOs embraced the new discourse of development with much enthusiasm and Oxfam, Christian Aid and War on Want grew to become household names in these years. A huge array of activities connected to the FFH

campaign took place across the UK. FFH committees were set up in over a thousand towns and villages across the country, raising money and sending it to one of the FFH's selected projects (Black 1992: 75). Teaching materials were produced to be used in schools to teach schoolchildren about world hunger (ibid: 72). Large numbers of ordinary people were engaged and involved. In 1965 the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) launched the Young World Mobilization Appeal (YWMA) to involve youth in educational and operational activities associated with the FFH Campaign. Like its adult counterpart, the YWMA aimed to build financial and political support for long-term agricultural development projects in order to 'help the hungry to help themselves'. In the UK, this took the form of Youth Against Hunger (YAH) (Bocking-Welch 2016:154).

Development NGOs such as Christian Aid and Oxfam ran YAH activities alongside their own educational and promotional work, and non-humanitarian associations, such as the Boy Scouts and church groups, found ways to introduce YAH to their broader remit of social activities (ibid:155). British adolescents supporting YAH attended 'teach-ins' on aid and development, organised fasting demonstrations, signed petitions, sent out letters to MPs, trade unions and industry, and protested with placards in Trafalgar Square. In 1968, YAH sponsored an all-party letter-writing campaign in which the youth movements of the Labour, Liberal and Conservative parties pressed for more equitable trading terms, an increase in Government aid to £300 million a year by 1970, and for industry to preserve the career prospects of qualified volunteers serving overseas (ibid:162). As these events illustrate, during the 1960s there was a huge popular interest in development and great support and engagement from the public.

During the 1960s a new 'development infrastructure' was put in place in the UK. In 1963 the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) was set up as an umbrella body for the 'big five' aid agencies - the British Red Cross, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Save the Children, and War on Want. It was intended to facilitate closer co-ordination between its members by making joint emergency appeals to the public on television after major disasters. The Committee was granted special arrangements with the BBC to make these appeals, the proceeds of which would then be shared between the members (Jones 2014: 22). In 1964 the Labour Government created a Ministry of Overseas Development, and in 1965 the Voluntary Committee on Overseas Aid and Development was set up, including all the relevant aid agencies. In 1962 the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) was set up, in 1964 Inter-Church Aid changed its name to Christian Aid, and in 1965 the Oxford Committee became Oxfam.

The liberal end of the Protestant church, the ecumenical Christians, also spent much of the 1960s thinking about 'development', as part of a broader process of trying to re-think the place of the church in society, both in Britain and also overseas. By this time the idea of overseas mission was proving more and more difficult for them to justify and it was being subjected to criticism from within the classical missions as well as from without. With the end of colonialism and the increasing secularisation of British society, the classical missions started a major decline, finding it harder to raise funds and harder still to find people willing to serve as missionaries. Missionary confidence fell dramatically and the image of the 'heroic' missionary collapsed (Hughes 2013: 826). These mission societies did not however, die out. While some did indeed close doors, others combined or merged with larger agencies in order to overcome funding challenges, and many of them set up new departments for relief and development as their focus shifted away from evangelism towards this more material

type of work. The 1960s and 1970s can thus be described as a period of the NGO-isation of many of the classical missionary societies (Paras 2014: 443).

In 1965 the British Council of Churches set up a Working Group to look at the issue of 'world poverty and British responsibility'. The Working Group was a collaboration between two departments in the BCC – the International Department and the Christian Aid Department. Its members consisted of the Director of Christian Aid, a number of missionaries and heads of mission societies, academics, development professionals and former colonial officials (British Council of Churches 1966: 74). The resulting report discussed how the world economic system needed to be structured in order to better serve the interests of the 'under-developed countries' and it focussed its suggestions on changes to British government policy regarding aid, trade and debt. It suggested that individual Christians could help in three ways: they could vote, campaign and seek to influence government policy; they could do voluntary service overseas and help with skills transfer; and they could make donations to secular or Christian voluntary agencies. Throughout the report the reason why Christians should care about development is because of Christian notions of justice and the command to 'love your neighbour', and at this time people in distant lands were being reconceived of as 'neighbours' and often as 'fellow members of the world church'. Bringing about 'development' was now seen as a matter of justice and morality, and not as a means to an end. Indeed, evangelism was rarely mentioned in the report.

Theological discourse within the WCC at this time similarly focussed almost exclusively on re-thinking the role of the church in a post-colonial secularising society and putting more emphasis on social action and speaking out against injustice. They established a Commission of the Churches on International Affairs and in 1966 the World Conference on Church and Society 'concentrated on such concrete human issues as the problems of development and the relations between the affluent nations and the nations engaged in a desperate struggle against poverty' (Visser t'Hooft 2004:12).

However, whilst both secular development NGOs and ecumenical Christian organisations were thinking about the huge material disparities in the new post-colonial world order and pondering what a more just world could look like, evangelical Christians were mainly thinking about entirely different matters. Since the end of the Second World War they had seen the peoples of the world as ripe for evangelising and their overseas missionary efforts had expanded with new energy and vigour. Dozens of new evangelical mission agencies were established and the number of Northern missionaries serving overseas in the global South grew rapidly. Their focus was evangelism and the verbal proclamation of the Gospel. Relief work, when carried out at all, was a secondary activity that was thought to help 'gain access' to more closed areas.

Nonetheless, as the 1960s progressed, there were some early signs of change as some evangelicals began, tentatively, to reconsider their single-minded focus on evangelism and their isolation from worldly matters. The impetus for this change in thinking came mainly from Latin America. There, evangelical theologians such as René Padilla and Samuel Escobar, influenced by the burgeoning liberation theology of the Catholics and the context of increasing inequality and poverty, began to develop a new theology of mission which sought to integrate both evangelism and socio-political involvement on behalf of the poor and oppressed into a holistic version of the Church's mission. They wanted to respond to the same realities addressed by liberationists while still upholding their evangelical commitments to the authority of scripture, the divinity of Christ, and the necessity of evangelism. Their

solution, which they called ‘misión integral’ or integral mission, emphasized an incarnational and kingdom-centred theology which claimed that because Jesus was Lord over all of creation and all spheres of life, there was no real distinction between serving spiritual needs and serving physical needs. From this perspective the mission of the church could not simply be reduced to winning converts but must also include action on behalf of the poor and for social justice (Carpenter 2014: 274, Clawson 2012:792). In the 1960s they began to increasingly participate in international evangelical conferences, and they started to push for their vision of a more holistic understanding of the gospel that included social engagement.

Thus in 1966, for example, the outcome document of a major evangelical congress held in Wheaton, Illinois under the title of ‘The Church’s Worldwide Mission’, with around a thousand participants from over seventy countries, recognized that evangelicals “are guilty of an unscriptural isolation from the world that too often keeps us from honestly facing and coping with its concerns” and that there has been a “failure to apply scriptural principles to such problems as racism, war, population explosion, poverty, family disintegration, social revolution, and communism”. It urged “all evangelicals to stand openly and firmly for racial equality, human freedom, and all forms of social justice throughout the world” (cited in Padilla 2002).

Nonetheless, this was not an easy discussion and many remained unconvinced. Several conservative evangelicals pushed back and argued that their one and only focus should be evangelism. In the same year, 1966, British theologian John Stott spoke at the World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin and forcefully argued that the task of evangelicals was ‘not to reform society, but to preach the Gospel... the primary task of the members of Christ’s church is to be Gospel heralds not social reformers’ (quoted in Stanley 2013: 155).

Whilst these debates certainly rippled into the UK, during the 1960s British evangelicals were largely focussed on an entirely different discussion – they were locked in a fierce internal debate about whether they should stay within the increasingly liberal mainline denominations, which were taking doctrinal positions that many evangelicals found problematic, or whether they should leave and set up their own separate churches. In 1966 tensions came to a head in the National Assembly of Evangelicals conference where there was a charged public discussion about this issue. Morgan Derham, General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance, and John Stott, two people later to be strongly associated with Tearfund, argued that evangelicals should stay in the denominations. Martyn Lloyd-Jones from the British Evangelical Council (BEC) took a more fundamentalist stance and argued for separatism. This led to a major rift, and many evangelicals left the Evangelical Alliance and moved to the BEC (Randall 2004: 66).

In the next few years those evangelicals who had decided to stay with the Evangelical Alliance focussed on fashioning themselves a new identity and position as distinctly evangelical yet part of broader denominations, particularly in the Church of England. At that time evangelicals had a very poor image among their fellow Anglicans, being associated with narrow partisanship, obstructionism and a tendency to be irresponsibly inward-looking. But now this began to change. In 1967 the first National Evangelical Anglican Congress met at Keele University for three days of intense debate. Almost 1000 delegates from evangelical parishes, mission societies and theological colleges formulated a new strategy for engaging with the Church of England. Many saw this event as a major turning-point in the history of Anglican Evangelicalism. The congress chairman, John Stott, declared that “nothing comparable has been attempted within living memory, if ever before” (cited in Atherstone

2017). One observer likened the Keele Congress to the Second Vatican Council, breathing a spirit of *aggiornamento*<sup>9</sup> through the Anglican Evangelical movement (Atherstone 2017). Stanley remarks that the conference “was evidence of a decisive mood shift among younger evangelicals in the Church of England towards an unprecedented degree of commitment to full participation in a theologically plural church. Conservative evangelicals had emerged from the fundamentalist ghetto and were about to enter an era of predominant influence unparalleled in Anglican history” (Stanley 2013: 44).

Thus in the late 1960s, just before the establishment of Tearfund, young evangelicals in the Church of England were feeling energised and outward looking – keen to ‘exit their ghetto’ and demonstrate that they, too, could move with the times and engage with real-world problems. At this particular point in time, that meant engaging with social issues and of course, with ‘development’. Many of them were already giving money to Oxfam, Christian Aid and War on Want. The time was ripe for the birth of a new evangelical NGO through which they could support development ‘as evangelicals’ or in a distinctively evangelical manner<sup>10</sup>. This organisation, of course, would be Tearfund.

### Conclusion

It can be seen that by the time that Tearfund came into being the fields of ‘development’ and ‘humanitarian relief’ were already well established. And whilst they were portrayed as fundamentally secular, they were in fact crowded with a wide variety of organisations with different relations to Christianity. In the UK there were secular NGOs which had been founded by Christians and whose thinking was inspired by Christianity. There were secular NGOs with no faith connection at all. There was Christian Aid, which was an agency of the British Council of Churches and associated with the liberal ecumenical movement. And there was CAFOD, which was an agency of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales. Overseas, most of the development work was in practice being carried out by missionaries from the classical mission societies (and also large numbers of Catholic missionaries). Evangelical mission societies were carrying out some education and medical work, but did not consider this to be ‘development’ as such and did not want to partake in the ‘development sector’. Thus the field was rather more complex than has generally been recognised, and at this point in time, was far from fully secularised.

It can also be seen that not all ‘faith-based organisations’ are the same, even when just looking at Protestant Christian organisations. Christian Aid and Tearfund grew out of very different parts of the Protestant world, and thus brought with them different priorities, different theologies and different institutional networks. Indeed, it is possible to see the birth of Tearfund as a response to the existence of Christian Aid. The split within the evangelical movement and the decision of the Evangelical Alliance and its supporters to remain within the Church of England, to retain their distinctiveness, and yet to also engage more in the outside world, can be seen in the context of the 1960s to almost create the need for an evangelical development agency – if the liberal wing of the Church of England had its own relief and development NGO (Christian Aid), then surely the evangelical wing should have its own too (Tearfund)?

And of course, this historical sketch helps us to understand how Tearfund would try to differentiate itself from Christian Aid. As an evangelical organisation it would surely seek to combine evangelism and social action. And yet this history also shows that there had been



many previous attempts to combine evangelism and social action in the preceding 150 years, both in activities in the UK and overseas. And by and large they had all failed in this endeavour, with the majority of them secularising over time. Would Tearfund simply repeat this history or would it be able to find a way to hold together these two dimensions of change which seem to have an almost entropic tendency to come apart?

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Nonconformist referred to Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, Calvinists, Methodists, Unitarians, Quakers, Brethren, the English Moravians and other 'reformed' groups and less organized sects who were not part of the Church of England, and later became called the Free Churches. It also includes the evangelicals or 'Low Church' element in the Church of England. A religious census in 1851 revealed that of the 40% of the population that attended church services on Sundays, approximately half were Church of England and half were Nonconformists (Floyd 2008:5).

<sup>2</sup> The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) had been formed at the start of the eighteenth century but its initial focus was on providing Christian services to colonial settlers in North America rather than on evangelising the 'heathens' (O'Connor 2000, Tennant 2013). It later went to carry out more typical missionary work. It has changed much over the years and still exists today as the Union Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (USPG).

<sup>3</sup> Anti-Slavery International can trace its origins to 1787 when the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade was formed (by Quakers and Anglicans), which later in 1839 morphed into the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, and which after several other mergers and name changes finally took on its current form in 1995 (Hilton et al 2012:13).

<sup>4</sup> In some cases the rift between conservatives and liberals led to mission societies splitting apart. For example, the CMS split in 1922 when their more conservative members left and established the Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society (BCMS), while CMS developed for several decades along a more liberal route.

<sup>5</sup> A significant amount of battle-field medical care was also provided by military medical facilities.

<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Dromi argues that it was Calvinist beliefs - about warfare, charity, and the relations between state and society - that convinced the founders of the Red Cross that humanitarianism should be waged as an autonomous field, rather than being proffered under the auspices of church or state (Dromi 2016: 198).

<sup>7</sup> Several scholars have argued that 'development' itself can be seen as a kind of religion, with its faith in progress and human betterment and its utopian vision of a future fair and just world (Rist 1997, Van Ufford & Schoffeleers 1988).

<sup>8</sup> At this time these two fields were widely over-lapping with many organisations carrying out both types of activity, now called 'relief' and 'development'.

<sup>9</sup> *Aggiornamento*, 'bringing up to date', was one of the key words used during the Second Vatican Council both by bishops and the clergy attending the sessions, and by the media and Vaticanologists covering it. It was used to mean throwing open the doors of the Church in a desire to dialogue with the outside world.

<sup>10</sup> Several evangelical relief and development NGOs had been established in the USA after the Second World War. The National Association of Evangelicals had established World Relief in 1944, World Vision was founded in 1950, Compassion came into being in 1952.