Freedom as development: Christian mission and the definition of human well-being.

Stephen Plant,

Wesley House, Cambridge

Introduction

At an early stage of post-war development in Bosnia, a United Methodist Minister recently stationed as a missionary in the country, entered the offices of UMCOR, the United Methodist Committee on Relief in Sarajevo. UMCOR, the Aid arm of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, was one of the largest aid agencies at work in the Balkans, specialising in reconstructing houses and resettling displaced persons. The receptionist on the UMCOR desk, who had worked there for more than a year, startled the Minister by telling him that he could not enter the offices dressed in a clerical shirt. "Religion has caused this country enough trouble" she said "and we are a non-religious agency". To their mutual consternation he explained that the word "Methodist" in the UMCOR logo above her head referred to a Church and that UMCOR was an arm of that Church's mission. [1]

My opening story is emblematic of a confusion in the practice of Christian mission between evangelism and the quest for justice. Sometimes this confusion is manifested in the competing views of agencies that emphasise one aspect against the other; sometimes it issues, as in my opening story, in conflict within the same organisation over aims and objectives. Many mission agencies, typically evangelical, claim to avoid such confusion by understanding mission exclusively as evangelism. Some agencies, as we shall see, eschew evangelism as an aim and focus exclusively on development. In this paper I take it as axiomatic that evangelism and the

quest for justice both constitute essential aspects of Christian mission. It is because I consider mission to be both evangelism and the quest for justice that I am concerned with achieving the greatest possible theological clarity concerning their mutual relationship. Where I critique agencies that attempt to integrate evangelism and the quest for justice it is because I believe the way in which many agencies carry out that aim is theologically confused. How is it possible for a staff member in such an agency to work for a Church, and not to realise it? Have development and evangelism in some churches become so disconnected that development workers and evangelists can fail to recognise themselves as colleagues? Such questions have absorbed the energy of practitioners in mission and development for half a century. David Bosch merely stated the obvious when he wrote in 1991 that: 'The relationship between the evangelistic and the societal dimensions of the Christian mission constitutes one of the thorniest areas in the theology and practice of mission' [2]The ambitious aspiration of this paper is to explore a new approach to this old dilemma.

My argument proceeds in four phases. Firstly, I introduce the idea of secular eschatology. Secondly, I examine the self-stated aims of several Christian agencies. What I detect in these statements is a loss of confidence in Christian eschatology. This results in particular in a lack of clarity concerning goal, destination or telos of human being. Some Christian mission and development agencies, I suggest, have replaced aspects of Christian eschatology with a secular eschatology derived from no-religious non-governmental organisations (NGO's). In the third part of my paper I turn to the question how to define the quality of life, one of the issues I suspect Christian agencies are unclear about. I do this by discussing the work of the economist, Amartya Sen, from whose book Development as Freedom the title of this paper is of course derived. Sen's work, I suggest, is an important prelude to a fresh approach to a specifically Christian account of the quality of life. Finally, I briefly contrast Sen's understanding of development as freedom with Paul's understanding of human freedom, under the rubric of 'freedom as development', using this as to suggest one avenue Christian mission and developement agencies should pursue.

Belief in progress as a secular eschatology

The earliest recorded use of the word 'eschatology' was 1844, in an anti-Christian essay disparaging the Christian account of last things. Derived from the Greek 'ta eschata', 'the last things', a typical dictionary definition of eschatology lists its contents as death, resurrection, judgement, heaven and hell. Such a definition, however, mistakenly supposes an entirely otherworldly focus for eschatology. The primary orientation of eschatology is certainly to the future, but only in such a way that the future is intimately interconnected with the present. In a fully developed Christian theology present and the future are not connected by a simple linear chronology but in such a way that the future has a real bearing on the present. Within the New Testament eschatology has a further double meaning. On the one hand eschatology is concerned with the whole of the created order, often represented as the closing of the present age that coincides with the second coming of the Messiah. On the other hand, it refers to the end or goal of an individual's existence as a human being. In this way Christian anthropology is set in the context of eschatology: our understanding of 'who we are' requires a sense of that for which we are destined and to which we are called. For the greater part of the past millennium, the connection between the nature and telos of human being was obscured. The twentieth century re-awakening of interest in eschatology is one positive legacy of the derelict quest for the historical Jesus.

It is important to acknowledge here that New Testament eschatology is not homogeneous. Richard Hays has summarised the differences in emphasis concerning eschatology in Paul, in each of the Synoptic Gospels, and particularly in the realised eschatology of John's Gospel. [3]Such differences, Hays demonstrates, have a direct bearing on the ethics of these respective NT traditions. They may also be supposed to affect the understanding of anthropology in each of the New Testament traditions. It is largely to side step these complications that this paper will focus on Paul's eschatology alone. We will come later to Paul's understanding of the telos of human life, but for now I

want to look at what happened to eschatology in the wake of the Enlightenment as a precursor to my examination of Christian agencies. Before Christianity, it occurred to no one that human life had a purpose. Pre-Christian philosophy and religion conceived time in cyclical terms; human life was thought to be a series of epoch long Groundhog Days. Only with a Christian account of last things did it become possible to imagine life as a journey from miserable point A to happy point B. Like Christian eschatology the Enlightenment project was premised on hope. But while Christian hope was rooted in the event of Jesus Christ, the Enlightenment project was premised on the hope of human progress. Beginning with the turn to the rational human subject, summed up in Descartes' cogito ergo sum, Enlightenment thinkers dispensed with Christian religion in favour of the hope that human beings would 'shed their traditional allegiances and their local identities and unite in a universal civilization grounded in generic humanity and a rational morality' [4] . The world now became the object of rational analysis, and philosophy took a radical anthropocentric turn. In the early 19th century there was a reaction against the dry-boned rationalism of Enlightenment thought in the form of Romanticism, but even the Romantics had no desire to restore God to the throne now occupied by Man. And though the Romantic movements of the 19th century would eventually spawn the nihilism of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, the belief in progress and the goal of human being rendered by the Enlightenment remains the dominant discourse to the present day.

This belief in progress constitutes a kind of secular eschatology. In the 19th and 20th centuries secular eschatology has taken three dominant forms and one minor form. The first form is science. Mary Midgley, in her book Science as Salvation [5],describes the way in which, in Enlightenment's wake, science functions as a faith. Faith, she contends, 'is a basic trust. It is the acceptance of a map, a perspective, a set of standards and assumptions, an enclosing vision within which facts are placed. It is a way of organizing the vast jumble of data'. Such faith does not need a god, and science is such a faith. As a secular eschatology, science understands itself as promising a rational route to the solution of all human problems.

Marxism is a second secularised eschatology. The Christian origins of Marxist philosophy, via Hegel, are widely acknowledged. Marxism too offers (or offered) the prospect of a steady progress from a capitalist, through a revolutionary, to an ideal communist goal for human society. The facile optimism of this secular eschatology has now been discredited, though its legacy lingers in a few outposts, in Cuba, and in the churches. Another major form of secular eschatology is represented by democratic capitalism in its present Free-Market incarnation. Free Market liberals, in a paradoxical resemblance of the Marxists they claim to have beaten, also maintain a form of secular eschatology in their misplaced trust in the capacity of the market to deliver universal human well-being. A final though minor form of secular eschatology, closely related to democratic capitalism though often in conflict with it, is the discourse of human rights. Human rights, though they may owe something to Catholic natural law theory, are essentially a product of the Enlightenment insistence, against the Church, of the Rights of Man. John Gray, in his recent rowdy attack on human optimism, Straw Dogs, believes that the only reason people have taken seriously the talk of human in these post-Enlightenment forms is that it is 'formed from cast-off Christian hopes… Humanism can mean many things, but for us it means belief in human progress…. This is the hope of nearly everyone nowadays, but it is groundless… Humanists insist that by using our knowledge we can control our environment and flourish as never before. In affirming this they renew one of Christianity's most dubious promises - that salvation is open to all. The humanist belief in progress is only a secular version of this Christian faith' [6]. One need not agree with Gray's conclusions to see the force of his critique of humanist ideals that just don't work in the absence of God.

Modern secular eschatologies, which, following Gray we may call varieties of humanism, share several characteristics.

1. Utopian ~ optimism about final solutions to human problems
2. Material
3. Anthropocentric, that is, they regard human beings as the centre of existence.
4. Human beings expected to build a utopian future by their own efforts and on their own behalf.

5. Finally, humanists identify an ideal *quality of life* at which they aim, though they may differ in their understanding of what constitutes an ideal quality of life.

Using Richard B Hays's helpful summary of Pauline eschatology [7]we may make a contrast between the two forms of hope.

1. Ambiguity (eg suffering & joy)
2. Cosmic conflict
3. Redemption of all creation ~ not other-worldly
4. It is God who prepares the community for the Lord's Day
5. Immanence of the Lord's Day heightens ethical imperative

Something of the contrast may even be represented diagrammatically [OHP slides].

This prolix foray into the history of ideas serves to make a rather simple point: alongside Christian eschatology, the Enlightenment produced several eschatologies which, while derived from Christian ideas of hope and purpose, function as alternatives to their Christian source. Crudely, just because a discourse expresses belief in human progress in a vocabulary of hope, it doesn't mean that discourse is necessarily compatible with Christian eschatology or with a Christian account of the *telos* of human life. Christian eschatology is always hopeful, but not all hope is Christian.

Into the thicket: evangelism and development

There are many common features in the self-stated aims and objectives of many British church-based mission agencies and development agencies. Whether rooted in Catholic or Protestant churches, high church or evangelical constituencies, Christian mission and development agencies appear to share many similarities in their conception of identity and purpose. The following observations are based on three aid and development agencies and three mission agencies. As a point of contrast it is instructive to look first at a leading secular NGO's code of practice.

The Red Cross code for NGO's

1. The humanitarian imperative comes first
2. Aid is given regardless of race, creed or nationality on the basis of need alone
3. Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint
4. We shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy

5. We shall respect culture and custom
6. We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities
7. Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid
8. Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities as well as meeting basic needs
9. We shall hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources
10. We shall recognise disaster victims as dignified humans, not hopeless objects.

Source: *The Economist,* 29/01/00

As we will see, some aspects of the Red Cross code of practice are essentially repeated in religious NGO's, which, in dubious tribute to their growing significance in international relief and development, have earned the acronym RINGO's. Aid should be sustainable to prevent the persistent recurrence of the need for aid and where possible relief should be built on local capacities rather than delivered by foreign agencies acting independently. Other aspects of the code appear, at first sight, to be at variance with religious commitment: in particular, aid will not be used to further a religious standpoint. Even this aim, however, is accepted as we shall see by some RINGO's. What is striking for our purposes in the Red Cross aims embodied in the code is its consistency with features of a 'secular eschatology'. The Red Cross, as is obvious, serves human beings whose need constitutes the whole horizon of their work; the code has an anthropocentric focus. Secondly, the code entails the hope that human beings may build a better future by their own efforts and on their own behalf. Finally, the code identifies several features that are regarded as necessary for quality of life: that race, creed and nationality have no bearing on the right to a good life; that human beings may build a better future by their own efforts and on their own behalf. Finally, the code identifies several features that are regarded as necessary for quality of life: that race, creed and nationality have no bearing on the right to a good life; that culture and custom are to be respected; that people should be helped to help themselves and that recipients of aid be accorded dignity.

Church aid and development agencies overlap very largely with the work of the Red Cross. CAFOD, the English and Welsh Catholic agency, identifies five aims:

- · Long-term development work (viz. education, health care, water and agricultural projects)
- · Emergency aid
- · Analysis of the causes of underdevelopment
- · Campaigns on behalf of the poor
- · Education in England and Wales to raise awareness of the causes of poverty and to promote change.

CAFOD's preamble to these aims ~ in an echo of the Red Cross code ~ takes up the vocabulary of the Enlightenment to state the purpose of their work: 'we believe that all human beings have a right to dignity and respect and that the world's resources are a gift to be shared by all men and women, whatever their race, nationality or religion'. The world's resources are to be shared for the benefit of human beings. Also implicit in CAFOD's self-description is optimism about the capacity, in this instance of CAFOD's supporters and partners, to fight poverty and to effect change.

Christian Aid, the British and Irish ecumenical aid agency, post extensive information on their vision, values, intentions and aspirations on their website. In a statement of vision and values Christian Aid present 8 commitments. As with CAFOD, Christian Aid deploys the Enlightenment vocabulary of rights in echo of the Red Cross code, committing the organisation to 'strive for a new earth transformed by an end to poverty to promote the dignity and basic rights of every person', though what those basic rights may be is not spelled out. Already, in this first commitment, Christian Aid expresses its belief in progress in the confident hope of an earth transformed and an end to poverty. The starkest expression of this optimism is the commitment 'to engage young and old, poor and rich in a global movement that changes the course of history'. Further commitments include: provision of resources to improve the quality of life for the poor (though what constitutes poverty of life is not spelt out); to work with marginalized communities and to 'ask the questions that spotlight the causes of poverty'. A statement of intent expands these commitments. A 'dream of a new earth', while acknowledging the persistence of 'breathtaking

inequality' catches glimpses of an emerging new earth, described exclusively in political and economic terms. A question and answer page expressly distinguishes development and mission work, stating: 'Christian Aid is not a missionary society but an overseas development agency… if you are interested in carrying out missionary work you should contact the following organisations': the list that follows includes TEARFUND.

TEARFUND'S expansive account of its operating principles includes a mission statement; a basis of faith; a values statement and a set of operating principles that describe how their theology looks in practice. In several respects TEARFUND differs in intent and practice from CAFOD and Christian Aid. They work exclusively with evangelical Christian partners; there is a distinct emphasis on the Christian commitment of workers and the set of commitments includes elements such as a commitment to the Bible unusual even in a Christian development agency. TEARFUND's distinct emphases are carried through in its attempt to distinguish Christian development work form other kinds of development work. 'The goal of Christian development' TEARFUND assert 'is restored relationships with the Creator, with others in community and with the environment'. This focus on reconciliation with God forms the basis of TEARFUND's aspiration to Christian development. Arising from it, for example, is the acknowledgement that 'reconciliation with God through submission to Jesus Christ is the greatest need of the poor, as with all people', a note that is not sounded by CAFOD or Christian Aid.

TEAR FUND

Characteristics of Christian Development

- · Compassion
- · Justice
- · Character
- · Cultural sensitivity
- · Cultural transformation
- · Accountability
- · Leadership
- · Empowerment for service
- · Participation
- · Sustainability
- Integration

Some of these items are entirely consistent with the secular aims of the Red Cross ~ justice, cultural sensitivity, accountability, participation, sustainability and integration. It is not clear why these shared aims are, for TEARFUND, distinctively *Christian* characteristics. Other characteristics are at sharp variance with the Red Cross code ~ in Christian development, according to TEARFUND, the Christian character of the development worker is vital; culture, including the culture of the development worker, is not thought to inviolable, and in some instances transforming culture is thought to be a proper aim. Other characteristics are given a Christian interpretation ~ compassion, for example, is rooted expressly in the compassion of Jesus.

USPG and CMS are both Anglican agencies, though rooted in different Anglican traditions. The Baptist Missionary Society has its constituency primarily in the independent congregations of the Baptist Union. In each of these agencies, though they arise from diverse theological traditions, an attempt is made to integrate evangelism and development. CMS and BMS each identify church planting and development in their aims. USPG prefers the term 'witness' to 'evangelism', but here too, 'witness' and 'justice' are held together. As with TEARFUND, USPG includes the aim of reconciliation. USPG and CMS overtly aim at educating Christians in Britain ~ expressed as being 'challenged' by the world church in USPG's aims.

Are the aims of these development and mission agencies clear or confused about the relationship between evangelism and the quest for justice? Has any aspect of secular eschatology impacted on these agencies? Conclusively to answer these questions on the basis of such slight evidence would clearly be unfair. But we do, perhaps, have enough information to warrant the following preliminary remarks, questions and observations.

- My 'sample' is small.
- The three Christian development agencies, though they consider themselves to be in God's service, do not claim to undertake evangelism [though it is interesting that Christian Aid suggested TEARFUND was a mission agency]. The exclusive focus on development begs the question of the relationship between evangelism and the quest for justice.
- The mission agencies undertake both evangelism and development work.
- In this sample only TEARFUND sought to define what is meant by *Christian* development, though with mixed results.

Turning to what we identified earlier as points of contrast between secular and Pauline eschatology, we may also make the following remarks:

- With the exception of TEARFUND there was little or no acknowledgment of the possibility that human agency might not be able to resolve poverty and

injustice. At this point the agencies come perilously close to the belief in secular eschatology that human beings may achieve progress by their own efforts.

- None of the agencies emphasise the *cosmic* dimension of mission. Though the environment is sometimes mentioned, there is a general emphasis on the material betterment of human beings.
- Most of the agencies in our sample emphasise human capacities to build a better world, though some include a sense of partnership with God in this task. Nevertheless this is rather different to Paul.
- None of the agencies attempted to give a distinctive account of human well-being or the quality of life from a Christian point of view. Where any attempt was made to give content to an understanding of the human *telos* the language resorted to derived from the Enlightenment language of rights.

In each of these ways, I suggest, Christian agencies are at risk of substituting the cuckoo hope of secular eschatology for the true hope of Christian eschatology.

Development as Freedom

Rather than abort my argument at this negative point I want to take up one of these five remarks to build towards a more positive conclusion. The proposal I now make concerns definitions of the quality of life or human well-being.

Amartya Sen is Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. He has shown particular concern for the development of poorer countries, for example contributing to thinking about how famines occur. In 1998 Sen won the Nobel Prize in Economic Science. Beginning with a seminal essay in 1979 titled 'Equality of What' Sen has also asked how those who seek equality, one might say in the context of this paper who those who quest for justice, would *measure* the achievement of their ideal. Without a clear sense of how to evaluate quality of life aspirations to 'dignity for all' or 'equality' or 'justice' or even 'rights', phrases we hear repeatedly from Christian agencies, will have rhetorical force but no content.

Sen's fullest recent thinking on development occurs in his 1999 book Development as Freedom [8]Sen argues that the expansion of freedom is both the primary end and the primary means of development. Understood in this way '[D]evelopment consists of the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency'. Freedom, that is, doesn't somehow follow

on from development of whatever kind; it *constitutes* development. There are two reasons why freedom is central to development. Firstly, understanding development as freedom means assessing or evaluating human progress in terms of freedom. Secondly, it means that the achievement of human development depends on the achievement of freedom. The reason such an approach is distinctive is that it opposes prevailing economic and political practices of evaluating and achieving human quality of life as a simple matter of average Gross Domestic Product. At least since for the last 50 years, the commonest way in which development has been assessed has been average income. Sen persuasively argues that this single indicator provides neither a helpful way of achieving or evaluating progress. Sen includes five particular types of freedom in his study: freedom of economic opportunity; political freedom; social facilities; transparency guarantees (such as in law or business) and protective security (e.g., against crime and aggression). Such freedoms are interdependent, that is, no one type of freedom matters more than another, and each type of freedom also requires the others.

Freedom is, for Sen on the one hand it includes processes that allow freedom, and on the other includes opportunities, that is, what freedom affords. He uses the term capability to indicate that work freedom through as the freedom to live a person's life according to what they value. Such capabilities are typically complex bags of freedoms. In this way, for example, mortality is as important an indicator as income of quality of life: literacy; democracy; protection from violence etc all contribute to well-being. Each of these must be taken into account in enabling development and in evaluating it. Of course, Sen argues, low income causes poverty. However, poverty is better understood as a capability deprivation because low income is not intrinsically the cause of poverty, but only instrumentally so. For someone unable to work there may be other important deprivations than loss of income, such as loss of dignity, or of a place of respect in her society.

Sen uses a parable to get at the distinct *philosophical* position he aims at. Annapurna wants someone to do up her garden and knows three unemployed labourers who could do the job. Dina is the poorest of the three. Bishanno, however, has only recently lost his job and is therefore the unhappiest of the

three. However, Rogini suffers from a chronic ailment. She bears this, and her relative poverty cheerfully, but giving her the job would fund her treatment and most dramatically improve he quality of life. Which piece of information should form the basis for Annapurna's decision? If income deprivation is the only measure of poverty then Dina should get the job. If, following utilitarian theory happiness is the measure, then Bishanno should get it. Sen's theory favours choosing quality of life, that is, giving the job to the worker it will make most impact upon.

Later sections of Sen's book explore development as freedom in relation to specific issues in development including democracy, famine and other crises, gender issues and population growth. A chapter on human rights defends rights discourse against some of the criticisms levelled against it. Although Sen thinks we can manage well enough with a language of freedom alone, he also thinks that the language of rights may supplement that of freedom by giving an individual a tool to achieve her freedom.

Both philosophers and economists have subjected Sen's proposals over the last thirty years, encapsulated in Development as Freedom, to rigorous critical scrutiny. G.A.Cohen accepts Sen's critique of using income alone as an indicator of well being, and also of utilitarianism, but finds Sen's 'capability' misleading and confused. Martha Nussbaum returns to Aristotle for a very different approach to moral and political philosophy, one based on the virtues. The theologian Nicholas Sagovsky suspects that Sen mistakenly confounds justice and equality. Sagovsky also suggests that Sen's ambivalence towards the legal embodiment of freedoms makes it much harder for his proposals to be realised in practice.

How is Sen's work important to the topics addressed in this paper concerning the tasks of Christian mission? Sen himself suggests one possible reason in his concluding chapter. Sen recalls the profound question of the suffering of the innocent. 'The argument' he continues:

> 'that God has reason to want us to deal with these matters ourselves has
> had considerable intellectual support. As a non-religious person, I am
> not in a position to assess the theological merits of this argument. But I
> can appreciate the force of the claim that people themselves must have

responsibility for the development and change of the world in which they live' (p.282).

At the beginning of this paper I deposited the axiom that mission entails both evangelism and development. Sen can't help with evangelism, but he can help a great deal with the exercise of Christian development work as with the development work on non- religious agencies. Sen's proposal offers a far richer, thicker account of human well being than the proposals of those he critiques. His proposals deserve the most serious and urgent attention of governments, NGO's, and of RINGO's. Yet an important question remains. Sen's proposals remain a form of secular eschatology, as he himself acknowledges. How will a Christian account of freedom affect the understanding within Christian agencies of human well-being and the quality of life? It is to this question that I now turn briefly.

Freedom as Development

The idea of 'freedom' is not widespread in the New Testament. The Greek verb, *eleutheros* is used in two ways. Firstly, it is used in a civil or political sense, to signify one who is not a slave. From this the word *eleuthero* is taken, meaning to make one free, i.e., from sin. In addition, *charisma* is translated in some contexts as 'free-gift', though the terms are etymologically unconnected. In Matthew, 'freedom' is given a clear political content in Jesus' response to the question of whether he would pay the temple tax, to which Jesus replies that the children of a ruler are free from taxes. In John, Jesus teaches that the truth will make you free. The word appears twice in I Peter, and again in the book of Revelation, where, usage alternates between denoting political freedom, and moral freedom. But it is in Paul where the idea of freedom becomes a significant theological idea.

As the earliest of the writings left to us in the New Testament Paul's letters are an obvious place to start. [But there is a further reason why Paul's understanding of freedom is instructive in the context of this paper. Paul was instrumental in organising the collection amongst the churches of Asia Minor and Macedonia for the church in Jerusalem. This instance of Christian aid provides a concrete example of Paul's attitude to human well-being that further serves to anchor an otherwise abstract discussion.] What I seek to indicate in this brief exploration of Paul on freedom to that a Christian point of view is not identical to that of Sen; that, as David Bosch notes '…salvation and well-being, even if they are closely interlocked, do not coincide

completely. The Christian faith is a critical factor, the reign of God a critical category, and the Christian Gospel not identical with the agenda of modern emancipation and liberation movements' [9]

Like Matthew, Paul uses 'freedom' in its formal legal sense, as when Paul describes a widow as free from the law of marriage, or in Galatians 4:31 where bonded and free denote the respective status of Abraham's bondmaid and his wife. The best known of such references is Paul's often misused remark in Galatians 3:28 that 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female'. This last is significant because here, where Paul is apparently using the term as others did in his cultural context, he also makes a distinct theological point. In stark contrast to contemporary understandings of equality, particularly in human rights, Paul does *not* suggesting that all men and women are equal if equality is thought to be an abstract quality in human being. The second half of Galatians 3:28 makes the point that there is no male or female, slave or free etc in *Christ*. For Paul human beings have no equality as such, but only insofar as they have, as baptized members of the Church, put on Christ. It is a point repeated in Colossians 3:11, where barriers between circumcised and uncircumcised, slave and free etc., cease to apply because of the new creation in Christ that has occurred.

Paul also uses 'freedom' as a figure of speech to suggest freedom from sin, for example in Romans 6 and 1 Corinthians 9. In these passages Paul, however, links freedom (i.e., from sin) with the giving up of freedom. He sums this up in Romans 6:18: 'Being made free from sin, ye became the servants [slaves] of righteousness'. A similar play on words is used to rather different effect in 1 Corinthians where again, Paul links freedom and servitude. 1 Cor 7:22: 'he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's free-man: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. At the point where freedom is gained in Christ, it must be voluntarily given up in servanthood to Christ. Paul put his service to others in the Church in related terms at 1 Cor 9:19: 'For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more'. Freedom for Paul carries none of the libertarian overtones it acquired in secular eschatology. Freedom

for Paul is not freedom asserted against or claimed from others, but freedom to serve Christ, and to serve others. This kind of freedom is found in Christ. It does not exist in the abstract, any more than does equality, with which he strikingly connects it. Yet freedom for Paul retains both a theological sense ~ freedom from sin ~ *and* a concrete social and ethical sense, since the freedom for righteousness effected by Christ establishes new relationships in the fellowship of the Church. It is in this double action of freedom ~ on the one hand being freed from sin, on the other becoming a slave of others and of Christ, that, I suggest, a distinct Christian view of freedom is to be found. Freedom entails service: it is not the freedom to fulfil an endlessly proliferating series of possibilities, but the freedom to serve. Even God is not free in the sense that God is able to do anything God pleases: as the Fathers already realised, God's good nature, for example, means that God is not free like Men to behave badly.

Sen has argued that the expansion of freedom is both the primary end and the primary means of development. Paul agrees that at the most profound level freedom is that which enables humanity to uncover its true identity. However, unlike Sen, Paul has no interest in freedom as a universal characteristic of human living, but rather in the unlocking of an individual's possibilities in the Church, where alone all are made one in Christ.

[Karl Barth CD I:2, God's freedom for man… with its parallel section in CD III/4 Man's freedom for God. Freedom before God (relationship with God); freedom in fellowship (relationship with others); freedom for life (relationship with self); freedom in limitation (relationship with time).]

Notes:

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i[1] The anecdote was told me by the Revd Zvonimir Vojtulek, the Minister concerned.

i[2] Transforming Mission, David Bosch, Orbis, 1991, p.401.

i[3] The Moral Vision of the New Testament, Richard B. Hays, T&T Clark, 1996.

i[4] Enlightenment's Wake John Gray, Routledge, 1995, p. 2.Las Casas, A Short Account, p. 127.

i[5] Science as Salvation: A Modern myth and its Meaning, mary Midgley, Routledge, 1992

i[6] Straw Dogs, John Gray, Granta, 2002, pages 3-4.

i[7] The Moral Vision of the New Testament,Richard B. Hays, T&T Clark, 1996, p.26.

i[8] As one would expect, Sen's theory has its critics. For example, a collection of essays edited by Sen and the Aristotelian philosopher Martha Nussbaum in 1993 [The Quality of Life, Clarendon, 1993] A number of alternative views enter into dialogue with Sen. The most interesting of these is Nussbaum's own essay which stages a robust defence of ethical theory based on Aristotle, to the effect that, contrary to pluralist and relativist accounts, it is possible rationally to defend a single objective account of human good, or human flourishing based on virtue. This intriguing, and counter-cultural thesis is worth more attention than I am able to give it here. My friend Nicholas Sagovsky, in a seminar paper at Durham University (31.01.02) has also pointed out that Sen is wrong to presuppose a link between justice and equality.

i[9] Bosch, op cit., p.398.