

Evangelism and Community Development

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Essay

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1. Introduction

As in every time, Christians ask the question: How do we respond to poverty, oppression and the unshakeable sense that we are *bound* by powers both within and beyond ourselves? The Bible claims that it is in a relationship to God, through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that we find personal, social, ecological and political wholeness. But how does the church, conceived as the movement of followers of Jesus, communicate and enact this wholeness?

In answer to this question, Christian mission groups have entered the realm of ministering to those on the margins. Initially, dissatisfied with the aims of a narrow evangelicalism, or self-serving charismatic expressions, they have sought out Christian welfare agencies addressing the needs of the poor. But welfare agencies with a Christian heritage have grown apart from worshipping communities, suspicious of 'colonialist' notions of evangelism and with little awareness of the interface between their work and the transforming work of Jesus Christ. Because of their reliance on government funding and the consequent demands for 'professionalisation', their core of discipleship has gradually eroded. Now they are organisations with "Christian values" at most, rather than a movement animated by the living Spirit of Christ.

The slow evolution of the Christian agency into the serving, secularized agency is a common occurrence...While retaining a strong service element which they have sharpened professionally over time, they have outgrown the often narrow evangelical base from which they started...[They] see themselves first primarily, then exclusively, as answerable to a professional ethic rather than a theological call. (Pollard, 1991: 9)

This professional ethic is not enough for Christian mission groups, whose corporate loyalty remains theological and ecclesial. The question for such groups is: "How do we proclaim and demonstrate the loving kingdom of God?" Unlike some Christians, for these mission groups, evangelism and social action (of any kind) are not separate. They are elements of an integrated approach to Christian witness and work. The battle is now about the practical application of evangelism and social action in an integrated whole. The famous Australian evangelist Alan Walker put it thus:

I began to count among my friends radical community and political leaders and was inevitably influenced by their passionate socialism, and the integrity of their lives. I came to realize the limitations of a personal evangelism which remained silent on issues of economics, society and

war...I came to see, dimly at that stage, that the Christian faith must be presented with a double thrust: it must seek the conversion of men and women and at the same time try to fashion a society to live in fit for people for whom Christ died. (Walker, 1975: 282)

Through this essay, I want to explore how Christian community development and evangelism can be combined in a biblical and practical sense, not only for people such as myself engaged in CCD, but as a viable form of Christian witness to both human need and a secular culture.

Before we detail the current state of both Christian community development and evangelism, we must say a brief word about the impact of secularity on Christian witness as a whole, for it has had an enormous affect on both evangelism and Christian community development.

2. Secularity in Australia

Many authors have identified the immense challenge that the church faces in a post-Christian culture (Murray, 2004; Bouma, 2006; Frost, 2006). However, our culture is still in a transition time, where the place of Christianity and religion generally is under negotiation. How should we understand this shift?

As an introductory case study, let us turn to a recent controversy concerning the place of Christianity in Australia. A Christian presence in Australian state schools has been largely unquestioned aspect for many years. But in 2010, a Queensland parent launched a High Court challenge to the validity of Commonwealth-funded chaplains in schools. This followed an expansion of publicly funded school chaplaincy in 2006 by the Coalition government in the form of the National School Chaplaincy Program (NSCP). Then came a challenge to the legislated place of Special Religious Instruction (SRI) in Australian primary schools.

Christian organisations involved in chaplaincy/SRI, such as Access Ministries, have been caught in a bind due to the differing constituencies they must speak to. For example, at a Christian conference in 2008 Evonne Paddison (CEO of Access) has advocated '*making disciples*' of young people through SRI and chaplaincy, yet Bishop Stephen Hale (Chair of Access) had to defend her comments, saying "*We're not actually seeking to convert [young people]...*"¹ The distinction was lost on many observers.

What I want to draw out is that up until recently, the use of public funds for explicitly religious ministry was not controversial, but assumed. For example, most large welfare agencies in Australia have a "Christian heritage"; they were founded by Christians or church denominations that were concerned to

¹ Topsfield, J & Cooper, M *We are not trying to convert kids: Bishop*, 13 May 2011, <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/we-are-not-trying-to-convert-kids-bishop-20110513-1elg9.html#ixzz1PbQjhX7j>, accessed 18 June 2011.

reach out in compassion to the poor. In the early days of the Australian colony, the promotion of religion was an integral part of this compassionate work:

The basic understanding people had – that religion was the mainspring of benevolent activity, that people who were in need of charity could ‘do with religion’ (or benefit from it in that their morals, their sense of responsibility and their ability to control their lives would be improved) – very heavily influenced the interior life of these organisations. (Horsburgh, 1994: 5)

From the very beginning, government and Christian non-government organisations worked together. Government initiated some services, while church organisations started others. Crucially, Horsburgh (1994) finds, there was a “shared agreement” about the aims towards which benevolent activity was directed. This shared agreement has now disintegrated.

In essence, this shared agreement has collapsed because Australian society makes sense of itself with less and less reference to religion, faith or spirituality. All the major dimensions of modern life (science, economics, politics, family, education, commerce and industry, technology and interaction with the natural world) are comprehended without need for religious faith. This is a momentous change from 500 years ago, as Charles Taylor has ably demonstrated, at which time every aspect of life in Western Europe (at the very least) was seen through religious eyes. Of course, these dimensions of life *can* still be seen through a religious lens, but that only proves that religious faith is one worldview option among many, and that the conditions for religious belief are ebbing away. This is the core of secularity. Taylor puts it poignantly:

I may find it inconceivable that I would abandon my faith, but there are others, including possibly some very close to me, whose way of living I cannot in all honesty just dismiss as depraved, or blind, or unworthy, who have no faith...Belief in God is no longer axiomatic. There are alternatives. And this will likely mean that at least in certain milieux, it may be hard to sustain one’s faith. (Taylor, 2007: 3)

Returning to our example, the privileged place of Christianity with respect to SRI and chaplaincy only makes sense in a culture where the language of Christian faith is widespread, the stories of Jesus are well known and a vibrant worshipping community still exists. These things are obviously on the wane. After a careful analysis of the validity of census data relating to religion, Tom Frame concludes that, despite some qualification:

What cannot be denied, however, is the falling level of overall religious affiliation and participation across the Australian population. To what extent does this decline reflect a loss of belief? Several studies over the past forty years suggest quite a close relationship. (Frame, 2009: 100)

My contention is that integrating evangelism and community development is a viable response to the secularism that pervades Western culture, but particularly Australia. In order to sketch such integration, I will now summarise evangelism and Christian community development, provide some initial critique and consider their exposure to the challenge of secularity.

3. Evangelism

I. Summary

Evangelism is motivated by the conviction that a new reality was inaugurated in the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This new reality, having been birthed in the realm of humans is thus accessible to us. In addition, this new reality, whose source lies beyond our real but is actually humanity's true source of life, is a reality that demands a response. All humans owe a response to this reality that calls us to conform (inwardly and outwardly) to its form and spirit. A people has been formed to communicate this new reality.

Evangelism is all that which intentionally draws people into shared life in the kingdom of God. Its heart is proclamation, but is surrounded by all kinds of other dimensions that also 'promote the gospel' (Dickson, 2010). In order to flesh this out, I want to enlist a few authors who have written in the past 2 decades on the topic, some theological and others more practical.

At the theological end, **William J. Abraham's** *The Logic of Evangelism* passionately advocates for an articulate theology of evangelism, given what he sees as the moribund state the study of evangelism is in, a concern shared by Pickard, who likens the relationship between evangelism and theology as a '*stormy courtship ending in separation*' (1999: 7). What is the reason for this state? Abraham draws on thinking about secularism:

Part of the explanation lies in the fact that Christianity has been part of the fabric of the West for so long that it has been assumed that Christians do not really need to evangelise. (Abraham, 1989: 4)

Our previous survey of secularity surely puts the lie to this assumption. After detailing the content of the gospel, emphasising its eschatological nature, Abraham presents a critique of evangelism understood as either simply proclamation or simply church growth, instead defining evangelism as "*primary initiation into the kingdom of God*" (1989: 13). He explains this thus:

To initiate someone into the kingdom of God is to admit that person into the eschatological rule of God through appropriate instruction, experiences, rites and forms...[T]he initiation I have in mind is much more than the execution of certain rites and ceremonies. It refers to those fundamental experiences and processes that take one into the rule of God on earth. (1989: 96,119)

This must be kept in mind when looking at the six areas for initiation that Abraham identifies: conversion, baptism, morality, the Nicene Creed, spiritual gifts and disciplines. So, when Abraham speaks of 'baptism' he is referring as much to becoming part of the body of Christ, as he is a rite involving vows and water. Whatever one may think of Abraham's specific proposals within each of these areas, he has identified crucial areas of the initial journey into the kingdom of God, and his unique contribution is to assign this task to the evangelist.

Australian author **John Dickson** places evangelism within the wider category of "promoting the gospel". Proclamation is non-negotiable to any biblical view of evangelism, but that does not mean that 'speaking the gospel' must happen in each and every encounter. Proclamation and promotion belong together:

*The former is properly called 'evangelism', a word that derives from the New Testament term **euangelizomai**, which only ever means 'announcing (grand) news'. The wider category of **promoting the gospel** includes any and every activity that draws others to Christ. (2010: 23).*

When focussing on the content of the gospel message, Dickson affirms that:

At the heart of the gospel message (in the Old and New Testaments) is the idea of God's rule as king, in other words, his kingdom. When the first Christians proclaimed this gospel of the kingdom, they were not copying the 'gospel' of the Roman kingdom; they were exposing it as a fraud. It was God, not any human king, who ruled over all. (Dickson, 2010: 114).

Dickson goes on to argue that "...authentic 'gospel telling' will always recount the broad narrative of Christ's life (as told in the books we call the Gospels)." (2010: 115)

Rick Richardson, after arguing that unchurched people are 'seeking community' and value the 'experiential', draws on Methodism to craft some practical foundations for evangelism:

1. **Soul Awakening:** Richardson is convinced that people in a post-Christian culture need to be made aware of their spiritual side:

We lack what Wesley called "awakening events"...These events awaken people to the existence of their soul. These events get people in touch with their spiritual needs and longings. (2000: 76).

2. **Community:** Drawing on the stories of Jesus' accessible community of discipleship, Richardson advocates genuine community as the core of evangelism.
3. **Conversion:** this section is mainly concerned with a way of 'inviting people into the circle of belonging' (2000: 129) and though giving a helpful method, is too specific to be of use to people seeking to do evangelism in different contexts.

4. **Transformation:** Richardson seems overly focussed on sexuality in his discussion of transformation, but his emphasis on a re-moulding of identity around Jesus is solid.

In all, Richardson presents a passionate and practical book on evangelism, but one that requires work on the reader's part to recontextualise what Richardson's methods might look like in other contexts.

Other current writers in this area include Bob Mayo, who emphasises the “...space between clarity of any description of God and the reality of his mystery” (2004: 71), and the consequent ambiguity in any evangelistic encounter, and Paul Dekar, who calls on the church to recover the practice of evangelism as ‘testimony’:

Testimony entails plainly speaking the truth in love...I want for myself, for each reader, and for children – the next generation of witnesses – to know God’s dream that our lives be filled with joy and peace. Without the baggage of proselytism and triumphalism, we are called to the practice of testimony. (Dekar, 2004: 103)

Despite their different emphases, these writers all have these things in common:

- The recognition that secularity is a challenge to Christian witness
- That evangelism, however it is understood, must be placed in a broader context of Christian witness
- That it is a corporate task, not the preserve of individuals
- That the kingdom of God and its embodiment and proclamation in Jesus’ life, is the centerpiece of the gospel

II. Initial critique

John Dickson, in his important book *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission*, identifies four ways in which the thinking and practice of evangelism has been weakened in the church (Dickson, 2010: 18-23):

1. **The Curse of Self-Consciousness:** Dickson tracks a shift whereby sharing Christ moves from being a ‘perfectly natural orientation’ to being a ‘...cross between a theological exam, an acting class and a knife-edge rescue operation’.
2. **The Gospel Download:** this factor involves the perceived need to impart the whole gospel at every opportunity, rather than recognizing that most evangelism will occur in ‘passing opportunities’.
3. **Reducing the Gospel:** while recognizing that ‘sin and grace are central to any true gospel presentation’, Dickson reminds us that ‘...at its heart, the gospel is the news about Jesus narrated in the Gospels’ and therefore cannot be simply boiled down to a ‘theological idea or two’ without losing the narrative arc of Jesus’ life.

- 4. Underestimating the Mission:** Dickson comments that mission, when defined solely in terms of evangelism, risks becoming an exclusively verbal activity. This leads him to make the distinction (mentioned earlier) between *'evangelism'* on the one hand, which he defines as *'proclaiming the gospel'*, and on the other hand, *'promoting the gospel'*, which includes prayer, public worship, Christlike behaviour and financial partnership in mission.

These are helpful criticisms to make as they are common weaknesses in popular thinking about evangelism, and they go a long way to guarding against the turf wars that evangelism easily gets drawn into, where debate about evangelism is used as a proxy for theological purity. However, they don't go far enough. Abraham, Dickson and Richardson all display a very confident view of what the gospel is and how it can be communicated. Although they see secularisation as a challenge, they make little attempt to contextualise the gospel beyond a 'translation' model, as Bevens would put it. In his words, they are confident that *"...the message of the gospel [i]s an unchanging message."* (2002: 37).

Countering this over-confidence are authors such as Mayo, who take seriously the contextual issues. Mayo details the reality of 'choice' in a secular, post-Christian mindset, and argues that it is a key factor that must affect evangelistic practice. His advocacy of play, imagination, story, understatement and dialogue demonstrate that he is seeking to transform the practice and (in part) the content of evangelism in ways that involve risk and compromise (2004: 70-93). In Bevan's scheme, I would place Mayo in the Synthetic Model, with his emphasis on dialogue (Bevens, 2002: 142).

III. Impact of secularity

There are three main areas in which secularity challenges evangelism.

Firstly, secularity has resulted in widespread biblical illiteracy, in which the language of faith and the stories of the Gospels are no longer familiar to many people. This means that evangelism must contend with semantic confusion when it speaks of 'salvation' or 'heaven' or 'redemption'. I would argue, rather than a wholesale abandonment of Christian language, the church in the post-Christian era must work to invest these words with meaning again, as well as finding others that express similar meaning. Secularity means that the quote attributed to Francis of Assisi needs inversion. Christians who display compassion to others but are wary of verbal evangelism often quote him: "Preach the Good New always. Use words if necessary". While this is an admirable admonition to make sure our walk matches our talk, secularity means that our actions will need more interpretation than they did in generations past. To a generation formed by the person of Jesus, the stories of the Kingdom and the traditions of the church, actions such as loving the enemy, self-denial, prayer, forgiving offenders and working for justice were all readily interpreted within the framework of Christianity. But now, such formation is rare.

Secondly, secularity is a challenge to evangelism at a core level. Evangelism depends entirely on the assumption that there is a creator God, who has acted in history, and who continues to be accessible to humans in some way. In a Christian or otherwise religious culture, these beliefs make sense and therefore evangelism has a base to work from. But secularity erodes this base, leading many to suggest that evangelism needs to pick the stones from the field before sowing seeds. We see this in proposals for 'soul awakening' events and processes, as with Richardson (above, 1), so that people become aware of their spiritual longings.

Thirdly, secularity has forced religion into a smaller arena, denying legitimacy in public areas of significance, such as economics, politics, education and health. In response, some Christian groups focus on areas of so-called 'private' concern, such as family, sexuality and personal spirituality. Evangelism tends then, to become focussed on what religion is allowed to speak about, such as the fate of the soul after death. In essence, evangelism becomes reductionist, 'boiling down' its message to a small area of human existence rather than addressing the whole of Creation.

4. Christian community development

1. Summary - What is Christian Community Development?

Christian community development (CCD) is a collection of values, principles and strategies whose aim is the development of communities in the shape of the kingdom of God. CCD borrows themes from contemporary social work thinking to guide its work, as well as biblical stories and themes. It requires a high level of sophistication to link biblical stories and themes to social work thinking because, as Kenny asserts, community development is a modern phenomenon:

Community development is, to a large extent, a response to many of the problems facing in the late twentieth century. (Kenny, 1994: 4)

In secular thinking, community development is the constellation of processes, roles and skills that enable communities to address the challenges that face them. It is based on a structural analysis of power in society, and sees that communities facing hardship have been stripped of the ability to solve their own problems; hence the foundational concept of 'empowerment'. Theoretically, secular community development tends to base itself on of two foundations, the '*ecological perspective and a social justice perspective*' (Ife, 1995: 75). The ecological approach starts from an appreciation that humankind has needs to structure itself differently if it is to halt environmental degradation. A social justice approach starts from the assumption that people have 'inalienable rights', such as the right to freedom of speech.

There is much that can be appreciated and appropriated by Christians wanting to work with the community in a Christlike manner. Community development, as conceived in modern writing, contains a critique of power common to the prophetic tradition, a belief in people's strengths consonant with *imago Dei* and a vision of a just community that is consistent with the values of the kingdom of God. That said, the secular conception of community development has some serious weaknesses when viewed through a biblical, Christ-centred lens.

First, secular community development sees spirituality and religion ambivalently, and definitely not foundational or integral to community development. On the one hand, religion is a potential source of communal resilience and source of strength for individuals, in a purely instrumental sense. That is, if religious congregations or personal spirituality support the assumptions of secular community development praxis, then they are approved. If not, they are rejected. On the other hand, religion is seen as a source of colonialist social work practices and many writers exhibit simplistic understandings of religion. For example, while considering community development with Aboriginal people, Ife writes as if religion is generally something separate from life in non-Aboriginal religious practice:

...Aboriginal understandings of spirituality and the sacred are fundamentally different from those of non-Aboriginal people, and pervade all aspects of Aboriginal society and culture. (1995: 161)

Secondly, secular community development generally shies away from any advocacy of a faith position, because of its fundamental assumption that a community holds within it the resources to solve its problems. In this framework, advocacy of a faith position or religious teaching is seen as essentially alien and external to the community, and cannot arise from within a community, as a theology of *mission Dei* implies. There is no distinction made between evangelism and proselytism.²

Thirdly, secular community development has an overly optimistic view of human capacity. Though it rightly identifies structural reasons why communities face poverty and oppression, such as environmental exploitation or housing markets, it fails to appreciate the interconnections between structural causes and personal failure.

Because of these reasons, among others, Christians who have become involved in community development have sought to reframe it in biblical terms. I will now summarise some of the main thinkers in this area. Significantly, they are all 'practical theorists', their theology and reflection arising from their embodiment of Christian community development.

² I am distinguishing evangelism and proselytism here: evangelism being an honest portrayal of the kingdom of God, whereas proselytism is an exploitative practice aimed at persuading recipients to join a particular religious group.

From the USA, **John Perkins** traces his journey of working in communities racked by the segregation of the 1960s and 1970s. He became convinced that Christian community development involves three major processes. In one of his major works, *With Justice for All*, he uses the story of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well to tease these out.

Firstly, Jesus chose to go through Samaria. Perkins calls this "relocation":

By living as a neighbour of the poor, the needs of the community become my own...Shared needs and friendships become a bridge for communicating the good news of Jesus Christ and working together for better conditions in the community. (Perkins, 2007: 55).

Secondly, Jesus points to the nature of true worship as reconciled community, *not on this mountain or that*. Perkins second dynamic is "reconciliation". Writing specifically about racial reconciliation, but in language applicable to barriers of class and power, Perkins argues that pursuing reconciliation is a higher good than pursuing justice:

Real justice would never be achieved by passing laws or going to court. 'Many seek the ruler's favor, but justice for man comes from the Lord' (Prov 29:26). True justice could come only as people's hearts were made right with God and God's love motivated them to be reconciled to each other. (2007: 113)

Thirdly, drawing on Jesus offer of living water, Perkins advocates "redistribution", not as simple transfer of wealth, but empowering the poor through economic justice:

The poor need something more than handouts. They need the means to build a better life for themselves...To achieve real redistribution, real economic justice, we must redistribute the means of production. (2007: 167)

In Australia, **Dave Andrews** picks up the theme of *reconciliation* that Perkins emphasises, teasing it out to include "breaking through barriers", "building bridges" and "bringing about" hope and empowerment (Andrews, 1989; 1996). Andrews' practical model of Christian community development is based on two foundations: the stories of the kingdom of God, both told and enacted by Jesus; and the doctrine of the Trinity. In his best book on the topic, *Can you hear the heartbeat?* (1989), Andrews employs Gospel narratives such as the encounter between Jesus and the woman who was a 'sinner' (Luke 7: 36-50) and the 'Jesus Manifesto' (Luke 4: 18-19) as well as New Testament passages like Philippians 2:6-8 to undergird his philosophy. Trinitarian theology is a more recent development in his thinking: *The Divine Society* (2009) details his thinking on the subject, but he provides a summary in the manual *Compassionate Community Work* (2006, 14-24):

The Trinity is not just a model for community, it is also a model for community development. Jesus sent his disciples out 'two by two' to look for a third person, the so-called 'person of peace', with whom the disciples could form a trinity as the building block for community. (2006: 18)

While Andrews tends to emphasise community development *processes* above any sort of *program*, **Ann Morisy** is concerned to stimulate church congregations to engage in 'community ministry', seeing it as a springboard to discipleship and a point of commonality between church and non-church communities. She provides a strong critique of community ministry that simply meets needs:

For those involved in community ministry, the pressure to drift into becoming a voluntary provider of care and service is intense, and with this there comes the danger of secularizing the Church from within. (2004: 25)

Using the ideas of social capital and the potential for community ministry to generate rich stories, Morisy advocates church congregations re-organising themselves around community ministry that utilise 'community chaplains' to make the connections between community development and discipleship and worship (2004: 152).

In all these writers there is a keen sense that close, relational contact with those we intend to serve is crucial, as well as a modified appropriation of the concept of 'empowerment'.

II. Some initial critique

Firstly, that CCD lacks a focus on evangelism. There has been a separating out of the spirit of Christ from Christian values – with a consequent weakening of the necessity to preach the gospel. Given that Christian witness involves an affirmation of Jesus as 'Lord', CCD often finds itself in tension with secular conceptions on community development which insist that all change must be intrinsic to the people involved rather than through outside intervention. Part of CCD's susceptibility to this critique is its own inability to argue against this secular conception. It is not as if the requisite resources do not exist. For example, the doctrine of *imago Dei* strongly implies that spiritual longings are intrinsic to human community, and therefore evangelism can be construed as integral to authentic community development. However, secular theorists would rule this kind of discourse inadmissible. Despite the protestations of Perkins (2007) that evangelism is integral to a holistic gospel, CCD has tended to err on the side of engagement with felt needs rather than people's religious questing. This is based on a number of factors: a strategic decision; a loss of confidence in the gospel; an assumption that poor people's passions revolve mainly around 'hierarchy of needs' concerns like food, housing and employment; and in some cases a wilful misreading of the biblical texts.

Secondly, CCD has a tendency to be co-opted by the welfare economy's ideas and forms. This criticism is as valid for secular community development. Because community development involves a power transfer, there develops a system to facilitate that power transfer – usually professionals employed by the church, government or NGO, who because of their place in the class structure, easily can co-opt the process to protect their interests, ensuring that the poor rarely get access to the 'means of production', which Perkins (above 4.1) advocates.

Thirdly, CCD has a weak appreciation of the deep ways in which people are bound by the interplay between personal failure and structural injustice. Because of its analysis of root causes, which are seen as the main reason for poverty, CCD tends to downplay the significance of personal agency. Those who are poor are seen as partly excused because of the historical circumstances of poverty and oppression.

III. Impact of secularity

A major impact of secularity on CCD is the corruption of "empowerment" language and practice as it melds with a consumer culture made ravenous by the displacement of a religious worldview through secularity. Removed from its original place within an analysis of power structures and the actual practice of community, "empowerment" moves towards the personal preferences that drive consumerism, thus "empowerment" becomes "what I want". Vincent Miller, in his discussion of consumer culture and religion, states that:

As commodities have achieved more cultural significance, the commodity form has overrun its banks, flooding into broader culture. (Miller, 2004: 54)

What Miller means is that commodities, things, have achieved more significance than the actual human needs they were intended to serve. So, empowerment, seen originally as a commodity intended to serve human freedom and holistic prosperity, becomes a good in itself, able to be applied as much to the aspirations of the upper-class housewife as to the downtrodden unemployed.

5. Evangelism and CCD

Now that we have an overview of what evangelism and CCD are, their weaknesses and vulnerability to secularity, let us define how they need each other before making some practical suggestions.

I. An unhappy relationship

Debate over the semantic, theological and practical content of 'evangelism' and 'community development' has proceeded down two timeworn tracks. Down one track, 'evangelism' is conflated with various forms of social action in an attempt to place social action on an equal footing with evangelism. Or, in an attempt to place evangelism on a higher plane than social action (which is seen as a 'gospel of works'), proponents have defined 'mission' as specifically or mainly verbal - that mission can be mission if only words are used, but mission cannot be mission without words. Down the other track, CCD critiques

evangelism because it suspects any ideology or practice that emphasises 'rescue' or intervention by an external powers, both of which tend to reduce a community's capacity to solve its problems. Because CCD usually focusses on poorer communities, it is sensitive to perceived exploitation of poor people by opportunistic evangelists, as it is sensitive to opportunistic welfare workers who enter neighbourhoods to implement a program and then depart.

II. They need each other

However, evangelism and CCD need each other. We have seen that secularity has a major impact on both of these Christian ventures. Combined they can become a viable and formidable form of Christian witness in secular Australia.

Specifically, evangelism needs CCD because without it, evangelism can only trace the outlines of the personal and corporate vision that the 'good news' advocates. CCD is a powerful way to help people participate in the kingdom of God, and within such participation the stories and ideas of the gospel come alive. From the CCD side, evangelism provides a risk factor without which Christian community development easily slides into secularised self-help mush. Evangelism points to a larger, deeper transformation, one that community development methods, even Christian ones, can only grasp at.

Evangelism and CCD have a number of similarities that make them natural partners:

- Theologically, they share narratives and doctrines (see below, 6.1)
- They work best at grassroots level
- They are both on about transformational change
- They both value voluntary methods of change highly
- They work by reframing present reality in the terms of the kingdom of God
- Both believe the resources for change are (partly) present already in people's lives
- Both are inspired by the possibility of "real change", by historically concrete changes in people.
- Neither makes sense in a secular context without the other: without CCD, evangelism will be co-opted by consumer spirituality; without evangelism, community development will be co-opted by the welfare economy.

Given these similarities, evangelism and CCD can co-operate and integrate. What are some ways that this can happen?

6. Integrating Evangelism and CCD

I. What theology do they need?

Both evangelism and CCD suffer from a weak theological base. Although this is not the time to develop a detailed theology of evangelical community development, there are three central theological themes that enable a theological interface between evangelism and CCD.

First, the doctrine of the Trinity. Taking a social Trinitarian approach, we can see that a community of mutual relationship is at the heart of God. This application to CCD is obvious. For evangelism, the application becomes clear when we take Abraham's view of evangelism as "primary initiation into the kingdom of God" (above, 3.1), because his view is an inescapably corporate vision of evangelism, in which people are drawn into a relational life with respect to their salvation and their identity.

Secondly, a partially realised eschatology. Both evangelism and CCD passionately advocate transformed lives in the present. A view of the kingdom of God that recognises its 'now...not yet' tension enables evangelism to be concerned with current reality, and CCD to recognise that its aims lie beyond the horizon of contemporary social work theory. This eschatology sees that Jesus' incarnation, life, death and resurrection has planted a tree, the roots of which are deep and strong, which will one day flourish into a tree for all to shelter in. What is the effect of such eschatology? As NT Wright puts it:

It gives us a view of creation which emphasises the goodness of God's world, and God's intention to renew it. It gives us, therefore, every possibly incentive, or at least every Christian incentive, to work for the renewal of God's creation and for justice within God's creation...[T]here is continuity between our present work and God's future kingdom...(Wright, 1999:24)

Thirdly, a keen appreciation of the Holy Spirit's work. For evangelism, it allows us to be confident that the Holy Spirit has already been working in people, awakening them to the possibility of God. For CCD, this prevenient grace enables us to work simultaneously with the intrinsic strengths of a community, knowing that these strengths are not wholly human, their true source being the Spirit of God.

II. Practical ways to integrate

A key to integrating evangelism and community development is given by Stuart Murray as he lays out a road for mission in a post-Christian culture:

Unpretentious long-term witness is our best hope. Gentle questioning must supersede domineering assertions. Bold humility must replace arrogant insecurity. The images of fellow travelers and conversation partners must usurp memories of inquisitors and crusaders. (2004: 231)

With this in mind, let me outline a few practical things to do:

- 1. Missional action:** Collaborate with non-Christians on issues of concern, then take opportunity share our motivations, make connections between common actions and the Gospel and share stories of Jesus. For example, our church provides space for a hip-hop program that weekly does dance, street art and music recording with young people. We have supported them to develop their program and have built informal relationships with them. They wanted to make the hall space more 'hip-hop friendly', and I suggested they spray paint wood panels with key stories of Jesus, allowing me to discuss with them the stories and their meaning.
- 2. Structured conversation:** Provide opportunities for open conversation about biblical stories, the Church, social issues etc. Do this in a way that uses CD principles: giving people the tools to interpret, allowing divergent opinion to be expressed. Friends of mine regularly invite people to their own and because of their non-confrontational approach, open up conversations about meaning, purpose and God. They find that people are eager to have these conversations.
- 3. Public worship:** the experience of people gathered to learn together, pray together and give allegiance to God can be mysteriously attractive to non-Christians. A friend has been stirred in his heart to find out more about God. He attends a highly ritualized Anglican church because the ritual enables him to know how to act and he can attend without expectation that he will form close bonds with the people, something he is not willing to do yet.
- 4. Community:** involve yourself in people's lives, and allow them to be part of your life. Focus on hospitality, where the reality of our faith in Christ is on display, verbally and actively. For example, a friend of a friend stayed with us for a few weeks while on a work placement. On the third night, she came home late, and I told her there was a plate of food left for her. This simple act of hospitality moved her deeply. She was at first unbelieving, and then said, "No-one has ever done that for me." Next morning she asked me questions about the Christian books on our table, allowing me to talk about God. I don't think the closeness of these 2 events is a coincidence.

None of these ideas is necessarily a community development 'program' or an evangelistic 'program'. That does not matter, because community development processes and evangelistic processes, which are being brought to bear in all kinds of situations, imbue them. They are ways to, in Dickson's words, 'promote the gospel' in any time and place.

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