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DEVELOPMENTAL MINISTRY AMONG WOMEN IN PROSTITUTION

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Introduction

The purpose of this article is to outline and articulate a philosophy of development that is rooted in, and derived from, the work of Samaritana Transformation Ministries, an evangelical ministry among female prostitutes in the Philippines. Its ideas and principles come from the struggles, joys, and lessons learned in that ministry. At the same time, this philosophy guides Samaritana's ministry, for every action needs a framework, a philosophical underpinning, a motivating and driving force behind it, giving it energy, direction, and shape. This philosophy of development is dialectical. It is an attempt at a synthesis within the action-reflection-action dynamic, a conversation between contemplation and action.[1] I hope to integrate here lessons learned from a ministry imbedded in transformational development work among marginalized women in the Philippines, and a philosophical framework for doing this ministry that has Biblical,

[1]Parker Palmer, in his *The Active Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1991), writes about what he calls "contemplation-and-action," a grammatical way of reminding us that action and contemplation actually belong together and cannot be separated. Thus, we may have "contemplative action" and "active contemplation" (15–34).

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theological, psychological, and cultural integrity. I also hope that this framework is dynamic, moving back and forth between action and reflection, with both sides of the dialectic informing one another, questioning one another, and enriching one another. As Parker Palmer would say, action and contemplation, or doing and being, cannot really be separated, but are a part of the same whole.

What follows is a series of themes or principles that I think are crucial to the process of "transformational development." Presented here at random are samplings of what I believe are the key elements of a ministry among wounded souls.

Development as Human

Development work has become a commercialized industry. There are seminars for professional workers who engage in inputs using log frames, hoping for good results which they can report to development funders. Library shelves and bookshops have a growing number of titles to sharpen the skills of development workers. Capacity building and organizational development interventions, along with costly consultations, all aim to produce sustainable development. Glossy brochures and reports are distributed to attract donors and volunteer workers.

This is not to say that development workers and development organizations do not have the responsibility to learn and employ the most effective and efficient strategies, make the best use of our resources as stewards, and do the hard work of research, communication, feasibility studies, project planning, monitoring, financial accounting, reporting, and evaluating.[2] Sadly, however, much of this activity, energy, and resource allocation sometimes miss the aim of development. The object of development is, or ought to be, the advancement of humans.

[2]See John R. Cheyne's *Incarnational Agents: A Guide to Developmental Ministry* (Birmingham: New Hope, 1996) for a good working toolkit of principles and tools involved in development projects, clearly and simply presented for practitioners.

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We spin our wheels and create a lot of smoke, but at the end of the day, we fail to develop women, men, and children. Veteran activist Jim Wallis rightly says, "Always remember that when you're dealing with projects and campaigns, you're dealing with people."[3]

This may seem self-evident, but a short look at the history of development as an academic focus, or as a profession,[4] tells us that development in reality has often become other than human-focused. An honest look at current development work suggests the same. People are too often missed and invisible in the development process.

Humanizing development work begins with an affirmation—or reaffirmation—of the inherent beauty, worth, and dignity of each human being. For Christians, the keystone of this is Genesis 1:26–27, where we find that God created women and men as bearers of his image: *Imago Dei*. This means that all persons carry within them the likeness of God, the attributes of God, however marred, hidden, or wounded they may be. Every human being is therefore sacred, and has a sacred story.[5] Jesus' ministry is human-centered. He valued very

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[3]Jim Wallis, *Faith Works: Lessons from the Life of an Activist Preacher* (New York: Random House, 2000), 262.

[4]See, for example, the article "The Roots and Context of Social Mobilization in the Philippines" by Oscar P. Ferrer, Emmanuel M. Luna, & Angelito G. Manalili, in Ofelia Valdecanas, Ramon Tuazon, & Delia Barcelona, eds., *How Social Mobilization Works: The Philippine Experience* (Manila: UP College of Mass Communication and UNICEF, 1996), 34.

[5]Margaret Guenther writes about a chaplain in charge of training theology students at a home for the elderly. He told his students,

> Visit with the residents, talk to them, and listen to their stories. And when they ask me what to do about those who are unable to speak, unable to hear, perhaps even unconscious, I tell them the same thing: sit with them and listen to their stories. Each of those very old people, no matter how fragile their hold on life might be and no matter how useless they might be in the eyes of society, is a rare parchment. A rare parchment waiting to be read. (Margaret Guenther, *Toward Holy Ground: Spiritual Directions for the Second Half of Life* [Boston: Cowley Publications, 1995], 127)

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deeply every woman, man, and child. This is evident in his interactions with all. He stopped and took time with individuals, asked questions and listened, shared with people in the thresholds of their lives (e.g., in weddings and funerals), offered touch, welcomed children, honored women. Jesus gave special honor and attention to those whom society disdained and marginalized.

When my wife Thelma and I began visiting women in bars, we frequented one small karaoke bar, sat at a table, ordered drinks, and asked the waiter to send a girl to our table. We tried to get "Sandy"[6] to sit beside Thelma so that the two of them could hear each other over the booming of the sound system. After a round of drinks, we were on our way. The next week we went back to the same bar and asked for Sandy again. She came out, surprised but with a beaming smile. Many women were pleasantly surprised that we remembered their names, birthdays, and other information they shared with Thelma. In a place where they entertained men who really did not care what their names were, or who they were, honoring their names was a way of affirming their dignity and humanity.

For our perspectives and our strategies to be fully human, we need to have a Biblical anthropology, a way of understanding humans and the human condition that comes from God's story. We also need to pay attention to what other disciplines, such as psychology and sociology, tell us about humanity. We need to have a clear understanding of what it is that makes a woman a woman and a man a man. What are the deepest longings and yearnings, fears and pains common to all people? What are the things that we hold in common as humans?[7] In order for our ministries to be human, we must have a rich understanding and acceptance of our own humanity and all that that entails. This means that all of us in the development process, the community and the

[6]All of the women referred to in this article are real women we have befriended in Samaritana's ministry, but their names have been changed in order to protect their anonymity.

[7]I recommend Jean Vanier's *Becoming Human* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press Ltd., 1998) as a wonderful collection of five talks he delivered on what it means to be human, and how to reclaim our humanity in a broken world.

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development workers, should be on an honest journey of deepening self-awareness and self-understanding, of psycho-spiritual growth.[8] The unexamined life is not worth living, and we cannot help bring others to places of the heart and of humanity where we ourselves have not gone.

Development Prioritizes the Most Vulnerable

Development takes place in a world where there is extreme inequity and harsh disparity. There are persons who are more capable than others in defending themselves, pursuing their dreams, living responsibly, and growing in maturity. Others, for various reasons, are weaker and more vulnerable. Development should always aim at touching the lives of the poorest of the poor, the people most at risk. We take our cue here from Jesus, who outlined his mission at the inauguration of his public ministry:

> The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18–19)

These persons may not be the most receptive, responsive, or capable. Development work, however, should be biased in favor of these persons—not primarily because of the agenda of funding agencies, or of an ideology, or because it makes us feel better ourselves, but because this reflects the heart of God.

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[8]David Benner, in his very helpful *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), is presenting a contemporary evangelical attempt at soul care that integrates psychology and spirituality. Personally, I have also found the *enneagram*, which has a fairly integrative framework taking into consideration spiritual and psychological dimensions, a very useful tool for self-understanding. Of the many resources now available about the enneagram, I recommend *The Wisdom of the Enneagram: The Complete Guide to Psychological and Spiritual Growth for the Nine Personality Types* by Don Richard Riso & Ross Hudson (New York: Bantam, 1999) and *Discovering Your Personality Type* by Don Richard Riso (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995).

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Liberation theologians from Latin America have given us a phrase that expresses this prioritization: *the preferential option for the poor*. This option does not come from a naïve notion of the poor. We do not romanticize poverty, as if the poor are less problematic, less prone to foolishness, less self-centered than the rich and powerful. Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf, quoting Ciroan, notes that "the great persecutors are often recruited among the martyrs not quite beheaded." Poor victims who are empowered and liberated but not transformed can become as oppressively evil as their former tormentors.[9] Romanticizing poverty and the poor only serves to add another layer of suffering on the poor. Portraying the poor as somehow noble and virtuous, or desirable, may serve the fantasies of the middle class and wealthy who have chosen voluntary evangelical poverty or downward mobility, but these fairy tales will not serve or empower the poor.[10] This preference is not exclusive, but it should remind us whom to prioritize when we make decisions regarding whom to be in solidarity with.[11]

This preferential option for the poor is a reflection of what we understand the heart of God to be. God has a special love for the voiceless and the powerless. He is in solidarity with the destitute and the oppressed because they have no one on their side. They are in need of an advocate and a protector. As God's people, we make the same choice as the God we follow. Our development initiatives should focus first on the poor, the weak, the vulnerable, and those who have no voice. "Union with the poor and the oppressed requires a commitment to combat poverty as an evil that degrades the lives of many people. Material poverty is not a Christian ideal, but is rather a subhuman condition caused by our sinfulness and the selfish exploitation of the weak."[12]

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[9]Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 104.

[10]Wallis, in Andreas Ebert & Patricia C. Brockman, eds., *Richard Rohr: Illuminations of His Life and Work* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 188.

[11]Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), xxv–vvvi.

[12]Wilkie Au, *By Way of the Heart: Toward a Holistic Christian Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 171.

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Prioritizing the poorest, the weakest, and the most vulnerable means making concrete decisions with regard to how we spend our time, how we allocate our budgets, and how we structure our programs. Development programs can easily begin to channel more and more of their resources into the more responsive beneficiaries, the less problematic individuals, the more quantifiably measurable activities, and the equipment and infrastructure to maintain and build the organization. It is worth making an honest and ongoing critical self-evaluation as to whether these decisions are made at the expense of the poorest, the weakest, and the most vulnerable whom we state on our brochures and funding proposals as our priority.

Development as Transformation

Development, as I understand it, is not *simply* about uplift, although improvement in skills, insight, understanding, social standing, opportunities, or income level may be a part of the whole process. True development, however, is best characterized by deep, lasting transformation of all the persons involved. That includes the oppressed as well as the oppressor, the poor and the rich, the target beneficiaries and the development workers. The transformation should also include the systems and structures that are in need of change, which may require advocacy, legislative action, and wider social change. Indeed, Gutierrez says that the "goal is not only better living conditions, a radical change of structures, a social revolution; it is much more: the continuous creation, never ending, of a new way to be human, a *permanent cultural revolution*."[13]

Bryant Myers uses the term "transformational development" instead of simply "development" in order to be free of the baggage and negative sense associated with the latter. He is also making the qualification in order to highlight that development, as he understands it, seeks "positive change in the whole of human life materially, socially, and spiritually." Moreover, development is transformational because it requires hard work, commitment, and struggle against the Evil

[13]Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 21.

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One and all of the evil forces that seek to stop human progress and development. True development involves decisions—making new choices and choosing life where once we chose death.[14]

With this in mind, we may define transformational development as the restoration of our relationship with God through Jesus Christ, with ourselves and our communities, with all who are "other" to us, and with the earth and all of creation.[15] It would be difficult to find a single verse or passage from the Bible to try and express this. It is more important to bathe ourselves in the whole Biblical narrative and have a grasp of the movement of God in history—past, present, and future—than to formulate a neatly packaged proof-text. But Jesus' statement, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10), perhaps, communicates something of the holistic nature of Jesus' mission, a redemptive image of God's vision for us and all of God's creation.

Samaritana's vision statement is an attempt to articulate a transformative vision.

> Our vision includes the women we minister with, the Church, and society at large being impacted deeply from the inside, but having concrete, visible, specific indicators of change and transformation on the outside. This by necessity includes our own ongoing conversion and transformation, too, as individuals and as an organization. Our vision for transformation touches all the areas of life, for that is what radical transformation is like.

Development as Incarnational

The primary movement of the Gospel is downward, following the example of Jesus who,

> being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very

[14]Bryant Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000), 3.

[15]Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 50.

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> nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:6–8)

Jesus is in fact our Immanuel, *God with us*. The good news of the Gospel is that we know the extent of God's love for us in the Incarnation. God did not send an email or a text message to show us his love; God came and pitched his tent among us. Incarnation is vital for development and transformation to happen. We must be *with* people before we can be *for* them. Being for people comes out of our strength; being with people comes out of our weakness. The fundamental movement of God was making himself known in the person of Christ in a particular place and time. The most effective ministry is making our presence felt in a particular place with a particular people during a particular time.

Part of what we in Samaritana have learned with regards to incarnating the Gospel for women in prostitution has to do with the ministry of presence. Presence is not the same as giving assistance or advice. It may include spoken words, but it is much more than conversation. I still remember the night when Samaritana staff members, volunteers, and women gathered in a small church sanctuary to be with one of our friends who was mourning the loss of her baby. There was not much we could do or say, but that really did not matter. What was important to her was that *we were there with her*. Presence speaks of solidarity, shared journey, mutuality, attentiveness, and full engagement. Presence, too, can have a redemptive impact. Bakke outlines a theology of presence based on the story of Abraham's pleading with God for Sodom (Genesis 18:16–33). The implication of the story is that the presence of a few righteous persons can have a redemptive impact on a particular people and place.[16]

The ministry of presence in Samaritana means, in practical terms, that we go to where the women are—to the streets and bars. What exactly do I mean by a "ministry of presence"? Sometimes that means sitting in a dark, smoke-filled bar with loud music playing, leaning forward to try to hear what the girl sitting across the table is saying.

[16]Ray Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 38–46.

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Sometimes it means giving a word of caution, a suggestion, or a short counsel, or often not saying anything at all. Sometimes it means walking around the street looking for a particular girl but not finding her. Other times it means talking to a group of loud and obnoxious women on the street corner while commuters and passers-by stare and frown slightly. Once, our ministry of presence led to two of our staff members being caught in a police roundup. Whether we pray for a woman or not, whether we speak the Gospel message or not, whether our plans work out or the unexpected catches us unprepared, we believe we are bringing the light and life of Christ to a place and to a people that need it badly. A ministry of presence means we regard the dark alleys of Cubao as our parish.[17]

Development as Journey

Development is not an event. Development cannot happen in a project lifespan. In fact, the process of development never really ends. Development by its very nature is a process, and may be best described as a journey. This is why it is helpful to understand development as an intersection or a convergence of stories of the poor and of the development workers—all fitting in the larger story or *metanarrative* of God's action in human history.[18] God's activity in the world can be characterized as a long and slow march.[19] There is nothing we can do to rush God or hurry him up. Our job is to be pilgrims, not timekeepers.

The Exodus story in the Old Testament can be a helpful paradigm for us as we consider the transformational development process as a journey. The people of Israel were rescued from Egypt in a singular

[17]Jonathan Nambu, "Lessons from Our Journey: Ministry Among Prostituted Women," *Phronesis* 5:1 (1998): 33–34.

[18]Nambu, "Lessons from Our Journey," 20–25.

[19]Ringma uses this phrase to describe the journey of faith in *Missio Dei*, the mission of God (Charles Ringma, "The Slow March of God," *Phronesis* 7:1 [2000]: 3–18).

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event, but their deliverance was also a process of following, fighting, grumbling, confession, renewal, worship, social reconstruction, etc. that took forty years. A preacher noted that it was easier for God to get them out of Egypt than it was for God to get Egypt out of them. We should expect that the process of transformational development, particularly among the severely oppressed, wounded, and abused, will also be a long and difficult journey.

One of the first women befriended by Samaritana workers was "Paula." She was a street prostitute who picked men up along Quezon Avenue. She was also involved in drugs. When Samaritana staff members invited her she volunteered, made a decision of faith, joined Bible studies, began to make noticeable improvements, and then disappeared. We later learned that she was back on the streets and back to drugs. Paula repeated this cycle numerous times over the next eight or nine years, bouncing from one service provider to another, weeping in sorrow one day and fighting another woman at knifepoint the next day. The cycle she was in was not a meaningless, karmic cycle. There was movement and growth happening, but there was also falling, struggling, and running. Today, Paula is still not done, but she is a completely different woman from what she was ten years or even one year ago.

Au writes that "the metaphor of a journey captures well what most adults come sooner or later to realize about spiritual and psychological growth: it is a never-ending series of changes and struggles. In a word, it is a hard road to travel."[20] He goes on to remind us of the proverb of the Chinese sage Lao-Tze: "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." Despite the length and challenges of the journey, we are encouraged to take small, sure steps together toward Jesus. Some of the steps along the way may be wobbly and unsure. We will in fact make mistakes, and there is nothing wrong with that. "Even great saints like Augustine of Hippo and Ignatius of Loyola learned how not to make mistakes by making many." The journey is difficult, long, and challenging, but it is not overwhelming. Our journey ought

[20]Au, *By Way of the Heart*, 191.

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to be made with the freedom to explore, discover, and learn from mistakes.[21] Change, growth, and transformation sometimes begin to happen in miraculous events, but they are also a series of choices that really never ends.

Development as Participatory

Spiritual director Margaret Guenther says, "Good ministry, like spiritual friendship, is mutual; it is a dance, a drama, a story, a partnership."[22] More particularly, we may say that transformational development must be mutual, shared, and participatory. It must be empowering. Individuals and communities should be encouraged to identify and understand their problems and needs, and to propose appropriate actions and remedies.

It is very interesting to read the story of Jesus and the invalid by the poolside (John 5:1–15). Jesus asked the man, "Do you want to get well?" When the man responded in self-pity and gave excuses, Jesus commanded him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." Jesus would not let the man off the hook. He required the man who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years to stand up, carry his mat, and take his initial steps. The man who had been helpless all his life was made to participate in his own miraculous healing.

This is what distinguishes a work of development from one of charity or relief. In development work, we look for partners and collaborators, rather than recipients and beneficiaries. We want everyone to have the freedom and space to be active partners in the whole process, from planning to implementation and evaluation. We listen to, and value what each one says, for as the Quakers say, "Everybody has a piece of the truth." As Paulo Freire writes,

> At all stages of their liberation, the oppressed must see themselves as men *(and women)* engaged in the ontological and historical vocation of

[21] Au, *By Way of the Heart*, 197–202.

[22] Guenther, *Toward Holy Ground: Spiritual Directions for the Second Half of Life*, 132.

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> becoming more fully human …. To achieve this praxis, however, it is necessary to trust in the oppressed and in their ability to reason.[23]

The process of involving all the community in the process of their own transformation and liberation is not so easy. There is often hesitation, reluctance, and even resistance from the community to take greater responsibility in the process. This may be due to the traditional perception of what leadership means, or low self-esteem, or an overwhelming sense of deference to authority and powerful figures, or a sense of powerlessness.[24] Inviting participation, building a healthier sense of self-esteem, and empowering people to take responsibility for themselves and others is a long process which will require not only patience and graciousness but also skills in listening, understanding, and working with people.[25]

When "Sophia" was hospitalized during a difficult childbirth, she and her husband expected Samaritana staff members to come to the rescue and do everything for her. She was surprised, disappointed, and irritated initially when "Cherry" and "Maribel," two of the other Samaritana women trainees, were the ones who stayed with her at the hospital, coached her how to apply for public assistance discounts for her hospital bill, and urged her and her husband to do things for themselves. This was a learning experience for Sophia and her husband as well as for Cherry and Maribel (and a healthy reminder for the

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[23]Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1992), 52–53.

[24]Maria Leny E. Felix, *Leading with the People: A Handbook on Community-Based Leadership* (Tarlac City: Holy Spirit Center of Tarlac, Inc., 1998), 1.

[25]There is a wealth of resources available to those who would like to engage in a more participatory style of leadership, development work, or ministry. One may want to look at Felix's *Leading with the People: A Handbook on Community-Based Leadership*, Sam Kaner's *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making* (with Lenny Lind, Catherine Toldi, Sarah Fisk, & Duane Berger [Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 1996]), and Anne Hope and Sally Timmel's four-volume *Training for Transformation: A Handbook for Community Workers* (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1984/London: Intermediate Technology Publications, 1999) for principles, suggested activities, and further ideas.

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Samaritana team, too!), as they all learned the important lesson that Samaritana funds did not grow on trees, and there was much that they could do for themselves.

At Samaritana, we designed and developed a new way of teaching and training our women to become "disciples." It is a three-part modular approach using non-formal adult education methods.[26] We recognize that our women will learn most effectively, and be most empowered, when they are active participants in the learning process. We have also used *Appreciative Inquiry* and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) as methods of involving the staff team in making decisions regarding the ministry's direction, and involving women in visioning, planning, and evaluating various programs and activities.[27]

One of the challenges of participatory processes is to learn what we as development workers can contribute and where we can participate. One inherent weakness, for example, in the appreciative inquiry method of visioning, planning, and evaluating is that not all of what is knowable or needful is within any one group at any one time. There are always new bits of information, experiences, wisdom, and creative ideas outside of a group. These new data are not available to its members unless outsiders bring them in. If we adopt appreciative inquiry woodenly and legalistically, we may help a group to feel empowered but we deprive them of important input, lessons, experiences, and resources that would have further aided them in their transformation. One community development educator has said that we must do "facipulation"—mixing facilitation and manipulation. This recognizes the fact that no one has pure motives

[26]One of our staff members is currently pursuing a master's degree in Non-Formal Adult Education at the University of the Philippines.

[27]Another staff member has gone through workshop training in using the *Appreciative Inquiry* methodology. For more information on Appreciative Inquiry and how it is used in planning and evaluating projects, see Sue Annis Hammond's *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry* (2nd ed. [Plano, Texas: Thin Book Publishing Co., 1998]) and Chapter 5, "Using Appreciative Inquiry to Build Capacity," in CRWRC's *Partnering to Build and Measure Organizational Capacity* (Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, 1997), 245–282.

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and no one is completely without an agenda. Is it honest for us to say that we completely devolve the process of development yet we remain actively participatory in it? What exactly is the appropriate level of our involvement so that we do not become manipulative? What are the areas where we may rightly give input and direction, or even exercise leadership and authority? These are areas Samaritana has not yet fully determined, and we are still learning.

Development as Holistic

Development of women, men, and children takes into account the wonderful mystery and complexity of humanity, and has all of the concerns of humanity in mind. Western culture has promoted a false and unhealthy dualism and compartmentalization of life, prioritizing private over public, spiritual over physical, work over Sabbath, personal evil over structural evil, prayer over politics.[28] God, however, is concerned with, and involved in, all of life. As God's people, we need to nurture that same concern and involvement. Our development work needs to be integrative rather than compartmentalized, whole rather than segmented. This is not merely a call to an eastern or southern cultural dynamic; it is an invitation to reclaim a more Biblical perspective on the redemptive work of God.[29] As John Perkins declares,

[28]It has been rightly pointed out that the relatively recent emphasis on holism has been needed in the West to serve as a corrective to the dichotomized, dualistic worldview that has captivated, or at least influenced, the Church in the West to a great degree. It is too simplistic, however, to brush this off as a Western problem. Western missions and theological education have had a huge impact on the shaping of the theology and ecclesiology of the Church in the east and south. Moreover, with modernity and globalization, technology and communications, many aspects of dualistic and dichotomized thinking and living have been absorbed into non-Western cultures, such that I believe it is now helpful to highlight the need for holism even among Christians in non-Western contexts.

[29]Ron Sider's fifth chapter, "Embracing the Fullness of God's Salvation," in his *Good News and Good Works: A Theology for the Whole Gospel* ([Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993], 83–100), provides a helpful survey of Biblical words for

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> The Gospel, rightly understood, is wholistic. It responds to people as whole people; it doesn't single out just spiritual or just physical needs and [speaks] to those. Christian community development begins with people transformed by the love of God, who then respond to God's call to share the gospel with others through evangelism, social action, economic development, and justice.[30]

The best way to describe what we mean by holism is by using the Biblical concept of *shalom*. Shalom is a concept of right relationships on all levels and in all areas of life: relationships with God, self, others, and all of creation. Shalom is "human welfare, health and well-being, in both spiritual and material aspects."[31] Shalom is "shockingly materialistic,"[32] and has to do with the gritty realities of life that we find ourselves in as inhabitants of planet Earth. Shalom, however, does not simply mean comprehensive programs. Pursuing holistic ministry among women in prostitution does not necessarily mean that we must have many programs and activities, e.g., a program for spiritual, a

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salvation. He notes that "salvation" in the Bible is the work of God, happens in history and is social, corporate, and communal, is linked inseparably with the Kingdom of God, includes physical healing, has right relationship with God at its center, has past, present, and future reference to the redemptive activity of God in Christ, and has cosmic aspects. Father Ben Beltran, meanwhile, gives a helpful background to the truly holistic worldview of ancient Filipinos, the development of a dichotomized and dualistic worldview in Greek and western philosophy and the development of the Church, and the impact of that often unconscious dualistic world view and theology upon Filipinos (and, by extension, other evangelized and colonized developing nations) in his chapter, "Toward a Theology of Holistic Ministry," in Tetsunao Yamamori, Bryant Myers, & Kenneth Luscombe, eds., *Serving with the Urban Poor* (Monrovia, California: MARC, 1998), 191–210.

[30]John M. Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities: Doing it Together and Doing it Right* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 21.

[31]Bruce Bradshaw, *Bridging the Gap: Evangelism, Development and Shalom* (Monrovia: MARC, 1993), 17. Bradshaw's book is actually a helpful attempt at encouraging a holistic approach to ministry using the theological framework of creation, redemption, and *shalom*.

[32]Bradshaw, *Bridging the Gap*, 18.

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program for psychological, a program for physical, and a program for social needs of people. Instead, shalom reminds us that all of life and all of ministry are created, sustained, and being redeemed by God. As Charles Ringma says, "All of life is under God's watchful eyes and in God's reshaping hands."

Commitment to the God of shalom demands that our development philosophy, strategies, and work must invite people to a life that is integrated and whole, healthy and reconciled.

Development in the Context of Community

People develop most fully and richly in the context of a community. Human development and transformation is not an individual endeavor, but a process that happens in the context of relationships and community. Change is made, tested, validated, and celebrated in community. "Discipleship is best done with others who are also disciples."[33] As Richard Rohr wrote, although we must work with individuals, yet too often "we are saving souls while God is creating a people."[34]

I still remember asking "Edna," a woman we had worked with for years and then referred, along with her two children, to another Christian ministry, "So, Edna, who are your friends there in your new home and community?" I knew that Edna was an angry and proud Christian woman who had a hard time trusting anyone. "Oh," she answered sweetly, "I don't have any friends there. It's just me and the Lord." Her spiritualized answer did not comfort me. She had a false sense of a privatized spirituality disconnected from people around her. She thought she could make it through life praying to God but not relating with others. Edna's spirituality appeared spurious and hollow to those around her who experienced her as an aloof and proud person.

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[33]Art Gish, *Living in Christian Community* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1979), 46.

[34]Richard Rohr, *Near Occasions of Grace* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1994), 50.

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The work of development needs to be done by women and men standing shoulder to shoulder. The story of God's transformative work in history, in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, is a story of people in a community. In fact, "although personal relation to God is vital, according to Biblical thought God is more concerned with creating a people than with private religious experience."[35] A person attempting to engage in development work alone is a sad anomaly.

"Reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel."[36] Our communities need to be places where people are experiencing, offering, and celebrating reconciliation with God, self, others, and creation. This is what is meant by *shalom*—right relationships in all the spheres of life. This means our communities will need to be places where honesty is encouraged, trust is built, and forgiveness is offered and received.

For almost two years, Samaritana experimented with a residential facility in Fairview, Quezon City. My wife and I lived in a large eight-bedroom rented house, along with several other staff members, an intern, five women, and three children. This was a learning experience for all of us. After the first two days, our initial romanticized notions of living in community were deflated. We began to experience fights, intrigues, irritations, and misunderstandings. We also experienced rejoicing, reconciliation, and shared celebrations.[37]

Now, for a variety of reasons, we no longer have a residential facility or program. Our challenge now is how to create the psychological and emotional space for the community to grow and flourish without physically living together. Particularly for the women who have gone through abuse, trauma, and psychological fragmentation, we must provide a safe haven for them, so they can begin to trust, to hope, and to re-collect themselves.[38] How do we as a group that meets four to five

[35]Rohr, *Near Occasions of Grace*, 23.

[36]Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities*, 22.

[37]Nambu, "Lessons from Our Journey," 35–36.

[38]Both Judith Herman in her *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: BasicBooks, 1997) and Diane Langberg in *Counseling Survivors of Sexual Abuse* (Wheaton: Tyndale

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days a week create a spirit of trust, and make space within ourselves[39] for God and others? The community is a gift that we receive as well as a responsibility that we nurture and struggle to maintain. How can we embrace it and take care of it? This is a process of learning and struggling, one that we are certainly still in.

Development's Impact on Structures

A Philippine Daily Inquirer article once featured a news item about a Manila hotel that was raided. Manila police officials were quoted as explaining that one of their assets masqueraded as a customer and selected a woman, then somehow sent a signal to the policemen who were waiting outside that he and the woman were already engaging in sex. Upon forcing their way into the building and into the room where this man and woman were, they were indeed found in a compromising position. The young woman was arrested and charged with prostitution. A number of other women were rounded up that day, but the owners and managers were not to be found. Is it right for a man to pretend to be a customer, select a woman, and then engage in sex with her in order to conduct a raid on an establishment fronting for prostitution? Entrapment is another level of violation, compounding the victimization of the women involved. It remains, though, a common method of police in trying to find and catch women in prostitution. What about the fact that women are commonly rounded up but customers, pimps, recruiters, and owners are usually not found, taken into custody, charged, and convicted? If prostitution is illegal

House Publishers, 1997) stress the utmost importance of creating safety for abuse and trauma victims as the necessary first step in their recovery and healing.

[39]Margaret Guenther, in the chapter entitled "Welcoming the Stranger" in her *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction* (Boston: Cowley Publications, 1992), writes of the necessity of creating a safe space for those we listen to and minister to. This safe space is not only physical, having to do with a room, decorations, and furniture layout, but is also personal, psychological, relational, and emotional. We must be committed to being centered ourselves in order to offer a safe space within ourselves to others, providing inward hospitality.

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in the Philippines according to the Revised Penal Code, why are all women employees of discos, bars, saunas, and similar establishments required to report regularly to the local social hygiene clinic to have a pap smear test for sexually transmitted diseases? These are examples of structural injustices, flaws in the system that contribute to the system of prostitution and to the oppression of women. Samaritana is just realizing in new ways that we must begin to be involved in addressing structural injustices that affect our women. We are to be involved in advocacy work.

What is advocacy? Advocacy, or advocate, comes from the Latin word *advocare*, or *a-vocare*, which has to do with "to call," "to call out," "to speak," or "to speak on behalf of." Therefore, advocating has something to do with 1) speaking for, acting for, or defending someone or something before someone else, or 2) proposing, promoting, or suggesting something to someone. Advocacy has to do with helping give a voice to the voiceless. It is worth noting, however, that whenever we advocate for someone or some people we can take away their voice and actually disempower them. Especially when we work with the poor and marginalized, we must be careful not to take away their voice. There are times when we must speak on their behalf, but we must be aware of the power dynamics involved, and always seek to develop their self-worth and potential.

Some Biblical examples of advocacy include Abraham bargaining with God on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:16–33), Moses arguing with the Pharaoh on behalf of the Hebrews (Exodus 7–11), Nehemiah lobbying the nobles and officials on behalf of the poor and overtaxed oppressed (Nehemiah 5), Jesus defending the woman caught in adultery before the lynching mob (John 8:1–11) and interceding for us before the heavenly Father (1 John 2:1).

What is our motivation when we engage in advocacy? What drives us? First, the heart of God is for the weak, the vulnerable, the forgotten, the disadvantaged (e.g., the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4). All of Scripture tells us the narrative of God who cares for the whole world, especially those who have no one to care for them. Second, we are driven by a commitment to justice and righteousness.

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As Samaritana's team, we decided to involve ourselves in the work of advocacy on the local and national level. We participate in legislative advocacy related to issues relevant to prostitution and the sexual exploitation of women and children that is already being done by other groups.[40] The staff members are engaged in gathering information, raising awareness among women and churches, catalyzing the involvement of prostituted women, building a network of relationships, organizing a team, and strategizing. Specifically, we work with other NGOs and women's groups to push for the passage of the Anti-Prostitution Bill. Our ministry among women in prostitution is not complete if we do not address the system of prostitution and dismantle the structure that supports it. As stated so clearly in the fifth paragraph of the Lausanne Covenant, "evangelism and socio-political involvement are *both* part of our Christian duty" (italics added).[41]

Development as Dying

As a hyperventilating, perspiring, exhausted teenager reeling from the pain of body-punishing workouts with my teammates on the high school wrestling team, I still remember hearing the coach repeat over and over, "No pain, no gain." Winston Churchill said, "We have fought them (the Nazis) with our blood, sweat, and tears." The principle is the same: goals are often realized through sacrifice and difficulty. Filipino theologian David Lim has said that "[nothing] good will happen on earth unless someone suffers for it."

Christians will recognize this as the principle of the cross, the invitation to sacrifice, and, indeed, death. John 12:24 reminds us that in

[40]We have learned some things about strategizing for and being involved in advocacy work from Tear Fund's *Footsteps* 45 (December 2000). This issue of their "quarterly newsletter linking development workers around the world" dealt specifically with advocacy, including articles outlining the "advocacy cycle," ideas for practical campaigning, case studies in advocacy efforts among development projects, Biblical reflection on advocacy, etc.

[41]*The Lausanne Covenant* (Lausanne, Switzerland: International Congress on World Evangelization, July 1974), par. 5.

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the agricultural planting-harvesting cycle as well as in God's economy, death is required for new life to emerge: "Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." Not everyone is called to martyrdom like that of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero, but all of us are invited to walk the way of the cross, and to embrace whatever form our "dying to self" will take. For some, this may take the form of a preferential option for the poor. They may be called to incarnate the love of God by moving into an urban poor community. For others, this may mean leaving behind their own culture, their preferred ways of thinking and living. According to Volf, "the practice of embrace … is for Christians possible only if, in the name of God's crucified Messiah, we distance ourselves from ourselves and our cultures in order to create a space for the other."[42] For many, the martyrdom we are called to is not dramatic and heroic, but made up of small sacrifices in mundane routines and chores of our families, work, and other involvements. Embracing death is in effect embracing humility, weakness, vulnerability, and powerlessness[43]—things we naturally recoil from because they are foolishness to the world and to our flesh (1 Cor. 1:18–29).

In any transformational development endeavor, there is, specifically, a crucifixion involved. According to Maggay, incarnation requires crucifixion, involvement entails *kenosis* (self-emptying), and solidarity requires surrender.[44] Our submission to death opens our hearts to the transformative work of God's Spirit. Our effectiveness and fruitfulness as transformational development workers depend not so much on our monitoring and evaluation, or on intervention strategies, or on the percentage of loan repayments, as on our willingness to lay down the things most precious to us—even those things that give us life—on

[42]Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace*, 30.

[43]In his *The Path of Power* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1995), Nouwen posits that it is in releasing power, and embracing weakness, vulnerability, smallness, and poverty, that we are ultimately empowered.

[44]Melba Padilla Maggay, *Transforming Society* (Quezon City: ISACC, 1996), 73–80.

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behalf of our brothers and sisters. To the extent that we do this, new life will emerge.

Our commitment to let go and live a life of self-giving becomes a model for those whose lives are intertwined with us. We willingly embrace death not only because it makes our work more effective, but also because it makes us more human. Wilkie Au quotes Judith Viorst, who writes about losses from a psychoanalytic background: "The road to human development … is paved with renunciation. Throughout our life we grow by giving up."[45] Au adds, however, that the good news of the Gospel is that God brings new life, so that we are not merely left with the existential reality of our losses but with the hope of new life and the heightened longing for God.[46] Moreover, the Suffering God, who chose death in order to redeem us and bring us new life, accompanies us always and invites us to accept loss, desolation, and death.[47] Not only does this make our development task more fruitful, it also makes our lives and our communities more real, more healthy, and more fully human.

Development and Spirituality

Development workers are usually activists. Not all of us march on the streets, make press releases, wave placards, and go on hunger strikes, but most of us are doers. We get things done and make things happen. We are people of action. However, we can go to the extreme. A voice inside us whispers, "Don't slow down or stop, things may fall apart. What will life be, what will you be, if you stop now?" There are gifted and committed friends and colleagues around us who have reached the

[45]Au, *By Way of the Heart*, 188.

[46]Au, *By Way of the Heart*, 190.

[47]Mitch Albom writes about "dying well," although not particularly from a Christian perspective, as he recounts the true story of his interactions with a dying former professor, Morrie, in his international bestseller, *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, A Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson* (New York: Doubleday, 1997).

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point of complete exhaustion and burnout. We need to develop and nurture a spirituality that will sustain us in our development work. As Merton warns us,

> He who attempts to act and do things for others or for the world without deepening his own self-understanding, freedom, integrity and capacity to love, will not have anything to give others …. There is nothing more tragic in the modern world than the misuse of power and action to which men are driven by their own Faustian misunderstandings and misapprehensions.[48]

I believe, however, that spirituality in our development action is more than simply a self-protective exercise to try to ward off burnout. To be distinctively transformational and Christian, our work needs to be shaped and nurtured by the streams of a vibrant spirituality, an inner reservoir that refreshes us in times of dryness, tiredness, and disappointment. The community we are with, and the people we serve, need to be quenched by the waters of life that come from within.

I suggest here that a spirituality which may serve us is a *contemplative* spirituality. We need silence to give power and meaning to our words, solitude to help us create safe space within ourselves, reflection to help us make sense out of what happens in our life. The contemplative spirituality I am suggesting here is not the "flight to the desert" type of spirituality, of escaping from the world to become an eccentric hermit. I am proposing a spirituality that integrates silence and word, solitude and community, action and reflection, prayer and work into a healthy rhythm of life and ministry.

True contemplatives, in fact, do not isolate themselves from people, but connect more deeply with people. That is why Thomas Merton could say, "… the only justification for a life of deliberate solitude is the conviction that it will help you to love not only God but also other men …. Go into the desert not to escape other men but in order to find them in God."[49] Kenneth Leech writes,

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[48]Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action* (Garden City, New York: ImageBooks, 1973), 178–179.

[49]Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions Books, 1972), 52–53.

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> The contemplative and the active are necessary for each other. Contemplation must be involved, a clear seeing into the reality of human life and human suffering, not an evasion of that reality …. In such contemplative spirituality lie the resources for resistance to injustice. For resistance can only grow out of improved knowledge and deepened insight (Philippians 1:9).[50]

Edwina Gately, a Catholic laywoman who founded the Volunteer Missionary Movement and has helped women in prostitution in Chicago through the Genesis House, which she began, says,

> Justice is inseparable from spiritual development. I think one of the mistakes we've made in our history is parsing things out and separating them. We pretend you can be a holy person and have nothing to do with the poor or the disenfranchised, that you can be involved in justice and not have anything to do with spirituality. But if we want to be whole, justice brings back upon our own spirituality …. It doesn't mean that we can cop out and become passive. The real act of faith and the move toward the deepest spirituality is when we admit we don't know, anymore, whether we're really making a difference. We do know that we must keep on doing what we believe in, what we're called to do right now …. We can't save the world, but we can work toward it.[51]

In Samaritana, we are discovering, experiencing, and exploring further the gift of contemplative spirituality as we engage in transformational development work among women in prostitution. The staff and volunteers meet once a month for quiet reflection together, often using the *lectio divina*, centering prayer, and extended times of silent reflection together. We practice a form of the Ignatian exercises together. My wife, who serves as Coordinator of Counseling and Spiritual Nurture (and who is herself receiving spiritual direction and training to give spiritual direction), has introduced to the women a form of group spiritual accompaniment. This is planting the seeds of a contemplative experience and spirituality into the soil of the women's hearts as they have group liturgies, extended silence, and *Taize* chants

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[50]Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend: An Invitation to Spiritual Direction* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1980), 192.

[51]Dorothy Whiston, "Living Justice: An Interview with Edwina Gately," *Presence: The Journal of Spiritual Directors International* 7:1 (January 2001): 21.

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together. These complement the more exuberant praise songs during Samaritana's worship times, and have been appreciated and enjoyed by the women. These practices are creating a safe place for the women with one another, with Thelma, and with God, allowing women to find moments of rest for their souls amidst noise, chaos, and confusion.

Conclusion

I appreciate the opportunity for me to think critically about my understanding of development, particularly in the context of our ministry in Samaritana. This exercise has forced me to reflect on our work, to articulate the lessons we are learning, and to try to integrate theory and practice, action and reflection, being and doing. I realize that the articulation of a philosophy of development is itself a work in progress. That is to say, while I share these themes freely *now*, based on action, reflection, and study, I also hold my thoughts and ideas tentatively and with humility, knowing that this is not the final word. The lessons I will learn with my colleagues and friends will not end, just as the process of development will never really end. There will always be new insights, new changes and adjustments, new experiments and revisions, new problems and solutions. That is part of the excitement and wonder of a journey.

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