Dena Freeman

Entangled Histories of “Development,” “development,” and “Christian development”

Introduction

While the origins of international development are many and diverse, as the articles in this volume attest, this paper seeks to explore certain aspects of development thinking and practice that can be traced back to nineteenth century European Protestant missionaries, in their entangled relations with both European governments and non-Western colonial subjects, in the context of European colonialism and Empire. It seeks to show that the idea of development did not burst into the world with President Truman’s 1949 speech, as is often assumed, but rather has roots which extend much further back, and which cannot be separated from Protestant ideas about providence, civilization, and the practice of overseas mission. It also seeks to show how the various different meanings that are given to the term “development” in the contemporary context in part arise from the historical collaborations and contradictions between these secular and Christian actors in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Academic discussions about “international development” often exhibit a disciplinary dichotomy, with scholars from different disciplines using the term to mean quite different things. Those in international relations, political science, and economics, broadly speaking, tend to conceive of development as political-economic relations within and between states aimed at promoting industrialization and modernization in poorer countries and increased trade between poorer countries and richer countries. In this article I will refer to that as “Development,” with a capital D. Scholars in development studies, and to some extent sociology and anthropology, and indeed much of the general public, more often consider development as a genuine concern to improve the lives of poor people, as a way of making society better, or as a set of techniques to improve human capacities, wellbeing, and quality of life. I shall refer to that as “development,” with a small d. When these meanings are conflated, which they often are, I will talk about “D/development.” And recently, there has been a surge of scholarly interest in the area of religion and development, focusing on the activities of (mainly Christian) faith-based development organizations and the ways that
faith, culture, and meaning impact on development. I will refer to this third strand as “Christian development.”

This article aims to consider all of these different meanings of development, and to shed light on their entangled and mutually constituted histories, in order to unravel the way that various actors, secular and Christian, governmental and non-governmental, have contributed to the contemporary manifestation of the field of “international development,” in its wide diversity, as an inspiring idea, as a set of practices, and as a discourse that legitimates relations of extraction and exploitation.

The Emergence of Protestant Social Action and Evangelism in the Context of Industrialization and Empire

The roots of contemporary ideas about international development can be traced back to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and the tumultuous societal changes brought about in Britain and other parts of Europe by industrialization, expanding imperialism and the institutionalization of international industrial capitalism. The re-organization of society and economy that these processes ushered in, both nationally and internationally, led to increasing wealth and affluence for some (mainly the capitalist entrepreneurs), and dramatically worsening living and working conditions for others (mainly the urban proletariat laboring in the factories and mines in Europe, and the slaves laboring in mines and plantations in the colonies). In this context, new ideas about social reform and societal improvement started to emerge in certain sectors of European society, most notably amongst Protestant Christians.¹

Since the Enlightenment, Christianity had been somewhat in a state of flux. New ideas about science and evolution were gaining ground, and many Europe-

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an Christians were experiencing a profound crisis of faith. European society was slowly starting to secularize and the Protestant church needed to re-imagine itself and its role in social life. And thus, even as large numbers of people left the church, a huge number of revival movements swept across Europe in what has since become known as the nineteenth century “Great Awakening.” These revival movements demanded that Christians engage more deeply and passionately with their faith in their own lives and also work towards the manifestation of Christian values in society. Thus the Protestant churches began to re-fashion themselves as institutions that demanded and facilitated intense spiritual experience on the one hand, while also dedicating themselves to social reform and the improvement of society on the other.

Throughout the nineteenth century the idea that society can and should be improved began to grow, and several social reform movements came into being, most of them initiated by Protestant Christians and inspired by Christian values. Most of these movements focussed either on improving working conditions in the mines and factories at home, or abolishing the transatlantic slave trade and ending slavery in the colonies. For example, in Britain Lord Shaftesbury, a prominent nineteenth-century evangelical Protestant politician, passed acts in the British parliament to prohibit the employment of women and children in coal mines and to establish a ten-hour day for factory workers. Other prominent British evangelicals, such as John Wesley and William Wilberforce, worked tirelessly to abolish the transatlantic slave trade and bring about the end of slavery. For nineteenth-century evangelical Protestants, in Britain, as in Germany, Scandinavia, and elsewhere, the improvement of society came to be understood as part and parcel of the practice of Christian faith. Charles Finney, a leading mid-nineteenth-century American evangelical revivalist, summed up the sentiment when he wrote:


The great business of the church is to reform the world. The Church of Christ was originally organised to be a body of reformers. The very profession of Christianity implies the profession and virtually an oath to do all that can be done for the universal reformation of the world.⁵

These “awakened” Christians also placed a renewed emphasis on personal spiritual experience and many began to develop a strong desire to share their experience with others, in the belief that it could bring them salvation. This renewed evangelical zeal, in the context of expanding colonial empire and increasing awareness of the existence and nature of “distant others” overseas, started a theological debate within the Protestant world about the importance of spreading the gospel. Up until then mainstream Protestant Christian thinking was that the “Great Mandate” to spread the gospel had ended with the apostles and that salvation depended on election by God and was not something that could be influenced by worldly activity or personal faith. But in 1792 William Carey, widely known as the father of Protestant missions, wrote a small booklet called *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, which argued that the “Great Mandate” had not ended with the apostles and that new methods had to be discovered in order to fulfil it in the present.⁶

Carey’s booklet led to the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) later that year, and to the founding of many other missionary societies in the subsequent years.⁷ The London Missionary Society (LMS) was formed in 1795, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1797, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in 1813, the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society in 1815, the Berlin Mission in 1824, the Swedish Missionary Society in 1835, the Norwegian Missionary Society in 1842, and many others.⁸ The birth of these missionary societies represented a major sea change in the Protestant world. As the nineteenth century American missionary Rufus Anderson noted, “It was not until the present centu-

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⁷ The one missionary society that was founded earlier was the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), that had been formed at the start of the eighteenth century in order to provide Christian services to colonial settlers in North America and it only started to evangelise the “heathens” later in the nineteenth century.
ry that the evangelical churches of Christendom were ever really organised with a view to the conversion of the world.”

In many cases missionaries from one country had first trained in another country, and there were strong links of cooperation between many of the missionary societies. Throughout the nineteenth century a series of interdenominational missionary conferences in Europe, America, and in the colonies further helped to develop a shared vision about the goals and techniques of missionary work across most of these Protestant missions, with the result that they operated in many fundamental respects in broadly similar ways. It has thus often been noted that nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries formed a network of religious actors extending over the colonial space, and often acted in opposition to, or at least in tension with, the other existing networks, of colonial administrators and of European settlers.

Nineteenth century evangelical Protestants were inspired to both improve society and to spread the gospel, and to a large extent they understood both elements to be part of a broader process of social and spiritual change leading towards salvation. Thus bringing Christianity to the heathen did not just involve matters of gospel and belief, but also included the work of “civilization,” a broader project which included changing people’s dress, lifestyle, social practices, and working habits. As Stanley puts it, “To bring to the ‘heathen’ the gospel of the cross of Christ was to open before them not only the prospect of eternal life but also the road to unlimited social and economic development.” Although the term “development” was not used until much later, some of the basic ideas underlying it were already beginning to take shape in the nineteenth century.

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12 Missionary societies sought to raise funds and to educate people by publishing information bulletins, with letters and diaries from the different missions. In this way they mobilized a mass movement in Britain, Switzerland, the German states, and elsewhere, in which people felt called to be involved in the mission enterprise by financially and spiritually supporting their missionaries overseas. See Catalano, “Missionary Societies,” 118. This mode of operation was later adopted by humanitarian and development NGOs in the twentieth century.
But at this point in time there was little idea about exactly how the “civilizing” or “developmental” process would actually take place. The initial focus of the missionaries was on spreading the gospel. But it quickly became clear that for people to be able to take in the gospel message they first needed reasonably healthy bodies, and second needed to be able to read the bible. And therefore almost all of the missionaries got to work providing basic medical care and teaching literacy. These can be seen as the first “development” activities, with missionaries of all persuasions opening schools, running clinics, and seeking to “improve” and “civilize” the bodies and souls of the people in the colonies.

According to the providentialist worldview that was common among most Protestants at this time, this process of “civilizing the heathens” was part of God’s plan for the world and would ultimately lead to the salvation of humanity. Viewed through this lens, nineteenth-century Protestants understood the expansion of European empires as part of God’s plan to redeem mankind. Empire, along with growing international commerce, facilitated their spreading of the Christian message, which would ultimately lead to the spiritual and material development of everyone and the salvation of humanity.

It is worth pointing out that at this point in time most colonial administrators and secular traders in what have been referred to as the “secular imperial networks” did not share the missionaries’ view of the purpose of empire. In their view the primary purpose of empire was to enrich themselves and the metropole. They had little interest in the spread of Christianity or of “civilization” or of any other scheme for “social improvement” in the colonies. Stamatov summarizes the distinction between the dominant views in the secular and the religious networks very aptly when he says,

secular networks, agents of governance and settlers, were largely driven by the logic of economic profit. This reckless drive for profits engendered, in turn, double moral standards that legitimized the exploitation and dehumanization of non-Europeans [...] In many cases, however, religious imperial networks were guided by a very different logic in which imperial ‘others’ were potential or actual Christians, and thus fellow human beings entitled to dignity and rights.

Thus in these early years the relationship between missionaries and the colonial administration was often rather fraught, with missionaries frequently being imprisoned or expelled. While the colonialists sought to exploit the colonies for

14 Stanley, “Commerce,” 73.
their own benefit, the missionaries sought to improve them in a way that they believed would lead to mutual benefit.\textsuperscript{17} And while the colonialists saw local people as a source of cheap labor and as little more than commodities, missionaries saw them as potential or actual Christians and thus as fellow human beings entitled to dignity and rights.\textsuperscript{18} Andrew Porter, in his masterful study of the tensions and entanglements between missionaries and government officials in the British Empire, gives the example of the missionary, John Philip, who struggled with British imperial officials and white settlers in what is now South Africa, about the treatment of black workers. While the officials and settlers argued that the local people were fit only to work, Philip contended that they were humans and Christians and as such deserved rights. Philip took his pleas all the way back to Britain and to the British parliament, supported by the London Missionary Society and the influential Clapham Sect. At the center of this struggle, and indeed of many other similar struggles detailed by Porter, was the “debate about the meaning of “civilization” and especially the possibility of civilizing, or improving the conditions of, non-European peoples.”\textsuperscript{19}

So here we see the beginning of the divide between secular and religious, and governmental and non-governmental, ways of viewing the colonies and the purpose of European activities in them. Secular governments were interested in pursuing their own national interests, mainly expanding production for export, which we can see as an early precursor to the idea of “Development,” while religious non-governmental actors were seeking to bring about a genuine improvement in the lives of local peoples, which we can understand as the first glimmers of the idea of “development.”

\textbf{“Commerce and Christianity” as the Route to World Salvation}

In the 1830s Protestant ideas about how to “civilize” the heathen took on a new shape. Rather than just focus on medical care and literacy, alongside preaching

\paragraph*{Footnotes}

\textsuperscript{17} The “natives” in the colonies generally also had their own ideas about what was good for them, and there were of course long processes of negotiation between missionaries and local leaders and communities. For one of the best explorations of the clash between missionary and “native” worldviews, see Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, \textit{Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

\textsuperscript{18} Stamatov, “Activist Religion,” 615.

\textsuperscript{19} Porter, \textit{Religion Versus Empire?}, 92.
the gospel, a new idea emerged about the civilizing power of commerce. As David Livingstone put it: “we ought to encourage the Africans to cultivate for our markets as the most effectual means next to the Gospel for their elevation.”

The idea of “commerce and Christianity” initially emerged as a solution to two problems that troubled nineteenth century Protestants – how to abolish the transatlantic slave trade and how to “civilize” the heathens. The vision was most ably put forward by Quaker MP Thomas Fowell Buxton in his book, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy* (1840), which set out a plan to put an end to the slave trade by improving the situation in Africa, through developing its “vast, though as yet undeveloped, resources” and “enlightening its population.”

Let missionaries and schoolmasters, the plough and the spade, go together, and agriculture will flourish; the avenues to legitimate commerce will be opened; confidence between man and man will be inspired; whilst civilization will advance as the natural effect, and Christianity operate as the proximate cause of this happy change.

In this way it would prove more profitable, and more ethical, to keep Africans in Africa, where they would work the land and sell the resources to the British, rather than to sell them as slaves to work for the colonists in the Americas. And thus the slave trade could be replaced with a supposedly “legitimate trade,” not of slaves but of resources. At the same time new markets could be opened up for British goods through African consumption. Africa could be developed by a program “to encourage her commerce; to improve the cultivation of her soil; and to raise the morals, and the minds of her inhabitants.” At first, this seemed like a “win-win” situation, in which the interests of the imperialists could coincide with those of the missionaries, and in which benefits could be generated both for the metropole and for the local people living in the colonies. And infused with the Calvinist work ethic, many European Protestants at this time were delighted that their capitalist economic interests could indeed be fully in line with their Christian faith.

This type of program required a combination of entrepreneurial and missionary effort. And thus between the 1830s and the 1860s relations between col-

onialists and missionaries improved considerably. Colonialists began to see the missionaries’ “civilizing” or “developmental” work as rather useful, particularly their endeavors to promote literacy, to encourage a Calvinist ethic of hard work and to improve agricultural production. And so from the 1830s onwards missionaries, and their worldview, became co-opted into the colonial project. During this period the Protestant idea that the fundamental purpose of European empires was to improve the world – by bringing the people of Africa and Asia both social and economic progress and spiritual salvation, while at the same time encouraging a mutually beneficial trade between Europeans and the colonies – was effectively co-opted by the secular colonialists to legitimate their imperial activities. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards Protestant understandings of empire in terms of providence, progress, and civilizing mission became the established framework of European imperial discourse. Here we can see the beginnings of a pattern of rhetoric whereby discourses about social improvement or humanitarianism (be that “civilization” or “development”) are used to legitimate relations of extraction and exploitation.

The Late Nineteenth-Century Divergence between Missionaries and Colonialists

However, during the 1860s the alliance between commerce and Christianity gradually fell apart and the aims and interests of religious and secular actors began to diverge. For a variety of reasons many European countries shifted their colonial strategies away from “commerce and Christianity” towards improved secular governance of the colonies and the extraction of resources.

Nonetheless, the discourse of “civilizing mission” remained central to the European colonial project in this period. Even though colonial involvement in “civilizing” was markedly lower, the power of the discourse and the uses to which it could be put were becoming much clearer. For example, public support for British and German colonial interventions in East Africa could be aroused by contrasting the European approach of “civilizing Africa” with the Omani/Swahili


slave-traders who were characterized as “barbarian.” Using this rhetoric, German colonialists, for example, were able to secure parliamentary support for military action to quash the uprising against the German East Africa Company in 1888. And Hermann von Wissmann, who would later lead the German military conquest of the East African coast, enthusiastically supported the call for a Christian “crusade” against Arabs in inner Africa and publicly proclaimed his wish to “see freed the enslaved race [...] and to truly open Africa to the influence of our civilization.”²⁶ The rhetoric of “civilizing mission” provided the moral cover for European colonial exploitation and was fundamental in securing widespread European public support for this project.

At the same time, on the missionary side, Christian confidence in the redemptive function of commerce had begun to wane. They observed that engaging “the natives” in commerce often failed to support their spiritual development as Christians. Instead it seemed that many people were converting simply to gain improved access to trading possibilities and as a result the quality of their faith was poor and superficial. Therefore a growing body of Christian opinion in the later part of the nineteenth century began to repudiate the association with such material matters as commerce, and to reconceive of the missionary task as purely spiritual and focussed solely on evangelism.²⁷ Thus after the 1860s most of the classical missions disentangled themselves from commercial activities and returned to their earlier focus on spiritual conversion alongside basic humanitarian and developmental activities such as healthcare and education. For many of the classical missions at this time education and health came to be seen as lofty goals in their own right, and not just as a means to evangelism, as the missions began to see humanitarianism (another precursor term to “development”) as a central part of their work.

During this period, and despite the ongoing rhetoric of “civilizing mission,” most European governments did very little to develop or improve the colonies or the lives of those living there. Britain, for example, followed a policy of “colonial self-sufficiency,” whereby the colonies were required to finance their own economic development from the proceeds of sales of their export crops and whatever private international capital they could attract, and funding would not be sent from the metropole. The result was that very little government money was spent on economic development, and what was spent was used to finance endeavors which would be profitable for the colonialists, with little regard to their impact

²⁷ Brad Faught, “Missionaries,” 122; Brian Stanley, “‘Commerce and Christianity’,” 92.
on the local people or the local society. The Dutch approach was even more exploitative, particularly in colonial Indonesia, with a focus on state-directed, large-scale agricultural enterprise, which had little benefit for the local people.²⁸

Instead, at this time, it was the classical missionaries who were the main agents of both material and spiritual development across the colonial world. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, over 90% of Western education during the colonial period was provided by missionaries.²⁹ In this way missionaries were critical to the early spread of literacy and Western scientific thought and their efforts helped to create a modernizing African elite.³⁰

By the early twentieth century the classical mission societies had grown hugely in scale and resources and had established a professional bureaucracy and structure which would later be copied by most non-governmental development NGOs. Each missionary society employed large numbers of European and local staff and ran several institutions in the colonies. The CMS, for example, in 1906 had an annual income of £300,000, and was responsible for 975 missionaries and 8,850 “native agents,” 37 theological and training colleges, 92 boarding schools, 12 industrial institutions, 2,400 elementary schools, 40 hospitals, 73 dispensaries, 21 leprosaria, 6 homes for the blind, 18 orphanages, 6 other homes and refuges, and 17 presses or publishing houses.³¹

Each missionary society also maintained its own publishing arm and distributed a primary journal to keep its European supporters informed. Much of what the average European person knew about Africa or Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries came from reading the bulletins and periodicals of the missionary societies. The mission societies also hosted meetings and exhibitions that were designed to stimulate interest and to generate financial sup-

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³⁰ Several graduates of this missionary education later went on to become the first generation of African nationalist leaders. The mission background of many of the first generation of African leaders added a significant Christian content to the development programs they sought to implement after independence – Kenneth Kaunda's Presbyterian heritage shaped his brand of humanism for Zambia, and Canaan Banana, formerly a Methodist minister and then first president of Zimbabwe, developed an explicit theology of development. See David Maxwell, “Post-Colonial Christianity in Africa,” in World Christianities c. 1914-c. 2000, ed. Hugh McLeod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 401–422, 401, 414.
port. In this way, rather like contemporary non-governmental development NGOs, mission societies played an important role in providing information to the European public about the rest of the world as part and parcel of their fundraising activities.\textsuperscript{32} And, whilst promoting support for their mission work they, often unintentionally, also promoted public support for the imperial project, as by now the quite distinct notions of “Christian mission” and imperial “civilizing mission” had become almost totally conflated in European public discourse.

Early Twentieth-Century Rapprochement between Missionaries and Colonialists in the Pursuit of “Development”

Throughout the nineteenth century colonial “Development” had primarily been a matter of resource extraction from the colonies for the benefit of the metropole. The term “development” was mainly used in the context of the “development of resources.” Towards the end of the nineteenth century this began to change. The Dutch government developed an “Ethical Policy” which promoted social welfare projects to support what was coming to be known as “the development of the native peoples.”\textsuperscript{33} British colonial government officials began to talk about the “development of estates” or territories, meaning the development of the colony itself. Thus in a speech given on August 22, 1895, Britain’s new Secretary of State for the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, said:

I regard many of our Colonies as being in the condition of undeveloped estates, and estates which can never be developed without Imperial assistance […]. I shall be prepared to consider very carefully […] any case which may occur in which, by the judicious investment of British money, those estates which belong to the British Crown may be developed for the benefit of their population and for the benefit of the greater population which is outside.\textsuperscript{34}

This speech marked the beginning of a new approach to colonial development, or what I call “Development,” in two other ways. Firstly, it brought the idea that

\textsuperscript{32} Patrick Harries and David Maxwell, eds., \textit{The Spiritual in the Secular: Missionaries and Knowledge about Africa} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 1.

\textsuperscript{33} Moon, \textit{Technology and Ethical Idealism}, 1.

colonial development should be for the benefit of the local native population in the colony as well as for the benefit of the metropole. And secondly, it marked a break with previous policies of “colonial self-sufficiency,” and a move towards a new approach where the metropole would play an important part in financing the economic development of the colonies.

While this speech marked the beginning of the public recognition of a new principle of imperial responsibility for colonial development, it was only with the passing of the Colonial Development Act in 1929 that these ideas began to be formalized into a more consistent set of policy and practices. The Act established a fund for colonial development of between £750,000 and £1 million per annum, and most of this was spent on transport, communications, and infrastructure projects where labor requirements could be met through exporting British workers, thus easing British unemployment problems. There was however little real engagement with social change or improvement for the natives in the colonies. This, as we shall see, has remained a key aspect of “Development,” in contrast to “development.”

As conditions in the colonies failed to improve and as social unrest and calls for independence began to spread, colonial officials in many European countries realized that they needed to change their approach if they did not want to risk losing the colonies. Thus they decided to invest more seriously in developing the colonies for the benefits of the native population in order to calm unrest. This led to the British Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940, and the French *Fonds d’Investissements pour le Développement Économique et Sociale* (Investment Fund for Economic and Social Development) in 1946, which both allocated more serious financial resources and focussed on improving the living and working conditions of workers so that both their productivity and their standard of living would increase. These acts marked a shift from pre-war extractive colonial policy married to a legitimising discourse of “civilizing mission” to a more balanced approach combining economic development and welfare, with

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the aim that there would be benefit to both the colony and the metropole.⁳⁸ Science and technology, bureaucracy and large, state-led projects, often in the agriculture sector, were at the core of this new approach of colonial “Development.”

As imperial governments became more interested in the development of the colonies, missionaries from the classical mission societies were again foregrounding humanitarian, or “developmental,” activities as the core of mission. And so in the early decades of the twentieth century they again started to work closely with colonial administrations to carry out what was now coming to be called “D/development.” Adjusting to the new opportunities offered by changing colonial policies, they began to shift their activities from a narrow focus on education and health to work more broadly on developmental activities, such as agriculture and welfare, in order to receive the government grants that were now made available.³⁹

As the classical missionaries became more and more involved in D/development work, now mainly funded by European governments, they formulated their own concepts of “development,” based on the liberal incarnational theology and the social gospel. Ideas were discussed and exchanged at missionary conferences, including the large and formative Edinburgh Missionary Conference in 1910, and proliferated through all of the churches and organizations in the newly forming Ecumenical Movement, forming a reasonably coherent theory of “Christian development.”

In this alternative view, development was the holistic change of the “whole person,” body and soul, towards living a comfortable and meaningful “abundant life.” The role of the missionary was to mimic Christ’s example as a “servant” to the other in his ministry of care to the “whole person.” Most fundamentally, they believed in the combination of secular science and technology with Christian compassion and spirituality, or in their terms, “science in the hands of love,” which could lead to “wholeness.”⁴⁰ And fundamentally, they believed that conversion to Christianity was both the most important method and the central goal of development, because it brought about a change in worldview in the develop-

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³⁹ Similarly, Catholic missionaries began to receive funding from the French government’s Fund for Economic and Social Development to carry out development activities in their African colonies. Foster, African Catholic, 3.
ing person, thus leading to a sustained shift in actions and behaviors, which they claimed was far more important than small material improvements.⁴¹

With this alternative conceptualization of “development,” the classical missionaries criticized the colonial state and its large-scale, secular, technological “Development” projects. They argued that development needed to consider persons as well as forms of production. For people to develop, they argued, they needed to change their worldviews, their beliefs, and the structures of their communities. For example, in contrast to imperial “Development” policies, that sought to displace small scale hoe agriculture and replace it with large scale mechanized agriculture, British CMS missionaries instead developed a “theology of the soil” to guide their approach to agricultural development, in which religious conversion combined with small-scale technical inputs would lead to improvements in agricultural productivity and harmonious rural communities. The type of progress they promoted was to deliver greater crop yields in order to satisfy human need rather than to make profit and riches for the metropole.⁴²

So we can see that during this period the basic outlines of two very different approaches to “D/development” began to crystallise. On the one hand was large-scale, state-led, technology-driven “Development” projects whose aims were primarily to increase productivity and export to the metropole, with at best, perhaps some benefit to the local people; and on the other hand was small-scale, Christian, people-or community-centered “development” approaches which focussed almost entirely on improving the lives and livelihoods of local people. While both types of activities went under the name of “D/development,” they were fundamentally different in rationale, organization, and purpose. The conflation of the terms used to refer to these two very different activities led to much confusion, and the beginnings of much discussion and debate about the nature and purpose of “D/development,” both in policy circles and in broader European civil society.⁴³

⁴² Hughes, “‘Science in the Hands of Love’,” 832–833.
⁴³ Hodge, Triumph of the Expert.
The Post-War Fall of Empire and the Rise of “D/development”

After the Second World War, and particularly after 1956, European empires began to wane. While it would take another 20 years for most colonies to achieve independence, the direction of travel was becoming clear. And as the idea of empire as the best way to organize relations between Europe and the rest of the world began to decline, in its place arose the new idea of “international development.” President Truman's speech in 1949 widely publicized the notion of “international development” as the idea that the richer or “developed” countries would help the poorer or “under-developed” countries in the post-war and post-colonial era. As has been shown above, the roots of D/development thinking and practice extend much further back into history, but what Truman’s speech did was to launch the idea that “international development” would become the main reason for the ongoing involvement of Europe and North America in the economic matters of the former colonies. In effect, Truman co-opted the already-existing idea of D/development and used it to legitimate future post-colonial relations of extraction and exploitation, in a similar way to how the Christian idea of “civilizing mission” had been co-opted to legitimate earlier colonial relations of extraction and exploitation. And the fact that “D/development” itself was already a contested term, used by different actors to mean quite different things, made it a particularly suitable term, rich in rhetorical possibilities and social and moral valence.

And as in the nineteenth century, many people in the public and in civil society were taken in by this legitimating discourse. The new field of international development began to flourish. Even as large, state-led “Development” projects, such as the Sukumaland Development Scheme and the Tanganyika Groundnut Scheme, were funded by Western governments and implemented by the new governments of independent countries in Africa and Asia, a plethora of non-governmental organizations emerged to take forward the vision and practice of small-scale, people-centered “development.”

Throughout the 1950s, many voluntary humanitarian associations that had been established after the First World War to help war refugees, such as Save the Children and Plan International, began to re-orient themselves to focus on providing aid to the poor in the colonies and former colonies. Newer voluntary associations that had been established after the Second World War to provide relief to the war-wounded and to refugees in destroyed communities in Europe, such as Oxfam, Christian Aid, and War on Want, also began to shift their activities to providing aid to the poor in the newly decolonizing countries of Africa.
At the same time many explicitly Christian development NGOs formed alongside their secular peers, including Christian Aid, formed in the UK in 1942; Brot für die Welt, founded in Germany in 1959; Bread for All, established in Switzerland in 1961; and Inter-Church Organisation for Development Cooperation (ICCO), formed in the Netherlands in 1964, amongst many others.\footnote{Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (London: Zed Books, 1997), 70 – 79.}

Whereas “development” had been a fundamentally Christian idea and practice during the colonial era, in the post-colonial years it was self-consciously secularized. European society had become increasingly secular, and there was a marked decrease in support for efforts to convert people to faith. In secular public discourse the notion of “mission” was now reduced to “evangelism,” and was discredited and de-legitimized both due to its conversionary focus and due to its association with imperialism and colonialism. Instead, the notion of “development” took its place, as the moral concern for the wellbeing of far-away others, but now secularized and cleansed of any colonial or religious connotations. Thus what had been “Christian development” was subtly transformed into secular “development.”

However, the secularization of “development” was far less clear in practice than it was in discourse. Most development NGOs, whether secular or Christian, in effect worked in similar ways, building on the approaches of the classical missionaries before them. In fact, most of the organizations that were working on the ground overseas continued to be the classical missionaries. And virtually all of the NGOs, whether supposedly secular or Christian, initially operated by raising funds in Europe and then making grants to missionaries overseas to do small-scale development work.\footnote{Maggie Black, *A Cause for Our Time: Oxfam, The First 50 Years* (Oxford: Oxfam Publishing, 1992); Mark Luetchford and Peter Burns, *Waging the War on Want: 50 Years of Campaigning Against World Poverty* (London: War on Want, 2003); Firoze Manji, “The Missionary Position: NGOs and Development in Africa,” *International Affairs* 78, no. 3 (2002): 567–584.} In response, many of the classical missionaries re-positioned themselves as providers of secular development services and began to downplay their religious nature in order to conform to newly emerging

\footnote{Major Catholic development NGOs also formed at this time, including Caritas Internationalis, established in 1951 and now a network of over 160 Catholic relief and development organizations focussing mainly on humanitarian aid, and CIDSE (Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité), founded in 1967 to coordinate the development priorities identified by the Second Vatican Council, which today has 16 member organizations in Europe (and a further two in America), including Trocaire in Ireland, Misereor in Germany, Fastenopfer in Switzerland, CAFOD in the UK, Cordaid in the Netherlands, and Manos Unidas in Spain.}
mainstream development paradigms.⁴⁷ They began to place less emphasis on spiritual matters and more on material matters. Most classical mission societies either set up new departments for relief and development or transformed entirely into secular development NGOs (or shut down entirely).⁴⁸ Thus by the 1960s many of the classical mission societies had been subsumed into the development sector, and the spiritual or evangelistic aspect of “Christian development” had been firmly excised from the new secular “development.”⁴⁹

By the 1960s colonial empire had almost completely given way and a host of new countries had gained independence. The concept of “international development” had indeed taken hold as the central discourse through which relations between richer and poorer countries, now framed as “developed” and the “developing” countries, was articulated. And of course, in the context of the burgeoning Cold War, the new discourse of D/development, and to some extent its practice, sought to encourage the newly independent post-colonial states to retain relations with their former colonial rulers rather than to develop new relations with the communist Soviet Union. The Western governments continued to push forward the idea of Development, and now the governments of the post-colonial states in Africa and Asia also began to call for assistance with D/development. The multiple meanings of the term meant that many people used it to refer to very different things, varying from activities that sought political and economic benefits for Western states (e.g., through access to natural resources and the inclusion of the former colonies in the Western geo-political bloc), activities that aimed for economic benefits to African and Asian states (e.g., funding and technology transfer for large-scale energy and infrastructure projects), and activities that attempted to lead to the improvements of the lives and livelihoods of poor people in communities in Africa and Asia (e.g., small-scale projects using appropriate technology in local communities). This multiplicity of meanings, often in tension if not outright opposition with each other, led to “D/development” becoming both a very widely used term and also an extremely imprecise and cloudy one.

In 1960 the United Nations launched the Decade of Development and many European governments, and the newly emerging European Economic Community, set about putting new “development infrastructures” in place, often at the behest of the United States. In the coming decades they set up Development programs for a variety of reasons, according to their domestic concerns and geopolitical interests.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, by the late 1970s and early 1980s local development NGOs had started to form in big numbers in countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, staffed primarily by local people rather than expatriate Europeans, and without links to earlier missionary organizations. At this point most of the major European development NGOs stopped making grants to missionaries and started instead to work in partnership with these local development NGOs. The Christian origins of “development” were largely forgotten, or swept under the carpet, as development NGOs were hailed in the 1980s as a “magic bullet” to solve the problems of the under-developed countries in a modern, efficient, and highly technical manner.

But only twenty years later, in the early 2000s, in the context of the “global resurgence of religion” and talk of the “post-secular society,”⁵¹ interest in religion began again to appear in the mainstream development field. Many in the NGO “development” field were becoming frustrated that even small-scale development projects often did not work and were beginning to come to the realization that culture, values, and beliefs played an important role in shaping people’s actions and thus their social and economic behaviors.⁵² At the same time Western governments were pushed into thinking about the ongoing relevance of religion in the world after the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York and the subsequent “war on terror.” Thus practitioners of both “development” and “Development” began to consider the role of religion and religious organizations in D/development.

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⁵² Freeman, “The Pentecostal Ethic.”
In 2001 the Faith Based and Community Initiatives Act was passed in the US, which enabled faith-based organizations to apply for funding for overseas relief and development work, leading to a huge increase in the number of evangelical Christian development NGOs receiving US government money to carry out international development. Governments in the UK, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden, as well as the World Bank, also started to increase their funding to mainly Christian faith-based organizations. By the mid-2000s the term “faith-based organization,” along with the acronym “FBO,” had emerged and become widely used in development circles and FBOs had become recognized as significant players in the development sector.

But as is by now a recurring theme in the history of D/development, practitioners of “Development” and “development” had contrasting ideas about the role of religion in D/development. For most government actors and funders, the main interest was in using local, national, and transnational religious networks as a means to get a fundamentally secular and Western developmental message down to local communities, so that the messages would reach even remote villages and would be presented by trusted local religious leaders.

For many Christian NGOs, on the other hand, considering the role of religion in development meant bringing (back) questions of faith and meaning into the project of social and personal change and improvement. Several leading Christian FBOs, particularly those coming from the evangelical wing of the Protestant church, such as Tearfund and World Vision, began to re-consider the Christian basis of “development” and to (re)-formulate ideas of “Christian development.” Going by various names, such as “integral mission” or “transformational development,” these new approaches sought to put Christianity back into development, to (re)-combine material change with spiritual change, or “development”

55 Ben Jones and Marie Juul Petersen, “Instrumental, Narrow, Normative?”.
with “evangelism,” in order to (re)-create a model of holistic change that would transform the whole person, body and soul.56 As such they effectively re-created something very similar to the original model of “Christian development” formulated by the classical missionaries in the 1940s and 1950s, and out of which secular “development” later emerged.

Conclusion

This overview of the histories of “Development,” “development,” and “Christian development” has shown the entanglements, interactions, and confusions between these overlapping but contrasting projects. It has made three core arguments.

Firstly, it has shown that the very idea of a coordinated project of global improvement – what we now call “development” – first emerged as a nineteenth-century Christian response to the ills of industrial capitalism and empire. Its first agents, or practitioners, were Protestant missionaries, who sought to develop people, rather than resources, through the twin activities of education and evangelism, in order to bring about what they called “civilization.” In the early to mid-twentieth-century the Protestant missionaries expanded their approach into a more coherent and multi-faceted approach to transform the whole person, body, and soul, which they called “development,” and we can term “Christian development.” And then later, after the end of European empires, secular development NGOs secularized “Christian development” into “development,” by removing the elements of faith and evangelism, and took over the structural position of the missionaries in the world system. And most recently, there has been a turn (back) to religion, with Christian FBOs (re)-formulating an explicitly faith-based form of “Christian development.”

Secondly, it has argued that the nineteenth-century Christian idea of coordinated global improvement, as a moral project, has been repeatedly appropriated by Western governments as a smokescreen to legitimate their trade and business activities in other parts of the world. This happened first in the appropriation of the idea of “civilizing mission” by colonial governments to legitimate the imperial project, and later in the appropriation of the idea of “development” to legitimize ongoing relations of domination and exploitation in the post-colonial pe-

period, in the project of “Development.” Rather than offering a brave new approach to dealing with the injustices of the world, post-World War Two ideas about “Development” can instead be seen as a re-working and re-positioning of earlier ideas about empire, resource extraction, and Christian social improvement.

And thirdly, it has argued that the multiplicity of meanings given to the term “D/development” make it a remarkably effective, and confusing, rhetorical construct that can, and has been, used and mis-used to a variety of different ends, throughout its relatively short history. Bringing this rhetorical confusion into focus, and highlighting the history of its different meanings, is important for those who still believe in the moral validity of the development project but feel frustrated with the realities of contemporary Development.