

The Role of Christianity in Holistic Community Transformation

Abel Bavakure Jumbe
Email: abeljumbe@gmail.com

Abstract

Christianity has a holistic mandate to transform lives and communities. This mandate is based on the Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20) and Jesus' charge to his disciples to be the light of the world (Matt 5:14–15). The various communities around the world, especially in the majority of the world, are still vulnerable in terms of life conditions, hunger, wars, and conflicts. The paper assessed the role of the Christians/ churches in holistically transforming lives and societies. The methodology used was qualitative, employing secondary data, observation, and interviews. The holistic approach includes the spiritual, social, and physical dimensions. The article argues that transformation hinges on promoting Christian belief, fighting against poverty, and promoting socio-economic and conflict resolution in the communities. The paper concludes that this holistic transformation is vital to the well-being and existence of people in the communities.

Keywords: Christianity and Community; Holistic Transformation; Great Commission; Faith-Based Organizations.

Introduction

Christianity is based on the belief in God and the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Bible. It is a worldwide religion professed and expressed by people of different cultures, customs, and traditions. As instructed in the Great Commission, the gospel should be spread to the ends of the earth to transform lives and communities. The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) affirms that the church community, as an assembly of people called out to belong to Christ, must be transformed as the whole community (WEA Theological Commission, 2009). This church community's exemplary leadership and management require leadership based on scriptural principles and not popular trends. The best



leaders of the church community have to lead with a vision emphasizing an integral mission of the church. Such leaders get an idea (hopefully through interaction with God) to share the good news that touches the soul and rescues vulnerable communities. Christianity must integrate deep theological convictions with the practical work of helping the community. In Luke 4, Jesus declares that He is the prophesied anointed One who will bring "good news to the poor," "liberty to the captives," and "oppressed," and to heal "the blind." How does the church carry out its mission to the poor today? This paper reviews the contribution of Christianity to the holistic transformation of communities. This contribution includes the biblical mandate for Christianity to fulfil the church's mission of holistic transformation of God's people.

Background of World Christianity and Community Transformation

Today, much emphasis is placed on the role of the church as a transformation and change agent (Jerry, 2017). Local churches begin a lifelong journey when they embrace and commit to partnering in God's mission to restore all four dimensions of human beings: spiritual, psychological, social, and material. This journey empowers Christians to change mindsets and brings about whole-life change in the congregation and the communities. When churches respond holistically to their local community's needs, people are lifted out of poverty and lives are transformed. Christianity uses holistic development in the process of transforming communities.

Holistic Development

Simply put, holistic development is a development that considers the social, emotional, physical, mental, and intellectual growth of a human being(Education, 2022). Regarding the faith-based concept of holistic development in communities, the role of faith in the development discourse remains relatively unexplored. Yet, it potentially plays a crucial part in spurring sustainable development. Marshall (2005) points out that faith-based organizations and development agencies across the globe have been identified as sharing a concern for dealing with the issue of poverty and social justice and being proactive in the global struggle for social, political, and economic change. In Africa, religion has played an active role in promoting and encouraging positive change in human society. According to Erasmus (2005), African leaders understand and promote the role of religion in social



transformation. Religious organizations are a potent force for social change, as they unify people's beliefs with their actions, ideas, and social lives. A religious idea forms the content and shapes the perception of what people do.

Furthermore, religious leaders have also been a significant source of motivation and direction for their followers to action, while religious groups also serve as forces of change (Erasmus, 2005). Erasmus affirms that the Faith Dialogue initiative started smoothly and is a potential strategy for enhancing the development network in a vast arena. However, it encountered serious opposition and objections in that religion was seen as contributing to conflicts and civil tensions. Many religions were seen to be opposed to modernization and social change. However, a literature review shows that, for many scholars, a spiritual approach is a prerequisite for sustainable development. According to Wallace, Myers, and Holley (2004), empowerment is one of the most critical roles of faith-based organizations in the communities where they offer services.

Faith-based development agencies focus on empowering and developing the assets of individuals, faith-based organizations, and neighbourhoods to solve their problems and achieve the desired outcomes rather than emphasizing people's needs and deficiencies. For example, Wallace et al. (2004) outline several levels. First, at the individual level, faith-based organizations connect people with God and others, provide them with opportunities to grow intellectually and spiritually, and help them identify and use their gifts and skills. Second, faith-based organizations level: They help members identify and nurture their skills and talents and provide opportunities to use them to strengthen and influence the organization. Third, at the neighbourhood level, faith-based organizations ensure that empowered individuals and organizations work together to influence their social environment and improve the quality of their collective lives. They build relationships between religious organizations and other actors in the community (e.g., law enforcement, schools, and businesses), develop formal linkages across sectors, and collaborate to address issues of common concern.

Concerning this example, Erasmus (2005) outlines some vital contributions of religion to social transformation. That is, religion is embedded in change processes and these processes, religion is active, not passive. Religion has been one of the most important motivations for change because it unites people's beliefs, actions, ideas, and social lives.



Erasmus (2005) explains various ways religious organizations contribute to social change, namely through religious ideas, religious leadership and religious groups. Religious ideas form the content of what people do and shape perceptions of their interest in what they do. Christianity, for example, maintains that their fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Similarly, religious symbols are essential in presenting their image of future change. Religious leaders have the skills and ability to initiate the desired change, motivate followers to action, and direct their actions to larger movements for change.

In the same way, big and small religious groups are potential forces for social change (Erasmus, 2005). Thus, religious institutions are better positioned and are relevant in social policy debate and advancing people-centred ideas and values (Swart, 2012). The religious sector has the following qualities that enhance development: they have proven to be closest to the people in need; they have the best development networks, especially in areas where the infrastructure is weak; and they provide the most effective network at the most affordable cost (Swart, 2012). For example, religious communities and their networks play an essential role in forming social values such as honesty, compassion, and solidarity with the weak and poor. They are also effective in dealing with symptoms of moral crises such as family violence, drug rehabilitation, and so on (Swart, 2012).

In line with this claim, Erasmus (2012) points out that religion's role in general has unique values regarding caring for and sharing with vulnerable people. That is, religious organizations have been functioning well, particularly in terms of social cohesion and in influencing the well-being of the communities. Erasmus (2012) adds that religious organizations have been identified as proactive in mobilizing resources for poverty alleviation. They are involved not only in the spiritual but also in the social dimension of human needs. Swart (2012) states that the religious sector, in partnership with other social welfare and development sectors, is vital in promoting development. Swart (2012) also claims that development terms, networks and partnerships of collective effort and mutual responsibility are ways to solve the problems of poverty and other social ills. Therefore, the religious sector must be acknowledged by other sectors as an indispensable partner in meeting the challenges of social development (Swart, 2012).

In the same way, Tsele (2001) reveals that it has been argued among economists, cultural anthropologists and sociologists that any measurement and definition of poverty that



does not include the religious dimension is inadequate. This is because no matter how materially wealthy a country may be, progress cannot pass the test of development without the dimension of religious experience and values (Tsele, 2001). Furthermore, religion helps people be aware that they should be accountable in their dealings with one another and to the one they believe in. In religious teaching and principles, people are reminded of good deeds and their benefits, as well as evil deeds and their rewards.

Besides, and linked to the above, Myers (2011) and Marshal (2005) point out that faith leaders and institutions have unique gifts and tools useful for effective development. First, there is presence and trust: Faith-based institutions have done well in providing social services and creating job opportunities. Their leaders and institutions are trusted by poor communities more than most other types of institutions across the world. Second, Active Engagement in Development: Faith communities are active in improving spiritual and social services and development, such as health care, education, water supply, environmental protection, and economic development. They are also deeply involved in providing counselling, caring for the sick and orphans, burying the dead, and advising survivors. Third, Conflict resolution, prevention, and humanitarian support: Faith-based institutions are proactive, strong, surviving institutions that can support and help people affected by human or natural disasters. They run schools and hospitals and help to rebuild damage in the affected area. Their voice, consolation and moral leadership are essential tools in healing wounds. Fourth, Ethics and values role: Faith-based institutions and leaders often stand as courageous leaders who speak truth to power, fight against corruption, and confront social justice, as well as the oppression of women and other excluded groups. Faith leaders' support, voice, and leadership are vital for effective and sustainable development. Fifth, Global support for development agenda: Faith-based institutions have unique leadership qualities and communication skills and are committed to fighting poverty. Engaging faith institutions in the planning and implementing development goals such as sustainable development goals will go a long way.

The above descriptions show that faith institutions, besides providing spiritual empowerment, are connected to helping people formulate and utilize processes directed towards achieving objectives that they regard as beneficial. To this end, Erasmus (2005) questions whether Christianity has the potential to influence social transformation. Research



reveals that the Christian religion is essential in influencing social change. Tsele (2001) points out that most Christians in Africa are products of missionary activities. They incorporated various development activities, such as education, health care, and agriculture, that contributed to the well-being of various communities.

Given this, Tsele (2001) challenges the church to be aware that they are not the only, nor are they the best, social service providers. The church must bring something substantive to prove that a different motive drives its commitment. His challenge went further by stating that it is only by reintroducing faith-inspired motives in development, which seek to restore the dignity of our work and which in turn make people subjects in their human restoration project, that the church's development enterprise can be authentic (Tsele, 2001). This is strengthened by the fact that religious institutions are not seen as survival-oriented but as transforming institutions (Narayan, 2001). It means that the Christian approach to development entails a passionate involvement in the objects of development, turning them into subjects of their own lives (Kwasi, 2022)

Methodology

This qualitative paper used secondary data collection methods to evaluate how Christianity transforms communities. In the literature review, the present study utilized several resources to explore the perspectives of other scholars regarding the role of Christianity in Community transformation. The literature review conducted in this research was premised on the notion that knowledge is cumulative, and researchers can draw on and build upon the work of others. To this end, the documentation examined was used to collate, synthesize, and analyze data to construct an argument regarding the current knowledge of the research topic. This approach is founded on the belief that scientific research is a collective endeavour, with researchers contributing to and sharing the outcomes of their work.

Discussion

As Heist and Ram Cnaan note, FBOs are often suspected of using development in local churches and adding new members (Heist & Cnaan, 2016). Development is thus not employed as a disguise for evangelization. Rather, a concern for development often arises from their understanding of Christian responsibility and love of their neighbour. Regarding the issue of FBOs and proselytization, Heist and Cnaan also point to the fact that not only



FBOs but "all organizations aim to transform the way developing countries think and operate." Nevertheless, they add that most FBOs focus on providing developmental services rather than proselytization. Neither of them discusses local churches in developing countries and their role in development, which is the focus. In the first step, we will examine similarities and differences between those three different Christian players and their understanding of development. Special attention will be given to how they relate to developmental norms presented by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In this context, let us look at the developmental endeavours of the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda, known commonly as "*Eglise Presbyterienne au Rwanda (EPR)*" The EPR's beginnings date back to 1907 when German missionaries from the Bethel Mission came to Rwanda. In 1959, the church became independent and took on its current name. Today, EPR has about 300,000 members. With 50,000 new members in the past five years alone, the EPR belong to the fastest-growing Christian denomination in Rwanda. The steady increase in membership is because of its current focus on evangelism and church growth. The EPR's Vision is to "build a strong church whose Christians are spiritually mature, able to testify to God's Kingdom in the world and whose Social environment is fully bloomed" (*Eglise Presbyterienne au Rwanda (EPR)*).

To achieve this vision, it views itself under a twofold mission, evangelization and development: "To evangelize by proclaiming the love and salvation offered by God through His Son Jesus Christ ... and to manifest the love of God through the concrete action of human and social development" (*Eglise Presbyterienne au Rwanda (EPR)*). Today, the mission of "social development" is church oriented and based on the development of families. The development concept of the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda stipulates that the process of development has to be holistic in terms of addressing all dimensions of life (spiritual, social, economic, intellectual, cultural and ecological) at all levels of the church (individuals, families, grassroots churches, chapels, parishes, presbyteries and the national level of EPR) in a bottom-up approach (from the grassroots to the top level). It is believed that if individuals and families are strong, the church will also be strong (*Eglise Presbyterienne au Rwanda, 2015*).

With the long-term goal of developing the church in mind, the Presbyterian Church engages in various developmental projects that take up different development norms put



forward by the SDGs, as the following examples show. 10 SDG goals 3 ("Good health and well-being") and SDG 4 ("quality education") are taken up by the church's engagement in several cooperations with both other religious and secular partners. In a specific kind of public-private partnership with the Rwandan state, the Presbyterian Church manages more than 100 schools, two hospitals and seven health centres. While the church is responsible for the buildings, infrastructure, and necessary materials, the government pays for the teachers and the medical staff. Furthermore, in cooperation with international religious NGOs, the Presbyterian Church has built a care centre for more than 100 homeless boys in Kigali, providing food, care and education. Secularly, this can be linked to SDG 1 ('no poverty'), SDG 2 ('zero hunger'), and SDG 3 and 4. Concerning ministry promotion through the training of women to become pastors and church leaders, the Presbyterian Church promotes gender equality (SDG 5) in predominantly patriarchal culture as they also teach care of the environment as God's creation (SDG 6 "clean water and sanitation" and SDG 13 "climate action").

To sum up, EPR is engaged in various development efforts that link to different SDGs. Their faith dimension is visible in their holistic development concept, characterized by an ecclesiological dimension. The ultimate goal of developmental endeavours is thus the development of the church.

In addition, the study looked at the Anglican Church's understanding of community transformation. With about 1 million members, the Anglican Church has become a significant player in Rwanda's civil society. The Anglican Church has its roots in the former Rwanda Mission, which established its first station in 1925 (Anglican Communion Rwanda, 2021). The Anglican Church and the EPR exemplify a specific type of FBO. While it is an FBO in its own right, it is at the same time part of a larger international network of churches and mission organizations, the German-based FBO United Evangelical Mission (UEM). As a member of the larger FBO body UEM, the EPR and the Anglican Church thus profile from personnel exchanges and financial aid through UEM partner churches.

The research findings also found that many faith-based international NGOs have the advantage of local congregations that they can mobilize in their development and welfare services. Having supporting allies on the ground is a strategic advantage that many secular NGOs lack. Developmental endeavours by the Anglican Church have been channelled in the



rural Development inter-diocesan service (RDIS) with its vision of "a holy soul in a healthy body' with a focus on the person as a whole" (Kabango, 2021). The aim is, according to RDIS's former leader John Wesley Kabango, to work for the "development of the poorest of the poor" through the project that aims at building livelihoods in poor areas through occupational training in areas such as animal husbandry, food production, micro-enterprise Development, fisheries, beekeeping, and tree nurseries.

Similar to the EPR, Development for the Anglican church is sent in a church context: "It is our conviction that the church holds the key to the real development of the community life in Rwanda and that God is longing to use its ministry to transform the physical, spiritual and social lives of ordinary people and the environment in which they live." By referring to the physical, spiritual and social dimensions, the Anglican Church displays a holistic understanding of development. It clearly distinguishes "Christian development" from other kinds of development. Christian Development does not mean organizations, buildings or projects, but building up mature Christians and teaching them skills to improve the quality of their lives and communities." This concern takes different shapes, including building homes for the homeless, contributing to medical bills, providing food for the vulnerable, sharing seeds, and increasing participation in church activities. With a Christian outlook perceptible in its holistic understanding of development, the RDIS displays various projects aimed at the "development of the poorest of the poor."

The Biblical Mandate

Considering the Great Commission of the church found in Matthew 28:18-20, Christianity must refer to the mission given by Jesus Christ in Matthew 5:13-14: 13: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.' 14 "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden..." Isaiah's prophecy to Jesus Christ in Luke 4:18 said: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind and to release the oppressed" (NIV). These two passages show that Christians are called to transform the community in different aspects by living and promoting an integral mission in society, developing the church and individual Christians where the



Good News of Jesus Christ embraces the whole man and furthers the spiritual and socio-economic development of believers. According to Tadeusz Jarosz, the church is also the agent of development; this research needs to provide input to developing a holistic ministry in the communities (Tadeusz, 2013).

Church Community

Christianity and its role in community transformation, the church community is also called the light of the world. In addition, the developed church community has different aspects, and its light must shine in the surrounding community and worldwide. To understand this, Williams defines the word "church" as rendered in the New Testament as comes from the Greek term *ekklesia*, which is formed from two Greek words meaning "an assembly" and "to call out" or "called out ones." (Williams, 2014) The church is a body of believers who have been called out from the world by God to live as his people under the authority of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:22–23). In this regard, gender must be considered in the struggle to transform the community (Kalu, 1998). The Christians are indorsed to accentuate the holistic meaning of the gospel of salvation, and as a result, the church proclaims that the gospel message intends to change not only people's lives but also their relationships; it changes structures, and it intends to change the world (Koegelenberg, 1992). Furthermore, (Bloesch argues that the church's mandate is a worshipping and nurturing community (Bloesch, 2002). To take a reference to the mission work done by the Rhenish Mission Society in South Africa, the writer. Strassberger wrote that it was directly motivated by the commission Christ gave his disciples in Matthew 28:19, 20, which included the economic development of the recipients (Strassberger, 2012).

The church is a teacher and a mother, and at the same time, the church is charged to be a witness and channel of God's grace. In its prophetic task, the church proclaims the kingdom's saving message, summoning all to repent, believe the gospel, and become partakers of eternal life (Bloesch, 1977). Indeed, in its priestly task by word and action, the church proclaims God's love and reconciliation between man and fellow man. In its kingly task, the church proclaims the demand for sanctifying our lives and for God's justice, which must and will triumph over all injustice and evil powers as the meaning of transformation. The church should take development seriously because development is ultimately about a new vision for society and the experience of a full life that God is giving (Koegelenberg,



2002). To do so, World Christianity adopted liberation theology to transform the communities.

Liberation Theology and Community Transformation

While theology, in general, is the study of religious texts and doctrines, liberation theology is defined as a theological current integrated by Catholic and Protestant branches that deal with the vital matters of marginalized populations needing social, political, or economic equality and justice (Alston, 2023). The essence of liberation theology consists in an interpretation of Christian salvation that retains its transcendent eschatological content and draws out its historical dimensions and their implications for personal life, the social sphere and the public action of the church. Boesak argues that part of the church's mandate is to seek justice for the victims, to seek liberation for the oppressed, to seek reconciliation as her Lord has done, and to be involved in works of mercy (Boesak, 1977). The primary mandate and obligation of the church is to be there for the poor and marginalized in society, as Jesus taught us: "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me"(Matt 25:45). In short and precise words, justice and dignity for the poor remain the yardstick for any system, and the church has to act according to God's will and Jesus' example in how to bring about justice and dignity for God's creation and within human society. Sharing in God's mission is an outworking of the commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves and be good stewards of the whole of creation (Croft, 1987).

A Basis for Liberation Theology and the Christian Community

De Vries draws our attention to the Bible through Gutierrez, the Peruvian priest, when he states that God manifested Godself as the defender of the weak in the place of the powerful, upholding human worth and choosing for the poor and exploited (De Vries, 2007). The term liberation theology given to Clarke came from Gustavo Gutierrez's (1973). The Theology of Liberation is a theological description that explains the understanding of economic development and the practical impact this may have on the lives of the poor with whom it engages (Clarke, 2011). The consequences of liberation theology for economic development, according to De Vries, were that it drew attention to the unjust effects of certain economic regimes, exposed structural deficiencies of industry and agriculture, and exposed the belief that raw material-producing countries remain poor while the industrialized countries enrich



themselves. This view of De Vries implies that the church's role in this context is to empower those who suffer from these economic injustices into new self-worth and self-respect, which is essential for a genuine new economic beginning.

For McKee, the church, from a diaconal view, should emphasize preventive action and be concerned about justice and its members (McKee, 1989). Writing from the perspective of those oppressed by poverty and sexism, Elsa Tamez draws our attention to the biblical message of freedom from oppression. According to Tamez, the principal motive for oppression is the eagerness to pile up wealth, while the Bible's message is one of love and liberation (Tamez, 1983). The poor help us discover the conflict in our society based on class, race, culture, and gender as the church moves into the world of the poor, the outcast, the exploited, and the needy (Boff, 1993). Boesak and August view the involvement of the church in the liberation struggle as inevitable, based on their conviction that the God of the Bible is the God of liberation rather than oppression, a God of justice rather than injustice, a God of freedom and humanity rather than enslavement and subservience, a God of love, righteousness, and brotherhood rather than hatred, self-interest, and exploitation (Boesak & Augustin, 2010).

The oppressed are given Tamez, the impoverished, the slaves, the day labourers, the widows, the resident aliens, and orphans who lack both social standing and power. August believes that the community of followers of Jesus Christ is bound by God's all-encompassing dedication and commandment towards those mentioned by Tamez and towards addressing their needs through their identification with God. De Vries notes that people like Gustavo Gutierrez and Leonardo Boff preached the gospel of Christ while working with the poor. They found a rich source of encouragement in the Bible to strengthen the downtrodden and lift them to a position of greater dignity and productivity. For the Brazilian theologian Boff, his liberation theological perspective on the church's role helped him to understand what part of the church's mission is and what kind of development the society would need as a result of this understanding Boff.

Given practical theology, the scholar Ignatius Swart's ultimate image of the church is that of a church in, through, and around which a comprehensive mix of initiatives for enduring spiritual, economic, and social renewal will develop (Swart, 2004). These liberation theologians in the Latin American context understood the Christians' role in setting their



parishioners free from oppression and an unproductive tradition by giving them a new insight into the Bible. Seeking the just rights of any person being mistreated is a way of honouring God as this, according to Calvin, as viewed by McKee, demonstrates love for the neighbour. Critics of liberation theology argue that this approach does not use biblical approaches to transform communities holistically. The paper reviewed how holistic community transformation touches on spiritual, social, physical, and psychological aspects.

The Agenda that Liberation Theology Gives to the World Christianity

Liberation theology set in motion a reformation in the late twentieth century, argues De Vries, that supplied the church with a biblical view to make a preferential option for the poor and give full respect to fundamental human rights, including the right to employment and food. The action that liberation theology seeks to undertake, as viewed by Clarke, has the grand aim of changing the world as it seeks to attain new social goals based on Scripture with six primary perspectives that shape its approach, namely:

First, the oppressed and the poor are the starting point for all action and reflection; Second, the person from whom liberation theology exists is the nonperson," the poor for whom existing structures deprive them of living full human lives." Third, Its analytical tools derive predominantly from the social sciences rather than traditional theology. Fourth, It utilizes Marxist "reliability as conflict" to shape its analysis issues. Fifth, praxis is the first act; Seventh, Theological consideration must (and can only) follow praxis (Clarke, 2011).

For the church, solidarity with the poor or the world never means conformity. As Heyns rightly states, the church does not stand outside the world, and so, in a sense, the world provides the agenda for the church. Precisely, this understanding of the role of the church in the world by liberation theologians and the view that Heyns has brought him to the point where he attached the role of the church to be one that cannot pass issues like wealth and poverty, integration and segregation, discrimination, pollution of nature, strikes and inflation, natural catastrophes like drought and floods without the church making comments about it in terms of Scripture (Heyns, 1980). Liberation theology, which Boesak prefer to refer to as Black theology, calls on the church to bring the gospel as a relevant message to people who have lost their self-respect, are denied human dignity, and are trying to come to grips with the dehumanizing facets in life.



Conclusion

To sum up, this paper reviewed the role of Christianity in community transformation. It demonstrated the reason Christians are the ones to be involved in the better lives of their communities and the communities surrounding them. This is because the church is the agent of transformation and change. The paper showed that faith-based uses holistic development in the transformation process. It showed that Faith-based development agencies focus on empowering and developing the assets of individuals, faith-based organizations, and neighbourhoods to solve their various problems and achieve the desired outcomes rather than emphasizing people's needs and deficiencies. The paper found out the role of the Presbyterian Church and Anglican church in transforming communities and their approaches to transformation. At this level, the paper clarified that the Scripture and the scholars' perspective ask Christianity to set an agenda of transforming people in all dimensions of their lives wherever they are and explicitly fighting against poverty in the community as the light of the world. The paper also reviewed the model of Christians who have already set their way of transforming their community in both the spiritual and physical aspects of their communities.

As the light of the world, their transformation must be extended to other vulnerable communities. The paper took liberation theology as an example of theology to transform communities as a theological current integrated by Catholic and Protestant branches that deal with the vital matters of marginalized populations needing social, political, or economic equality and justice (Alston, 2023). It showed that the essence of liberation theology consists in an interpretation of Christian salvation that retains its transcendent eschatological content and draws out its historical dimensions and implications for personal life, the social sphere, and the public action of the church. The paper appreciated the theology of liberation as a theological description to explain the understanding of economic development and the practical impact this may have on the lives of the poor with whom it engages (Clarke, 2011).

The consequences of liberation theology for economic development, according to De Vries, were that it drew attention to the unjust effects of certain economic regimes, exposed structural deficiencies of industry and agriculture, and exposed the belief that raw material-producing countries remain poor while the industrialized countries enrich themselves. This view of De Vries implies that the church's role in this context is to empower those who suffer



from these economic injustices into new self-worth and self-respect, which is essential for a genuine new economic beginning. It set the agenda that liberation theology gives to the World of Christianity, which is helpful in community transformation.

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