

# BEHOLDEN

*Religion, Global Health,  
and Human Rights*

SUSAN R. HOLMAN

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## CONTENTS

1. Introduction: Toward a Vision of the Ought	1
2. Pilgrimage: From “Glocality” to Global Health	25
3. Private Lens, Public Health: A Reluctant Physician in Nineteenth-Century America	45
4. From Matthew 25 to Article 25: Why ESC Rights Matter	83
5. Between Cape Town and Memphis: Religious Health Assets	125
6. Don’t Teach Me to Fish: What’s Wrong with Gift-Charity?	163
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	195
<i>Notes</i>	199
<i>Select Bibliography and Suggestions for Further Reading</i>	261
<i>Index</i>	287



## DON'T TEACH ME TO FISH

### *What's Wrong with Gift-Charity?*

IN JANUARY 2010, a few days after the earthquake that destroyed much of Haiti, a “Democracy Now!” news video caught on film a missionary-sponsored helicopter dropping loaves of bread from the air onto the grieving Haitian community in the town of Léogâne. The helicopter had in fact been on the ground a few minutes earlier, then took off and rose to hover several hundred feet above the rubble purposely for the bread “distribution.” The aerial donation was completely impersonal, its plastic-encased food raining down as if from a visiting spaceship from another planet.

The Haitian community responded to the bread drop with outrage. As one young man told reporters, “They should have given [it] to the responsible on the ground to distribute to the rest of the people here, and not when they go back up in the air, throw the bread out like they were throwing bones to dogs.”<sup>1</sup> Léogâne’s mayor, Santos Alexis, sitting in the backyard of the local police station amidst the stench of rotting corpses trapped under the rubble around him, identified the helicopter with an American institution, “you know, a church.” He told reporters that the weirdly impersonal donation made his now-homeless constituency “feel humiliated . . . very embarrassed.”<sup>2</sup> The event amused and shocked the press, which, with the local community, pointed to it as an example of everything that is wrong in religious”

attempts at social relief. Instead of mutual respect and intentional conversation between the helicopter's American missionary sponsors and Léogâne's profoundly wounded, hungry, and thirsty human beings, the interchange compounded their victimization with a dehumanizing and humiliating rain of bread from the sky.

Mario Joseph, Haiti's most influential and respected human rights lawyer, reflected on the incident again two years later, as much of the displaced population in Haiti was still struggling to survive in camps. Summarizing the problems with so-called "gifts," he identified issues that are directly relevant to the themes explored throughout this book and his comments are worth quoting here in full:

[I]t was a missionary helicopter and they had bread. Instead of asking people how to organize to distribute the bread they hovered over the area and just dropped the bread down. It was something that really hurt me. And it really hurt everyone in the area. That's an example that's indicative or really explains all of the aid distribution in Haiti. They never want to plan; for instance if they want to help the people in the camps, they don't sit with the people in the camps to ask how to help them. . . . So what they do is they come with just a little bit. But they come with cameras, and their video cameras to show that they're giving the aid, but it's just a little bit, it's not even a lot. And then you know there are people that are hungry and thirsty, and they fight amongst themselves for the aid. They don't have any choice. That means handicapped people can't get first aid. And people who don't have the will to fight have no access. I don't understand how these civilized countries that say they want to help . . . in distributing aid they need to recognize [people's] rights and dignity.<sup>3</sup>

In the world of faith-based aid related to health, missionary activities, charity, or so-called gifts like the bread drop are what most of us may think of first. In fact, whenever I speak of my work

as engaging with the history of faith-based responses to poverty, hunger, and disease, people often assume that this means a focus on handouts, rather than a more nuanced exploration of attitudes and meaning across languages, cultures, and history.

But what is a gift? What does it mean to help another person in a way that promotes individual and community health, including respect for basic human dignity and rights through the exchange of some tangible substance that is (at some level) seen as free? Acts of voluntary, non-economic exchange, whether mutual or one-sided, are all too often, even with the best intentions, plagued by self-interest, the politics of religious power, and rapid emotional burnout of unprotected, naïve and woefully unprepared volunteerism and gender blindness. Donors are frequently acting on deep-seated control issues that keep them from being equally vulnerable to receive anything back, so focused on “doing good” or “helping out” that they may demonstrate insensitivity or blindness to their own and others’ real needs, limitations, and equal humanity. I know; I too have done it. And religious groups are often the worst offenders. But does this mean gifts are wrong?

C. S. Lewis captured this tension well in a radio talk on “The Four Loves” in 1958, where he said:

To receive love that is purely a gift, that bears witness solely to the loving-kindness of the giver, and not at all to our loveliness, is a severe mortification. . . . ‘I don’t want any of your darned Christian charity’ is a very familiar sentence. Of course, it often springs from an ignorance of what Christian charity is, more often from a well-grounded suspicion that Christian charity is not what we are really being offered, because of course much that is called charity contains so much vanity, self-applause, and veiled contempt that it cannot but be resented. It is hard to bear *agape* from our fellows. And yet each of us needs it.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter is—very intentionally—the only one in this book that focuses even obliquely on what might be traditionally called

religious charity. In all my writing on faith-based responses to poverty in Christian history, I have tried very hard to avoid the term charity, since I generally believe that this word—like the word love—is often used so broadly that it is functionally meaningless and certainly unhelpful in any discussion about what is good for human beings who suffer the effects of poverty, illness, sorrow, pain, hunger, and injustice in our world.

My concern throughout this book, therefore, is not for almsgiving or philanthropy in general, but only with the conceptual potential of related non-market-based intersections of exchange that address or occur within settings of social poverty and inequity. Charity is often conflated with gift, but in this chapter I suggest they are not quite the same thing. As we know from authors like anthropologist Marcel Mauss and Mary Douglas, as well as social historians like Margaret Visser through her wonderful book, *The Gift of Thanks*, it is possible to receive a gift without it being regarded as charity.<sup>5</sup> What can we learn about the role of the gift in settings where need is more obvious? This chapter will explore this question by reflecting principally on several common contexts for gift exchange that have a particular focus on health, and through a lens that focuses on two basic elements common to such gifts: food and water.

## GLOBAL HEALTH AND THE GIFT

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As basic elements for life, food and water are often where our gifts to one another begin. Food distribution, rights to food and water, and the global challenge to keep water safe and food healthy shape debates, tensions, and gifts within family and friend dynamics, school breakfast programs, corporate food donations to homeless shelters and food banks, farm subsidies, humanitarian aid, border-control regulations, and global and national health policies. Spoilage and contamination, theft, and corruption related to food supplies and distribution are common risks. Food and

water are also metaphors for other types of charitable gift dynamics. Their deep cultural meanings and uses in ritual and feast emphasize that faith-based gift exchanges for health (whether the exchange is one-sided or both parties give *and* receive) require far more than mere fulfillment of basic bodily needs. Pilgrims to the Kumbh Mela, described in Chapter 2, often take home a bottle of Ganges river water; and blessed water—whether from the Jordan River or the bathroom tap with an added ritual blessing—is often also sprinkled or distributed (usually both) in Christian liturgical practices. To give and exchange food and water sufficient for community and global health invites an attitude of mindfulness about the whole person—not merely their minimum daily requirements, but a cultural adequacy for human flourishing. To consider gift-charity through a focus on food and water also evokes the tensions of essential reciprocity. While it may be easy for me to mail a gift of money to a distant land, empowering others to adequate food and water tends, more often than not, to invite me to get personal about the exchange: to share a meal, even to risk taking into myself the true kindness and gentle generous goodness of someone else's cooking and to defer to others when it comes to the hygiene of their eating utensils. We may all know people who use food and water access as a means for power control (their own or others'). More constructively, however, activities that engage us with justice related to global and individual food and water adequacy may include community-based social practices that make us vulnerable as recipients. This was the dilemma of Joseph Lumbar (described in Chapter 2), when he chose to accept the hospitality of a cup of water that he correctly suspected would make him very sick. Whether we ourselves would make a similar choice is a deeply personal decision, based on our own health histories and needs. It may well be that a prudent deliberation to practice such openness as Lumbar's in certain circumstances is, at least philosophically, a good thing. It reminds us that we are not alone, and that we cannot change the world all by ourselves. Whether we share the food and water of others or abstain due to

well-founded concerns about sanitation and health, such a call to receptivity from the other communicates a truth: that we are all interdependent; we need the healthy support of one another.

Giving anything—including food and water—also mandates respect and support for the agency of the other person: that is, their legitimate option to receive or reject as active agents, to make choices about what is best in their context and culture about what they receive and what they may offer in return. This matters, said South African theologian Steve de Gruchy, because “the very act of compromising the agency and assets [of the poor] is itself an act of injustice.”<sup>6</sup> Faith-based gift exchange that promotes global health must begin with donors (or mutual partners in an exchange) who willingly choose to face risks inherent in reciprocity and return; that which we get back may be unpredictable indeed.

Let us look at what this can mean in three interpretive contexts: first, the popular food proverb about “teaching to fish” as it relates to *economic development*, in an example from Malawi and a story about gift aid from Zambia; second, liturgy and historical images of *gratitude and blessing*; and third, the differences, gift ideas, and tensions in the contrast between humanitarian relief and *building solidarity* assets. The chapter concludes the book with some brief thoughts on what such gift dynamics may mean, particularly within the Christian tradition, in how we might think creatively and fairly about our own “beholdenness” in faith-based social action.

## GIVE A MAN A FISH . . . ?

A few years ago, I was invited to speak at a religious conference that was debating various perspectives on the popular—and probably ancient Confucian—proverb, “Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day; teach him to fish and he will eat for a lifetime.” This proverb is commonly cited in debates over economic development programs for communities marked by poverty. It is sometimes

used when the speaker hopes to “prove” that unconditional gifts are wrong, or to defend limitations on personal, church, or government support. Those who appeal to this proverb may suggest that education or skills training are all that we need to become successfully self-sufficient. In the end I was unable to accept the invitation, but the conference title got me thinking about why this issue—and this proverb—are so very controversial.

The “gospel of self-sufficiency,” the idea that teaching people to help themselves is all that really matters in poverty relief, has never made sense to me. This may be because I began my professional life working as a registered dietitian and public health nutrition educator in a government food program that recognized the value of both teaching and giving at the same time. While this program is by no means perfect, it remains an instructive example of how improving the agency (that is, the ability to make their own decisions and act on them) of individuals, in this case mothers, in any household can improve the health of an entire community.

I was working in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Supplemental Food Program.<sup>7</sup> Established in 1972, WIC both *gives* and *teaches*. Pregnant and breastfeeding women and mothers of children with an eligible health-related risk (for example, anemia, obesity, underweight, or short stature) are required to meet for a (free) personal consult with a trained nutrition educator (such as a registered dietitian) at least once every six months, in a discussion that can help personalize the program’s benefits to their or their child’s specific needs and cultural preferences. WIC is also about “giving away food,” issuing vouchers valid only for very specific (free) groceries that promote health and contain essential nutrients. WIC is emphatically *not* welfare, and it is often tragic to see the palpable shame of women in the grocery store checkout who need to keep these foods separate and explain them to the cashiers while other customers roll their eyes and whisper “food stamps” to other impatient shoppers. WIC is not food stamps. As a government program, it also has no religious component, although recipients typically choose and use the food options according

to their culture and faith beliefs. The program's local nature in community health centers also fosters informal relationships and friendships that frequently include conversations about religious beliefs and practices. WIC is not perfect; its funding has been systematically slashed by one presidential administration after another and is now a mere shadow of the original vision to support the health and developmental potential of children in America. But its effectiveness rests on both its free gifts and its teaching components of interactive dialogue with individuals at risk in the local community setting. Its tight administrative constraints minimize the risks of corruption and program abuse, and WIC puts power firmly in the hands of women. It is women who, studies have shown, are most likely to make the greatest difference in children's health and ensure that resources actually and fully benefit the children they are meant for.<sup>8</sup>

Self-sufficiency can of course be very good. It is certainly a vital part of acting as a mature adult. But learning is an ongoing process, and gaining life skills often requires give and take. The focus on capacity building in the "give a fish" proverb seems to overlook some of the economic, cultural, and even religious issues that may present insurmountable obstacles. For example—just to play devil's advocate with the image of fishing—what if you are the man or woman who needs help and your fishing teacher is an outsider to your culture who has flown into your village to try to force you to follow his or her very different way of thinking? What if the hungry person is allergic to fish? What if the fish in the only available streams are polluted by industrial mercury or other toxic wastes? What if the only person in town with power over fishing rods and water rights will (after the teacher finally goes home) make such employment difficult or impossible, or demand a large percentage of your profit? What if the hungry person is a woman who must depend on an abusive partner for the cutting instruments to clean and bone the fish she catches? What if she (or he) must depend on someone else who will demand and abuse the market profits? In short, skill building is only one very small

fleck of paint in a vastly broader canvas of interactions that can (but might not) help to promote global health through empowering people to be sufficient and self-motivated agents of their own resources and choices.

Sociologists and anthropologists Ann Swidler and Susan Cotts Watkins identified such challenges more specifically in a 2009 study, “‘Teach a man to fish’: The sustainability doctrine and its social consequences.”<sup>9</sup> Their research was based on years of learning from communities in Malawi, a very poor nation in Africa that ranks near the bottom of the “Human Development Index.”

Swidler and Watkins knew from experience that most NGOs who were funding innovative development efforts operated by inviting groups to compete for grants through proposals that presented fundable ideas according to specific rules. The administration, funding, and eligibility criteria of such grants were (and this is common in many other places too) usually based in a wealthy Western nation; those who judge the funding applications, that is, are rarely native citizens of the country or culture where the applicants live and where the intended project will take place. This difference fosters a model of patronage that creates invisible barriers between donor and recipients. Donors usually want quick results so they can report “success” to their supporters, often limiting the grant period to a one-to-three-year cycle. They favor start-ups or short-term projects and almost never promise continuity beyond the initial cycle; even if a funder promises support for many years with the best of intentions, this may not happen. Funds can dry up and disappear and promises can be broken. Such a time-limited and resource-limited approach has created major challenges, for example, in health-care delivery programs for HIV/AIDS. If you want to start someone on antiretroviral (ARV) therapy, and you cannot guarantee—and deliver—lifelong access to the affordable drugs they need for healthy survival, you (and they) face a much-debated serious moral and ethical quandary that has a direct impact on their quality of life and survival.

Partly to avoid such empty promises, development efforts since the late 1990s have sometimes incorporated “asset-based” development approaches (described in Chapter 5). The goal of an asset-based action plan is ideally to support the power of the poor community or individuals who want help to develop community-based and community-directed innovative ideas that will draw on resources that they already have. What Swidler and Watkins saw happening was, rather, a profoundly disempowering application of this idea that was actually causing great harm in its social consequences, by using the “assets” idea as an excuse not to fund essential resources like food, water, and drugs in the grants they offered. Instead, grant applicants were competing for funds that would limit them to spending resources only on training sessions, discussion and evaluation groups, and the creation of ideas. Such talking groups were not helping the people who needed it most. To learn more about why the model didn’t work, the two anthropologists interviewed hundreds of local people in Malawi to hear what they thought would work better. Their findings are important because they reflect very common practices in many other communities, including those funded and directed by religious organizations.

What Malawians told them pointed to a long history of disconnect between donors’ attitudes and the actual realities of poverty and need. Local applicants in fact worked very hard to get what funding was available, but honing their skills at grant-writing seemed to result in a vicious cycle that, Swidler and Watkins saw, offered “intelligent, educated locals only years of insecure work as ‘volunteers,’ punctuated by occasional access to ‘training’ in knowledge and skills that are often irrelevant.” Although most funding opportunities were aimed at creating “autonomy, empowerment, self-reliance, and a coherent rational modernity,” in fact, “the *actual practices* dictated by the sustainability doctrine have created nearly its opposite.” The young bright applicants—who were literate and perceptive enough to know how to play the system and win—saw these monies as a sort of “glittering castle,”

a promise out of poverty that led instead to perpetual frustration. The promised opportunities fed their hopes for an exit out of village poverty rather than a chance to strengthen the health of the village and themselves within it. Given the local and national job markets, often their highest imaginable goal was a job in the administrative strata of one of these aid organizations, perpetuating the very programs that were not effecting positive change where it mattered in their country. Such jobs hardly nurtured “sustainable” health; instead they enabled perpetuating dysfunction.

The Malawi applicants sometimes tried to make the funds work where it would count. In writing proposals, they told Swidler and Watkins, the local leaders strategized about “ways to camouflage what they really need—support for the elderly, the poor, children, and the ill; agricultural inputs like fertilizer or breeding hens; blankets and school uniforms. . . . [V]illagers do know what they want but little of it is training [for things that] they already know how to do.” In sum, the researchers concluded, the ideal of sustainability as it is usually understood through the “teaching to fish” model is “a convenient self-delusion for funders.”

These findings should matter to anyone who works in faith-based dialogue about poverty, especially those of us conditioned to think skeptically about the value of free handouts. If Swidler and Watkins are right, and the dominant model today does not work where it matters most, then we in the funding-rich West need to stop forcing funds onto this model and focus instead on what really does foster sustainable global health and human potential. We may also need to face the fact that, as Buddhist writer David Loy put it, “The dismal record of the last 50 years of development reveals the cruelty of the usual slogan: when we have taught the world’s poor to fish, the effect has often been to deplete their fishing grounds for our consumption.”<sup>10</sup>

What is important here is not to criticize what goes wrong, but to reflect on how gifting may play a role in opportunities and activities that can succeed in improving global health. We can

learn about examples of good outcomes, for instance, from organizations such as the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; studies like *Portfolios of the Poor*,<sup>11</sup> the World Bank's three-volume series, *Voices of the Poor*;<sup>12</sup> the "Millions Saved" case studies from the "What Works Working Group" in the Washington DC-based Center for Global Development;<sup>13</sup> or watchdog economic monitors like Transparency International.<sup>14</sup>

Whether we belong to a faith community or not, it is often too easy to condemn religious activities just because we personally may not agree with their teachings or because we hear about encounters like the Haiti missionary bread drop. No response to human need is an instant fix-it. Most of the good examples depend on complex dynamics by imperfect people whose work weaves connective threads across and within entire communities in relationships of trust and effective respect, dignity, and honest communication. Such relationships are never easy or simple.

## HAVE YOU EATEN ANYTHING?

This chapter opened with a story of food aid that illustrated a shameless and inexplicable violation of basic human dignity and respect following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. The research from Malawi shows how development grants also fail to get at what people may really need for a just approach to health. Another story, from Zambia, may suggest a more encouraging model of faith-based food gifts based on very small-scale solidarity, although this example too is not without challenges.

Zambia is, like Malawi, a poor country in Sub-Saharan Africa. In April of 2005, three researchers for the African Religious Health Assets Programme (described in Chapter 5) visited the community of Bauleni in the province of Lusaka as part of a "participatory inquiry," a quest to learn if and why religion made any

difference in the way people thought about health. The team was directed by Steve de Gruchy, a native of South Africa and professor of religion and theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg. Working with de Gruchy were two of his graduate student researchers, Sinatra Matimelo, a pastor and former banker from Zambia, and the Rev. Mary Mwiche.

The team walked through the village, asking questions, and met with several groups to listen and record community narratives about health, religion, and healing. At the Bauleni Pentecostal Church they heard this story:

As a pastor, we had a patient who was sick, a church member, and we prayed for her for two weeks, and each time there was no improvement. Until one time the spirit of God says, 'can you just ask, if she has eaten anything?' So I asked, 'Madam, have you eaten anything?' And she said, 'how can I get anything?' So the church decided to do something. In the afternoon they all went and bought her this and that, such as a bag of maize-meal. And the very next morning . . . she was healed!<sup>15</sup>

This deceptively simple tale illustrates several key points about charity and gift that have been explored in this chapter. The speaker is a pastor who is part of the local community, remembering an encounter with a woman who everyone in the room (except the researchers) would have known. This woman had turned to the church for the only solution she could count on: prayer. Pentecostal Christians take prayer very seriously; it must have been hard for the pastor to admit that prayer had not worked for this woman, not because she did anything wrong, but simply because she needed something else: something as “worldly” as food. Prayer led to a divine “nudge,” and thanks to the spirit of God, someone thought to ask, “Has she eaten?” Hunger was so normal for this woman (and presumably those in her church) that—for two weeks, it appears—no one happened to notice that she was starving. But as soon as the suggestion went public, the

church community mobilized their resources, their internal assets, into action.

Like de Gruchy and his listening team, we, too, know nothing, really, about why this woman was sick, or if her “healing” would hold up under evidence-based medical scrutiny. But we do know how hunger works. We know that her likely chronic hunger and related malnutrition had reduced her immune system’s ability to fight disease, making it more likely that she could die from even a simple illness.<sup>16</sup> A 2012 Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) report on the State of Food Insecurity in the World today has estimated that about 870 million people remain chronically malnourished, with about 850 million of them living in developing countries.<sup>17</sup> We know that she was a poor woman in a poor country who had likely very poor sanitation and also likely lacked reliable access to clean water. Basic hygiene, sanitation, and clean water are low-cost solutions that can make a big difference to health.<sup>18</sup> We also know that her chronic starvation would have made it harder for her to bounce back or have energy for work (if work was available), since the starving body makes it hard to focus, learn, and find the energy to act or realize one’s potential, perpetuating chronic inequities.

We might also wonder why the church needed “the spirit of God” to see that she was starving. But poverty and hunger are so common in many places that they can be all but invisible. And women traditionally get shortchanged on food in many cultures. In Sub-Saharan Africa today, it is estimated that more than a quarter of the entire population is undernourished; this situation was far worse in Zambia in 2005, when it was estimated that 71 percent of Zambians lived in “abject poverty.”<sup>19</sup> This hungry woman’s church could afford to pray, but providing food called for gathering sacrificial portions of “this and that.” Development programs like those in Swidler and Watkins’s Malawi—if they even existed in this woman’s community—would not have provided food, and would more likely have caused a church’s brightest and most promising youth to leave town to learn to write grant

applications. De Gruchy and his researchers might be suspected of having time for their research thanks to exactly one of these sorts of grants that focus on gathering information rather than on direct provision of food, medicine, or other resources; but the problem Swidler and Watkins described is not that such grants exist, but that too often they offer the only options for communities in need. Unfortunately, even multinational secular NGOs who do provide medicines—and who bring innovative health care and health-care delivery methods to poor communities—rarely include food and nutrition in essential health-care services. Why should we expect faith communities to be different?

## LITURGICAL GIFTS: OF GRATITUDE AND BLESSING

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Food and water—the very substances excluded from the common development grant model and essential for the woman's survival in Zambia—are also central in the role of the gift in religious liturgy. Such liturgies touch on gifting relevant to poverty, but cannot be reduced to “charity.” The liturgical reciprocity of gift *exchange* dominates early Christian and Jewish texts. A key element in such practices is the concept of *gratitude*. But if social justice is about helping people realize their *entitlements*, what does it mean to say “thank you”?

In anthropology, and sometimes also in religious practice, a “pure gift” is generally understood as an exchange free of any self-interest, an offering that expects no compensation from the recipient. But this idea is a messy one in religion, where it is often claimed simultaneously with a teaching that one will indeed receive a reward—from God—if perhaps not in this present life. The religious idea of the pure or free gift to benefit the poor is not limited to monotheistic religions. In India, a similar concept is that of *dan*, which in Hinduism signifies “a gift offered through desireless action.”<sup>20</sup> Ideally described as giving “in order to forget,”

*dan* has, like Western alms, come to encompass a broad range of donations for the poor that don't necessarily fit a strictly selfless image.

"There should not be any free gifts," said anthropologist Mary Douglas. By this she meant that when such so-called pure gifts are seen as charity they wound the poor by aggravating the tensions of social inequality, undermining human dignity, and fostering dependence. In such experiences, as also in Douglas's experience working for a charitable foundation, "the recipient does not like the giver, however cheerful he be."<sup>21</sup> And indeed the shame and stigma of poverty, including the shame of being an object of charity, handicaps many, who then experience a lifelong struggle with low self-esteem, a deep sense of inferiority, and an inability to take themselves seriously enough to pursue with confidence ambitions that in fact they are often capable of attaining successfully.

This disempowerment of shame also crosses generations, affecting children as they inhabit the effects of their parents' economic fears. I remember how angry my mother would sometimes get when my brother or I got sick or hurt ourselves badly enough to need medical attention. Part of her anger was rooted in her own extreme childhood poverty, her response to a deprivation that had enabled her to save face by denying any need for charity. To see her children in pain, I think, cracked that defense in a way that made her angry precisely because, as we knew well, she did love us very much. But her anger—which came across to me at least as a message of blame and shame—was also triggered by something much more straightforward: health insurance coverage. Although both parents were working, we survived on very spare resources, and the only health insurance available through my father's employer required a hefty deductible up front at every medical visit, a deductible that our parents could barely afford. For years I internalized my mother's fearful anger so well that it sometimes seemed easier to live with the pain of an injury or illness rather than risk her attention by admitting a need for medical help. For me as a child, therefore, health care seemed at best

a costly charity. Happily, we were for the most part healthy kids who also (ironically enough) lived in a region known for some of the best and most abundant health-care resources in America. We always received the treatment we needed—eventually. But these experiences were a deep lesson in the limits of private medical insurance in the United States and the vital importance of prompt treatment and adequate coverage for all as essential in truly global health. Millions around the world live (and die) in circumstances where they lack access to even the most basic medical resources that might be practically available to themselves, their family, or their community. If charity merely perpetuates social and economic injustice, it is right, I believe, to be angry at the system, but not at those (adults or children) whose very ordinary human vulnerabilities deserve the dignity of decent care.

There are two popular—and vastly different—views in modern American society on why free gifts are seen as wrong. One view—that of those who are often called economic and political conservatives—argues against handouts because, so they say, the poor should be made to work for whatever they get. This is a variant of the opinion that charity hurts the *donor*, that is, by wasting his or her money on a scheme that undercuts the social muscle of a capitalist society where human value is measured by work and production. The second view—the opinion of Mary Douglas and Haiti's human rights lawyer quoted earlier, and held by many so-called political and economic liberals—argues that, in contrast, such one-sided free handouts hurt the *recipients*. In this view, those who receive are hurt by a donation that deprives them of something far more important than economic performance: the respect they deserve from others on the basis of their agency and personhood as human beings who by nature are created to engage in social and material *reciprocity*. In other words, both conservatives and liberals actually agree that so-called free handouts for the poor are problematic. They differ, however, in their view of who gets hurt, what to do about it, and why. And if charity is sanctioned in certain settings, there may be disagreement on the value

of the gift, the value of the other person, and the relative value of the donor's time and resources.

But what of the moral value for gratitude? The dynamics of gratitude are complex. The Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva, who survived by living in an unheated room with her two children on the charity of friends when she was oppressed by ruling Bolsheviks soon after the 1917 Russian Revolution, could not bring herself to thank her friends. Ashamed by the unequal power relationship of alms from friends, she felt that saying "thank you" would be a degeneration into "paid love . . . an outright offense to the giver as well as the recipient . . . and an obstacle to the development of lasting ties."<sup>22</sup> She chose, she wrote, an intentionally "silent gratitude" as the only acceptable response. Others may attempt to cope with the shame of charity by using it to help those around them. I once had an aunt who gladly accepted all the government-surplus food she could get (and was qualified for)—and then gave our family what she didn't want. For many years growing up, the little that I knew about government aid to the poor in America was poignantly symbolized by a couple of irrelevant heavy glass bottles of Karo syrup that sat gathering dust in the back of a bottom cupboard. Still others may handle the indignities of dehumanizing shame by condemning the donors. The Haitian citizens of Léogâne, whose story opens this chapter, felt that the helicopter bread drop called for public rage. "This is pure humiliation," said one young man in Haiti who had spent the previous week organizing his neighborhood to dig bodies from the rubble; "We don't want their stinking bread."<sup>23</sup>

Marcel Mauss's classic study on *The Gift*—and much recent anthropology as well—does not focus principally on help for the poor. And few of the other recent studies on social gift exchange and gratitude<sup>24</sup> consider faith-based aid. We find an exception in essays by several historians who have recently published on the concept of the gift in antiquity.

In one study, historian Gregg Gardner looked at early rabbinic Jewish ideas of gifts to the poor that help mitigate the "wounding"

effect of one-sided charity.<sup>25</sup> The rabbis in late antiquity, Gardner noted, knew all about this troubling paradox of hurtful gifting and the need for corrective dignity and justice. They addressed the problem by hedging gifts theologically with language of reciprocity. Changing the conceptual understanding of a gift into one that carried a meaning of reciprocal exchange (as a “loan,” for example) was necessary precisely because in Judaism *charity*—*tzedakah*—was a moral mandate. Another scholar, Tzvi Novick, explored how gift-giving rules for Purim in Palestinian rabbinic sources blunt the social distinctions between *tzedakah* and the idea of “reciprocation of kindness.”<sup>26</sup>

In several recent studies, historian Daniel Caner has focused on the detailed nuances of alms, blessings, and offerings in sixth- and seventh-century Christianity. While gift-charity and social justice are sometimes polarized in dialogue about aid, early Christian texts from late antiquity also interweave these ideas together with gifting.<sup>27</sup> *Tzedakah*, for example, meant both alms and righteousness to late-antique Jews as well as Syriac-speaking Christians such as Rabbula of Edessa, a fifth-century bishop active in health-care reform, the establishment of free hospitals, and details such as sanitation and the role of hospital attendants for the poor sick.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, true social justice in many biblical and patristic texts is understood as demanding an inseparable application of both justice *and* mercy, and this package of prescribed behaviors manifested “righteousness” as well as “loving kindness.” Such close conceptual pairing is so tightly integrated in the modern Christian tradition that the late Krister Stendahl, Lutheran bishop of Stockholm and a forthright voice in global ecumenical dialogue, wrote,

The basic point is that we should not think of judgment and mercy as two different things, . . . Judgment is mercy for those who need mercy. Judgment is justice for those who hunger and thirst after it, since they do not have it. . . . In the world one speaks about justice and in the church one speaks about

righteousness. But Hebrew, Greek, and Latin do not offer this distinction.<sup>29</sup>

Gratitude was an important part of these expectations for the poor in the early Christian era. We see this at its simplest level in the story of Jesus healing ten lepers in Luke 17:11–19. When only one returned to thank him—to “give praise to God”—Jesus asked, “Where are the other nine?” Sirach 35:4, which many early Christians read as scripture, equates alms with a “thank offering.” And 2 Timothy 3:2 closely associates “ungrateful” with “unholy” on a list of the sort of Christians that their fellow believers ought to avoid. Prayer was regarded as a form of gratitude in early Christian texts, where the poor who received aid—especially widows—were perceived as having an obligation to give back to the church by, for example, praying for their benefactors.<sup>30</sup>

Gregory, the Christian bishop of Nazianzus (modern central Turkey) in the fourth century, was also explicit about such gratitude as a moral mandate that had particular importance for the poor. We find this idea in two of his sermons (Orations 19.9 and 24.18), where he argues that *gratitude* is precisely that gift which the poor—who, after all, have nothing else—offer up as their way to honor God, expressing it either directly or through their pious acts of recognition of and honor to the martyrs. In context, Gregory recites a systematic list of who owes what, assigning specific virtuous acts to different ages and genders across the social spectrum according to their role in society; the appropriate moral actions that are suitable gifts from: young women, matrons, young men, old men, civil authorities, military authorities, men of letters, priests, laity, those in mourning, successful men, the rich, and the poor. Both lists conclude by calling for *generosity* from the rich and *gratitude* from the poor, pairing the two phrases in a way that strongly suggests an expected perceived interdependence between them.

Thanksgiving also finds central expression in Christian liturgical practice through the exchange of small tokens known

as *eulogiae* (or “blessings”). According to Caner, these were very small gifts distributed by religious leaders to clerics, monks, and pious travelers, including the poor and sick in search of healing and justice.<sup>31</sup> Caner locates the root of this idea in the New Testament, where Paul speaks in 2 Cor. 9:5–12 of the spiritual blessings or enrichment that follows from giving small amounts of extra goods to the poor and to the holy. *Eulogiae* could be tiny pieces of bread, small amounts of money, or some other material substance that was perceived to have a spiritual power to do good. By the fifth and sixth centuries, when this practice found its way into patristic literature, *eulogiae* represented “an early Byzantine example of a pure gift ideal, in the classic sense of a gift that imposed no obligation on its receiver to reciprocate or make a return.”<sup>32</sup> Blessings could come from what the faithful offered to God, and they could lead to all (or part) being used in turn for alms for the poor. But blessings were distinct from alms: anyone, poor or rich, could ask for and receive a blessing, while alms, Caner suggests, were exclusively for the poor. The concept of *eulogiae* persists today in extra-eucharistic practices associated with the Christian liturgy of the Orthodox Church, for example, in the practice of “prosphora” bread. After the priest blesses the loaf that will be used for the eucharistic celebration but before it is consecrated, he removes a section of it for the eucharistic consecration, and cuts the remaining unconsecrated loaf (illustrated in the photo that begins this chapter) into small squares that are available for distribution after the eucharist to everyone present, regardless of religious affiliation. Loaves that are designated as *prosphora* are also part of this intentional practice of sharing and generosity. This exchange is often marked by a parity of reciprocity, and portions are sometimes taken home to those who cannot be present for the eucharistic liturgy.

If the key to a health-giving liturgical gift in early Christian sources was in the manner of exchange and social interdependence, it was also shaped by views about relative social status.

Reciprocity between people who are economically and socially “unequal”—such as from the rich to the poor—may not seem like a mutually beneficial exchange. It is a truism that the poor in every culture practice philanthropy among themselves—often more generously than the rich—but, as some anthropologists note, poor individuals who engage in these exchanges may look blank or puzzled if you ask them what they gave back in their aid exchanges with those who are more wealthy or powerful than themselves.<sup>33</sup>

Sociologist LiErin Probasco has recently explored this dynamic and value of liturgical exchanges across cultural and social groups, particularly the role of blessings and gratitude. Probasco’s research was based on fieldwork about North American short-term missions projects in Nicaragua.<sup>34</sup> Her informants—Nicaraguan villagers who participated in one of two very different types of faith-based aid initiatives that engaged partners or volunteers from the United States—tended to consistently regard their Western beneficiaries as active and themselves as passive, even when the Nicaraguan informant was obviously (to Probasco, at least) intensely proactive in local community development activities.

Probasco observed the Nicaraguan Christians practicing a high level of reciprocal “giving back.” This practice took the shape of symbolic objects and actions offered as “gifts” from poor community villagers in Nicaragua to the short-term missionary workers. She noticed that symbolic activities seemed to take the place of material gifts such as food or drink, often rejected by the American travelers, “not only because of contamination but also because they believed it could not be spared.”<sup>35</sup> While religious narratives such as offers of prayer helped bridge this gap, self-perceptions of disparity remained:

Despite evidence of locally initiated community development projects, the religious language that I heard locals use with foreign donors left little space for collective Nicaraguan moral

agency apart from an all-powerful God, God-appointed foreign emissaries, and devout Nicaraguan recipients.<sup>36</sup>

Probasco advises those who might lead such gift-based mission teams to keep in mind seven key lessons for shaping their dialogue and action. Outside organizations intent on “helping” in such settings should, she suggested: know the community’s narrative; connect with long-term programming; practice social reflexivity; educate team members (before they leave home); publically recognize the gifts and contributions of hosts; make the link between global and local; and perform post-travel follow-through to reflect on goals and shape what happens next.<sup>37</sup>

As we may try to tease out whether a particular example of aid is problematic charity, justice, or gift in similar cross-cultural settings today, we may need to ask related questions about our own perceptions, whether we practice philanthropic tourism or not. For example: What exactly is being exchanged? What is the power differential and how does the exchange enact (or not) a healthy life-giving redemptive space for the person who has the greatest material need in this exchange? What is the metaphorical location of donors’ and recipients’ bodies and faces in such activities: Are they worlds apart, face-to-face, or shoulder-to-shoulder as they walk together? What are the expectations for the exchange? Is the exchange nothing more or less than an employment model, and does it have anything to do with justice? If it seems to be perceived as win-win, how do we know what is win for the other? How does the exchange respect human dignity? And who decides on the gift?

## FROM HUMANITARIAN RELIEF TO SOLIDARITY ASSETS

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Faith-based food aid as gift operates most acutely today in the realm of humanitarian aid and emergency relief. Disaster relief

or humanitarian aid is big business in much of the world. Such emergency aid focuses on saving lives fast by targeting intensive donations that provide food, water, medical care, and housing in highly unstable situations marked by man-made and natural disasters: flood, earthquake, political chaos, and refugee displacement. Such emergency gifts are usually justified by the argument that a particular crisis has made local conditions so severe that cultural sensitivities to empower, accompany, and foster solidarity and sustainability are impractical goals in the urgency to keep people alive this minute.

Crisis settings by their very nature destabilize delivery access and infrastructure, things like storage and refrigeration, and food preparation methods. Charitable shipments to areas of civil strife are often diverted and commandeered by the warring forces of those in power, who may limit distribution to loyal partisans or sell them for weapons or personal luxuries while terrorizing refugees and NGOs who are trying to help.<sup>38</sup> In most settings, all too often, money raised (or promised) from afar rarely seems to reach its targeted use. Emergency *medical* aid is sometimes more consistently hopeful, since it requires the presence of highly skilled health-care workers with a specific purpose. But often even medical aid may “parachute” into an infrastructure that lacks tools that the volunteer doctor may take for granted at home (such as reliable electricity or parts and skills available for repairs and maintenance). Medical groups who address these needs vary in their ethical approach to political neutrality. For example, Médecins sans Frontières/Doctors without Borders (MSF) is committed to “witness” or speak out publically and take a stand on political issues they view as unjust or harmful, while some other international medical aid organizations have a policy of neutrality, helping everyone without distinction between political loyalties or military roles in a particular civil or guerrilla conflict. Policy differences may similarly affect faith-based efforts. Those who choose to get involved should know exactly what they are getting into before they commit themselves, make decisions slowly and

carefully, and anticipate clearly in advance the possible consequences and ethics of what they want to do. Unfortunately, such advance planning often seems to be impossible in real life, but the better-prepared and aware one is, the more likely she or he is to be part of a solution rather than perpetuating a chronic injustice or aggravating frustrations. As in other gift-justice actions generally, the most effective actions likely draw on the experience of many years and a long-term, even lifelong, commitment to local relationships of mutual respect.

Dignity and respect sometimes matter even more than necessary food and safe living conditions. Cardinal Francis George, Catholic Archbishop of Chicago, realized this when Mexican agricultural workers living in shacks asked him to help them form a union. He certainly knew from their lives that they desperately needed higher wages and better-insulated houses to protect them from the desert environment where winters could drop to 20 or 30 degrees below zero. But in fact, they told him, their real need for a union was not really related to material goods. “Bishop,” they said, “We want a union because the owners don’t respect us.” In the ensuing dialogue with the owners, the bishop noted, the Mexican workers focused their demands on nuanced cultural changes in how they related to one another.<sup>39</sup> Human dignity in faith-based aid is often far more complex than simple economic adjustment, and is instead deeply tied to solidarity and accompaniment.

Solidarity and accompaniment are ideas central to Catholic Social Thought and liberation theology. Such ideas also inform NGOs that may not be explicitly religious. One example is that of Partners In Health (PIH), founded in the early 1980s by two Harvard physicians and their friends. PIH has as its guiding philosophy “the preferential option for the poor,” the view best known in liberation theology that God has a special concern for the poor. Like liberation theology, PIH is not principally about gifts or charity; its focus is on social justice, with a particular emphasis on engaging in solidarity with those who are in need.

In a talk given several months after the Haiti earthquake in 2010, one physician from PIH, Dr. Paul Pierre, who grew up in Haiti and now works in Malawi where he has directed community programs for PIH's sister organization in that country, emphasized the vital importance of reciprocity that builds what he calls "solidarity assets" and "trust assets." In this view, assets, he said, are not so much something that a community already has to help one another (although this too is true); rather, they are intangible tools, qualities, advantages, or gifts that the community chooses to give to those—including outside NGOs and "donor" organizations—who seriously make the commitment to walk alongside and work with them on their own terms. They are assets that potential "donors" need to invest in—seriously, for the long term. Solidarity and trust assets enable effective reciprocity—but they require the transparent integrity of a committed engagement with the community partners. NGOs who want to build such solidarity assets in order to "help," said Pierre, can do it in health-care activities by proving that they can be trusted and relied on, for example, through

being on time in the clinic, having the drugs there, having a clinician there, having water, having electricity, having internet, providing good services, and [providing] people in those communities who are very, very poor [with] access to those minimum social and economic rights.<sup>40</sup>

## **BECOMING *EULOGIAE* PEOPLE**

Gifts need not be incompatible with solidarity assets in building the healthy community. Ethicist Luke Bretherton has recently explored the language of gift in faith-based civic exchange, in his new book on *Resurrecting Democracy*. Bretherton suggests a gift-based vision of citizenship as part of what he calls "conso-ciational" common life in community. The gift is, he emphasizes,

fundamentally a relationship mediated by symbols. In the civic context, gifting matters as it affirms the human social nature of citizenship, because, following Aristotle, “acquisition without reciprocity amounts to acquisition without justice.”<sup>41</sup> Gift, he insists, is part of how we relate to one another as human beings, in community and in society. To reject the value of this dynamic is to deny much that is human in social citizenship and honest solidarity. Gifting from one person to another that comes out of twisted motives—to patronize, for example, or somehow “prove” one’s ability to be generous with a one-sided push that refuses mutual exchange—is, says Bretherton, a “corruption of grace.”

But gift is only one of several kinetic processes that mark the healthy democratic citizenship that is Bretherton’s focus. Other “taxonomies of sociology” that must also enter the mix of any truly human and “grace-filled” exchange, he suggests, include: equivalent exchange, redistribution, grace in the deeper religious sense, and communion (or mutual sharing). All of these types of gift relations in sociality, Bretherton argues, “are necessary for human flourishing . . . an absence of one leads to dysfunction in the others.”

Gift is often pitted against ideals of equity, but Bretherton’s vision for gift woven into the fabric of a civic system is one that is aimed at joyously affirming human diversities in a manner that ultimately affirms human wholeness. Building and sustaining a common life, Bretherton argues, “entails being able to recognize and value the non-equivalence of each person and their unique contributions to the whole.” Indeed, he concludes,

the forms of relation built around gift exchange, grace, and communion . . . are precisely ways of recognizing and valuing persons in non-equivalent ways. So while these forms of relation seem to contradict egalitarian commitments, the paradox is that they are necessary means of upholding and affirming

the genuine equality of each person as a unique and incommensurable human being.

As Bretherton also emphasizes, philanthropy is not the only form of gift relation. Indeed, as many of the stories throughout this book illustrate, the risks and opportunities of global health consist, in essence, of many diverse multidisciplinary and articulate practical responses based on “this and that.” Into such a context, small *eulogiae* exchanges—“bite-sized blessings” from across different perspectives, including specializations, skills, applied expertise, gifts, and what some might call “ordinary neighborliness” within and across cultures—might, collectively, have the potential to heal the world.

In Chapter 1, I emphasized that this is not a book about what to do, but rather an exploration of common points of tension at the intersection of religion and health that relate to the interconnections of material exchanges on behalf of those who suffer injustices and inequities wherever they live. As I hope the stories in this book illustrate, a commitment to advance and work for global health requires an integration of many disciplines, attitudes, and actions, drawing on culture and religion as well as human rights, social and economic justice and equity, creative thinking in technology and innovations, and so much more.

Listening to religious history also remains crucial to understanding modern ethics and practice on wealth and poverty. If we want to avoid repeating past disasters and perpetuating what does not work, we need to listen to the voices from other times and cultures and learn how to compare them with voices in our world today. Examples from the past often sound very modern, reminding us that there are no easy answers to these issues.

And yet we may still find ourselves at this point persistently wondering what *we* should do, either as individuals or as community participants within a faith-based setting who wish to nurture global health and respect human rights. How should we act, we

may ask, in the presence of a strong sense of “beholden-ness”—either our own or that of someone else? If I were pushed to risk a venture here into prescriptive advice, I would reply to such a question with: It depends. What we might best do depends, I think, on who *we* are, our opportunities to effect global change, and our personal “vision of the ought.” Whatever we do, we must begin by learning from and listening to others around us who have far more and more deeply nuanced wisdom based on a range of encounters, experiences, and hard lessons in what does and does not help in these areas. Poverty in any culture is complex, determined by a nuanced network of individual human need, community dynamics, ethics and dis/respect, systemic errors, injustices, and inequities, as well as a host of other factors. It is not helpful to approach poverty assuming it is all about money, power dynamics, politics, sin, greed, or structural violence, though these all contribute. We need less on “how to fix the problem” and more on accountability to learn from others across the global setting within this immense complexity.

The conscientious debates over what to *do* sometimes miss the obvious truth: we put our words into action all the time. Every choice we make, whether deliberating about practical ethics or not, illustrates to those around us what we really think and believe as it relates to that eternal tension of “faith” and “works.” How we relate mind and body will depend on what we think of the connection between ideas (body, spirit) that can or cannot be measured, and how we make daily decisions about what is “the right thing to do.” Speaking for and to those who identify with the Christian tradition, I would say this: If we really believe in the power of prayer, in the resurrection of the body, in Christ’s true presence in our midst, in the ultimate victory of God’s true reality over the deepest sorrows of life in this world, in the incarnation of the present moment as something that really matters—if we truly believe these things, we cannot separate mind and mouth from the rest of the body. Whatever our faith views, “action” in response to poverty—whether the poverty is our own, our town’s,

our faith community's, or the desperate injustice of a global pattern—is *not* just an external behavior that can be contrasted with talking and thinking. Life is short; let us live out our vocations (whatever they are) by acting with the best holistic integrity that we can manage. Action responding to poverty is not essentially about stuff; it is about how I relate in daily life to everything and everyone that is “other,” and how honest I am with myself about the theological integrity of the created world and my place in it.

And when it comes to thinking about those traditional forms of “social action” that commonly define “works,” again I would say: the choices we make depend on who we are. Some of us will have the natural gifts, talents, and opportunities to make big changes in global health and human rights practices and policies, to effect “big system” problems. We may know instinctively when others’ advice and warnings to us are nothing more than over-cautious and unhelpful attempts to clip our wings and curb our true gifts and vocation. Others of us, like the faith community in the Zambian story, may be among those who live with what seem like crippling inner or circumstantial constraints that force us to work within the context of a more limited focus, creatively altering a few small ideas and actions in everyday life, living in the constant kinetic balance of little blessings, eulogiae of “this and that.”

If we think we might be “eulogiae people,” cautious but eager to think creatively and push boundaries, we may still feel that we ought to be doing as much as possible to help others in need—and that we ought to be doing it—right now! Those most likely to be reading this particular chapter, I suspect, may, like me, be living with a moral conscience that seems to slip into hyperdrive at inconvenient moments. We may struggle with guilt that we cannot always hear “the spirit of God” even when she is standing on the dirt path in front of us.

Certainly there is a place and need for action; permitting passive victimization is not the route to health, either for ourselves or the world around us. And yet—unless we are emergency

physicians trained for such a career—there are also occasions when the most health-giving act in a given situation might be to relax a little and cut ourselves some slack. A decision to act or not in a given encounter with human need is of course an individual choice. But interventions that seem like ways to “help the poor” can also risk doing real (if unanticipated and sometimes unpredictable) damage. This is especially true if we leap into aid or volunteer gifting opportunities that would be better served by a depth of relationship and cultural humility that may take years (or perhaps a lifetime) to develop.

If this is who we are, perhaps we might take to heart the novelist Carlene Bauer’s fictionalized advice to an oversensitive poet: “Please do not berate yourself for not inventing the Catholic Worker.”<sup>42</sup> Even Dorothy Day, who (with Peter Maurin) invented the Catholic Worker, wrote, “to have undertaken a life of silence, manual labor, and prayer might have been the better way. But I do not know. God gives us our temperaments.”<sup>43</sup> Eric Gregory, a political ethicist and religion professor at Princeton, reminds us that the parable of the Good Samaritan was not about saving the world, but about acting ethically in the immediate moment since, after all, “the Samaritan was going down that particular road.”<sup>44</sup> And Harvard ethnographer Michael Jackson puts it this way:

[T]he movement from a local to a global world . . . is as fraught as the journey of life itself. There are always losses as well as gains, and it is never possible to decide in retrospect which of our decisions, or our parents’ decisions, were for the best. Rather than strive to do the maximum good, I prefer the Hippocratic principle of doing the least harm . . .<sup>45</sup>

We may need these reminders precisely because modern global health conditions present us with a world where boundaries have collapsed. The human needs of our fellow travelers through life and space are ever present to us and can seem to overwhelm. Our “proximate” daily journeying may bring us alongside needy

strangers far outside our culture and front door, yet at the same time “there is no indication that the Good Samaritan spent the rest of his life wandering the byways of ancient Israel looking for remote strangers in need.”<sup>46</sup> In a reflection on Luke 14: 7–14, in which Jesus tells his followers to make dinner for those who can’t reciprocate, historian and writer Lauren Winner puts it this way:

For many of us in the grocery store, it is relatives—non-cooking spouses, and most especially children—who do not invite us back. . . . So I am going home to cook for my husband and my stepdaughter. I do not have any idea when, or if, or how they might invite me back, or not. But suddenly this very ordinary thing may be a bit of discipleship.<sup>47</sup>

The “glocality” of gift, justice, and health begins with finite exchanges such as this. As Gustavo Gutiérrez reminds us, “finding our own way is the task of our discernment and the goal of our spirituality.”<sup>48</sup>

Whatever our gifts and vocation; whatever the examples and stories we find most inspiring: that which helps us face the challenge of each moment’s struggle to keep balance may be as simply as staying mindful of what really matters. In the faith tradition that ignites my own vision for meaning, the eternal is about past and future, yes, but it is most crucially manifest in a particular and personal sanctity of an Other effective in, with, and upholding each moment of sacred substance in the here and now. However we each view such cultural and belief systems of others, and their connection—relationships of “beholdenness”—between human rights, honest material needs, potential for health, and grace of our fellow human beings—it seems to me that the essence of effective response in the making of community is not *doing*, but *being*. It is not the stuff we “own,” worry about, sort, exchange, and trash, but rather the value of time; not charity, but justice with respect and dignity in all that is both good and intangible in our relationships with one another. This, I suspect, is where life gets real.

83. Jo Wreford, “Worlds Apart? Religious Interpretations and Witchcraft in the Negotiations of Health Strategies for HIV/AIDS in South Africa,” African Religious Health Assets Programme, *Assessing and Mobilizing Religious Health Assets in Christian Settings: Interim Report on a Study Conducted by Difaem and WCC. When Religion and Health Align: Mobilizing Religious Health Assets for Transformation, ARHAP Conference, Cape Town, 13–16 July 2009*, [http://www.arhap.uct.ac.za/downloads/Wed\\_Wreford\\_paper.pdf](http://www.arhap.uct.ac.za/downloads/Wed_Wreford_paper.pdf), accessed 1/1/14.
84. On justice, see, e.g., James R. Cochrane, “Fire from Above, Fire from Below: Health, Justice and the Persistence of the Sacred,” *Theoria* 55, no. 116 (August 2008): 67–96; and James R. Cochrane, “The Incommensurability of Development and Justice,” in *Living on the Edge: Essays in Honour of Steve de Gruchy, Activist and Theologian*, ed. James R. Cochrane, Elias Bongmba, Isabel Phiri, and Des van der Water (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: Cluster Publications, 2012), 188–200.
85. James R. Cochrane, personal communication, February 3, 2014. For further discussion on this social nature of the claim to rights, particularly in the South African context, see Laurie Ackermann, *Human Dignity: Lodestar for Equality in South Africa* (Claremont, South Africa: Juta and Co. Ltd., 2012).
86. Steve de Gruchy, “Taking Religion Seriously: Some Thoughts on ‘Respectful Dialogue’ Between Religion and Public Health in Africa,” in *ARHAP International Colloquium 2007: Collection of Concept Papers*, Cape Town, March 13–16, 2007 (Cape Town: ARHAP, 2007), pp. 7–11, [http://www.arhap.uct.ac.za/downloads/ARHAP\\_colloquium2007.pdf](http://www.arhap.uct.ac.za/downloads/ARHAP_colloquium2007.pdf), accessed 9/24/13. What follows in here is my paraphrase of de Gruchy’s main points.

## Chapter 6

1. Amy Goodman, “*Tè Tremblé: Journey to the Epicenter*,” Democracy Now! news video interview, Jan. 22, 2010, [http://www.democracynow.org/2010/1/22/t\\_trembl\\_journey\\_to\\_the\\_epicenter](http://www.democracynow.org/2010/1/22/t_trembl_journey_to_the_epicenter), accessed 3/10/10.
2. See Kim Ives, “Massive Earthquake Wreaks Devastation in Haiti,” *Haiti Liberté* 3, no. 26 (January 13–19, 2010), online at

- <http://www.haiti-liberte.com/archives/volume3-27/Massive%20Earthquake%20Wreaks%20Devastation%20in%20Haiti.asp>, accessed 3/10/10. Goodman also mentions the incident and community response in Amy Goodman and Denis Moynihan, *The Silenced Majority: Stories of Uprisings, Occupations, Resistance, and Hope* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012), 259.
3. Tukufu Zuberi, “Has Foreign Aid Hurt Haiti? An Interview with Mario Joseph,” *Huffington Post*, April 6, 2012, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-tukufu-zuberi/mario-joseph-haiti\\_b\\_1392750.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-tukufu-zuberi/mario-joseph-haiti_b_1392750.html), accessed 12/19/13.
  4. C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (audio CD) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004). The passage given here is not in Lewis’s book of the same title but is found only in the radio talk, recorded in London by the Episcopal Radio-TV Foundation in 1958.
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## 256 | NOTES TO PAGES 180–181

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## Acknowledgments

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## Image Credits

### Chapter 1 viii

Benjamin Rush, *Medical Inquiries and Observations*, Second Edition (1789), here opened to page with “S. Saltmarsh” inscribed at top right. Author photo.

### Chapter 2 24

Public Water Faucet. Author photo.