

*Chapter 18*

# An Ethical Dilemma: The Imposition of Values on Other Cultures

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THIS CHAPTER IS based on the assumption that an examination of ethics, particularly the ethics of change as it relates to international development, is not only interesting but needed in the current development discourse. Particularly, I would argue, it is a subject that has special implications and importance to Latter-day Saints.

Below is a reproduction of an interesting correspondence that I came across from Mahatma Gandhi to Adolf Hitler in the earlier years of World War II:

As at Wardha,  
C. P.  
India,  
23.7.39  
Dear friend,

Friends have been urging me to write to you for the sake of humanity. But I have resisted their request, because of the feeling that any letter from me would be an impertinence. Something tells me that I must not calculate and that I must make my appeal for whatever it may be worth.

It is quite clear that you are today the one person in the world who can prevent a war which may reduce humanity to a savage state. Must you pay that price for an object however

worthy it may appear to you to be? Will you listen to the appeal of one who has deliberately shunned the method of war not without considerable success? Any way I anticipate your forgiveness, if I have erred in writing to you.

I remain,  
Your sincere friend,  
(Signed M. K. Gandhi and addressed to Herr Hitler in Berlin)<sup>1</sup>

The process of change and its internal and external conditions are commonly examined and discussed in academic circles, but the ethics of change seem less frequently questioned. In this chapter, I question the colloquial use and definition of *idealism* and suggest that inherent to our vernacular use of the term *idealism* is the notion of change. All idealists seek for change. I also propose that there exist *change orthodoxies*, certain assumptions—akin to types of ethnocentrism—that dictate our views on what needs to change and what does not, which direction to change and the speed of that change. Too seldom individuals, institutions, and even academic disciplines question these orthodoxies; they are often given free passage. I will finally suggest that change involves ethics, in that ethics is the study of good and bad, right and wrong, and just and unjust, and that change can, and often does, fall into the categories of what we would call good and bad, right and wrong, or just and unjust. A discussion of international development is a discussion of change, and a discussion on change requires a consideration of ethics.

*An idealist.* There seems to be a lot of unanswered questions around the notion of idealism. What are people implying when they say this person or that person is an idealist? Is it true that most of us as children and youth were more idealistic? If so, why? What would be the cause of this phenomenon—this pattern—of beginning life with idealism, then losing it? As adults, most of us have not ended up as idealists. Is this trend of youthful idealism a onetime and unique fallout of the sixties generation? Or is it the historical norm since

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1. From Peter R  he, *Gandhi: A Photo Biography* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2001).

the beginning of the human race, repeated each generation as the consequence of loving parents wishing to shelter us as children, thus giving us the illusion of impossible things—*idealistic* things? Or is this phenomenon simply due to young, innocent minds that are unwilling to accept what we adults might term the ugly things of life (e.g., brutality and greed)? Why is it that some individuals persist in their idealism well into adulthood, while rare individuals persist to deathbed in pure idealism? I think we often label these people with titles of hero, martyr, great leader, or even prophet.

Though I have some confusion about the nature and usage of idealism, I would wager that many people would describe the participants at this conference on international development as idealists. Are you an idealist? The sloppy definitions of idealism, as well as the ambiguity of whether it is a good or bad quality to possess, may be disconcerting to an audience wanting to change the world for good. The ambiguity may also reflect a need to analyze the definition more carefully.

For a start, does idealism have more to do with naïveté or with hope? This association makes a considerable difference. Is idealism gullible and irrational, or is it looking for the bright side and accentuating the good? Is it connected to hope? To faith? To tolerance? Tolerant people are often labeled as idealists. I personally cannot support a Pollyanna idealist, but on the other hand those who aspire to sophistication by finding the worst in everything—and everyone—seem to me to be equally useless and much less enjoyable to be around. Tolerance seems not only *politically* correct but also *morally* correct.

I believe it is axiomatic to say that every idealist seeks and supports some type of change. If a person was completely satisfied with the status quo, then I do not believe anyone would call them an idealist. An idealist, regardless of our definition, is, ultimately, a person with elevated ideas, or *ideals*, of how the world, or some part of it, *should* be and not how it *is*. If this assumption is true, then both Hitler and Gandhi were idealists. But if this were the case, what, then,

is the difference between the two? Just saying, “One guy is good, and one guy is bad,” seems to deny us of the opportunity to discover more completely what we mean by good and bad as well as a more thoughtful understanding of the concept of idealism. I keep coming across the question, “What is the difference between historical colonialism and present-day international development efforts?” This question, I believe, challenges some assumptions of what idealistic change is. Will future generations read textbooks less forgiving of our present-day efforts “to bring prosperity” than even the efforts of colonialists “to bring civilization”? Will we be held accountable for setting in motion certain cause and effect sequences that lead to bad, wrong, and unjust events, just as we hold the colonial powers responsible for their initiation of changes that led to undesirable consequences? Who decides what change is good and needed and what change is bad? Which criteria are used in these determinations? In light of the predicament in the Middle East and in other parts of the world, when are people freedom fighters and when are they terrorists? When are development workers humanitarians and philanthropists, and when are they cultural and even political imperialists?

Many of us work in development at a much smaller scale and on less grandiose projects than the above questions seem to be addressing. But undesirable, even destructive, consequences can be initiated at the community level. In fact, our potential to have impact—lasting impact—is much greater at the community level than at regional or even national levels of even the smallest countries. In some ways we perhaps need to be most cautious in instigating change.

### Culture and Cultural Values

I will not bore readers with a lengthy discussion of the definition of culture. Those working both within and without the social sciences who are very experienced in international environments will verify the complex and profound nature of the notion of culture. Many bookshelves are full of books dedicated to this one subject.

Culture is real, and its effects and manifestations are real and often profound. Anyone, whether or not from academia, who has lived for any extended period of time in a foreign community will verify the significance of culture. Still, I would agree with those who claim that few individuals, regardless of their education and intellect and regardless of how extensive their intercultural living, truly comprehend the scope and magnitude of what the notion attempts to convey in the simplicity of one word—*culture*. Noted anthropologist Clifford Geertz defined culture as simply a set, or system, of symbols and meanings.<sup>2</sup> But when we consider that virtually *anything* and *everything* in life can be a symbol—a wink, a sound, the volume of sound (such as a whisper), a color, clothing, food, architecture, how we stand or sit, a tone of voice, an adornment, body parts and sizes, stories, proverbs, metaphors, writing itself (that is, the letters and words on this page), flora, fauna, social positions and titles, religious rites, myths, and so forth—then we realize that his definition may be simple, but its implications are not.

Another point regarding culture: human beings place meaning, and sometimes what we call *value*, on everything they see, hear, taste, touch, smell, or think of in their life, and the meaning, or value, they place is greatly affected by their upbringing within their social and physical environments. From the perspective of religion, particularly a Latter-day Saint perspective, most of us would not argue with this viewpoint, since there seems to be little or no contrasting points with our theology. Most religions would add the factors of spirituality, divine or supernatural interventions, and characteristics brought from a premortal or another mortal life as affecting mean-

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2. Clifford Geertz is sometimes referred to as “the father of interpretive anthropology” and is perhaps the most influential anthropologist of our time. Some of his most popular works include *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: BasicBooks, 1973); *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: BasicBooks, 1983); and *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

ing and values. As Latter-day Saints we certainly would not hesitate to include these factors as contributing to our identities, that is, who we say we are and what we say we value.

Cultural values are commonly discussed and defined as the most central paradigms within a culture. In the overly simple, and perhaps overly used, model of an iceberg to represent culture, the cultural values are analogous to the deep heavy mass far below the surface of the water. Unlike those evident parts of culture near or above the surface, such as clothing, body language, eating habits, and religious rites, values are not easily discernible, though they are the hidden bulk of the iceberg that gives rise to the surface characteristics.

In 1961 two scholars, Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck, published a somewhat classic work, which since has been frequently quoted in anthropological publications, as well as publications in intercultural communications and various other social sciences.<sup>3</sup> In their publication, the authors discuss the significance of what they call *cultural value orientations*. They define cultural value orientations as “complex but definitely patterned principles . . . which give order and direction to the ever-flowing stream of human acts and thoughts.”<sup>4</sup> Stella Ting-Toomey, commenting on their work, describes cultural value orientations as “the basic lenses through which we view our own actions and the actions of others. . . . They also set the emotional tone for how we interpret and evaluate cultural strangers’ behavior . . . and influence our overall self-conception, and our self-conception, in turn, influences our behavior.”<sup>5</sup>

In their work, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck focus on five areas that they felt were universal or common to the human experience: (1) people’s relationship to nature (do they submit to it, live in

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3. See Florence Rockwood Kluckhohn and Fred L. Strodtbeck, *Variations in Value Orientations* (Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson, 1961).
  4. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, *Variations in Value Orientations*, 4.
  5. Stella Ting-Toomey, *Communicating across Cultures* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999), 58.

harmony with it, or control it?); (2) people's time sense (are they past-oriented, present-oriented, or future-oriented?); (3) people's belief in human nature (is it basically evil, neutral, or good?); (4) people's concept of activity (being, becoming, or doing); and (5) people's concept of social relations (lineality/authoritarian, collaterality/group decisions, or individualism/autonomy). There are many and varied cultural values and value orientations—perhaps hundreds, even thousands could be identified—and many social and cultural experts have spent years identifying and discussing similarities and differences in human societies.

When speaking of values, people often assume that values have moral or ethical underpinnings that are considered inherent to the word. This assumption is perfectly logical and understandable. We often use the term *value* when explaining or exploring highly ethical and moral topics. However, I will risk suggesting that the use of the term in the social science realm is not necessarily implying a moral or ethical dimension. Often values—in the social science sense of the word—are complex and difficult to isolate and therefore difficult to determine if linked to ethics or morality. Also clouding the issue is the ambiguity that cross-cultural comparisons can yield, simply due to our own ethnocentrism and interpretations from our own cultural context or even our personal point of view. For example, in the study of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck and with regard to the cultural value orientation concerning human nature—being basically evil or basically good—one might possibly argue a moral superiority of one or the other depending on circumstance or context. As a Latter-day Saint, I might argue for “basically evil” when referring to “the natural man” (see Mosiah 3:19; 16:3–5) and then conversely, at a different time or place, argue that our nature is basically good—we are the offspring of God (see Acts 17:28). Both these divergent views are valid Latter-day Saint perspectives in certain conditions and contexts.

Some values and principles lie at the heart of the gospel and would not be subjective or relative to context or conditions. These principles are well established and should guide us in everyday life.

But even these more absolute principles, I would propose, have a relative dimension. For example, Christ, being a Jewish male in His community and culture, would most likely have showed reverence and respect to the Father by covering His head with the *tallit*, or prayer shawl, as He taught or prayed in the synagogue, the temple, or even in the Garden of Gethsemane. In the community and culture where I live, I demonstrate that same principle of respect and reverence by uncovering my head when in church or when I pray. The significance of Geertz's definition of culture as "systems of symbols and meanings" thus becomes apparent. The meaning, or principle, of respect and reverence is maintained and manifested by two very different symbols of two cultures. The importance and focus on the principle is well established, but how it is demonstrated is left to the history of humankind and the relative development of cultural traditions throughout the ages. Meanings may be absolute or well established, but symbols can still vary and be relative to context and environment.

### Development as Imposition

In light of the nature and importance of culture, its relevance becomes quite obvious to the field of international development. Trying to implement change in a cross-cultural relationship is challenging and can even be dangerous. As participators in development, we naturally are attempting to bring about change with the assumption that we can gauge and guess what the rippling effect of our actions will bring. The complication comes when the environment and context within which we initiate change (speaking of all the aspects of environment, for example, social, religious, political, economic) is different from our own and is unfamiliar, or worse, unknown. Colonialism is one historical example in regard to this discussion of change and culture. Most students of history need little convincing that colonialism, regardless of intention or motive, brought change—change that was to a large extent imposed. These changes

led to longer lasting effects—some good, some bad. In reference to the negative, sometimes colonial activities were immediately nefarious in nature, while at other times activities took years, even decades, to lead to undesirable outcomes. The same attitudes, assumptions, and processes of cultural imperialism continue to occur today. Whether it is worse in our day, with regard to the intensity of the imperialism or breadth of its influence, I am not qualified to say. I only can attest to its presence in many development activities and in the attitudes of many development workers. Sometimes it exists in concepts like *modernization*, *westernization*, and *globalization*.

Modernization theory is one theory accused of ignoring differing environments or contexts—in short, ignoring culture and cultural values. This theory would be described by those opposing its views as purporting that “poor” individuals or communities have been made poor or are being kept poor by the fact that they are not modern, that either they refuse or have not had the opportunity to modernize. The theory can be, and often is, used by those who speak of economic systems, technology, medical methods, health-care systems, agricultural practices, or political systems and ideologies, just to give a partial listing. At the center of all this theorizing is the belief of a type of unilinear evolution—that all societies evolve in the same way and along the same line of progressive stages, with our Western culture being the most evolved and advanced. Change toward modernization seems to be orthodox—that is, generally accepted with little questioning and with the assumption that it is a change toward the better.

In a very cheeky essay, written several years ago, I played the role of a cynic and attacked several theories in development. Modernization theory was one of the orthodoxies I heavily criticized. This was very “tongue-in-cheek” and was meant for the eyes and ears of students in a course I was then teaching, an introduction to development studies. It was meant to elicit discussion. Although I exaggerated my disdain, in reality I do find modernization theory to be not just arrogant and condescending but also dangerous and

perhaps leading to unethical decisions and behavior. If you will forgive me, I will share with you some parts of this essay which I shared with my class:

The concept of *modernity* cannot be very modern—I just cannot believe it. Surely all of history, from the beginning, is filled with example after example of societies, communities, and individuals holding themselves up as specimens of modernity—the “latest and greatest”! So, why does each rising *modern* society, community, or individual think and act like they are so unique, so special, so enviable? And why do they convince themselves, and everyone else, that no one can be happy, content, or “developed” unless they become *modern* like themselves? (But then, this same society just one or two generations later will be seen as old-fashioned, out of date, ineffective, and even foolish!)

I then go on to tell the students of a lecture I heard from a very capable professor:

I once heard a speaker being very critical of our general approaches in development. I remember him raising his voice and saying, “Development has always been about one group of people *doing* development *to* another group of people,” then he really raised his voice and said, “Development should not be about *doing*.” At the time I was not sure what he meant or whether I agreed with him. I have had a number of years to wonder what he meant by his statement “doing development.” I think what he meant has everything to do with this obsession of being modern. Modernization theory dominated most of the decades of the last century. Many spoke against it, but it persisted and still persists. I do not think much has changed except our language of how we talk about it. Even the use of the word “participatory,” a word describing a very popular approach of development organizations today, does not guarantee freedom from modernization theory, since it can also mean “Come, all you poor backward people, and participate in our modern way of making you modern.” What is our goal? To make *them* like *us*—modern—and to allow them to have modern things like us? This belief and approach must be questioned, and fortunately, has been questioned by many, such as

authors Katy Gardner and David Lewis: “Modernisation, as both a theory and a set of strategies, is open to criticism on virtually every front. Its assumption that all change inevitably follows the Western model is both breathtakingly ethnocentric and empirically incorrect. . . . While theories of modernisation assume that local cultures and ‘peasant’ traditionalism are obstacles to development, . . . ‘actor-oriented research’ has consistently found that, far from being ‘irrational,’ people in poor countries are open to change if they perceive it to be in their interest. They often know far better than development planners how to strategise and get the best from difficult circumstances, yet modernisation strategies rarely, if ever, pay heed to local knowledge. Indeed, local culture is generally either ignored by planners or treated as a ‘constraint.’”<sup>6</sup>

*Westernization* is a more ambiguous term. It could be defined as the trend of non-Western societies to embrace the symbols of those referred to as Western nations. Some people tend to use the term as being synonymous with modernization, which may be appropriate in some cases. However, westernization seems to imply a process of cultural domination, and, I should add, a process that seems not so much imposed as it is invited and desired by those being westernized. Westernization is not so much considered a theory or set of assumptions as modernization theory is, but it is rather a description of a process taking place. It enters our discussion not so much as a factor in development or underdevelopment but as an outcome, which can be encouraged and supported by some change agents. I will not attempt the same criticism with those promoting westernization as I did with those believing in modernization theory mainly because I think there are few who feel it is necessary to westernize in order to “develop.” Still, it is a concept that development organizations should be aware of, as well as its potential consequences on individuals, families, and communities, particularly with regard to their concept and value of self.

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6. Katy Gardner and David Lewis, *Anthropology, Development, and the Post-modern Challenge* (London: Pluto Press, 1996), 14–15.

Globalization consists of very real processes with very real consequences, but nobody really seems to know what they are or how they actually function. Those who speak against globalization and seek to stop it are perhaps as naive as those who promote it. As with all social and cultural changes, there will be those who benefit from change and those who will get hurt, and it is probably true that no one person, government, or group of governments can stop globalization from advancing, even if there were a consensus and desire to do so. But any change agent, whether a large multilateral agency or a tiny non-governmental organization (NGO), should be aware of the existence of globalization and seek to protect local individuals and communities, especially those who are most vulnerable, from harmful and unjust consequences. Some cultural environments, including socio-political systems, have few built-in protections against certain nefarious influences of globalization. Family life, kinship relations, reciprocity, religious beliefs and behaviors, ecosystems, and local economies and vocations can all be debilitated and in some cases devastated by the process of globalization.

### Safeguards against Imposition

This is the section about which I would very much like to receive suggestions. This is where we need our collective wisdom in meeting some very large challenges, doing so ethically while preserving the agency of those we seek to help. Very briefly I would like to speak of two safeguards against imposition: *cultural congruence* and *true participation*.

When speaking of cultural congruence, an element or activity of a development effort would not only be appropriate and effective to the cultural environment, but the attitudes and perceptions of everyone involved, including the change agents, would be respectful and reinforcing of cultural values. Obtaining cultural congruency requires considerable effort and longitudinal study. It requires genuine concern and respect. The characteristics required to achieve cultural congruence are best obtained through working among the

people and living as they live. Many hours of conversation, interviewing, observing, and participating in local life will be needed, and the level of success will directly correspond to the level of involvement and the total amount of time spent in meaningful activity and living. Methods of rapid appraisal and assessment most likely will not be adequate to assure congruency.

The method of participation was an idea too long in coming to the field of development. We would think that such a basic and commonsense idea would have been instinctive to development workers and organizations, but it was not. Perhaps it was not the overwhelming influences of certain orthodoxies such as modernization or even the good old-fashioned ethnocentrism that contributed to the assumption that we knew all the solutions and answers, so why bother involving the locals? Whatever the reason now, participatory approaches are virtually accepted and extolled by every camp. Robert Chambers, at Sussex University, has promoted participatory approaches with much success through the last decade or more. His book, *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last*,<sup>7</sup> has influenced literally every level in development from the World Bank down to the smallest of NGOs. However, it seems that there is some debate as to what participation means. Several scholars and practitioners recently have started to question the extent and sincerity of certain efforts in participatory approaches. Bill Cooke (University of Manchester), David Mosse (University of London), R. L. Stirrat (Sussex University), and others make some salient points in the edited publication *Participation: The New Tyranny*?<sup>8</sup> These authors have concerns that modern-day versions of the old modernization strategies and even colonial mindsets are being disguised and labeled as participatory strategies in some current development projects.

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7. See Robert Chambers, *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last* (London: Intermediate Technology Publications, 1997).

8. See Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, eds., *Participation: The New Tyranny?* (London: Zed Books, 2001).

In conclusion to these comments on the importance of participation, I should say that true participation requires an environment of trust, openness, respect, and friendship, where locals' input is highly valued and guides all decision making. When this type of participation exists, then the last becomes first, as Chambers recommends; that is, the local input and insider perspective takes precedence over foreign or outsider opinion. And when this occurs, true participation is fostered and imposition becomes less of a threat.

### The Gospel, Agency, and Development

When speaking of idealism, we, as Latter-day Saints, will sometimes speak of the “ideal world” as a world without violence, hunger, sickness, exploitation, and abuse; but in our theology, is this really the ideal world? I would suggest that the restored gospel principles teach us that the world of agency is the ideal world, or at least the beginning of it. Herein lies the problem, or paradox: a world of agency inherently allows for violence, hunger, sickness, exploitation, and abuse. This paradox suggests that free and uncoerced agents will, and do, make mistakes and misjudgments, which result in the creation or promotion of the unhappiness we witness in every society. Then what is the ideal world? I fear that this would be a hot debate, even among Latter-day Saints. I will suggest one answer that presents itself: the ideal world is a world where free agents choose to educate themselves concerning, then actually live by, the principles of happiness; subsequently these same agents then, in nonselfish and nonmanipulative ways, help others to see the mistakes and misjudgments that lead to their unhappiness (for example, violence, hunger, sickness, exploitation, and abuse).

When I first started thinking about the ethics of those striving for change, I looked for counterexamples—extremists, if you will—and rather quickly came up with the almost diametric opposites of Gandhi and Hitler. Of course they were contemporaries, but I did not think of this, since it is difficult and unlikely to think of the pair sharing anything—one just does not put the two in any common category or

simultaneous thought. Then, just several weeks later a friend gave me a beautiful book on Gandhi—a coffee-table book—and as I flipped through the pages, my eye caught the photocopied letter (the one placed at the beginning of this paper), and I saw the two men’s names there on the same page. It then occurred to me that they did have things in common, and many of these are the same things that we idealists share and desire. Idealism can be a very good thing that motivates great women and men to do great things. But since what motivates us quite regularly deals with right or wrong, good or bad, and just or unjust, we must be aware, or beware, of its potential to do harm.

Like most people, I aspire to be a Gandhi, not a Hitler. I aspire to liberate and help and to facilitate change in favor of the greater good. But the specifics of *how* it is done and *for whom* that greater good is accomplished remain debatable. They, Gandhi and Hitler, were alike in many ways: men focused and dedicated to a cause, confessing deep concerns about the welfare of their people, being fully convinced of the greatness of the motherland (India) and the fatherland (Germany), and being committed to a destiny that they envisioned. I see both of them striving to bring change, a change that would bring to pass their vision, their version of the ideal. Still, even considering these similarities, they were very different men, and they lived by different principles. Gandhi led by example, not by imposition. He loved his people, but he did not allow that love to diminish their agency. He loved democracy, and he consistently strove to give the poor a voice and to empower them. His idealism drove him to a lifetime of service and unselfishness, and in the Ammon fashion of the Book of Mormon, he won himself into the heart of almost every man, woman, and child of the subcontinent, as well as the favor of common folk in many Western nations. He traveled the length and breadth of the subcontinent in the common-class train. He wore his people’s clothes, common clothes, ate common village food, and slept in common traditional housing. He practiced subsistence horticulture and even spun his own clothing. His development project was culturally congruent and truly participatory!

I apologize for using the dramatic distinction of Hitler and Gandhi to make my less dramatic points concerning ethics and development. It was a dramatic distinction indeed. But somewhere between Gandhi and Hitler are the rest of us. And surely somewhere between the extremes of these two idealists is a large middle ground where most of life happens and where things blend, bend, and become less clear. Finding an idealist or leader near the middle of this middle ground may leave us to wonder as to which side we fall. In the middle, with all the visions and all the efforts to change, we can wonder whose idealism is more right than wrong. Are there absolutes and universals in idealism, or are there only preferred particulars and relativity? And what of change? When does the end justify the means when moving toward the ideal? Does a quest for the most just ideal ever condone the most unjust of actions to achieve it? As Gandhi queried Hitler, "Must you pay that price for an object however worthy it may appear to you to be?" Do *injustices* ever support and promote *just* causes? Can imposition, manipulation, or force ever be condoned or considered ethical when they support a worthy end? Are *unjust* actions ever *justified*? I wish the answer were as simple as a resounding "No, never," but something tells me that this response would be naive. I think it would also be naive to think that Gandhi was always *Gandhian* and never *Hitlerian*. These are all further questions for a study in the ethics of change.

Let us be idealists that recognize and respect agency and are aware of our motives, predispositions, and areas of ignorance. It is safer for us to submit to the will of others when it is their decisions and their stewardships; ethics, if not gospel principles, require this of us. Development should be about others, not ourselves; we can participate, where appropriate, in influencing their lives and giving advice when we are invited, but even caution is needed in giving advice, because advice can easily turn to compulsion and manipulation. We must be aware of our impositions, meaning how our cultural values may differ from others we try to help, and how forceful we are, or can be, in influencing their ideas and actions and ultimately their lives.

We should question our methods and our assumptions, including any change orthodoxies that have not been humbly and thoughtfully challenged. As outsiders, we are influential and often are automatically given a status that we do not deserve. It is wise for us to move slowly and carefully. Even we as well-intentioned idealists, wanting only good outcomes, can diminish or even rob another's agency, thus claiming the glory for ourselves. From the very beginning, we have known that this approach is not in keeping with what is good, right, and just. Let us utilize this gospel principle in informing our development theory.

I end this chapter by stating that I do not claim any special insight or understanding into these important topics. I am intrigued and challenged with the questions and issues surrounding the ethics of change and at the same time convinced that more careful discussions are needed by those of us involved in international development and especially by those of us who consider ourselves idealists.

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