History and Theology of Christian Welfare in Australia: A Review of the Literature

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Introduction: The Purpose of the Review

The material in this paper was originally gathered to demonstrate that there is a scholarly foundation for the various units which might be included in a 'Graduate Certificate of Vocational Leadership'. The proposed course, to be offered by the MCD University of Divinity, is designed for people involved in the management or governance of Christian welfare organisations.

This review covers two major areas of literature.

1. **Historical narratives** of church-related community services (particularly in Victoria). It has been assumed that the historical narratives raise questions regarding future directions and that these need to be formulated in relation to the history of organisations and the traditions on which they have been built.

2. **Theological concepts**, social teachings and doctrinal issues relevant to the community services sector. Again, it is assumed that theology is not static nor universal, but is the expression of faith in particular circumstances and at particular times. Some general theological themes are discussed as well as some theological reflections which arise in relation to specific community service issues.

It is always hard to determine how to fix the boundaries on literature reviews. This review is somewhat cursory and was limited by time and budget. It has sought to be indicative of the literature rather than comprehensive, describing the range of literature and issues arising from it. Because it was commissioned by an organisation based in Victoria, it emphasises Victorian histories and organisations, but not exclusively. It has focussed mostly on recent books, articles and academic theses, and sought to identify some of the major issues arising in this literature that would have direct relevance for the operation of church-related community services.

A. The Historical Narratives and Current Agendas of Community Services

The Origins of Christian Community Services in Australia

From the earliest days of the church, there has been a concern for the poor and marginalised and structured means of addressing the issues (Acts 6.1-7). The attitudes of Jesus to people with specific mental health, disability or other needs, as demonstrated by his teaching and his actions, provide a foundation for the historical narrative of community welfare services, but the literature associated with this will be explored later under theological concepts.

Care provided by the church was often expressed through local church communities in the Middle Ages. Many monastic communities supplemented local assistance, providing care for the sick and the destitute, as well as providing early forms of structured education.

Northern European society began to change in significant ways in the middle of the 18th century with the agricultural revolution, followed by the industrial revolution in the early 19th century. These changes in society produced a new and different context with new forms of poverty and marginalisation. Farm labourers found there was no employment available in the villages and they had to find new ways to survive. The new expressions of poverty and marginalisation were a major factor in the development of the early penal settlements of Australia as British gaols overflowed with unemployed people who had taken to petty crime in order to survive themselves and provide for their families.

As the industrial revolution gathered pace, many of those who had previously worked on farms found employment in the growing industrial cities. Employed in mining coal for the stream-driven machines, in digging the canals that formed the new transport networks, in the factories that produced goods, many people worked very long hours in poor conditions, and returned to their accommodation in miserable slums. In these industrial cities, Christian welfare took new forms. In 1826, the City Mission movement began with the founding of the Glasgow City Mission by David Naismith. Its vision was to be an inter-denominational agency, working for the spiritual and material welfare of the people of Glasgow. It became the model for many such missions in the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States.

The Melbourne City Mission, based on the Glasgow model, was formed in 1854. In the period following its foundation, there were considerable social problems in Melbourne. Gold-hunting immigrants arrived in large numbers. Men left their families in Melbourne while they sought gold on the goldfields. In many

cases, women and children were left to fend for themselves. There were few options for the employment of women. While some were able to get work as domestics, others turned to prostitution in order to put food on the table. The Melbourne City Mission sought to help these families and its history is told in Waterhouse (1999) and Otzen (1986).

The City Mission was not the first of such Christian agencies to develop charitable work in Australia. In 1813, the New South Wales Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and Benevolence in these Territories and Neighbouring Islands was established for 'relieving the distressed and enforcing the sacred duties of Religion and Virtue in N.S.W.'. In 1818, it became the Benevolent Society of NSW. In Melbourne, the Presbyterian Female Visiting Society began in 1845. In 1851, the Melbourne Ladies Benevolent Society evolved out of it with the intention of providing food, clothing and other goods to the deserving poor.

A brief overview of the general narrative of the development of church-based community services has been written by Brian Dickey (1987). Dickey has also described the development of social welfare in South Australia in considerable detail in Dickey (1986). An increasing number of histories of various charitable organisations are emerging.

In 1833, the St Vincent de Paul Society was formed in Paris by a group of students. The students were dedicated to the works of charity: visiting the poor in their homes, delivering wood and coal for fuel. The story is told in many places (see for example, Honner 2007). Unlike some of the other charitable organisations, St Vincent de Paul was essentially a lay movement. The founder, Frederick Ozanam, saw the Society as a practical expression of the self-sacrificing example of Jesus Christ (Honner, p.99). Indeed, while the work of the society was to assist the poor, the aim of the society was the spiritual growth of its members which, Ozanam believed, would come from self-sacrifice. After one or two false starts, the St Vincent de Paul movement spread and in 1854, the Society of St Vincent de Paul was established in Australia. It has become a major lay movement in the delivery of practical aid by lay Catholics in Australia.

A number of Catholic orders were very active in helping the poor in the 19th century. Lesley Hughes (2010) describes the significant role played by Catholic Sisters in helping the poor in the nineteenth century, arguing that their work has not always been given full recognition in the histories of social welfare in Australia.

The Salvation Army began in the late 19th century as an off-shoot of its work in London. Its history is told, for example, in Gittens (2010). William Booth, the founder of the movement, set out his challenge to England in his book, *In Darkest England and The Way Out*. He argued that the situation in London was as dark, gloomy, and de-humanising as the darkest forest in Africa. He described it as consisting of three circles. The outer and wider circle was inhabited by the starving and the homeless, but honest, poor. The second circle was of those who lived by vice, and the third who existed on the basis of crime. 'The whole of the three circles is sodden with Drink', Booth comments (Booth, p.33). Booth was ahead of his time in many of his suggestions for addressing the problems of cooperative banks and legal services, of establishing farm colonies, and so on. Like most of the founders of welfare organisations, underlying Booth's social welfare work was a deep commitment to evangelism. He wrote:

> My only hope for the permanent deliverance of mankind from misery, either in this world or the next, is the regeneration or re-making of the individual by the power of the Holy Ghost through Jesus Christ. But in providing for the relief of temporal misery I reckon that I am only making it easy where it is now difficult and possible where it is now all but impossible, for men and women to find their way to the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (Booth 1890, p.8).

In 1881, the first Salvation Army officers sent by Booth arrived in Adelaide. The following year a Corps began in Melbourne. One early aspect of their work was seeking to find missing persons. In the 1890s, they opened labour bureaux in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide to help people find work. Soon after, as economic depression deepened, they opened refuges and hostels for people without accommodation. Similar facilities were re-developed in the depression of the late 1920s and 1930s (Gittens 2010).

In 1887, the Melbourne branch of the Charity Organisation Society was formed. It was non-denominational, and tried to use 'scientific methods' in its work. It has been argued that, partly through its work, the profession of 'social work' evolved. Its story is told in Kennedy (1985).

The Central Methodist Mission began in Melbourne in 1893. Its history is told in Howe and Swain (1993). Swain (1997) has described how the Anglican Mission of St James and St John was founded in 1919.

These organisations were based on Christian principles of benevolence and often with the explicit intention or hope of converting those they served. It was common to distinguish between the 'deserving poor' and the 'undeserving poor'. The deserving poor included children who, it was presumed, could not be blamed in any way for their predicament. On the other hand, it was assumed that many adults who found themselves in poverty had caused their own situation through the choices they had made. It was often thought that many, if not most, of the adult poor had become poor because of their lack of obedience to the commands of the Christian faith. Hence, to remedy the situation, it was necessary to convert them. It was strongly believed that evangelism should go hand in hand with welfare, as illustrated, for example, in the writings of William Booth.

Much of the welfare of this time focussed on the 'deserving poor' who had not had the opportunity to make their own decisions: in particular, the children.

Many children's homes and orphanages were founded, not only for those children who did not have parents, but also for those children who lived in poverty with their families.

Another area of welfare was the hospitals. Some of the earliest hospitals were developed by the government. Sydney Hospital, for example was established by Governor Phillip and John White, the Surgeon General, in 1788 to care for some of the sickest convicts arriving in the first fleets (http://www.seslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/SHSEH/default.asp). In Tasmania, a hospital was established in Hobart in 1804 (http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/hospital/royal-hobart-hospital).

In the middle of the 19th century, some non-denominational charitable hospitals were established. For example, a committee of women led by Mrs Frances Perry, the wife of the Anglican Bishop of Melbourne, established in 1856 what became the Royal Women's Hospital with the specific task of caring for women unable to afford private medical care (http://www.thewomens.org.au/ourhistory).

In 1855, the Catholic Sisters of Charity established health services in Wolloomooloo, Sydney. These services grew into St Vincent's Health Australia which now includes hospitals in Sydney, Melbourne and Queensland (http://www.svha.org.au/aboutus/Pages/aboutus.aspx). St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne, for example, was established in 1893 (http://www.svhm.org.au/aboutus/history/Pages/history.aspx). Other denominations, including the Methodists, Presbyterians, Salvation Army, and Seventh-day Adventists developed their own hospitals.

A third area of welfare was the Benevolent Asylums. In 1818, the NSW Benevolent Society was established to care for the needy. It developed an asylum to care for the poor, abandoned, destitute and sick. 'Asylum' meant a place of refuge. The Melbourne Benevolent Asylum was built in North Melbourne in 1850. In 1909, a second asylum was built in Cheltenham, later becoming the Kingston Centre (http://localhistory.kingston.vic.gov.au/htm/article/302.htm). These were not places for the insane, but played a major role in the care of the elderly. In the late 19th century, some denominations established their own aged care institutions.

It should be noted that the histories of welfare organisations have been written from various perspectives. Swain (2005) discusses the issues of how religion is considered within the writing of such histories. On the one hand, some histories have been written without any analysis or critique of the religious foundations of the various welfare organisations, either simply accepting them or ignoring them. Academic histories have often interpreted the stories using concepts of 'rationality, class and social control' (Swain 2005, p. 79.3) Swain argues that the religious dimensions, the convictions of involved individuals and the ways in which religious views of the world motivated individuals and shaped organisations should be taken seriously in understanding the early developments of welfare.

The Changes in the Approach to Social Welfare After World War II

Following World War II, there were some early attempts to develop national policies in some denominational church agencies. For example, a National Catholic Welfare Committee was formed in the 1950s. Part of its role was public advocacy. It has been argued (Gleeson 2008) that it inspired a transition in welfare policy away from the domain of individual bishops towards the formation of a national perspective.

This movement to develop long-term policies rather than to focus on solving short-term emergencies was given additional impetus in the 1960s. Cleary (2012) and others argue that a new social and political agenda emerged in the 1960s with a focus on social justice. This new focus involved looking at societal structures which impeded a person's ability to access services relating to employment, health and education and caused the poverty. Led by the Brotherhood of St Laurence and the Australian Council of Social Services (Cleary 2012, p.25) this new focus led to concern for the wellbeing of the whole community rather than a focus on the individual.

Some agencies, such as the Victorian Children's Aid Society and Berry Street Child and Family Services, changed significantly from their founding patterns and re-defined themselves. Many children's homes, for example, which had catered for orphans and children isolated by family break-down and poverty, were closed. Many children had been placed in homes by relatives because of a disaster that had happened to the family such as death or mental illness of the parents. In other cases, state authorities took action if they decided that children were being neglected by their parents. Children were placed in family group homes, supported through administrative and counselling centres (Penglase 2009). However, during the 1970s and 80s, many of the residential children's homes were closed as income support for sole parents was introduced by the Federal government and the availability of child care increased. At the same time, people began to question the value of institutions as the basis for welfare.

As agencies and government began looking at the societal causes of poverty and how they might best address the causes, there was an increasing reliance on professional expertise. Social welfare was no longer simply a matter of gathering well-meaning volunteers and charitable giving to provide material assistance or to run a children's home. It was a matter of examining the social situation in some depth and working out what interventions could best contribute to long-term change. However, some of the new professionals in social work did not share the evangelistic aims or theological understanding which had been part of their organisations' narratives.

A particular example of the conflict between professional and church perspectives is described in David Bollen's book, *Opening Up: A History of the Institute*

of Counselling (2009). The Institute of Counselling was established in Sydney in 1969 as a Catholic institution to provide training in counselling through increased self-awareness and client-based approaches to counselling. It was particularly attractive to many Catholic Religious at a time when the religious orders were changing in significant ways. Many clients spoke of the new forms of spirituality which the Institute helped people develop, in contrast to the rule-bound, straight-jacketed religious life that had been commonly experienced. It was noted that few priests attended activities at the Institute because its group dialogue and style of spirituality was too confronting.

At the same time, there were also some significant theological changes which challenged earlier patterns of evangelism and had profound implications for the ways that social welfare services would tell their story. In some instances, inspired by secular theologies, there was a movement to remove all explicit signs of religious identity in some welfare organisations (Swain 2005, p.79.5).

There was some re-organisation due to increased ecumenism. The most prominent form of expression of this was the formation of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) in 1977 from all churches of the Methodist Church of Australasia, most of the churches in the Congregational Union of Australasia, and about two-thirds of the churches associated with the Presbyterian Church of Australia. As the Uniting Church was formed, many decisions had to be made about which social services would become part of the Uniting Church and which would stay with the Presbyterian Church.

Apart from this organic union, there was a new focus on ecumenical activity and many organisations sought to work across denominational boundaries. Included among these initiatives were the Ecumenical Migration Centre and an ecumenical housing cooperative associated with the Victorian Council of Churches.

Community Services - Church Relationships

In the 1970s, a decline in the levels of participation in congregational life in major denominations shifted the economic power balance of denominational community service agencies and church congregations. Community services looked for and found other sources of financial support beyond the congregations. Over recent years, government has been an increasing source of income. Some community service agencies have become large multi-million dollar social enterprises, while their respective denominations have increasingly struggled to meet more meagre budgets. This has given rise to much discussion as to how denominational bodies and local churches should relate to the community service agencies which grew out of them.

This issue is discussed in a number of publications. Wallace and Bottomley (2012, p.39) lament 'the growing separation within the church of its agencies at

mission in the public world, and its congregations at worship, for the most part, in the private world of the individual'. They note that there have been increasing tensions over the past twenty years. Wallace and Bottomley suggest that the major reason for the tensions is the increase in government funding and control (p.41ff).

Many professionals in such welfare organisations have been concerned about the possible interference from the church, the inappropriate expectations the church and its personnel may have of them, and the values that they might bring into the welfare situation. Jim Barr (2006) explores these expectations from the perspective of a chaplain appointed to work with community service professionals in a church-related mission.

Linda Campbell (2004) has written from the perspective of a professional employed within a welfare agency. She begins with the fact that the government is encouraging partnerships between the social welfare agencies and other people, such as members of local churches, in the care of children and families. She argues that finding ways in which such a partnership can operate are not easy. Agencies have grown to be professional, responsible, and complex. They have to be competent and impeccable as employers as they are highly accountable in their use of public money. She suggests that the churches have not always been sensitive and helpful in the care of children and families. She notes that the church is divided in its responses to issues of gender roles, drug use, homosexuality, abortion and child discipline (Campbell 2004, p.87).

Wallace and Bottomley conducted a survey of CEOs of Uniting Church community services. The majority of these CEOs described themselves as having a personal relationship with God, often formed in a time of upheaval and struggle in their personal lives. However, Wallace and Bottomley argue that 'there was little sense of how their [the CEO's] understanding that God had been present in their personal crisis and salvation from that dark time informed their discernment of God's presence in the socio-political context of challenges to agency identity' (2012, p.51).

In the Catholic Church, many community services, as well as educational institutions and health agencies, were run by Catholic orders until the 1990s. The CEOs were often members of these orders who had training in theology and an explicit commitment to the Catholic Church. However, as the orders declined in numbers, lay professionals were often appointed to manage these agencies, and sometimes the orders handed over all governance of these services to lay people (Reid, Dixon and Connolly 2010). Some of the CEOs, managers and members of the boards of these agencies have not been members of the Catholic Church, and the issue has arisen as to how best to maintain the Catholic ethos in these agencies. One of the major ways in which the church seeks to provide guidance for welfare organisations is through the formulation of codes of ethical standards such as the *Code of Ethical Standards for Catholic Health and*

Aged Care Services in Australia. The Catholic Church has also provided guidance for governing bodies of Catholic health and aged care services in its *Guide for Understanding the Governance of Catholic Health and Aged Care Services.*

There have been specific attempts to bring together local churches and welfare services in The Salvation Army. A review of eleven centres in which such integration had been attempted was made by the Christian Research Association. It was published in Hughes and Bond (2004) *A Handbook for Integrated Ministry*. A review of the project was published in Hughes (2010). Both the article and book argue that integration can reflect a holistic sense of mission, but that for integration to work well, there needs to be an integration of ministry and business plans. A manuscript which looks specifically at mission in The Salvation Army is John Cleary's (2001) 'Boundless Salvation: An Historical Perspective on the Theology of Salvationist Mission'. The ministry of The Salvation Army is also explored in Halse and McGavin (2010) who argue that the work of The Salvation Army in the field of domestic violence has been innovative and socially transformative. Some of these themes are explored in the DMin thesis of Craig Campbell (2004), 'Emerging Images of Salvationist Mission: For the Glory of God and the Benefit of Your Generation'.

The Development of Local Church Initiatives in Community Services

The attempts to bring together denominational welfare organisations and local churches have been sporadic and localised. Thus, Bedford (2004) distinguishes three major methods by which Christians and churches are involved in welfare / social work today.

1. Denominational organisations - in which there is a high level of professionalisation of work, but which has some ties or responsibility to a denominational body.

2. Faith-based organisations - in which there is a high level of professionalisation of social work, but which are not tied to a particular denomination, and which sometimes have a tenuous Christian identity.

3. Congregationally-based organisations and activities - in which a locally based church congregation is involved in community activities which have a social service nature. In many cases, these are run by or most of the work is conducted by lay people.

Cleary (2012) does not find a firm distinction between denominational organisations and non-denominational faith-based organisations helpful. He argues that there is a continuum of relationships between denominations and welfare organisations with some being more distant than others from the control or theology of the denominational organisations.

Congregationally-based organisations and activities remain a significant dimension of the churches' involvement in welfare. Their projects are often highly focussed in terms of locality, and involve people from the local area. Bedford suggests that such projects 'instinctively ...reflect needs within their surrounding community. Yet, in doing so, they seem naturally to attempt to do so much with so little' (Bedford, 2004, p.269). In a review of such projects in three congregations he concludes that 'clearly they contributed much to the overall wellbeing of their community' (Bedford 2004, p.269).

Another study of the welfare activities of local churches in a rural setting is Mitchell, R. (2005) in *Country Life and The Church: The significance of the Christian church in an Australian rural community*. While the book covers the variety of ways in which churches in a rural town interact with the local people, it includes sections on the various 'helping activities' conducted by organisations such as St Vincent de Paul Society and Global Care, drought aid, youth groups and contributions to the general health and wellbeing of the people.

One example of congregationally-based activities is the provision of counselling facilities. A study of such services in Melbourne was conducted by Vivienne Mountain (2009). There is a danger that such services, run largely by volunteers, would not meet professional standards. However, the study noted that, in general, the counselling services were client-centred, that confidentiality was maintained, and that professional training was given to those involved.

Local church initiatives in community welfare and the use of volunteers who have little, if any, professional training, raise most poignantly the issue of the comparative value of professional social work based on scientifically-based methodologies and lay methods of addressing needs and issues drawing on traditional religious methods. The Christian practice of prayer in counselling is a specific issues raised by Mountain (2009) and is an issue that has received some attention in the literature. For example, K. Pargament, an American scholar who has written numerous books and articles about the interface between religion and psychology, reviews this issue in Pargament (1997). A recent Australian paper on the place of prayer in relation to healing is that of Jantos and Kiat (2007) published in the *Medical Journal of Australia.*

Another significant issue that arises, not only in counselling, but in many welfare activities is the value-structure out of which the welfare activities are conducted. Is it possible to have 'value-free' counselling, for example? Are the services of professional counsellors who describe them as 'value-neutral' really value-neutral? Is there one Christian framework for counselling, or for other welfare work? Anderson, Zuehlke, et al. (2000), for example, argue in relation to counselling that there is no such thing as a value-neutral approach.

Another significant issue for many community services is the inter-relationship between religion and scientific understandings of and attitudes to issues

of mental health and healthcare. In his book, *Faith & Mental Health: Religious Resources for Healing*, Koenig (2005) discusses at length the contribution that religion can make to mental health and the integration of religion into mental health treatments. He also considers the provision of faith-based mental healthcare and issues of integrating faith into counselling.

Relationship between Government and Community Service Agencies

Since the 1990s, there have been significant changes in the relationships between the Australian government and church community service agencies. The various levels of government have become increasingly important in funding the work of the community service agencies. Mendes (2008) discusses the use of public funding of welfare in Australia and the role of the churches from an academic perspective.

Wallace and Bottomley, drawing on their survey in Uniting Church agencies, report that a number of CEOs saw 'the church's increased incorporation into the market as draining their agencies of life' (Wallace and Bottomley 2012, p.61). They identified three ways in which this was occurring:

1. having to compete for tendered projects, and ensure they break even on each government funded program;

2. the increased regulatory environment for compliance with performance targets, data collection, service standards and guidelines, which siphons resources from service provision; and

3. the perceived over-emphasis on risk management, which gives less opportunity for programs to be creative in their responses to specific needs (p.61).

The move by government in the late 1990s to contract out welfare services to church welfare agencies has been widely discussed. Howe, Nichols, et al. (2002) argue that the practice raises questions of the autonomy of church agencies, the maintenance of their distinctively Christian value-base, and the extent to which the Church is being co-opted into government policy.

A variety of essays in Sullivan and Leppert (2004) explores the tensions between the churches' responsibilities and contractual obligations as service providers and their commitments to being agents of social justice, advocacy and responsive action for people who are disadvantaged or marginalised. As part of this, the book also examines the way community services are currently expected to operate in a climate of market driven economic objectives, privatisation, competition policy, and government social policy reforms. The essays in the book cover themes such as terms of engagement, images of church, and spirituality and engagement.

Joe Caddy (2004), for example, expresses concern about some of the government policies in regards to the unemployed. He suggests that, in relation to the long-term unemployed, the 'Work for the Dole' scheme has tried to change the behaviour of the long-term unemployed. However, there are not enough positions in which these people can be employed and the scheme leads to feelings of exclusion and builds resentment. He argues that the government needs to move from the poll driven, economy-driven policies to deeper principles: an openness to all people, a sense of respect for the other and solidarity between people, the common good, and the requirement to deal firstly with the needs of those who are poor and disadvantaged. (p.94).

Hilary Berthon and Lin Hatfield Dodds (2004) in 'Standing for Truth: Vision-driven Advocacy' explore the role of social welfare organisations in advocacy. They argue that the role of advocacy flows from the belief that:

> God created all humankind and gave us responsibility for one another, with the strongest having a special responsibility for the vulnerable. God invites all people to a society based on justice and right relationships (Berthon and Dodds 2004, p.96).

They argue that it is appropriate for church-based welfare organisations to advocate for those who need services most, the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in our communities (Berthon and Dodds 2004, p.97). True advocacy, they suggest, listens to people and creates safe places for them to tell their stories, as well as engaging with policy makers and politicians. Advocacy must take account of research and be well based on the evidence.

Berthon and Dodds also hold that church-based welfare organisations participate in the global community. In combating poverty, organisations should argue for the acceptance of the responsibility to care for one another globally and for the care of the totality of God's creation through the wise use of energy, protection of the environment, and the replenishment of the earth's resources (Berthon and Dodds 2004, p.100).

In 'The Church and Civil Society: Mission Imperatives', Ray Cleary (2004) notes that there has been criticism both from within the church and from politicians when church and community leaders challenge and debate with political and corporate leaders about the victimisation or marginalising of sectors of the community. He refers to the fact that the then Victorian Premier, Jeff Kennett, criticised the churches for engagement in politics. Academics also have accused church leaders of lacking understanding of the contemporary social and economic agenda and associated issues (R. Cleary 2004, p.110).

However, Cleary argues that the church is impelled in its advocacy by mission imperatives, by the desire for justice and equality that find their fulfilment in the death and resurrection of Jesus (R. Cleary 2004, p.106). He argues that Christians often express a

one-sided view about salvation, hope and forgiveness as being only personal and consider communal justice secondary to evangelism (R.Cleary 2004, p.111). Cleary argues that if the church is truly about the Kingdom of God, then 'the church and its leaders cannot afford not to engage in the politics of civil life' (R.Cleary 2004, p.115). He agrees that the churches do not always get their arguments right, but that they should enter public debate through dialogue and moral persuasion. Christians have a responsibility and privilege to be contributors, along with other citizens, to the debates on issues which shape our world (R.Cleary 2004, p.116).

Harry Herbert (2004), in 'Faith-based Realities' argues that:

> There can be no escape from social and political engagement once the church has accepted its role as a service provider. Otherwise, the church will become nothing more than a sub-contractor for government services and will be indistinguishable from private operators. It should be a fundamental feature of the church's provision of community services that it is accompanied by advocacy and lobbying on behalf of both the direct users and potential users (Herbert 2004, p.139).

Voyce (2004) is concerned that, in the process of being contracted to undertake government social service programs, the churches are being manipulated by governments to their own agendas. He is concerned that private religious concepts are being applied by some politicians in the public sphere for the use of the agenda of 'right-of-centre governments'. As a particular example, he explores Tony Abbott's role in contracting religious organisations to deal with unemployment.

One of the consequences of the development of the relationship between government and church-based welfare organisations has been a greater centralisation in the management of welfare activities. Gottemoeller (2005) describes this development in Catholic health agencies in the USA. Similar trends have occurred in Australia where the Australian government's desire to deal with large national organisations rather than directly with local-based agencies has contributed to a centralising of the organisation of welfare in Australia and the development of peak welfare bodies.

Gottemoeller is positive about this change in the USA. She notes that 70 per cent of Catholic health care is now organised into ten large systems (Gottemoeller 2005, p.63). She says that there is an on-going effort now to create a shared vision of the caring and healing ministries in order to collaborate more fruitfully in a common mission. Out of that effort have come some new initiatives, such as low income housing programs which incorporate health and social services (Gottemoeller 2005, p.63).

One of the concerns commonly raised by popular media in relation to church-based organisations being responsible for the delivery of government services is whether the church-based organisations would serve all people without bias or whether they would favour those people connected with their own religious groups. Popular media has also often raised the concern that such organisations might take advantage of vulnerable people to push their own religious agendas. This has often been raised in relation to the provision of chaplains in government schools, which in fact is a particular form of community service (Hughes and Sims 2009).

While it would appear that the media's concerns about religious agenda have not been realised in a major way, there is comparatively little discussion of it in the academic literature. In the context of health care in the USA, Gottemoeller suggests there is no longer a need to promote a separatist Catholicism, but Catholics may represent the inculturation of the faith in a pluralistic environment (Gottemoeller 2005, p.63).

Winkworth and Camilleri (2004) examine the current environment of human services restructuring and the impact of the shift to contractualism on one church related provider: Catholic social welfare provision in Australia. They explore the significance of the church's social teachings and history of concerns that service innovation, diversity and advocacy are currently under threat. They call for greater appreciation of the distinctive contribution of church related agencies and what they have to offer in service delivery and as contributors to the social policy discourse.

Ray Cleary (2012) argues that the tensions with government in regard to the government's desire to set the agenda through its funding for social welfare is one of several challenges for the direction of church-based social welfare in contemporary Australian society. He suggests that the Christian narrative has been separated from service delivery and the actions of the agencies. This separation is due partly to the ambivalence of the churches about social welfare, the fact that leaders in welfare have not named the narrative at the centre of their organisation, and that professional staff with different belief systems have been employed in these organisations. Another factor is that the Christian welfare organisations have to deal with an increasingly litigious environment in which they are subject to issues such as equal opportunity which are not always aligned with church expectations (R. Cleary 2012, p.17).

The issue of how the churches and their agencies relate to their governments in regards to social welfare is a major issue across many countries of the world. There has been considerable debate, for example, in the USA. Carlson-Thies and Skillen (1996) note the questions about welfare which continue to dominate the political scene in the USA. Should welfare be abolished because it fosters dependency, or should it be expanded to offer more effective help? Are people poor due to their own irresponsibility or as a result of social injustice? Is the key welfare problem non-work or illegitimacy? Should government help the poor, or is aid a job for the church? Such polarised questions have hampered the quest for constructive welfare reform and have left Christians criticising each other

as mere advocates of a bogus compassion or of a "tough love" that actually lacks love.

Carlson-Thies and Skillen move beyond such polarities by seeking to develop a fuller biblical understanding of personhood, the multiple institutions of society, and the limited yet constructive responsibilities of government. They argue that welfare assistance should aim to restore people and institutions to their diverse responsibilities in a healthy society. For *shalom* to replace poverty and social decay, families, churches, schools, government, and other institutions must each fulfil its own responsibilities.

Others who have weighed into this debate include Schneider, (2006), Wuthnow (2004), Davis Hankin (1999), Wineburg (2001) and Chaves (1999). The similarities and differences between the debate in Australia and in the USA are explored by Melville and McDonald (2006). They note that, despite the similarities, the involvement of faith-based organisations in social welfare in both countries has evolved in different historical, social, political and cultural contexts.

The Church of Sweden was a state church until 2000. As a government instrumentality, the Church was not allowed to tender for government welfare contracts. However, a change in status meant that it could tender to be an agent for government welfare programs. This change in status gave rise to the largest pan-European study of churches and welfare ever undertaken. The Uppsala Institute for Diaconal and Social Studies gathered a team of researchers together to undertake detailed sociological studies of the relationship between churches and the provision of welfare in Sweden, Norway, Finland, England, Germany, France, Italy and Greece. These studies are descriptive of the very different political arrangements in regards to welfare in the different countries of Europe, and how the churches play different roles in relation to government policy. In some countries, such as France, the role of the churches is relatively small. In other countries, such as the UK, the role is much greater. In each country, a case study has focussed on a particular town. The studies cover the attitudes of the churches as organisations and their members about their roles, as well as the underpinning theology. The studies also explore the attitudes of public officials.

A number of books have been published as a result of the project of the Uppsala Institute. The first set of working papers was edited by Beckman and published in 2004. Two volumes were published in 2006, edited by Yeung, describing the results of the various case-studies in the eight countries. Other general discussions of the results have also been published including Backstrom, Davie, et al. (2010; 2011) examining the nature of religious change and the configuring of connections between welfare and religion.

There was some discussion of the possibility that a parallel study would be conducted in Australia (Hughes 2006). However, after some consideration, the major social welfare organisations decided not to proceed with the proposal.

The Issues of Organisational Abuse

Public confidence in religious organisations has been damaged significantly since the 1990s by increased concern about a variety of forms of abuse, particularly of children, which occurred in church-related organisations. One form of abuse was the compulsory separation between parents and children. This occurred frequently as unwed mothers were forced to give up their children to adoption.

The issue of forced separation between parents and children has been a particular issue in relation to Aboriginal children and led to a 'stolen generation'. The removal of many thousands of Aboriginal children from their parents was government policy for many years and many church-based organisations participated in the process. Only in the 1990s did the public become aware of the scale of these removals involving between one in three and one in ten Indigenous children between 1910 and 1970 (*Bringing Them Home*, p.31), the suffering involved, and the long-term consequences of removal on the lives of the children. In 1995, the Attorney-General, the Hon. Michael Lavarch, set up a national inquiry into the issue. After extensive hearings, the Commissioners reported in 1997. After many years, the report, *Bringing Them Home*, provided the basis for a national apology issued by the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, on 13th February 2008.

There has also been wide-spread physical, emotional, and sexual abuse of children and people with disability. A Federal Senate inquiry into Children in Institutional Care was initiated in 2003. The first report, *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children*, was tabled in 2004. The report noted that:

> Evidence to the inquiry described the atmosphere in many homes as emotionally and physically punitive, where children were subjected to criminal assaults and had no emotional relationships with any adults or personal interaction with significant people in their lives. Apart from specific acts of emotional, mental, physical, psychological and sexual abuse, institutional life itself is inherently abusive (2004, p.17).

The report cites many instances of such abuse occurring in various church-run as well as government-run institutions. A second report, *Protecting vulnerable children: A national challenge* included some of the responses of the denominational bodies to the concerns raised in the first report and identified a wide range of measures to ensure better care for children, the disabled, and other vulnerable people.

Continuing concerns about the cover-up of abuse by some organisations led the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, to announce a Royal Commission to further investigate child abuse in churches, schools and foster homes and how organisations had handled it. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse began gathering evidence in March 2013. It follows a Victorian Parliamentary

Inquiry into child abuse by religious and other organisations. It also follows similar concerns of abuse of children and vulnerable people by people within church organisations in many other parts of the world. There is a growing literature about these forms of abuse. One book which specifically addresses the relationship between child sexual abuse and the organisational culture of churches is Marie Keenan, *Child Sexual Abuse and the Catholic Church*.

The Continuing Reform of Social Welfare Policy

Throughout recent decades there has been continuing debate and attempts to reform the social welfare policies in many countries, including the USA, the United Kingdom and Australia. One of the influences has been 'Third Way' thinking. Those political parties which have adopted Third Way thinking, such as the Labour Party in the United Kingdom, and, to some extent, the Labor Party in Australia, have seen their role as actively seeking to building a healthy, inclusive, entrepreneurial society. This vision involves the government proactively intervening in the lives of people, not just in the form of regulation of activities, nor just in providing infrastructure, but in encouraging certain types of behaviour, which will have long-term impacts on the sort of society in which we live. An example of this has been the proactive role that the Federal government of Australia has taken to discourage smoking. By discouraging smoking, the Federal government is positively contributing to the health of the community and to reducing the costs of healthcare.

The sociologist, Anthony Giddens, has had a considerable influence on the development of 'Third Way' thinking. He has argued that governments should act in partnership with agencies in civil society to foster community renewal and development (Giddens 1998, p.69). He argues, for example, that civic society is in decline in some respects, and this is not just a problem of poverty and underprivilege. Government needs to play a major role, in partnership with civic organisations, to 'further the social and material refurbishment of neighbourhoods, towns and larger local areas' (Giddens 1998, p.79). Such refurbishment will contribute to a decrease in crime. The natural response to an increase in crime is for people to withdraw from each other. Yet, as social connections are loosened, crime increases. Government needs to be encouraging the building of social capital, he suggests (Giddens 1998, p.87). Indeed, the positive notion of social capital has become a significant, although contested, notion in defining the aims of community services.

Giddens argues that, traditionally, the welfare state has been 'essentially undemocratic', depending on a top-down distribution of benefits with the motivation of the protection and care for the vulnerable (Giddens 1998, p.112). Giddens argues for a re-construction of the welfare state towards 'positive welfare' in which there is an investment in human capital where

possible, rather than the direct provision of economic maintenance (Giddens 1998, p.117). One example is the development of combined private / State provision for income during old age such as through superannuation as well as government pensions and the abolition of a fixed age of retirement (Giddens 1998, p.120).

Brian Howe (2007) has argued for a continuing development of social welfare (or wellbeing) policy in this direction in Australia. In talking about employment, for example, Howe says, "What is needed is a more proactive concept than welfare, a concept that recognises the need to invest in people and support systems to ensure or bring about employability" (Howe 2007, p.93). He suggests that, in fact, this means a shift in social policy from welfare to risk management (Howe 2007, p.95). He notes that many OECD countries have moved from a compensation approach in relation to disability towards economic integration which encourages employment and can offset the additional costs of employing disabled people (Howe 2007, p.95). He wants flexible arrangements for work so that people can take greater control of their lives, perhaps even 'leave banks' which allow people to save up their time for longer periods of leave, for example (Howe 2007, p.123).

Howe says:

> The Australian social security system was never designed to be more than a short-term safety net for people in the workforce. While the system has worked reasonably well in minimising poverty and providing social protection at a manageable cost, even under the pressures of high unemployment in the 1980s and the early 1990s, it has not been able to effectively help people manage the risks of our modern society. The task, so strongly advocated by the World Bank, of assisting individuals, households and communities to proactively manage risk is the missing agenda item in Australian social policy. Over the past twenty-five years, the risks people are exposed to have increased dramatically, especially for those with significant care responsibilities and those without education or skills (Howe 2007, p.185).

At the other end of the political spectrum, some have been calling for less government intervention in the lives of the individuals. The right-wing parties such as the Republicans in USA and the Conservatives in Australia have called for government to focus on ensuring that individuals have the freedom to pursue their own wellbeing with minimal interference from government. Such attitudes have been given additional impetus by the economic recession and the desire to reduce government spending. In reducing government spending, some politicians and social theorists have advocated a return to a focus on welfare for those who were in real need. This has been accompanied by the call to reduce what has been described as 'middle-class welfare', the use of government funding to encourage certain social developments. Another set of policies, such as 'Work for the Dole', have put pressure on people who might depend on welfare to take responsibility for their own lives. One

of the most extreme examples of this approach was George W. Bush and his policies of 'compassionate conservatism'. Such political views have been echoed by some religious thinkers such as Marvin Olasky and John Dilulio (Fitzgerald, p.288).

Changes in government social policy will inevitably have an impact on church-based community service organisations. As policies are developed, they provide greater or more limited opportunities for church-based community service organisations to be involved in the positive re-construction of civil society.

One common challenge of recent social policy has been to develop partnerships. Governments challenge community service organisations to be proactive in engaging volunteers, in developing partnerships, in building social capital with people, rather than 'managing' problems. New forms of professionalism and partnership with non-professionals are needed. This would appear to be one of the cutting edges for the development of community service organisations.

Summary

This brief review of the literature demonstrates the extent of change in the nature of church-based welfare and the evolving nature of community service. There are many issues as to how contemporary community services should relate to their origins, to the concepts of charity out of which they have risen, to the Christian stories which have formed them, in a context in which they are increasingly under pressure from the professionalism of social work and from government-funding of projects and regulation of the environment in which they should work.

Large-scale changes began in the 1960s as agencies began to look beyond the immediate needs of people to the underlying causes in the structures of society and in particular social arrangements. This led to a professionalisation of many community services.

Further changes occurred particularly in the 1990s when government began large-scale contracting of its programs to church-based community services. Through funding and regulation, the government has increasingly influenced the agenda of the church-based services. At the same time, the capacity of churches to provide funding and staff for the agencies diminished.

The government social welfare agenda has been evolving. One general trend has been the increasing desire in government to be proactive in constructing a flourishing society rather than simply respond to individual needs.

Some people, such as Wallace and Bottomley, see the future of chuch-based community services very bleakly because of the loss of independence from government. They comment:

> It may be a moot point as to whether the prophetic voice of church community services has failed to restore justice and renew human dignity because it has been ignored, or whether intentional resistance to the church's prophetic witness has exacerbated the current economic, scientific and cultural sickness in society (Wallace and Bottomley 2012, p.59).

For others, such as Ray Cleary (2012), there are certainly challenges for church-based community services in the acceptance of government funding. However, Cleary believes that church-based organisations must and can continue to be driven by their Christian mission, which should be seen not just in personal but in communal forms, and that they can and should enter into dialogue with government and the public sphere on that basis.

Cleary (2012) suggests some principles in the further development of the narrative which he summarises in the following points.

1. Agency's programs should be seen in the context of the total mission of the church and reflect values which contribute to the attainment of the Kingdom of God. Not just one of good works, charity and benevolence.

2. Christian faith affirms the presence of Christ in the stories and life experiences of the people agencies are called to support – including those separated and alienated from mainstream society. The message to be offered is of life, hope and liberation, not despair and failure.

3. Christian faith calls its followers to live on the edge – identifying and sharing in the pain and suffering of the world. This may mean a more pro-active role in dialogue on social and economic issues.

4. Work of agencies should be undertaken ecumenically in cooperation with others of different faiths and no faith – in an increasingly multi-cultural society.

5. Church welfare agencies should live in a state of creative tension with both the church and the community they serve.

6. Church welfare agencies should be open to the continuing presence of the disturbing spirit of God and open to what God is doing in the world.

B. Theological Concepts Associated with Welfare

The literature regarding theology and welfare can be divided into three parts.

1. Literature specifically addressing the theology of welfare. This literature is relatively slim. One volume is *The Theology of Welfare* edited by John and Sonia West (2000). This book explores the competing visions of welfare in the American religious community, drawing on the theological thinking of Catholic, mainline Protestants, evangelical Protestants, and Jews as this gives rise to specific welfare proposals. Within the various religious traditions, 'theologies of welfare' have been developed to varying extents. The most well-developed is Catholic social teaching.

2. Literature about theological concepts which may or may not be applied specifically to welfare and community services. It is hard to draw the boundaries of this literature as many aspects of theology can be directly or indirectly related to issues of welfare and community services including the areas of soteriology, ecclesiology, missiology, and eschatology. This review touches on various parts of this broad literature, particularly as this literature has been used within community service contexts.

3. Literature on issues of community service which draws on theological concepts. There is a growing literature on community services and welfare which refers to theological concepts. While not representing this literature comprehensively, a range of books and articles of this kind are noted in this review.

Changing thinking in the area of soteriology has probably had greatest impact on the nature of community services and welfare. This review of the theological literature begins there.

Change in Notions of Salvation and Wellbeing

As has been noted, many of the church-based community services began with the notion that we should love one another as God loves us. The teaching about loving our neighbour and the story Jesus told of the Good Samaritan made it clear that Christians should seek the welfare of others. As has been noted, Ozanam, the founder of the St Vincent de Paul society saw such altruistic behaviour as important for the social development of all Christians. Indeed, among the Catholics and the High Anglicans, welfare needs were seen as an opportunity for Christians to offer assistance and thereby earn their own salvation (Swain 2005, p.79.4).

Many of the Protestant founders of church-based community services also believed that welfare should be accompanied by evangelism. Saving the eternal soul of a person was more important than meeting material needs of food and shelter. As has been noted in the case of William Booth, the founder of The Salvation Army, meeting material needs was seen as a first step in evangelism. When material needs had been met, it was easier to attend to the matters of the soul.

Early in the 20th century, however, the Social Gospel movement emerged among some mainline and left-wing evangelical Protestants. Most of its advocates were progressive in their theology. Like William Booth, they were deeply concerned about poverty, particularly as they saw it in the slums of the industrial cities. However, rather than focus on the salvation of the individual soul, their key theological notion was 'the Kingdom of God'. They argued that God's Kingdom could not come until social evils such as poverty, crime, racial tensions, bad hygiene, child labour and other problems had been overcome. They emphasised the importance of compulsory schooling and called for the abolition of child labour. They also inspired many welfare projects. The YMCA was one such project, originally created to help rural youth adjust to life in the city without losing their religious faith. Quite often their faith expressed itself in a commitment to socialism (Fitzgerald 2011, p.279). One of the key American thinkers of this movement was Walter Rauschenbusch, a Baptist pastor who wrote *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917).

A more recent theological development which reflects some of the themes in the Social Gospel has been 'Liberation Theology' which emerged in the 1970s in South America. One of the most prominent of the liberation theologians was Gustavo Gutierrez (1973), who wrote *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*. Gutierrez argues that material poverty is 'a scandalous condition' (Gutierrez 1973, p.299), inimical to human dignity and therefore contrary to the will of God (Gutierrez 1973, p.291). He argues that a sign of authenticity of the church's mission would be 'authentic solidarity with the poor and a real protest against the poverty of our time' (Gutierrez 1973, p.302).

Other prominent writers on liberation theology include Juan Luis Segundo (1976), Leonardo Boff (1979), and Ruben Alves (1969). While the link between political liberation and salvation has been strongly made by the South American theologians, similar ideas have also been explored in Africa and Asia as demonstrated by the articles in Deane William Ferm (1986), *Third World Liberation Theologies: A Reader*. Liberation theology was also inspirational among some black Americans (Cone 1970). While liberation theology has not been adopted in an integrated form in the Western world, it has had a significant influence on the understanding by Christians that salvation has political, material and communal dimensions and should not be reduced to something that is only personal and spiritual.

On the other hand, some theologians in the 1960s and 1970s believed the Gospel could be effectively reduced to a secular understanding of the present, political, material and communal conditions of life (Cox 1965).

Some of the themes of the Social Gospel and Liberation Theology movements have emerged in different contemporary forms as salvation has been seen to be of the whole person and of communities, rather than just the individual soul.

1. Salvation of the whole person. Over recent years there has been an increasing body of literature that has contended that the physical self cannot be separated from the spiritual self. Salvation is not just about a soul which was released from the body when the person died, but rather the whole human person, body, mind, and spirit who exists in the present. This holistic sense of salvation is well developed by the existential theologians such as Paul Tillich (1968, Part IV).

Cameron and Reader, et al. (2012) encourage theological reflection around the concept of human flourishing. They examine what such reflection would mean in practical situations and use, as a particular example, an encounter between a faith-based charity and the National Health Service.

The issue of the wholeness of human beings and the concept of the self is particularly challenged by those people who have severe dementia. Is there still a self in such circumstances? Swinton (2007) argues that, because our culture so values rationality and productivity, observers easily characterise the life of the person with dementia in the bleakest terms because it lacks sociocultural worth. The author argues that the experience of the person with irreversible and progressive dementia is clearly tragic, but it need not be interpreted as half empty rather than half full.

This issue is also discussed, for example, by MacKinlay (2006) and MacKinlay and Trevitt (2012). These books explore some of the theological imperatives and their implications for organisational policies for the engagement of welfare personnel with people in care. They refer to the importance of respect for the whole person as made in the image of God. This is an important theme in Catholic Social Teaching and occurs frequently in the literature associated with that teaching, as discussed later in this review.

An extreme theology which is popular in some Pentecostal circles is the Prosperity Gospel. Essentially, it argues that God wants human beings to flourish and that sickness and poverty are contrary to the will of God for human beings. The way to prosperity is through openness to God's Spirit and total obedience to the will of God. In practical terms, obedience has often been associated with giving money to the church as a sign of faith in God, and with the expectation that God will reward the giver financially. The leading Australian Pentecostal church, Hillsong, was known for advocating the Prosperity Gospel, as developed in the book by the senior pastor, Brian Houston, *You Need More Money* (1999), although the church has recently backed away from that theology. While *You Need More Money* has been withdrawn, two other books are indicative of the

direction Houston's theology continues to take: *How to Live in Health & Wholeness* (1996) and *How to Flourish in Life* (1996).

2. Salvation of communities – the idea that salvation is not just of individuals but of whole communities has been widely debated by theologians and church leaders. As has been noted, it was an important part of the thinking of the Social Gospel theologians and the Liberation Theologians. In various forms, it has been a significant theme in recent theology. The debate has had important implications for Christian social welfare agencies.

The change in the theological orientation in the 1970s is overviewed, for example, by Kavunkal (2010). He points to the 1974 Lausanne Covenant which was written from an Evangelical perspective and which argued that 'Christians should share in God's concern for justice and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression, as required by the intrinsic dignity of the human person'. He also quotes from the 1975 Nairobi meeting of the World Council of Churches in which the assembly of a wide range of churches was reminded:

> We are commissioned to proclaim the gospel of Christ to the ends of the earth. Simultaneously, we are commanded to struggle to realise God's will for peace, justice and freedom throughout society.

Kavunkal argues that the social mission of the church is the continuation of the mission of Jesus, which in turn, has its roots in the earlier Jewish prophets. This mission is focussed particularly on those at the margins of society, saving them from alienation and negation. The fact that Jesus associated with people who were on the margins of society — people who were outcasts because they were 'sinners', the poor, those with a disability or with leprosy, and women — was one of the notable features of his mission. Kavunkal argues that only in the early days of the church, in the world of Hellenistic dualism, was the the mission of Jesus transformed to a salvation to another world. Kavunkal argues that a major challenge for mission today is to dismantle the disgusting structures of human dehumanisation. In so doing, mission is about transforming this world into the pre-figuration of the world to come. These themes have been further developed in Kavunkal (2008) which explores the meaning of this sense of mission for various contexts in Asia.

Cleary suggests that a 'Community theology' is relevant to the theology of church agencies. Social service agencies may see their task partly in terms of building communities of people in which there is a sense of relationship, belonging, and shared values (R.Cleary 2012, p.128). In so doing, church welfare agencies can become 'faith communities' in which the Jesus tradition and a renewed creation theology define their identity purpose and mission' (R.Cleary 2012, p.130).

3. Inclusive Community. If Christian communities pre-figure the Kingdom of God, then Christian

communities should be inclusive of all people, irrespective of race, ability and disability, age, and gender. There is an extensive literature which explores the theology of inclusivity and seeks to apply it to specific groups of people. One book which well illustrates this exploration in relation to a special needs group is Hitching (2003) in *The Church and Deaf People: A Study of Identity, Communication and Relationships with Special Reference to the Ecclesiology of Jurgen Moltmann.*

Hitching correlates several of Moltmann's theological concepts to the ways deaf people experience community and the world.

Moltmann's non-hierarchical model for the church consisting of friendship type relations mirrors how deaf people form identities in relationship with one another and in relation to larger social categories, in contrast to more individualistic notions of being in the world.

The eschatalogical nature of ecclesiological communities provides an avenue for deaf people to encounter the message of hope present in Christianity and reshape their own understanding of being in the world which they often experience as marginalising.

Hitching sees the sign languages as drawing people into communities that understand their being through relationships, which resonates with Moltmann's view of the church being constituted of communities of open and inviting dialogue.

Inclusion is also a key notion in Moultrie (2007), who argues that feminist theologies of embodiment and wholeness are incomplete without understanding what these terms mean for persons with disabilities. The article also challenges those who would follow Jesus to actively prepare the community by looking critically at its language and pedagogy to create a theological ethic where one can be 'different but not alienated'.

Other books which address the notion of inclusion and how it relates to other people, such as those who are disabled, include Sullivan (2013), Moss and Schipper (2011), and, extending this to a comparison between the belief systems of Hinduism and Christianity, Rao (2004).

Others address the issue of inclusivity in relation to immigrants such as Carroll, Rodriguez, et al. (2008), in relation to homelessness, Moxley, Washington, et al. (2012), and in relation to people with visual impairment, Milian and Erin (2001).

The discussion about inclusivity takes a somewhat different form in the discussion of the boundaries in accepting the behaviour of others who may come for assistance to a welfare agency. A particular issue is in relation to homosexuality. Religious communities have differing ideas about what is acceptable and not acceptable, which can have a significant impact on how welfare and care is offered. There is a brief discussion of this issue in Barr (2006).

Suffering and Sin

If the vision of salvation is of wholeness, health, and, in some accounts, prosperity, then does the absence of these qualities indicate failure or human sinfulness of some kind? What does this mean theologically for the fact of suffering?

In popular thinking, disability is sometimes seen as the consequence of sin. That is, the disability is, in some way, merited. This issue is discussed in several essays including Schumm and Stoltzfus (2007) who ask why are chronic illness and disability often associated with merited suffering in Buddhism and Christianity? What types of Buddhist and Christian practice can help cultivate spiritual healing in the midst of chronic conditions? Webster (2007) discusses how early Christian communities explicitly rejected the traditional link between disability and sin, as demonstrated in John 9.1-41.

McNair (2007) begins with a study of local church attendees to determine their perspectives, or social constructions, of disability, focussing mostly on people with mental retardation. Some attenders felt that God gives people disabilities to teach others about life, or because God is giving the disabled person something special to do. While the author did not find that many attenders linked disability to the parents' sin, he points to areas in which Christians need to change their thinking about disability and seek to challenge the wider society to different ways of conceptualising disability.

Molsberry (2004) examines the stories of the healing miracles in the Biblical text. He also distinguishes between three models of understanding disability: moral (Biblical), medical and socio-cultural. He argues that the discussion is moving from a medical model to a socio-cultural one, from blaming the victim to blaming an insensitive and handicapping society.

McCloughry and Morris (2002) explore a theology of disability. They suggest that disability has often been interpreted as a distortion of God's purposes. However, all human beings are created in the image of God which means that all are created for relationship and that disability is not an incomplete humanity. The book argues that society's view of disability must be changed from one of deficit to diversity. The church should be a true community where people are loved for who they are and their unique gifts celebrated.

Dawn (2002) claims that a major theme in the book of Revelation is that 'Christ reigns in the midst of our suffering'. An appropriate response to the text is to value the gifts of people with disabilities and others who experience suffering or weakness and to recognise and learn from the suffering that occurs within each of our individual lives.

Ministry of Jesus

Over recent decades there has been much re-evaluation of the ministry and mission of Jesus, arising partly from attempts to get behind the accretions of

tradition to see again the 'historical Jesus'. There is significant disagreement about issues such as how Jesus saw himself in relation to the traditions of the Messiah. However, there is widespread agreement that he saw ministry not just in gaining converts to a cause, but in healing the sick, casting out demons, and showing hospitality to the poor.

The discussion of contemporary mission and how it relates to the mission of the historical Jesus has been wide-ranging. While there have been different understandings of Jesus' mission, contemporary literature has tended to re-emphasise the focus of Jesus' mission to the people on the margins of society. This is expressed through care for people's welfare and healing, along with a challenge to social structures and regulations which are oppressive and dehumanising (sometimes in the name of religion). While there is general agreement about the nature of the mission, there has been extensive discussion about how Jesus understood that mission and the extent to which it was seen as eschatalogical. Among the literature that has contributed to this debate is Crossan (1994), Gnilka (1997), Meier (1979), Wright (1996) and Wright and Borg (1999).

Catholic Social Teaching

Catholicism has the most comprehensive and systematic account of social teaching which has direct relevance to the social welfare sector. For a historical perspective of the development of its social teaching, see Duncan (1991), Coleman (1991), and Curran (2002).

An introduction to Catholic social teachings and its implications for social work practice can be found in Donaldson and Belanger (2012). They argue that Catholic social teaching reflects the Hebrew prophets' call to 'do justice, love goodness, and walk humbly with your God' (Micah 6:8) and that it is based on the life of Jesus. The teaching of the church has been gathered together in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2004). Many of the early documents focussed on the concern for labour conditions, rights to just wages, and special consideration for the poor. In 1963, John XXIII directed his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* not just to Catholics but all people of good will, calling for international dialogue on social and economic questions which threatened world peace. Several encyclicals, such as *Populorum Progressio*, have examined and commented on the world market system and the resulting inequality. Other encyclicals have re-affirmed the value and dignity of each human life and the need to protect it. One of the most recent papal encyclicals, *Caritas In Veritate*, encourages that form of love that leads people to 'faith-inspired engagement in the world'. It identifies justice as the 'primary way of charity' and the obligation for love, truth, justice and solidarity to inform economic life, including trade, globalization, personal business transactions, immigration and assistance to poor countries (Donaldson and Belanger 2012, p. 122).

Donaldson and Belanger (2012) argue that Catholic Social Teaching begins with two interlocking principles of the dignity of the human person and the common good. The dignity of the human person is rooted in the belief that all people are created in the image of God. Promoting the human good and the situation which enables human beings to flourish involves fostering associations and institutions in all spheres of human life (family, community, economic, political and spiritual) and directing them towards the common good.

A third major principle is that of solidarity. This is the recognition that people have a mutual responsibility for each other. It is expressed in the commitment to the good of one's neighbour.

A fourth principle is subsidiarity which includes 'the vision for the ordering, functioning and governance of society whereby individuals, families and civil society have the autonomy to fulfil the functions they can fulfil without government interference'.

The fifth principle is a special or preferential concern for people who are poor and vulnerable.

An extensive body of literature examines how these principles apply to general social welfare work including McMillan (2012), Constable (2012), and Brenden and Shank (2012). Massaro (2007) looks more generally at Catholic social teaching, its central vision and its application in relation to welfare in the USA.

There are a few articles on Catholic social teaching and its relationship with Australian social policy and welfare such as Duncan (2003; 2012) and Haeusler (2003). Crisp (2010) in 'Catholic Agencies: Making a distinct contribution to Australian society welfare provision?' argues that the Catholic Church has a deep resource in Catholic Social Teaching. However, she quotes Bruce Duncan in suggesting that

> Catholics ... make very poor use of [Catholic Social Teaching], despite vast practical efforts in the fields of health, education and social services ... Although we have developed a great rhetoric of social justice in Catholic circles, and have clearly identified a set of principles to guide our policies, we have barely begun to explore their implications beyond our immediate concerns (Duncan 2004 quoted in Crisp 2010).

Nevertheless, Crisp concludes that Catholic agencies have been influenced by it in that they have not excised the spiritual from the more prosaic needs of the individuals who seek assistance from welfare providers. Nevertheless, she suggests that the extent to which people were treated holistically depended largely on particular staff involved in service delivery rather than on the ways that agencies as a whole are working (Crisp 2010, p.451).

Other Denominational Perspectives

Other denominations also bring their specific denominational traditions to bear on social welfare, as has been described in general terms by West and West (2000), Fitzgerald (2011) and Schindler (2008). Writing in the USA, Schlinder argues that

there has been a decline in civil society, in family, neighbourhood, church, and civic associations. Society is dominated today by the individual, the state and market. He explores the doctrinal resources of Christianity in the political theology of St Thomas Aquinas, papal encyclicals, John Calvin and other prominent theologians in history to defend what he considers to be the irreducible identity and value of the social institutions that serve as the connective tissue of a political community. He argues that the church should make its contribution on the basis of the 'common good' (Schindler 2008, p.180).

Wendy Dackson (2012), in 'Anglicanism and Social Theology', examines both pre-Reformation and post-Reformation teaching that has contributed to an Anglican social theology. She argues that the 'trajectory of Anglican social theology …is one of the church's service to society' (Dackson 2012, p.637). She points to such themes as Anselm's theological reflection on the restorative and proportional nature of divine justice. She also notes the recently expressed concern of Rowan Williams for moral education with a focus on character formation as a basis for participation in society (Dackson 2012, p.637).

McKay (2008) contains a group of essays about basic theological concepts such as the concept of human dignity and its relationship to welfare written from a (Scottish) Presbyterian perspective. Some of the essays discuss refugees and war.

Ekstrand (2011) writes from a Swedish Lutheran perspective about why churches engage with social welfare issues, what sorts of values they argue for, and how they should understand their roles.

The Anabaptist tradition has emphasised following Jesus, particularly in relation to 'the concrete social meaning of the cross in its relation to enmity and power'. Anabaptists have emphasised servanthood as replacing dominion, and forgiveness as absorbing hostility (Yoder 1994, quoted in Wolfer 2011).

Anabaptists have maintained that the church and the government work in distinctive spheres and have different responsibilities. As a consequence of that, Anabaptists have sometimes rejected government finance for welfare projects. Rather, they have sought to identify ways in which the church may supplement the basic welfare services for which they believe the government to be responsible.

Appropriate Theological Methodologies

One recent development in theological methodology has been the focus on constructing local theologies. It has been argued that theology is not about the development of universal concepts, but the expression of faith that is specific to particular cultures and circumstances. The leader of this movement is Robert Schreiter who captured attention with his book *Constructing Local Theologies* (1985). This movement gives permission to community welfare agencies to reflect theologically in their own particular situations.

The Australian theologian Gerard Arbuckle who has written extensively about the Catholic health system in Australia and in other parts of the world has focussed on the theological method rather than particular theological concepts. In Arbuckle (2007), for example, he argues that health and welfare agencies should be guided by theological narrative in the development of their welfare using inductive methods, rather than having a particular set of rules thrust upon them. This is also a theme in his earlier volume (Arbuckle 2000).

Spirituality Rather Than Religion

While religiosity has declined in Australia, some people have turned to concepts of spirituality. In a national survey of Australian adults in 2009, more people identified themselves as 'spiritual' than as 'religious' (Hughes 2012b). An empirical analysis by Kaldor, Hughes and Black (2010) identified two major forms of spirituality in Australia: an eclectic form and a nature-oriented form.

There is a growing literature on the use of notions associated with spirituality in social welfare. One substantial book is that of Crisp (2010), *Spirituality and Social Work*. Crisp argues that, for much of the twentieth century, professional social work sought to distance itself from its religious origins with the consequence that the role of spirituality in the lives of service users tended to be sidelined. Yet it is clear, she says, that many people begin to explore their spirituality precisely at times when they are trying to make sense of difficult life circumstances or experiences and may come into contact with social workers. She suggests that, in recent years, there has been an increasing understanding that, in order to be relevant to the lives of people they work with, social workers need to go beyond their material needs. However, she suggests, there is little understanding of how spirituality can be sensitively incorporated into practice, especially when either practitioners or service users have no religious affiliation or there is no shared religious background.

Crisp (2010) offers social workers ideas for beginning conversations in which spiritual values and beliefs may surface, allowing service users to respond from their own framework and to begin to discuss the specific religious or spiritual practices and beliefs which are important to them. She considers spirituality in the context of lived experience, a perspective that, she argues, breaks down any mystique and suspicion of explicitly religious language by focusing on language and experiences with which most people can identify. She suggests that such a framework allows the exploration of issues that emerge at different stages in the lifespan, both by persons who are religious and those who do not identify with any formal religion. Most literature on spirituality within social work refers to the elderly, to those who are sick or have been bereaved. Yet, as Crisp points out, spirituality is important for people of all ages and not just at those particular times in life.

Implications for Church-based Welfare Organisations Today

Most church-based welfare agencies in Australia began with the conviction that the Christian should express compassion towards others. It was frequently held that the most important work was the salvation of the individual soul, and that this was facilitated by assisting the poor materially. From early times, there was an emphasis on the 'undeserving' poor: particularly orphaned children and children of unwed mothers, or in families abandoned by the father. The charity offered to the poor was a sign of God's love and, from the point of view of the giver, a response to God's love.

Since the 1950s, every facet of church-based welfare has changed and has become contested. The theology has been challenged. Some see the work of welfare as salvific in its own right and part of God's mission. As community services address social structures, they are contributing to building 'the Kingdom of God'. Salvation is often seen in holistic and communal ways, rather than simply a change in an individual.

On the other hand, there are many professionals employed by the agencies, as there are many clients of the agencies, who do not have any commitment to the Christian faith. Humanistic values of care for others motivate some. For some a generalised attention to human spirituality is more helpful than religion.

In the 1960s, there was a change from the focus on aiding those in need to examining the causes of such need. This new focus was often formulated using the non-religious professional terminology of psychological and social work. Indeed, in many aspects of welfare, from the writing of histories to the design and provision of services, there have been significant tensions between religious perspectives and non-religious perspectives informed by professional training in the human sciences. There is currently a further shift to proactive development of positive wellbeing and high levels of social capital across society. However, given this shift of focus, it is not clear where the commitment to the most vulnerable and marginal sits. At the same time, the needs have changed. Rather than children orphaned or of lone parents being the focus, issues of domestic violence, mental health, substance abuse, homelessness, and refugees, for example, have come to the fore. Within this more complex welfare scene, the need for professional expertise has become increasingly evident.

Denominational bodies have become somewhat ambivalent about their relationships to some of their agencies. Local churches have frequently felt estranged and, in some places, have moved to establish their own local welfare work. Churches are no longer the major source of staff, volunteers or finances for most major faith-based community service organisations. Government has become the major funding source, and welfare agencies also look to the wider community including the corporate sector for assistance. However, how the agencies should relate to government and the wider community, and the extent to which they should be driven by the agendas of these other bodies, rather than the agendas of the church, is very much a matter for discussion. There are significant differences in the literature on the extent to which government funding compromises the prophetic and advocacy roles these organisations can or should have.

Debates about the future directions of social welfare in Australian society, at both theological, professional social welfare, and political levels continue. There is continuing ebb and flow in changing religious, social welfare, and political language and understanding. The literature in the historical narrative and the theology points to the fact that while there are deep roots to some basic principles, significant changes are occurring. Different theological traditions of accommodation to society and maintaining distinctiveness in relation to society (as identified by Niebuhr 1951) take community service organisation in different directions. Understanding the issues is an important basis for preparing leaders in welfare to wisely and skilfully negotiate the whitewater of contemporary Australian society.

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