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Response to Steve Walton

Helen Hekel

I really enjoyed Steve Walton's paper, and in preparing my own, I have found the way that he has drawn out the distinction between patronage and partnership particularly helpful. I suspect – as I hope came through in my paper – that if those of us working in aid and development are really honest with ourselves, we have not often clearly thought through the distinctions between them. Without this kind of clarity in articulating what we think we are doing and want to do, it is quite easy to be confused in our behaviour and practice – meaning that what we *want* to be partnership continues to contain elements of patronage, perhaps especially as we pursue 'best practices' that place demands on those with whom we are in the kind of partnership that is not mutual.

On Steve's second question about the training of future church leaders, I think there is scope for stronger mutual relationships between academics and practitioners and trainee church leaders. Practitioners have much to say about the reality of the experience of seeking to serving those living in poverty in ways that honour people's God-given dignity and agency. Equally, academically trained theologians can help practitioners to reflect on, critique and – where necessary – develop their practice so that their work more closely reflects their aspirations. In the case of Christian development organizations, such as Tearfund, this aspiration is for *koinonia*, *true* partnership, rather than partnership in name only.

A further challenge to both 'parties' in dealing with the reality of practical service is the demand of other 'patrons' – such as a charity's donors or supporters. Charities such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are often mediators between a wide range of benefactors and beneficiaries. Often we find that while these patrons value partnership as a model, they do have a variety of assumptions or demands which make it harder to become a true partner, rather than a patron to those with whom we work in communities around the world.

We have to navigate this not only in our work with those living in poverty whom we seek to serve but also in the ways we talk about our work to those we want to

serve by stewarding their financial gifts well. In his paper, Steve discussed some of the ways that Paul challenged and subverted the common contemporary understandings of patronage as he aimed to shape the giving-relationships in the early church. What can charitable organizations learn from Paul's rhetoric and ideas as we tell the story of the work we of which we are a part, so that our supporters can become partners too?