Bible Society

# Trends in **Christian Philanthropy** in the UK

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# 1. Introduction

## 1. Introduction

Giving to faith-based charities in the UK remains strong. Whilst charitable giving declined during the recession of 2008[1], faith-based organisations did not on the whole experience a decline in their income. Some even saw it increase as their donors were aware that many others would be experiencing the recession in a far deeper and more painful way. Such persistent generosity bears witness to the commitment of the many donors supporting these organisations. Nevertheless, the continued pressure of secularisation is impacting the charitable sector, changing both donor practices and the way in which faith-based organisations operate.

Against this backdrop, the aim of this research was to explore trends within Christian philanthropy. This was partly to gain insight into precisely how faith and philanthropy are connected, and what motivates and influences Christian philanthropists in their giving. More specifically, the purpose of the study was to examine how spiritually-orientated projects and organisations fare in relation to those with a more social focus. This particular research question emerged in part because of a widely-held perception that support for social action is increasing at their expense. Our primary research question was therefore: has there been a shift in giving amongst Christian philanthropists from causes that focus on spiritual transformation to those that emphasise social transformation? Before addressing this question, however, we first sought to gain insight into general trends in Christian philanthropy in order to understand the motivations and rationale underlying it and provide a context from which to address the primary research question.

The report begins with a summary f the main findings (chapter 2), followed by an outline of the method of data collection used (chapter 3). The main body of the report is divided into two parts, the first of which addresses the main research question (chapters 4 and 5), and the second of which focuses on general trends in Christian philanthropy (chapters 6 and 7). Finally, chapter 8 outlines the future of Christian philanthropy according to the data collected. The report has been designed such that it does not need to be read in the order in which the chapters have been arranged; rather, parts I and II function as stand-alone documents and can be approached in any order depending on readers' interests.

There have been a number of studies published in recent years that touch upon Christian giving and provide a helpful context for this research. *Why We Give,* a quantitative study conducted by Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) in 2014, emphasises the positive impact of religious faith on giving, finding it to be one of the most

[1]The impact of the recession on charitable giving in the UK (NVCO; CAF 2009).

significant motivators for charitable giving in the UK. Yet although 'religious causes' were found to attract substantial funding, a report titled *UK Giving 2015,* also published by CAF, suggests that it does so primarily from those within the 65 plus age bracket. In light of the risk this poses to their future supporter base, this is perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing Christian charities today. Indeed, Tearfund's *Joyful Givers* (2016) highlights concern amongst philanthropists that the younger generation's zeal for social justice is *'more likely to be expressed through volunteering or activism rather than financial giving.'*

In addition to these studies, in 2016 Theos published *Christian Funders and Grant-Making,* the results of a study of Christian grant-making trusts. This identified 'a particular trend towards supporting social action work,' with comparatively few funders supporting more 'spiritually' orientated activities such as evangelism. Evangelism was categorised as a 'marmite' issue, with almost half of those interviewed expressly stating that they would not fund it. Interestingly, a survey by New Philanthropy Capital (2016) titled *What a Difference a Faith Makes: Insights on faith-based charities* found that faith-based charities have a similar apprehension towards evangelism.

Whilst these reports are comprehensive in addressing their aims, there are a number of gaps as far as our research questions are concerned. The CAF report is not explicitly focused on the Christian population, although seemingly representative of the views of a considerable number of 'religiously motivated' givers. The Theos report focuses specifically on Christian funders, understood as 'registered charities that make grants to organisations… and that have some form of Christian ethos.' Thus, it does not capture the funding that passes from individuals to churches or Christian charities, for example. The NPC report focuses on faith-based charities as a whole, and Tearfund's research focuses solely on their supporters and those with a connection to their work.

The aim of this research was to build on studies such as these in order to provide a solid evidence base from which to further the conversation on these issues. It is not 'representative' in the conventional sense of the word, but rather, by gathering a range of views and perspectives, offers glimpses into how Christian philanthropists think and act. Therefore, we have sought to retain the different voices and perspectives emerging from the data as far as possible, whilst at the same time organising these into a coherent narrative.

# 2. Executive Summary

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### *a. The social and the spiritual in Christian philanthropy*

Our hypothesis was that there has been a shift in Christian philanthropy from causes that emphasise spiritual transformation to those that give priority to social transformation. While many felt that this is a trend, most said that it does not apply to their own giving. In reaction to this perceived trend, some have in fact increased their giving towards spiritually-orientated causes. Nevertheless, the relationship between the spiritual and the social is complex, and we found that:

- It is not easy to define what is 'spiritual' and what is *'social'* since their boundaries are porous.
- Many view both the spiritual and the social as part of the Christian message, and are supportive of both, albeit to varying degrees.
- Those who have sensed a shift in their giving towards the social tended to make less of a distinction between the two.
- Even those who have moved towards the social are open to funding evangelism, prayer and discipleship if there are good and innovate ideas.

The data suggests that organisations whose focus is more *'spiritual'* than *'social'* can and should approach Christian philanthropists with confidence.

### *b. The where, why and how of Christian philanthropy*

For Christian philanthropists, it is primarily their faith that motivates them to give. While they differ in their approach to giving and in the criteria they use to make decisions, the data brought to light several points of similarity:

- Both philanthropists and charitable organisations spoke at length about impact, measurability, and accountability. Nevertheless, by far the most significant factor influencing where Christian philanthropists choose to direct their giving is relationship. To the extent that donors' behaviour contradicts their rationale, it is always along relational lines.
- Impact is an important consideration for philanthropists when they are deciding where to direct their giving; however, there was an acknowledgement that some causes – such as start-ups and those with a focus on the spiritual – need to be evaluated differently since their impact is often not immediately evident.

- The idea of *'stewardship'* is gaining traction amongst Christian philanthropists. The implications of this are that:

  - Philanthropists are increasingly concerned about how much they should keep as opposed to how much they should give;
  - Philanthropists feel a sense of responsibility and accountability towards their giving; there is a desire to 'give well';
  - Philanthropists are keen to give of themselves as well as their finances, and for some this can be seen in their involvement in the causes to which they give.

From the perspective of charitable organisations, causes that are *'tangible'* or *'definable',* such as capital projects, are much easier to raise funds for than those that are *'intangible'* or *'abstract',* such as research, advocacy, or operational costs. There is a recognition that innovation is desperately needed; however, it is difficult to access funding for this since the outcomes are often uncertain and there is an element of risk involved.

***c. The future of Christian philanthropy***

The Charities Aid Foundation report *UK Giving 2015* suggests that although *'religious causes'* still attract considerable funding, this is primarily from those above the age of 65. This is a risk for Christian charities today; in fact, several of those that we interviewed identified their failure to engage younger donors as one of their major risks. Our findings indicate that younger donors are moving away from supporting larger organisations and are instead looking for new ways to give that cut out the intermediaries. We also found that:

- Many are keen to support spiritual causes such as evangelism, church planting, and mission, but their conception of these is broader than previous generations;
- Philanthropists across the board are looking for innovative ideas to support, and it is likely that this will include the use of technology;
- There is significant interest in impact investment, although it is still early days.

# 3. Method

## 3. Method

This is a qualitative, interview-based study, the aim of which was to 1) build a richly detailed, macro-level picture of current trends in UK Christian giving from the perspective of the Christian community broadly conceived, 2) gain a deeper understanding of the factors underlying these trends, and 3) explore Christian philanthropy with a view to gaining insight into how Christian philanthropists navigate giving towards causes with a more explicitly spiritual focus.

### *a. Data collection*

The findings of this report are based on 47 in-depth, focused interviews, together with an additional 4 context-building conversations with researchers engaged with the topic.

An interview guide with 8-10 targeted questions provided a rough framework for the interviews. It was broadly divided into three key themes: current giving habits and the rationale behind these, changes in practice, and more specific questions concerning spiritually-orientated giving. Through the interview process and regular conversations with the research team at the Bible Society, the questions themselves evolved and matured.

Furthermore, the interview guide was such that it could be adapted according to each individual context. For instance, a couple of interviewees had sudden time constraints, and in those cases the interview was adapted on the spot with a focus on the questions most relevant for that particular individual. At other times, the flow of conversation between the researcher and interviewee took the interviews in unexpected directions.

Since our aim was to explore both the perceptions of those that have had significant engagement with Christian philanthropists – including employees of organisations offering philanthropic advice and fundraisers at Christian charitable organisations – and the perceptions of Christian philanthropists themselves, we conducted two sets of interviews that differed slightly in their focus. However, given that the purpose of the research was to encourage conversation amongst those both giving and in receipt of funding, we were careful to ensure that we captured both the similarities and differences in the ways in which they perceive and articulate the issues.

### *b. Interview process*

The majority of the interviews were conducted in person, with some via Skype. They typically lasted 30-45 minutes, with just a few under 30 minutes and several as long as 60 minutes or more.

Philanthropists were identified through a snowballing method. However, in order to mitigate against the potential bias that might have been present in the data set if all interviewees had come from the same networks, we used several initial contacts that were unknown to each other as entry points. One of the downsides of this approach was that fewer females participated in the research. We were also unable to interview as many philanthropists from the historical churches as we had originally intended.

### *c. Demographics*

In total, we spoke with 33 philanthropists, 3 representatives from different grant-making trusts and foundations, the directors or relationships managers of 7 charitable organisations, and the heads of 4 philanthropic organisations. We wanted to cover a variety of perspectives, but due to the nature of our approach we were not aiming to make broad generalisations. We instead wanted to capture a wide range of voices that would provide us with an illustrative sample from which we could gain more in-depth insight into the nuances of people's perspectives.

As such, we sought to interview members of all major Church traditions in the UK. We used Peter Brierley's classifications to codify the churches to which interviewees belong or associate. Such church classifications are admittedly problematic amongst Protestants, if less so for members of the historical churches.

Many of those we interviewed have moved between denominations and only loosely associate with a particular one, while others do not identify with a denomination at all. We have therefore classified interviewees according to their current local church.

The Anglican Church had the highest representation with 17 participants attending, and of these, all but one belong to Evangelical churches. There were also representatives from New Churches (4), Independent Churches (2), Baptist (2), Methodist (1), and Church of Scotland (1). From the historical churches we interviewed Catholics (5) and a member of the Greek Orthodox Church (1).

We also had a category labelled *'Diaspora'* (6), which included first generation diaspora members from the Global South who do not necessarily attend diaspora churches, but nevertheless engage with diaspora communities. Regardless of denominational belonging, however, the majority of the participants identified themselves as *'Evangelical'* or are associated with Evangelical churches and movements (35).

In terms of geographical representation, the vast majority live in London (22) or the South East (11), but there were participants from most regions of the UK, including Northern Ireland (1), Scotland (2) and Wales (1). As noted above, the gender balance was weighted towards male participants (38). Finally, since one of the aims of the study was to capture trends it was important to get a good generational spread. We spoke to traditionalists (2), baby boomers (21), Generation Xers (17), and millennials (7).

***d. Analysis***

With participants' permission the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The qualitative research analysis software programme NVivo was used to assist the process of arranging and categorising the data. However, we also spent a significant amount of time analysing each interview as a whole in order to counter the risk of analysing quotations minus their context.

***e. Definitions and abbreviations***

***Philanthropist:*** Our definition of *'philanthropist'* was intentionally broad. When possible, and through use of the snowballing method, we allowed others to identify philanthropists. However, if pushed for a definition we defined them as those that give five figure sums and above per annum, and who to some extent think strategically about giving. It was particularly important not to define philanthropist too narrowly so that we could capture the upcoming generation of philanthropists.

***Spiritual:*** The term *'spiritual'* is also central to the research. We suspected that the phrase 'spiritual causes' was likely to be contentious, since our perception is that Christians in the UK are increasingly uncomfortable with a body/spirit dualism. We therefore grappled at length as to how to approach this. In the open-ended questions, interviewees were allowed to define the terms for themselves as and when they surfaced.

It was only in the last question that we introduced the term 'spiritual transformation' and pitted this against 'social transformation'. If and when we were asked how we define 'spiritual', we used words such as evangelism, prayer, spiritual formation, discipleship, and bible engagement.

**Abbreviations**
BB: Baby boomer (b.1946-1964)
CO: Charitable organisation
GM: Grant-making trusts and foundations
M: Millennial (b.1981-1995)
P: Philanthropist
PO: Philanthropic organisation
T: Traditionalist (b.1945 or earlier)
X: Generation X (b.1965-1980)

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# 4. Towards Social Causes?

## 4. Towards Social Causes?

### *a. Perceptions of a shift*

The main question behind this research concerns whether there has been a shift within Christian philanthropy towards causes that emphasise social transformation at the expense of more explicitly spiritual causes. Our data suggests that a high proportion of those interviewed perceived that such a shift had indeed occurred over the last few decades. However, we found that relatively few felt that this applied to their own giving, and if it did, it was not without qualification.

### *b. Towards a more social focus*

There were some who clearly felt that this trend applied to their own giving. A number of reasons for this change were given. Several referred to changes in their theology as having a knock-on effect on their giving, whether it was a broadened understanding of mission to include development and aid, or more 'holistic' understandings of the gospel as including both promises of spiritual regeneration and a way out of poverty:

> *'I think we've gone past just trying to make converts. You know, you can make converts that are still living in abject poverty. What kind of gospel is that'* (P: X)?

The most explicit verification of the shift came from a participant who was evaluating his inherited theology of giving as a result of a personal crisis (P: X).

Yet, for a number of those we interviewed, the shift in their giving was not so much seen as a shift at the expense of spiritual causes, but rather as an expansion into funding social causes as well. For some, this mirrored what they perceived to be a trend in Evangelical churches to be more socially engaged. An interesting case in point is that of a millennial who had started out by giving solely to his church, but as his income increased had begun to give to Christian aid organisations since he felt that his local church was wealthy enough and did not require his money. However, he did not view this as a shift from spiritual to social since he held that the aid organisations he supported were just as 'spiritual' as the church (P: M).

### *c. Towards more spiritual funding*

Interestingly, we found that some Christian donors have increased their giving towards spiritual causes in reaction to what they perceive to be a trend in the opposite direction. A Scottish philanthropist bluntly stated that: *'it is something I recognise as a trend and I'm very much against'* (P: T). Another philanthropist said: *'I'm resisting it, because I just think that there's so many other people who will support social transformation and I think that Christians should be giving to something a little bit more distinctively Christian'* (P: BB). Several interviewees voiced a concern that if Christians do not fund more *'spiritual causes,'* who will?

While people of all persuasions will fund charity, only Christians will fund causes that promote the gospel. For some, this has led to a wholesale cutting of social causes from their charitable funding lists. One baby boomer spoke of his own radical shift, which came about because he felt strongly that the church in the UK is not taking evangelism seriously enough (P: BB), while another has stopped funding development and aid to give greater priority to what he referred to as 'strictly orthodox spiritual Christian' causes (P: BB). There are also philanthropists in younger generations who have gone against what they perceive to be the flow.

For example, like a millennial interviewee stopped supporting a homeless charity and a youth charity in favour of funding missionaries working amongst unreached people groups (P: M). Finally, one interviewee has set up a church-planting initiative in direct response to their perception of a trend towards social causes in order to *'provide granularity around evangelism and church growth projects'* (PO: X).

> *'I think the church is so marginalised in society that we've got to look after our priorities, because no one else is going to do so'* (P: BB)

### *d. Little or no change*

Several participants felt that there has been little or no change in the balance between their giving towards spiritual and social causes. There are those who have remained consistent in prioritising the *'need for individual spiritual transformation… for salvation'* (P: BB), and some that have always focussed on social justice.

A philanthropist from the Greek Orthodox community simply stated that religion is a private matter, implying therefore that they would not consider giving to such causes (P: BB), and a Catholic interviewee who is a member of a family trust noted that the trust has never promoted Christianity per se (GM: X).

Finally, there were Evangelicals who have always been inclined to support social transformation. One reasoned that looking after the economic and social needs of others is a more effective means of achieving spiritual transformation (P: BB).

***e. Broadening definition of 'spiritual'***

The data therefore suggests that there is some evidence for the hypothesis that there has been a shift amongst Christian philanthropists towards giving to causes that focus on social transformation at the expense of those that emphasise spiritual transformation.

owever, the picture is far more complex than simply indicating a move in one direction or the other. There are clearly those who have increased or maintained their focus on spiritual giving in reaction to the perceived trend in which more humanitarian and societal causes are favoured.

There are also those who have seen little or no change in their giving. As for those who have shifted towards social causes, the complexity of this position increases once their reasoning is examined in more detail. As noted above, one reason given was that it is not so much that their giving to spiritual causes has decreased, but rather that it has expanded into other areas. Hence, these givers did not think that this constituted a shift in *'spiritual giving'.*

For many interviewees, the boundaries between spiritual and social are porous. We found that a number of respondents who were more likely to fund social causes also tended to downplay or even reject the demarcations between spiritual and social. For example, one interviewee, from an Asian background, lamented the dualism that he found prevalent in much Christian thinking on these issues: 'they have elevated that, the word, over and above our actions, to love our neighbour... We've unfortunately inherited this dualistic kind of worldview' (P: X). Such views chime with those held by a Catholic respondent, who on behalf of the Catholic community stated: *'we wouldn't actually make that distinction. So, we wouldn't say the spiritual is not the social, the social is not the spiritual... if we help refugees we don't think that's only practical, we think that's spiritual'* (CO: M).

For others, the boundaries between the spiritual and the social are maintained, but the Gospel is seen as consisting of both. In other words, the two go *'hand in hand: 'on the one hand, 'societal problems are rooted in the human heart'* and thereby require a spiritual solution, and on the other hand, *'if we don't address some of the systemic issues then individuals just end up in a very difficult place where they're unable to escape a poverty trap'* (P: X).

Others argued that God's love can be expressed both in word and in deed (P: M) and evangelism should allow people to both experience God's unconditional love and have the opportunity to comprehend it (P: X).

Admittedly, for some, Evangelical Christian development organisations are not spiritual enough, while for others they exemplify a good equilibrium between the social and the spiritual, for *'in a quiet way they're promoting Christianity as the reason for what they do'* (P: T).

Whether there has been a shift from causes that emphasise spiritual transformation towards those that focus on social transformation is thus intimately connected with how *'spiritual'* is defined.

For a significant proportion of those we interviewed, spiritual and social are not mutually exclusive. There appears to be a trend towards a more inclusive definition of what counts as spiritual, which is in turn rooted in a holistic theological understanding of the gospel. Thus, for many of the Evangelical interviewees funding the spiritual and social are two sides of the same coin:

*'I don't see the demarcation between the two. There's no sacred and secular, there's no humanitarian… I mean, it's all humanitarian and spiritual, at least from where I'm sitting. You know, so when Jesus gave water at that well to that Samaritan woman it wasn't just a physical or humanitarian act, it was a spiritual act also.'* (P: BB)

### *f. Spiritual and social*

Amongst our interviewees, there was a tendency towards appreciating that the Gospel contains a message of both spiritual salvation and practical help to the poor and marginalised. We asked respondents whether it is important for them that the projects and organisations they fund cover both of these dimensions, and then asked how they weighed their relative significance. Apart from those who have deliberately dedicated their funding exclusively to evangelism or related causes, there was strong support for holding the two together, although the preferred weighting between the two differed.

This is an issue that respondents genuinely wrestle with. A donor who supports missionaries to *'unreached people groups'* spoke approvingly of both their work to

*communicate the Christian message and their humanitarian efforts. When pressed on which they felt was more important, they referred to the life of Jesus which was 'totally both'; they noted that whilst ultimately eternal life is more important, in praxis Jesus acted as though it is '50-50'* (P: M). Another young philanthropist was also hard-pressed to say which was more important. They used an example of a project building wells in Africa, which was *'bringing spiritual and physical water to a dry land'* (P: M).

Some had a preference towards funding social causes that also have a spiritual outcome. In order to illustrate their thinking on this issue, a young donor used an example of an orphanage that they support that is run by Christians. Whilst not explicitly evangelistic, many of the children at the orphanage have become Christians through exposure to Christianity in their upbringing (P: M). Another donor referred to the 'old Victorian thing of bread and Bibles;' whilst their preference is towards social causes, they lamented that many development organisations have toned down their Christian identity in order to obtain governmental funding. For them, *'the two are really important'* (P: X).

However, we also came across an alternative narrative amongst Evangelicals which gives prevalence to *'proclamation'* and views mission in terms of the spoken word.

For example, one interviewee supports a church planting network. He believes in *'the church's primary role in the proclamation of the word and people finding their eternal life in Jesus'* and would only support 'mercy ministries' as far as they are part of the outreach of the local church. Whilst he insisted that it is a Christian duty '*to love mercy, act justly, to love the poor and the oppressed,*' for him, these are different from proclaiming the pure Gospel (P: BB).

Another donor argued that *'the spiritual has got to be the lead element,'* but that this does not preclude him from giving to social causes (P: BB). This reasoning was echoed by another participant who estimated that 80% of his giving is 'focused on explicitly gospel stuff, so either churches or evangelism' (P: BB).

***g. Reasons behind the perception***

Given that we found limited evidence amongst our interviewees themselves of a shift towards funding social causes in favour of spiritual causes, what lies behind this widely held perception? Whilst the data set does not enable us to be definitive about this, we can table the ideas advanced by the research participants themselves.

A fundraiser at one charitable organisation suggested that it might be *'charity driven rather than donor driven;'* that is, whilst donors still have a 'heart for salvation,' charities are more likely to emphasise *'saving lives'* than 'saving souls' (CO: BB).

One suggestion was that this idea has been created by churches and Christian charities. One interviewee made the point that there is a lack of supply; whilst they could refer to a number of successful Christian charities tackling societal issues that have emerged in the last few decades, they could not think of a single *'Scripture-based teaching organisation'* that has emerged during the same time period (P: M). Another put it down to a *'gap of awareness:'* those focused on social transformation are better at marketing and engaging with the public, and therefore people are reliant on their churches telling them about more spiritually-focused causes to which they can give (P: M).

One philanthropist responded to this question by using the example of a programme that he had helped to set up. Whilst the programme originally aimed to attract church planters, Christians engaged in social evangelism and those in business, he observed that the vast majority of its participants are engaged in social evangelism. He attributed the shift to several 'attitudes' he has come across: a sense of disillusionment with the church; the knowledge that running a church is hard work: *'I'd rather let other people do that;' and the fact that the church has not been good at understanding and engaging with entrepreneurs, and therefore, understandably: 'those people don't think: actually, I can use my entrepreneurial gifting to start a church and run a church'* (P: X).

In part, the shift towards social causes was attributed to how churches have increasingly promoted intertwining the social and the spiritual. This drive towards holistic ministry was critiqued as naïve by some, inevitably leading to the demotion of *'the Christian […] element'* (P: BB)

A few respondents suggested that there has been a shift in the church's language, theology and practice. Whilst others saw it as a positive attempt by the church to break out of its ghetto mentality and reach out to society (P: T). One donor remarked that church leaders do not speak enough about evangelism, and at the same time, secularisation is making the pool of Christian donors smaller (P: BB). Consequently, there is less money available for Christian charities and churches.

Some also attributed what they saw as a change to the pressures that come with living in a secular society that does not value religious activities: *'I can understand why that's a question, because I would imagine the answer of most people is that there has been a shift towards [social transformation]. Because I think their answer is, is that it's probably a little bit less acceptable to be [Christian]'* (P: BB). The director of a philanthropic organisation did not feel that he was in a position to comment on whether there has been a change or not, but suggested that there has certainly been a change of language amongst grant-making trusts, toning down religious statements out of fear of being seen as *'anti-social'* (PO: X).

This was confirmed by a member of the board of a grant-making foundation, who explained that the reluctance of the foundation to fund overtly evangelistic projects was because *'we're all a little bit conscious of the fact that we are potentially under a bit of attack from the secular sector'* (GM: BB). One interviewee observed that 'quite a few Christians are struggling with this issue of humanitarian versus spiritual because of, you know, because of secularism, because of institutional giving and all, where governments etc. are being a bit more, wanting to be seen as fair, even-handed in terms of what they're giving, not just to one particular religious group or another' (P: BB). An interesting suggestion was made by the director of another philanthropic organisation. He suggested that the push towards helping the poor and the marginalised within the churches in the UK was driven by the quest for legitimacy in order 'to break the stigma of being a Christian' in a secular society, *'as opposed to just being comfortable that evangelism in and of itself is a good thing'* (PO: BB).

It was also suggested that the shift is due to complacency amongst Christians thinking that the task has been done; the world has been evangelised and the Bible has been translated into most of the world's languages, so why bother (P: BB)?

Another view is that there has been a *'commodification of giving,'* in which giving is seen as an investment that is expected to offer a return (PO: X). Naturally, it is harder to measure the return for spiritual activities. In a similar vein, some felt that spiritual causes are harder to raise funds for because of their *'intangibility'*; it is simply difficult to know what the outcome is going to be (P: BB). It is a problem of measurability, and the assumption here is that spiritual causes fare worse in a climate where donors wish to see concrete measurable results delivered.

However, not all interviewees were convinced that there has been a shift. The director of one of the charitable organisations we interviewed said that it has always been the case that *'raising money to fund cataract operations is easier than asking for money to help church leaders learn how to disciple people.'* This director, who runs a charity that largely encourages discipleship, does not lament this but rather celebrates the contribution of Christian social action and the many new innovative organisations in this space (CO: X).

# 5. Giving to Spiritual Causes

## 5. Giving to Spiritual Causes

### *a. Harder to fund?*

Regardless of whether or not there has been a shift in favour of more social and humanitarian causes, there was a consensus amongst respondents that it is easier to find funding for these causes. Several fundraisers and those working in philanthropy argued that people are more easily motivated for causes focusing on poverty alleviation and disaster relief than evangelism and church-planting. Some of the reasons for this have already been mentioned, including the difficulty of identifying measurable outcomes. One founder of several Christian charities pointed towards the longevity often required in order to see the results of spiritual transformation, that in any case tend to be inward. Further, spiritual transformation implies investing in people and people often fall short of expectations (P: X).

The head of one Christian philanthropic organisation was ambivalent about whether or not it is harder to find funding for spiritual causes, arguing on the one hand that *'a lot of people find it very easy to fund caring for the poor and marginalised, and less so for evangelism,'* whilst still asserting that his clients, individual Christian donors, remain 'passionate' about evangelism. In support of his view he referred to the Theos report of 2016, which found that less than half of the Christian trusts and foundations interviewed would fund explicit evangelism (PO: BB).

It is important to note that the more negative statements concerning raising money for *'spiritual'* causes came from individuals working for charitable organisations, grant-making trusts and philanthropic organisations. Our research, however, has taken this question to individual Christian donors as well, and there a different picture emerges. One of the main findings of this research is that, whether or not there has been a shift, individual donors are still open to funding 'spiritual' causes, but under certain conditions.

### *b. Evangelism, a 'Marmite' issue?*

For many of the Evangelical interviewees, *'spiritual transformation'* was implicitly and primarily associated with evangelism. Therefore, much of the discussion around 'spiritual' causes focused on proselytizing. It is clear that this is a contentious topic. Whilst there certainly are individuals that steer clear of evangelism, it was the family trusts and foundations that said they would not fund explicit evangelism. These confirm some of the findings of the report *'Christian Funders and Grant-Making'* published by Theos in 2016, which found that evangelism was a 'marmite' issue amongst grant-making trusts and foundations.

Nevertheless, it is clear from our research that individuals are overwhelmingly positive about funding, and indeed are funding, projects and organisations whose end goal is to see people adopt the Christian faith, whether it is labelled evangelism or something else. The extent to which those we interviewed are willing to fund evangelism varies. There were a group of interviewees who saw evangelism as the sole focus of their giving. As one participant explained, it is not that they are against other causes, but rather that they feel that *'it's much harder to get money for more out and out gospel causes (P: BB).'* A donor passionate about issues related to social justice nevertheless stated that their giving is guided by, *'the general principle of an urgent need to see the good news shared with communities that are desperately under reached'* (P: BB).

There are also those who are apprehensive about evangelism. Slightly uncomfortable with the question, one participant held that their faith is not as *'black and white'* as that and that they would therefore not fund evangelistic charities. Interestingly, they admitted that Alpha Courses, seen by many as the foremost evangelistic *'tool'* in the UK today, was something that they are funding and are indeed highly supportive of (P: X).

Other conditions on funding evangelistic activities included that *'they're mainstream, not too weird',* or are *'something we would be proud of, and not, you know, coercive or, you know, somehow funny.'* (P: X).

Another disillusioned funder struggled with the lack of authenticity in evangelism and said that he would no longer want to be part of *'handing out tracts or bibles and offering to pray for people'* (P: X). For others, evangelism is not something that they do other than indirectly via giving to their local church (P: BB).

It is noteworthy that for many Christians, especially those from the historical churches, evangelism is seen to be the task of the church, and less so the responsibility of individual lay persons. A non-Evangelical member of the Church of Scotland said that evangelism was not part of her *'tradition',* but nevertheless she understood it to be an undertaking of the church, *'so, to the extent that the church is doing evangelism then yes, we do support it'* (P: BB).

Thus, whilst it is not that there are no hesitations around evangelism, we did find that most donors are willing to consider funding such endeavours under certain conditions, and that the methods and means matter to them.

### c. *New approaches, changing conceptions*

One thing that stands out in the data set is that conceptions of what constitutes evangelism are changing; or at least the methods and approaches to evangelism that interviewees are willing to fund have changed. For several participants, this entails a rejection of evangelism when manifested as *'big evangelistic rallies,' 'preaching at people, or 'standing at street corners handing out tracts,'* and this is primarily because it is considered ineffectual and culturally irrelevant. A number of alternative models for propagating the Christian faith were advanced, which are outlined below.

**Evangelism as witness and bridge-building**

Firstly, several interviewees spoke of *'witnessing'* and *'bridge-building'* as indirect modes of engaging people with the Christian faith. *'Witnessing'* was defined as *'being salt and light… provoking questions for people to ask or on a one-on-one or small group basis'* (P: X). This indirect witnessing could also refer to helping the poor and marginalised or standing for Christian values in the business world, influencing with an *'evangelistic thrust'.*

A great example of this was noted in an interview with a convert who gave extensively to evangelism when he first became a believer. This changed because two things became apparent to him: firstly, that *'99% of evangelistic efforts'* were ineffectual, and secondly, those that were successful did not produce disciples. As a result, he moved his giving from evangelism to what he calls bridge-building, and this can include initiatives such as handing out original and thought-provoking literature to those in positions of public leadership, as well as creating forums where Christians can meet with people of other faiths, or even no faith, to talk about life's great questions and issues facing humanity. In essence, the question for this interviewee is not whether to evangelise or not, but *'whether it's creative, unusual, different from the standard, and is going to touch people where they are from some unexpected angle, some angle which is where people are itching or hurting'* (P: BB).

**Relational approaches to evangelism**

Secondly, many valued more relational approaches to evangelism. As one business person argued, evangelism should flow out of genuine community and friendship, and this is why they are reluctant to fund *'solely evangelism'.* Thus, there was a willingness to fund ventures that provide forums for such personal exchanges to take place. Examples of this included funding purpose-built community centres which double up as churches. The appeal of this approach for one interviewee was

that it provided space to experience Christian spirituality in a form that appeals to a younger generation. It is less about apologetics and *'Billy Graham-like'* talks and more about conversation, relationship-building, 'journeying with people' and providing social services and care: *'That's what I like though… we are in a post-reasoning world and we are back to experiential things, so those experiences people have come in in a whole range of ways'* (P: X). It is for similar reasons that several funders spoke in favour of events that provide the space for discussion, listening, friendship and reciprocity.

**Church planting and innovation**

Thirdly, there is a high interest in investing in church planting. The appeal of church planting can partly be explained by its community-building potential. One interviewee spoke of the transformative power of grassroots movements such as local churches in India; these churches are a source of support and transformation, whether through affirming community members' Christian faith or through enabling the development of *'self-help groups,'* which can generate income (P: BB).

The rationale offered by another interviewee provides a further insight into the attraction of church planting. Contrasting event-based evangelistic organisations with church-planting projects, he justified his preference for the latter on the basis that it allows for discipleship, which he believes is a *'super important'* aspect of evangelism ministry, and one that also leaves a greater footprint in local communities. He spoke of the entrepreneurial aspect of church planting as something that appeals to him (P: X). With many of our interviewees having a business background, it is hardly surprising that they are drawn to church planting which implies innovation, entrepreneurs and start-ups. For example, speaking of an entrepreneurial church planting initiative that has had relative success in fundraising, one respondent emphasised the need to create *'high-grade product'* in order to generate interest for evangelism. He used terms such as planning, measurability, research and talent leadership (PO: X).

***d. Funding spiritual causes***

Whilst conversations around spiritual causes majored on evangelism, it is important to point out that what counts as 'spiritual' expands beyond this. Even those who are reluctant to fund explicitly evangelistic ventures are still open to funding other *'spiritual'* activities. For example, the representative of a grant-making foundation said that they would fund church-based activities and Christian outreach – in other words, activities that are *'actually supporting the mission of the church'* – however, they also said that: *'if you start talking about proselytism, we don't do that'* (GM: BB). It should also be noted that participants from different Christian traditions had different associations with *'spiritual'.* For instance, when asked to define *'spiritual',*

a Catholic interviewee referred to *'retreat, the writings of Teresa of Avilla, prayer, devotional, sacramental stuff',* but made no reference to evangelism (GM: X).

### Church giving

Many of our interviewees took giving to their local church for granted. In fact, the vast majority chose to mention their church giving without having been prompted to do so. We did not specifically ask interviewees whether they give to their church, but when we asked what kinds of causes they support, it became clear that for most, it is a priority. For one donor, *'the decision is ahead of the actual giving. […] By joining that church, we committed to supporting their various ventures'* (P: T). Several interviewees limit the amount they give to the church, and we encountered a range of reasons as to why. One explained that they do not give a full 10% to the church because they believe *'a good deal more is done by'* the other organisations that they support (P: BB). In a similar vein, another goes to a very wealthy church and feels that the other charities they support *'probably need my money more'* (P: M). A Generation Xer told us that they give to their church, but *'don't support it in an extraordinary way'* because they have found that if churches acquire too much wealth they begin to *'spend unwisely and end up with too many staff.'* Another Generation Xer said they have given *'very regularly' for 20 years, but are now beginning to question whether they 'believe in a, you must give your 10% to your local church.'* Lastly, a millennial said:

> *'I never want to be giving more than 10% of the church's giving. So the church should never be totally dependent on me. They should actually be getting, be sure that they're getting funds from quite a wide variety of sources, and that's partly when I first came to London I had a really well-paid job and I think I was one of the biggest givers in the church. And then I disagreed with something really fundamental and had to leave. And that kind of thing's really damaging for a church if you're a massive giver, a big proportion of their giving. And so, you kind of have to be sensitive that you don't get in that position.'*

It is interesting to note that for some philanthropists, their approach to church giving is intentionally different from that of their charitable giving. One interviewee referred to the lack of integrated thinking on the part of philanthropists, who 'use different parts of their brain and different pockets for their giving' (PO: X). As another told us:

*'When I give to the church, obviously it's nice for me to feel that money is used constructively to build the church. But actually, if I'm going to church, I'm really following instructions from God and it isn't in fact up to me to decide what happens to the money that I've given. If it's wasted, well if I've done my part, other people have to answer for their part. And if I really don't like the way it's being used in the church, I should leave. It's not the money that's the issue, it's me going to that church that's the problem. So, giving to church is never a difficult thing. The charitable side, it's structured, and I'm probably using more of my business intellect there' (P: X)*

Finally, it worth mentioning that even an interviewee who was not particularly interested in spiritual causes, a member of the Greek Orthodox community, would still consider giving to the church (P: BB). This is interesting, because most local churches engage in the range of activities typically associated with the word *'spiritual'.* However, our focus in this research was on giving to charities, organisations and projects that engage in spiritual activities.

**Prayer**

Whilst most are not against funding projects that focus on prayer in principal, there was a level of hesitancy about doing so. A couple of interviewees mentioned retreat centres and monastic orders as something that they either had funded or would consider funding (P: X), but in reality, few had thought about funding causes related to prayer. Although prayer is seen as an important Christian practice and therefore few would rule it out, not many had actually been approached about specific initiatives.

Some had questions about the level of funding that prayer requires. As one interviewee explained: *'I guess people never ask money for prayer, because it doesn't cost to pray'* (P: M). Another had no objection to prayer in principle but wondered whether funding such an initiative would merely be 'spinning the wheels' (P: X). One conscientious giver who puts an emphasis on measurable outcomes questioned whether he would fund anything linked to discipleship or prayer for the sole reason that it is difficult to measure (P: M).

**Encouraging Bible engagement**

There was a similar tentativeness around funding projects that seek to engage people with the Bible. Whilst interviewees were open to doing so, only a handful currently do. A number of caveats were noted by those who self-identified as potential future donors. A millennial said that they would not fund what they called *'the conservative Evangelical'* approach, which *'feels a bit like you're in school'*; however,

they would be supportive of an approach that encourages *'self-discovery'* and the *'ability to self-analyse'* (P: M). Others would support such projects, but under the condition that there was alignment with their specific view of the Bible or personal values.

An active supporter of biblical engagement said that one could study the Bible till *'the cows come home,'* but if did not result in action *'it's meaningless and worthless and it's a sham'* (P: BB). One interviewee noted that they would only be willing to give money to Bible-related projects in as far as they relate *'to real issues and real people's lives'* (P: BB). Finally, a Generation Xer who recognised a definite shift towards social causes in his own giving described this shift as an outcome of grappling with his Evangelical upbringing and his frustration with his church's superficiality.

He therefore emphasised authenticity as a criterion for funding evangelism. Interestingly, when pushed on whether he would give money to organisations focusing on biblical engagement, he admitted he would if it felt relevant to him. He proceeded to give an example of a biblical animation company that he would support (P: X).

**Promoting Christian values**

Some respondents are keen to promote Christian teaching, values and ideas in society. This was admittedly not a major theme within the interviews, but we found no substantial objections towards investing in projects with such aims in mind. Several spoke approvingly of charities that are based on Christian values even if not explicitly. Others had stronger views on the need for Christian values to be disseminated in society at large, whether in the business world, or by influencing leaders. One respondent reflected on how the Western world has lost its *'moral compass'* and from this point of view he saw a need for the recovery of a moral framework from the Bible (P: X).

# 6. The 'Where', 'Why' and 'How' of Christian philanthropy

## PART II: General Trends

### 6. The 'Where', 'Why' and 'How' of Christian philanthropy

Christian philanthropists give to a wide variety of causes, organisations, projects and individuals, ranging from the arts to evangelism, from national and international charities to local charities, cafes and churches, from start-ups to large, well-established organisations. Whilst the significant factor for some is the specific individual or organisation to which they give, for others it is the particular cause or geographic area that is of primary importance. Through the research, we sought to gain insight into why Christian philanthropists have made these choices, as well as the criteria underlying their decision-making processes; in other words, we wanted to understand why and how they give where they give. In this section, we present some of the main themes emerging from our research on the *'where', 'why'* and *'how'* of Christian philanthropy.

#### *a. Why do Christian philanthropists give?*

Whilst many of those that we spoke with mentioned multiple reasons for giving, biblical teaching, principles and mandates are a central driver.

For most, it is simply seen as something that flows from following Jesus: *'I mean, Jesus said if you love me you'll keep my commands, so I think part of being a disciple of Jesus is to give money'* (P: BB). We found that baby boomers were more likely to use words such as *'command', 'obligation'* and *'duty'* than those from younger generations. As one bluntly put it, *'I'm a Christian and it's a biblical imperative, so I do what I'm told'* (P: BB). A millennial, on the other hand, said: *'I understand Bible teaching on giving, but… I'm quite reluctant to do what I'm told'* (P: M). This individual's motivation for giving instead stems from their desire to support the church and its mission.

Others pointed towards giving as a natural response to God's grace, whether in terms of salvation or financial provision. One interviewee told us: *'it is an expression of my thanksgiving'* (P: BB). Several spoke of God's blessing: *'God's been very good to us and we feel, well, sharing is not a problem for us'* (P: X). A number referred to their philanthropic work as being a means of *'giving back'*; or in other words, sharing with others from their abundance.

Often, *'giving back'* was spoken of in the context of social justice and poverty alleviation. Biblical teaching on compassion for the poor and marginalised was regularly cited as a motivation for giving: *'I do it not because I think there's a bunch*

*of rules that say I should do it, I do it because I really feel compassionate, that I might be able to help and uplift somebody else.'* This same person, however, also spoke of the duty of giving: *'As a matter of fact, I think it's an obligation'* (P: BB).

A businessperson we spoke with emphasised that for philanthropists, money is not usually a scarce resource: *'For lots of the rest of the world money feels quite scarce. And so, if something is scarce for you, you tend to put probably an unnaturally high value on it. If you have a little more money, the thought process in your head begins to change.'* They told us that they genuinely feel *'thankful and grateful'* when given the opportunity to *'do something really good'* with their money (P: X).

> For several, what started out as an obligation developed into a realisation that *'it's a blessing to be able to give'* (P: M). Donors described the act of giving as: *'very joyful',* a *'pleasure',* and something that *'makes you feel good.'*

Some spoke of their personal experience of giving as being a major motivating factor. A respondent who referred to giving as a biblical commandment nevertheless said that ultimately: *'I don't give because I have to, I give because I want to, and I think that there are things that need support, and I have the opportunity and privilege to do that'* (P: BB). However, not all spoke of giving in such emotive terms. A businessman confessed that he does not get *'a sort of warm glow that people talk about;'* what motivates him is rather the existence of societal issues that need to be addressed (P: BB).

A young entrepreneur told us that he turned to philanthropy as a remedy for depression, and others referred to their giving as an *'antidote to consumerism and selfishness'* (P: X). The idea of stewardship was repeatedly mentioned as a motivating factor also. This is the idea that everything is a gift from God and that therefore everything ultimately belongs to him. Philanthropy then becomes an exercise of simply distributing that which does not belong to one anyway. Even the talent of money-making was seen by several as a tool to be used for the Kingdom of God.

Finally, to a lesser degree, giving was seen as a learnt behaviour from either family or tradition: *'It's something that I was taught from a very, very young age to do'* (P: X). Having grown up in a charismatic evangelical church, another said that tithing *'was a foundational principle… almost part of the blueprint of how I was brought up'* (P: X).

***b. Where do Christian philanthropists give and why?***

Most of those we interviewed give to their church, and many see this as a priority.

The majority support causes that would fit within the categories of social justice, education, youth and community, and a few mentioned health-related causes also. Others support individuals and organisations working in the areas of church planting, pastoral training, unreached people groups and persecuted Christians. A large number give towards causes such as evangelism and mission, but their conceptualisation of these is broad.

When asked whether there are any causes they have taken a conscious decision not to support, interviewees most often mentioned those related to animals – although their importance was stressed – and those that are explicitly anti-Christian. Some noted that they are not keen to take a negative approach to their giving, preferring instead to take the positive approach of focusing in on a few select areas. For many, however, whether or not they would support a cause was more to do with issues around management.

**The importance of relationship**

*Interpersonal relationships*

Relationship emerged as by far the most significant factor influencing where Christian philanthropists choose to direct their giving, appearing either explicitly or implicitly in every interview.

For many of those we interviewed, their relationships with those connected to the causes to which they give are a source of reassurance, understanding and insight. For one donor, the regular and personal follow-ups that a particular charity contacts him to arrange are one of the reasons why he continues to support it: *'its aims, objectives are in tune with what I like to give to, but also, they have a pretty good number of people on their staff who are good at keeping me as a potential donor up to speed with what they are aiming at and they'll contact me for a chat twice a year. And that persuades me. If they're interested enough to contact me directly, if they'd like to have a coffee or something, then I respond to that'* (P: T).

The importance of relationship was highlighted in interviews with grant-making bodies also, with one representative observing that: *'a lot of it comes out of the relationship with the people we know. And the partnership working is good, and there's people we value. […] You might get a cold application which you then, you develop the relationship, you get to know the people on the ground, and then you might say, you know what, I actually want to do more with this organisation'* (GM: BB).

*Introductions to funding opportunities*

Many of those we spoke with referred to *'approaches', 'requests', 'opportunities'* and *'invitations',* and it is clear that these are important means by which philanthropists become aware of need. When asked why they give to some of the particular causes they do, a few responded by simply saying that an opportunity arose and they had money to give. Nevertheless, donors cannot respond positively to all such requests. Interviewees told us that they get *'endless approaches', 'hundreds of requests'* and *'begging letters week in week out.'* Therefore, there is inevitably a selection process, and as one explained: *'you get a lot of deal flow, you can then kind of pick and choose what you like. I probably give to about 10-12 things, which I think is a… you know, I wouldn't want to have too many and lose track of it'* (P: BB).

*Affinity with a cause*

A philanthropist's relationship with a cause also emerged as important; as one told us, without this connection, it is: *'very hard to get enthused and excited and motivated to financially back it'* (P: X). Several said that they give to causes: *'that are close to our heart.'* Others referred to personal experiences as being the motivating factors behind their support of particular projects and organisations. For example, health problems, a perceived lack of support for Christians in public leadership and exposure to gang crime. The role of media in raising awareness of certain societal issues and inspiring action was also highlighted.

Good communication was mentioned by many as fostering relationship with and excitement for a cause, making it *'so much easier to give. Not that I wouldn't give if they were bad at writing emails, but this does make it easier because I know exactly what's happening out there and I feel a sense of being on the journey with them'* (P: M).

Yet the influence that a person's affinity with a cause can have on their giving can perhaps be best illustrated by one interviewee's reflection on why they would be willing to give towards one organisation focusing on bible engagement but not another: *'It feels contemporary. It feels useful to me, selfishly. Let me just have a look. What could the differences be? Yeah, it feels relevant, I think, to me'* (P: X). Others expressed similar views in relation to causes with a more spiritual focus, such as bible engagement or evangelism, emphasising the importance of those causes being *'aligned'* with their own beliefs.

*Relationship and the Catholic church*

A few interviewees noted differences they have encountered when engaging with Catholic donors. Whilst we are keen to avoid stereotypes, a couple of comments were mentioned several times. One interviewee said: *'they want to know the connection of the foundation to the Catholic Church […] for example, if we have a board member who is Catholic, a patron who is Catholic. These make a difference'* (CO: BB).

A Catholic told us that from their experience, Catholics feel that they *'need to support the Catholic church. Partly because the Catholic church asks you to support it. Every week. And it's in our culture and our psychology to support the Catholic church'* (CO: X).

*People as well as causes*

A related subtheme evidenced in the data set is the fact that *'very often it's a question of supporting people as well as causes'* (P: T). Several expressed a similar sentiment, noting for example that appeals are typically made by individuals and therefore one is often responding to an individual as much as a cause. One philanthropist noted that for them, there is an element of: *'I don't even know what that project's going to be in two years, but I'll probably do it if it's that person'* (P: X).

In several instances, this theme emerged through the course of the interview as participants were given the space to think and reflect. One interviewee, for example, when first asked what type of causes they support, told us that for them, it's more 'where the cause is' as opposed to what the cause is. When we asked what criteria they use to decide where to direct their funds, however, it became apparent that the most important is in fact connected to people and relationship: *'I'm not sure we're really that rational. […] it's really a question of trust, whether we like the person, we like the idea, whether they have a previous track record at being successful at something, or whether they're already established in some way.'* Later, they noted also in relation to criteria that in actual fact the essential element is really the *'authenticity'* of the person; something that it is hard to put one's finger on or define (P: X).

A businessperson, reflecting on the question of criteria during the interview, also concluded that they probably look more at people qualities than the projects themselves. They referred to *'soft skills'*; in other words, *'how passionate are people, how prepared are they to go the extra mile, what happens if the going gets tough, because it always does, what are they likely to do then'* (P: X).

It is interesting to compare these responses to that of the CEO of one charitable organisation when asked for his perception on the same question based on his personal experience of fundraising:

*'I think despite all the forms and proposals that are filled in, it's the same probably for most fundraising, which is that, and perhaps particularly for major donors, again, those from a business / commercial world, I think one of the things that happens is, they look you in the eye, and they look me in the eye as a chief executive, and really, it's a personal transaction. Do I believe that this guy is going to do something? And I think a lot of business is done that way, and I think a lot of giving is done that way as well. So fundamentally, I think, often in major donor giving there's a significant trust relationship between the chief executive and the person, who says yeah, I think he's the real deal, I think he's desperate to make a difference to young people, he's got a great team, he's leading it well, I trust him. […] Ultimately, people give to people before they give to projects' (CO: X).*

*The power of relationship*

One interviewee referred to *'the warm fuzzy feeling'* he experienced through his support of a particular cause, noting that this was because it was relational (P: X).

Relationships are therefore a powerful motivator for philanthropists. Another confessed that out of everything they have funded, the thing that has emotionally excited them the most is their support of a family member's charity (P: M). This is worth noting, because the same interviewee had told us earlier in the interview that they have been seeking to make their giving less emotional and more altruistic. Interestingly, the data set shows that, to the extent that donors' behaviour contradicts their criteria for giving, it is always along relational lines. By way of further example, a couple of interviewees mentioned that they support particular charities because the CEOs or founders are good friends, and both implied that were the personal relationships not there, they would probably have directed their giving elsewhere (P: X, BB). Another interviewee, having said that they would not support projects that are explicitly evangelistic, then added that they do however support one organisation that is evangelistic, but that is because it is supporting a relative (P: BB).

## The role of strategy

Strategy plays a vital role in philanthropists' choices of which causes to support. Many of those we interviewed have purposefully chosen to direct their giving towards a limited number of causes, because this is felt to enable 'proper' and more effective support. Others spoke of plans to cut down on the number of causes to which they give, to enable *'deeper'* and *'more committed'* giving. One interviewee noted that they are gradually moving away from supporting bigger charitable organisations in favour of smaller start-ups: *'the main theme there is fewer things, more personal involvement, and much bigger financial commitments'* (P: X). A millennial admitted that whilst they have not yet taken steps to focus their giving, it is something they have in mind for the future: *'from the outside it can seem a little bit ad hoc, because it's been tightly coupled to the people we're close to. […] I'm pretty sure, my sense is that we're going to have to become much more tightly defined around our focus. But we're not exactly there yet'* (P: M). This trend towards giving greater support to fewer organisations correlates with observations made by the director of one charitable organisation. Referring to conversations they have had with grant-making trusts, they were positive towards this trend, since they see it as a way for such trusts to both 'make a bigger difference' and better understand it (CO: X).

Many are either put off supporting causes that they perceive to be well-funded, or keen to give to causes that are more difficult to raise funds for. We asked the CEO of a philanthropic organisation how his work has influenced his approach to giving, and his response was that he has realised that for the causes that pull at people's heartstrings: *'you think, well, somebody should do something. But of course, that emotion's felt by everybody'* (P: BB). He now purposefully looks for those causes that are more difficult to attract support for. Other interviewees operating with the same rationale have chosen to give to areas such as *'out and out gospel causes'* (P: BB), pastoral training (P: BB), new charities (P: GX), and infrastructure: 'if you don't have infrastructure you cannot do projects' (P: BB).

For a large number of those we spoke with, it is of primary importance that they give to Christian organisations because only Christians will do so. Referring to a non-Christian organisation that they are not currently supporting, one interviewee was very honest in saying: *'I love what they do, but I just know that I can't support everything, and so they're one, they're something that, I haven't decided not to support them, I wish I could. But I can't do everything. And I'm saying to myself, I think there are lots of people who aren't necessarily believers who will support that'* (P: BB). One of the reasons given for prioritising Christian causes was that: *'the church is so marginalised in society that we've got to look after our priorities, because no one else is going to do so'* (P: BB), another was the desire to give to something 'distinctively Christian' (P: BB).

**A desire for impact**

Philanthropists are keen for their money to have impact, yet there are seemingly as many interpretations of impact as there are philanthropists. One donor spoke of *'strategic'* impact: *'where are the areas that I feel are under resourced, which can have a strategic impact on a particular issue'* (P: X). Another emphasised *'transformational'* impact, and for them, assurance of this type of impact stems from the relationships they have with those they support (P: X). Still another spoke of the *'meaningful'* impact that a small development organisation they support has, which rather than simply being about *'impact per pound'* is a result of the way in which it works alongside local churches (P: X).

Nonetheless, in spite of its inherent subjectivity and range of interpretations, impact is evidently a critical part of philanthropists' decision-making processes. It was mentioned in every interview. For some, their choice is made purely on the basis of which causes are the most *'impactful'.* Several made reference to their own limited resources as being a driving factor in their desire to choose those that are *'most effective'.* For others, the value that their potential contribution will bring to a cause is an important consideration; in other words, will the money make a difference, or as one said, *'am I going to add extra value or am I just joining a throng?'* (P: BB).

For some, the desire for their donations to make a difference has resulted in an unwillingness to support charities with high overheads. This was mentioned by many of those we spoke with, particularly in relation to salaries.

One donor described their reaction to a recent pitch: *'I just thought that I can't give money to this because all that I'm doing, for every pound that I'm giving 40p is just going to go to paying salaries to run the thing, it's not actually making a difference'* (P: X). This was also mentioned by one of the grant-making foundations in relation to their decision to support smaller charities: *'the money goes much further. … [it] doesn't get lost in the system, it doesn't pay a director, it just pays to keep the project up and running basically'* (GM: X).

In fact, several interviewees observed that they have moved away from supporting bigger charities. One noted of a particular charity: 'they are actually run relatively like a large corporate. Which means, I guess you can get clutter. You can get extra roles that you don't need. Or you've got a huge staff base in the UK, you can end up spending a huge proportion of your income on marketing' (P: M).

In relation to marketing, another stated: *'I know that a lot of charities will spend a high percentage of their donations on marketing, so I think it would be inefficient use of the resources to support that by responding to the marketing. I mean, I'm in marketing myself, so I can't take a strong view against marketing, if I was them I'd probably do the same. But I don't want my donation to feel like it's being siphoned away, at least half, and maybe most of it, in marketing'* (P: M).

The size of the impact in relation to the money put in to a cause also emerged as an important consideration for philanthropists, with several implying that this is a crucial factor in their decision-making processes. One millennial noted that in those cases where it is hard to discern this, they tend to go on intuition. For another, although they would be put off from giving to a particular cause if they considered it *'too expensive per outcome,' they also said that whilst they would 'definitely' look at outcomes, sometimes 'you just feel commanded to do something and that's that' (P: X). Others expressed a similar opinion, with one donor saying that 'giving to where God directs you, you trust him for the results'* (P: T).

In relation to causes with a more *'spiritual'* focus, some noted that these have to be evaluated differently from other causes: *'Giving to a faith-based organisation is literally an act of faith, and therefore you cannot reasonably anticipate the future impact of what you give'* (P: BB). In a similar vein, a number of interviewees are keen to support start-ups, even though impact is difficult to measure: *'I guess when you support things that are starting out you can't really measure whether any of it's worked'* (P: M). In this case, relationship was noted by several as the primary criteria: *'I think a lot of what we focus on is the personality, the relationship, […] at the beginning of something you're not going to be worrying about outcomes or metrics or… because you can't, because you're trying something new'* (P: X). A donor who supports both larger organisations and start-ups told us that their criteria for each differs; for the larger organisations, *'solid measurement and track record and impact'* is important, whereas for start-ups it is personal relationships (P: M).

### *c. How do Christian philanthropists give?*

**Approach**

We encountered a range of different approaches to giving, with some choosing to give to select individuals or organisations, and others, towards certain thematic areas. Some made reference to the balance of their giving, which they periodically reassess in order to make sure that they are neither neglecting nor favouring certain areas. Marriage was mentioned by several as a key point at which they re-evaluated and adjusted their approach.

*The nature of commitment*

Some used the language of *'commitment'* to describe their giving; for example, one donor stated: *'It's like a marriage in a way that, you know, I feel like I have to keep going'* (P: BB). Another told us that they have supported people who serve with Wycliffe for 30 years: *'we made a commitment then, I'm not going back on it. And actually, I still believe in Wycliffe, I think they do a fabulous job.' Nevertheless, they explained that once you make a commitment to people you either need to keep it, or 'very clearly explain why you can't any longer'* (P: BB). Others that spoke of their giving in this way also noted that once they have made a commitment they tend to continue until projects come to a close or the people that they support stop their work. This sense of resolute commitment was not present to the same extent amongst those that we interviewed from younger generations. Whilst they might commit to things on a long-term basis, their support came across as being more conditional.

A number of interviewees referred to *'one-off', 'random'* or *'sporadic'* giving, and contrasted this form of giving with their more strategic or intentional giving. Whilst most that mentioned occasional giving seemed to regard it in a positive, or at least neutral light, others were more critical. One donor is against giving of this kind when it is for *'people doing fun things and then asking all their friends for money,'* because, they said: *'it's just all about stunts and PR and media, and whilst it works and it does raise tonnes of money, I think I don't want to get sucked into the societal approach.'* Whilst they can see the appeal for fundraisers, they feel it fosters a short-termism that undermines the habit of long-term commitment (P: M).

This same interviewee noted later that they respect the lifetime commitment their parents have made to supporting some missionaries: *'I just admire that so much that I want to do it'* (P: M). It is interesting to reflect on this in relation to one Generation Xer's comments when asked about their perception of generational differences. Their response was that: *'even though social media and the internet has made a big difference on the way that we live, humans are still humans. And I think we do our best learning by watching others'* (P: X).

*The role of prayer*

For many, prayer and God's leading play an important role in their approach to giving. When asked what criteria they use to decide where to direct their giving, one interviewee told us that it is: *'as much God's leading as anything else'* (P: T), and another emphasised that: *'prayer is an important part of the decision-making process'* (P: X).

This was mentioned by several others also, in relation to decisions about both whether to fund or withdraw funding from a particular cause.

> *'And then the other way that we give is when we, is kind of like the lightening bulb or sometimes we've had, felt need that we feel very strongly we have to reply to. And it may or may not be in our normal areas that we've agreed, hey, let's really support these things. And sometimes we've done that and it's been very pivotal and the charities have gone on to be very successful, but we find 5 or 6 years later had we not done that, they would have gone bankrupt or closed, or whatever, for example. So sometimes we will have confirmation that, wow, we were able to listen to what we felt was the Holy Spirit telling us, hey, do this'* (P: X)

*Stewardship*

A representative from one philanthropic organisation told us about recent conversations they have had with millennial philanthropists. One thing these younger givers said they find absurd about older generations is the 'endless' debates about what percentage of their income they should be giving and whether a tithe is enough, or if Christians should instead be giving over and above this. This interviewee told us that in their experience it is increasingly common for people to 'cap' their standard of living, giving everything above that to charity: *'their interest is not on how much I should give, but they are actually increasingly saying "how much should I keep?" […] And for them charity is not always gift aid and an official charity, it can be helping people in their community or helping an anonymous person on a crowdfunding site'* (PO: BB). This was evidenced in our data set also, with one donor explaining, for example, that: *'it's not so much how much can I keep for myself, but the things that I spend on myself I have to have a rationale for as well. And I see all of that as in God's service. So, we've just bought a house and that was again in this whole stewardship narrative'* (P: M).

We observed this approach to giving emerging amongst the older philanthropists we interviewed as well. When we asked one baby boomer at the end of their interview if there was anything they wanted to add to the conversation, they said:

*'Well the only thing to say theologically is the sort of realisation that everything is God's anyway. So, when we're talking about giving, you're really only deciding what you*

*keep for yourself. So actually, it's interesting that we have that conversation about giving, which implies you're taking it from here to give to Christian work, but in reality, if you've really got the theology right it's all God's and it's actually… And so, everything we spend, should really be spent, you know, am I doing God's will in spending this? You know, I'm trying to get into that mentality. […] That realisation that it's all God's is what really drives me. So, everything you do should be furthering God's kingdom, with all the resources you've got, all your abilities you've got, all the money you've got, whatever, everything that comes through your hands. You know, that's what I'm trying to get to, that mentality really'*

Comments such as these are of course in line with the concept of *'stewardship'*. The director of one philanthropic organisation observed that: *'in days of old there was much more a sense of paying back […] so it's just a gift and it's a gift in the truest sense of the word that, I don't need anything back from it. I think that's been replaced by a much greater sense of stewardship or accountability to the gift'* (PO: X). This came through in other interviews also. A millennial donor, for example, when asked how their method of giving has adapted through their involvement with one particular philanthropic community noted: *'We believe in responsible giving… having a really clear understanding of what that money's going to be used for. […] we would very much be against giving where we didn't have visibility into how that money was going to be spent.' This same respondent also had a broader understanding of accountability in giving: 'if my calling as a Christian is to work in the field of artificial intelligence what does it mean to use those gifts for the kingdom?'* (P: M).

> *'I mean, for me it's really about stewardship. What do you do… and money's only part of that. I mean I know you're asking about giving, but, for me it is about stewardship, and it's your whole life – what do you do with it? And your money kind of will follow all the other things, you know, where do you put your time, where do you put your effort, where do you put your thinking, where do you put your, you know, mental acuity, all of that. And it's not just, I'll fling a fiver in there and get rid of the conscience'* (P: BB)

*Towards impact investment*

Another difference that emerged mainly in our interviews with Generation Xers, is that some seem to be questioning the use of charitable models for certain causes and projects. A couple of interviewees told us that they evaluate potential causes by asking the question: *'should this be a purely charitable model'* (P: X)?

These kinds of questions are the reason why there is significant interest in social enterprise and social impact investment. One advocate spoke of their disillusionment with the charitable sector and its perceived failure to actualise substantial social and economic change as the catalyst for the shift in their thinking on philanthropy. They spoke enthusiastically of a paradigm shift taking place in the world of philanthropy, whilst lamenting that Christian charities are lagging behind (P: X). Indeed, a leader of a Christian philanthropic organisation noted that although there is substantial interest in impact investment: *'I've yet to actually see that translate into a real change in the way people give'* (PO: BB).

That being said, there are signs that this is already happening in the Christian world and several of our interviewees attested to their own shift in giving towards impact investing.

For example, one has been influenced by their philanthropic networks to move in this direction.

They currently allocate 10% of their giving towards it and expect this amount to increase in the future (P: X). A banker argued that whilst it is not a model that can be applied to churches, for many organisations working in the area of poverty alleviation it could prove to be a helpful break from the *'horrible cycle'* of fundraising (P: X). One such organisation is taking steps towards incorporating it into their practice, however, they said that: *'it's a small area for us at the moment and we're still moving slowly into it because… I think it's easy to get it wrong, and I don't want to get it wrong for people in the communities that we're working with.' Nevertheless, they also noted: 'Investors are available. Have we got people who want to get into that? It's becoming really clear that there are lots of people'* (CO: BB).

**Levels of involvement**

Bearing in mind the significance of relationship in philanthropic practice, it is perhaps unsurprising that one of the recurring themes emerging during the interviews relates to the nature of philanthropists' involvement in the causes to which they give. We came across a range of different approaches. Some are very hands-off: *'There are different people who are called to do different things. The organisation has its own staff and it has its own translators, its own printers, its own evangelist, its own trainers. Everybody has a role. My role is giving'* (P: BB). Others are more hands-on; when explaining that they give to operational costs, one donor noted that they do, however, like to ensure *'that their core costs are at a minimum, as small as possible, and that they are running as efficiently as possible'* (P: BB).

In terms of how donations are spent, one interviewee said: *'I trust the charities. I rarely, rarely, rarely impose any restrictions or perimeters. If I give 20,000 or whatever to the charity, I wouldn't return "and I want this spent on such and such"'* (P: T).
Another donor, who had earlier remarked that they like to be involved in the charities to which they give – as a chair or trustee, praying for people, helping and advising them – nevertheless noted that once they have taken a decision to support something and trust the people involved: *'I don't interfere with how my money's spent […] I like to know what's going on but I'm not… I don't say "go and spend it on this or that," that's up to them I think, to be quite honest'* (P: BB).

For one donor accountability is very important, and they monitor and evaluate the *'trustworthiness and credibility of both the person and the project that they're running, and the beneficiaries.'* They told us: *'I go out there, meet the beneficiaries: "is it really coming to you?*

*Is your life changed? Has your family been fed? You know, have you gone to university etc.? What's your state?" […] And sometimes I challenge them to say look this is the wrong outcome. We don't want this outcome, you know. Because it's not just about input and output, it's about what is the long-term impact on this society or this family or this community'* (P: BB).

***Reasons for involvement***

Some cited previous experience as the reason for their approach: *'I have given to other charities before, where I think a lot of money has gone on administration and other areas, which is… you know, it's quite frustrating. So I decided quite a long time ago that I only want to get involved with projects where I can be involved directly'* (P: BB). Another explained that if you are very involved with an organisation, you know its flaws and because of your involvement there is transparency (P: X).
A philanthropist that set up his own foundation told us that it began as a grant-making foundation; however, not finding this satisfactory, the foundation is now engaged in its own charitable work:

*'I was used to running a business and therefore being in control of what happened, how that was organised, and just giving money to other organisations to do as they pleased with was quite a difficult thing for me to do. So, this way we keep control of what happens to that money, how it's used. And we like to think we get every ounce of use, every ounce of benefit to the people that we're trying to help, out of it that we can'* (P: BB).

For one donor, the reason why they take a more hands-on approach is because there is a correlation between their level of involvement and the joy they experience through giving: *'it's a very different thing if you give and then you get to see in person the impact that that's having, what it means to the day-to-day lives of people [. . .] yeah, it's being more hands on with it I think that increases the amount of joy that you get'* (P: M).

For others, the level of their involvement is connected to a desire to give of themselves as well as their money. One interviewee described it in this way:

*'I remember, years back when I was involved in [a cause] and they were wanting to republish some kind of document, and I gave them £50 for that, which for me was nothing, but they were so grateful. I felt a bit bad about it, because it was easy for me to give the money. It was less easy for me to actually go on a demonstration. . . . So it was at that point I realised that giving money can be quite easy for people who have it, but if you actually care about something then you should be giving of yourself as well as giving of your money. So that's how in many cases we are giving to projects that we're already involved in, and not just to ones that come off the shelf as it were' (P: BB).*

Expressing a similar view, another explained that money is not their most valuable commodity, and therefore, simply giving money would not be a sacrifice for them: it *'would be not a very good form of giving. But to give my time, that is something that is quite precious and difficult to give, and so I suppose that's a better way to give'* (P: X).

Philanthropists' level of involvement is also greater when they are supporting start-ups or organisations in earlier stages of life. This is seen as a way in which they can contribute not just their money, but their skills as well.

One interviewee reflected: *'we can bring organisational knowhow. So we don't just give and then forget, we give and if they need help with legal work or if they need help with structuring a business plan, we will either point them in the direction of people who can help them or we'll help them ourselves. So that's really I suppose what we uniquely give when we give money'* (P: X).

When asked about the extent to which they get involved with these projects or organisations, they observed that it is to a certain extent dependent *'on what's being asked for.'* Another told us: *'we're probably focusing more on things that we feel we're*

*better at, that we can be a helpful donor too, not just a cheque, and be more hands on and actually bring real insights or experience…'* Such support could include providing access to contacts in their personal networks or advisory support, and their perception is that this is very helpful for those they financially support. We asked if they tend to be part of the management of the causes they support, and their response was that they like to have a status similar to that of a board member, so that they have *'access'* to leaders and *'insight as to what's going on'* (P: X).

Consistent with the trend towards relationally driven giving, a couple of respondents mentioned that they have been influenced by a movement called *'gospel patronage'.* The concept derives from John Rinehart's book Gospel Patrons (2013), which presents historical accounts of the wealthy patrons behind those individuals that have been instrumental in furthering the gospel. As one individual explained: '*gospel patronage is about, you know, deep, deep relational giving. It's using the networks that we have to support the person*' (P: BB). It is easy to see how this idea resonates with philanthropists seeking to have a committed relationship with their beneficiaries.

# 7. From the Perspective of Charitable Organisations

## 7. From the Perspective of Charitable Organisations

The perspectives presented thus far emerged primarily from the interviews we conducted with individual donors and grant-making trusts and foundations. However, we felt that it was important to allow the voices of those working in the charitable sector to be heard also, and we therefore endeavoured to understand their perspectives on Christian philanthropy. In particular, we asked what causes are easiest and most difficult to raise funds for, what criteria they think donors use in their decision-making processes, and whether they make adjustments in order to meet donors' expectations. In this section, we summarise some of the main themes that came to light during these interviews. We came across some differences in perspective depending on the size of the organisations we were interviewing and their particular area of focus, but common themes surfaced nevertheless. It is worth noting that charitable organisations did not necessarily make distinctions between individual donors and grant-making foundations as we have.

> *'I think raising money is hard, I honestly think raising money is hard work because you've got to do it all the time, you've got to do it year, after year, after year. And it's something to really pay attention to because an organisation like us, like many organisations, the majority of the money goes to people's salaries. Because they're the people who are going to produce the stuff. So, it's to do with people. It's funding people'* (CO: X)

### *a. Where, why and how?*

The experience of most organisations is that it is easiest to fund causes that are *'tangible'.* Other words used included *'physical', 'definable', 'visible', 'direct'* and *'concrete'.* One interviewee used the example of capital projects: 'there's just something about an actual thing that is much easier to raise money for,' and this was set against raising funds for revenue. Another observed that it is easiest to finance causes where outputs can be identified, even if not outcomes. Further, projects that *'touch the people on the ground'* generate support much more easily than *'having an international conference or a roundtable discussion or producing a film or developing a course.'* This sentiment was expressed by others also, with one philanthropist echoing these words: *'I want to touch the people on the ground'* (P: BB).

We were told that it is hardest to raise funds for *'general costs'.* One interviewee observed: *'we develop wisdom. […] So, the tangibility comes in the dissemination.*

*The intangible is where we're spending time learning stuff ourselves. And people learn stuff not machines. So, you're looking at people's salaries.'* Overheads – and salaries in particular – were mentioned by several others also. The head of one organisation told us that this is an area on which they are often *'pushed back'* by donors, yet: *'the people element is really the critical element'* of projects. Through our interviews we came across a few smaller organisations that have chosen to adopt a model whereby donors underwrite their operational costs so that all other donations can be said to go directly to projects.

Also difficult to finance are causes that are more *'abstract,'* or where it is 'tougher to define the impact,' such as those *'addressing systemic issues… whether it's advocacy, capacity building or systems change.'* Advocacy was mentioned by several of those we spoke with as being a *'difficult'* area. One organisation told us that this is because their advocacy work is often being compared to other aspects of their work requiring funding, where the outputs and outcomes are much easier to communicate: *'it's people who are being impacted straight away.'* Another area that is difficult to finance is research.

Additionally, complexity was identified as not conducive to fundraising: *'I think complexity often turns people off. So, a lot of people just like a kind of a simple, magical bullet which is going to deliver change. Unfortunately, there aren't that many simple magic bullets.'* As another organisation told us, one of the challenges they face in their relations with donors is that of *'communicating the complexity'* of their work, since they are not a *'one product kind of charity, with one approach.'*

***b. Funding for innovation***

A source of frustration for some fundraisers is the perceived lack of money available for higher risk projects and innovation.

One director told us that it is much easier to fund *'tried and tested programmes,'* than it is to find venture capital for the 'fresh' thinking and approaches that are so desperately needed in their area of work. A representative from one of the philanthropic organisations we spoke with voiced a similar concern:

*'I think there's a dearth, if you like, of Christian venture philanthropy in which you put up sizable chunks of cash to get a new project started. […] I'd say a lot of our UK Christian donors, which, I would include some of the larger agencies, don't provide enterprise finance. Meaning, here's a great idea, this needs to happen, let's fund it properly. And what often tends to happen is you get great ideas out there flapping in the wind because there's just no real support for them'* (PO: X)

One interviewee felt that there is sometimes a contradiction in donors' behaviour, since they seem averse to risk when it comes to charitable work, yet: *'as a business, I mean you absolutely take measured leaps but you take opportunity, you seize moments, you take risks because that's the way it works. And if you don't, then you end up being IBM trying to make computers and going out of business. That's not a model that takes you very far.'*

However, this perception seems to contradict some of our findings. In fact, several of the philanthropists that we interviewed spoke of their desire to support innovation, one even emphasised their willingness to take risks, and another told us that they like *'backing visionaries'*: *'I think I weigh the vision of the leadership very highly. So, there were some years where I gave more money to the sort of social justice stuff and other years where I gave more money to what you might call the traditional church. Based I think on the vision of that'* (P: X). The entrepreneurial spirit of many of the philanthropists that we interviewed translated into a support of start-ups and charities in an earlier stage of life. This was noted by several as being a source of excitement: *'because you have that sense that it might not quite have happened if I wasn't able to give those funds'* (P: M); *'I think, I look for projects where if we didn't do it, it might not happen. That's like my biggest [criteria]. It doesn't mean we don't give to other things. But those are the ones that get me the most excited. […] it's almost like an impossible task that you make possible'* (P: X); *'I don't know if that's rewarding because of the charitable work that they do or it's just the feeling of, oh wow, something worked, and you're kind of part of it'* (P: X). This interest in supporting start-ups amongst Generation Xers and millennials was also partly in reaction to larger charities.

The director of a London-based charitable organisation told us that through conversation with major donors they have heard that there is a lack of *'really good ministry to invest in'* and ideas that are *'big enough'* to attract larger donors:

> *'Because most of the people who have large amounts of money to give are entrepreneurs and successful entrepreneurs, and therefore they're used to thinking with an investment mind-set and they're used to thinking around a big idea and they're used to getting things done well. I think what they get frustrated by is the plethora of very small projects in the UK. The UK church operates generally in quite a fragmented way. There are very few really big ideas around that somebody who's got an entrepreneurial mind-set and an investment mind-set wants to invest in. They're generally too small. And I think more joined up working across the church, I mean para-church as well as local church, actually would be much more attractive to some of the larger donors'*

This may go some way towards explaining the problems that charitable organisations can face in raising funds, yet from the perspective of one such organisation, the real issue is the lack of venture capitalists willing to journey with them and to fund research and development and innovation where the outcomes are uncertain: *'The models of youth ministry are broken. There is little that is working. And what I actually need is a sort of Silicon Valley venture capitalist who says, "let's go on a journey to find what will work." And right now, we don't know the answer.'*
It is evident that this is an area in need of deeper reflection and discussion. The chief executive of one philanthropic organisation told us:

*'I have asked a great many wealthy Christian people for support and it hasn't been forthcoming, they've said no. Not because they've thought our cause wasn't right, or because they were being mean. But I think, firstly, if they've lots of money they must be quite successful. Well you could have inherited it, but let's say you've made your own money. Then, these are people who can think and can take decisions, who can take risks, they can evaluate, they know how to assess, because they've succeeded in business. And therefore, they are minded to be philanthropic, but they are very conscious that they know best. They can evaluate their giving decisions. And it's quite hard to go to somebody with a new idea and say, here's an idea, would you like to help with this. I think certainly with Christian giving I've had lots of conversations with Christians to whom you would think this would make a lot of sense they'd be bound to help, and nobody has. But probably they're getting asked an awful lot of times by an awful lot of people'* (PO: BB).

***c. Donor-receiver relations***

Donor-receiver relations are a central dimension of the charitable world. In the following paragraphs we present some reflections from charitable organisations on their engagement with philanthropists. All of the organisations that we interviewed see the accountability that their engagement with donors provides as extremely valuable; a *'positive challenge'* that they appreciate: *'Impact reporting or impact measurement isn't just about telling the good story to the donor. It allows us to be focused in our practice as well… it's about, you know, are we on track ourselves, are we doing the best job that we can do, and we want to bring others in on that with us as well.'*

Nevertheless, inherent in the relationship between charitable organisations and donors is a power imbalance, which was inevitably commented upon during some of the interviews. Frustrations noted by charitable organisations included that of the secretive nature of grant-making trusts and foundations, on account of which organisations often find themselves engaged in a *'guessing game'*; information available online is often very different to that you are told in person and there is

little transparency throughout the process: *'They asked us to submit a proposal, we submitted it, they turned it down, we asked them to explain why they turned it down and they said they weren't at liberty to give us reasons but invited us to reapply next year.'* One CEO spoke very honestly with us:

> *'I don't think major donors often quite appreciate the power they have. They wield enormous power with people, just because they're significant. So, if a donor rings up and says, I'd like you to meet so and so, you know, you're on the train straight away. It's very hard to challenge funders, because you're in receipt of funds. So, I can't be as forthright with a funder as I am with you now. That's not a conversation that's possible, because the power dynamic in my relationship with funders is not in my favour. So, one is constantly trying not to upset them. And if you're not careful, again… that's not easy, and I do think funders are sometimes a bit naïve about how that works'*

The director of one of the philanthropic organisations we interviewed voiced a similar opinion: *'donors become the governors by virtue of the fact they can stop funding'* (PO: X). For one donor we spoke with, it is for this reason that they have a preference for business models when it comes to poverty relief, since the problem with the way that *'traditional'* charities work today, is that they have to *'continually invoke a sense of dynamism in their donors so that the donors keep supporting them. Because donors, including myself, are fickle and today I really like x or y or z thing, and tomorrow I might like something else. So, if you're the charity that I liked yesterday, now you're trying to find some other donor. You're living this sort of horrible cycle of constantly trying to come up with new things'* (P: X).

Only one other philanthropist mentioned or showed an awareness of their power as donors. This interviewee told us: *'we're very conscious of the risk that there is where donors are also involved in the governance of a charity, because then you can be giving money in support of the causes you're interested in, and in support of the direction of travel that you're interested in, and that can be an inappropriate kind of influence on the charity'* (P: BB). Where other donors spoke of their relationship with the individuals and organisations they support, it was always in a neutral or positive way. It is also worth noting here that only one of the charitable organisations interviewed spoke of the dignity and equality of the donor in relation to fundraising: *'if our principles in terms of the mission are around the dignity of the human person, whether they have no money and they're in dire straits and no resource, then it has to be the same for somebody*

*who has a lot of money, because it's the dignity and the equality of people. So, we take the same principles to both.'* Another charity has sought to constructively overcome the donor-receiver dichotomy by setting up forums in which potential donors are invited to participate and contribute to discussions concerning the charity's operations.

The focus for most of the charitable organisations we spoke to, however, was on the challenge of remaining true to their visions and objectives in spite of the temptation to engage in the activities they know donors will fund. We spoke with a philanthropist who has established his own foundation, and interestingly, he said to us: *'my view was that if we accepted money from outside, some of what we're doing would probably be watered down. So, in order to keep the purity of the programme […] we didn't accept any outside funding'* (P: BB). The director of another foundation that raises funds externally was adamant, however, that they will not compromise on their foundation's objectives, telling us that they have in fact refused offers *'to get money and implement certain programmes'* on this basis: *'Don't give me £100,000 and tell me but you have to do this and this and this. These are the objectives of the foundation, these are the programmes of the foundation, would you like to help us with those? But I am not ready to take money and programme at the same time in order to keep the foundation going. I don't do that.'*

One interviewee voiced a slightly different perspective, saying that they have found that: *'having those conversations with people has sometimes opened up very interesting avenues for us […] we're not going to be led into, kind of, avenues which we just don't want to do just to chase money, but sometimes, not just closing off the conversation straight away means that there are opportunities to do new things when you do kind of partner a bit more and talk to people at least.'* One Catholic charitable organisation that we spoke with made a thought-provoking point on this subject: *'people are looking for the personal contact, they want that sense of relationship in their giving. And… is it good, is it bad? I've no idea. I think if it becomes a kind of shopping it's a problem.'*

Finally, all of those we interviewed noted that one of their major risks is that they do not have so many younger donors and are now actively thinking about how to engage future generations of givers. Several mentioned models of collective giving for younger philanthropists, and one of the millennial philanthropists we interviewed has in the past been part of such a collective.

# 8. The Future of Christian Philanthropy

## 8. The Future of Christian Philanthropy

The aim of this study was to capture and gain insight into recent trends in Christian philanthropy based on a series of interviews with 36 philanthropists and grant-making trusts of different ages and church traditions. The perspectives offered by these individuals have been complimented with 11 interviews with representatives of philanthropic and charitable organisations.

### *a. Primary research question*

The particular focus of the research has been on Christian philanthropists' interest in funding causes with distinctly spiritual outcomes. We entered the data collection phase with the hypothesis that there has been a shift in Christian philanthropy from causes that emphasise spiritual transformation towards those that give priority to social transformation. Whilst many interviewees agreed that this is a trend, surprisingly few felt that it applied to their own giving. In fact, several interviewees have actively sought to counter this perceived trend by increasing their giving to spiritual causes.

Nevertheless, we found that the dynamics of the relationship between the social and the spiritual are more complex than this, and their boundaries porous. Therefore, what counts as *'spiritual'* and what counts as *'social'* is not always easy to discern; indeed, some make no distinction between them at all. What is clear is that Christian philanthropists see both of these aspects as part of the Christian message and are supportive of them, albeit to varying degrees. It is striking that even those who have sensed a shift in their giving towards causes that emphasize social transformation are open to funding evangelism, prayer and discipleship provided the conditions are right. What is important for these donors is that they are innovative, authentic and relational. Christian organisations seeking funding for spiritual causes cannot afford to be complacent, but they can and should approach Christian donors with the confidence that there is potential funding available, even for evangelism.

### *b. General trends*

It is likely that most of the trends evidenced in our dataset are not unique to Christian philanthropy but correspond with wider societal and cultural trends. At the same time, however, it is clear that faith is the primary motivator for Christian philanthropists. Whilst for some, their giving is an act of obedience, for others it is a direct response to the gift of God's grace.

The principal reason why philanthropists prioritise certain causes over others is because of relationship; ultimately, giving is an act that occurs between people. The power of this relational factor is such that it sometimes leads people to act against their own beliefs and opinions for the sake of supporting the endeavours of those they trust and value.

Impact is an important consideration for philanthropists also, but at the same time some acknowledged that this is not always easy to measure, and that some causes – such as start-ups and those with a focus on the spiritual – need to be evaluated differently.

Our data also shows that donors are increasingly involved in the causes to which they give, and several reasons for this emerged:

1. Changing perceptions of philanthropic giving: a gift is no longer simply a gift; it is instead something that we are accountable for;
2. The desire to give of oneself: whilst for some this is connected to the notion of *'stewardship,'* for others it is seen as a sacrifice to God;
3. The desire to be helpful – to not simply provide money, but to bring their whole self and the unique skills that they possess to their philanthropic practice.This suggests that the concept of *'stewardship'* is gaining momentum amongst Christian philanthropists, although not all would articulate it in this way. In relation to this, we found that instead of questioning how much they should give, some are instead asking how much they should keep.

Whilst predictions about the future should be made with caution, there are some emerging trends that suggest a trajectory into the future. For this reason, it was particularly important to include voices from younger generations in the research. Whilst they might not have the financial resources that older donors have, we found that they are dedicated and thoughtful in their commitment to generous living. Listening to these voices will be important for those organisations with an ageing support group, for these are the major funders of tomorrow. On the basis of our research, we can affirm what the director of a philanthropic organisation had to say about millennials: *'I think that a whole new generation is coming up who do philanthropy very, very differently… Actually, it needs a real long journey and engagement from early on with these people.'*

We found that younger donors are moving away from larger organisations in favour of more direct giving to smaller projects and start-ups. In this regard, the observations of a Generation Xer, who is a philanthropist in his own right but has also

worked extensively with a philanthropic network, are worth noting: *'I know a lot of my generation kind of say, well look, why give to [large organisations]? I can give directly, I know someone who's doing a project in x, y, z country. So, I'm much more comfortable to give to them.'* The same person also pointed out that the language of faith is different for the younger generations and yet some of the larger Christian charities have not adequately addressed this. Speaking of a well-established Christian organisation he said: *'I don't know, like any time I ever engaged with them I was one of the few people in the room below the age of, well it would have been below the age of 30 at the time. Everyone else was kind of retiree generation. And so, their communications, their language, was all set up and built around that particular generation. Now I know that they've made, I think, good efforts to change and address that, but it's really challenging.'*

Several interviewees of all ages spoke of their desire to fund innovative projects, and this is worth emphasising since the sense emerging from our interviews with charitable organisations is that they are keen to work with philanthropists in developing such projects. It is likely that in the future these will include, if not major on, the use of technology. One millennial's view is that:

*'As someone who's in the tech scene and start-up scene, I guess apps and other resources are going to need to be created. […] But, I think, you need to start with dedicating some resource to looking at how you engage in discipling people in a digital age. And that's happening in pockets, but it's not, it's just… I feel like the church is like 20 years behind the rest of society in how we're doing this'* (P: M).

This interviewee noted that they are constantly reading content on their phone, and their observation is that: *'we just need a lot more content to be created and I guess investment in that. And this conversation's made me very aware that no one's doing that well.'* A Generation Xer pointed to new uses of technology, like *'crowdfunding, micro-finance platforms like Kiva, and campaign-led activities,'* as a means of engaging younger generations in philanthropic activities. A further trend that has the potential to change the charitable world and the way in which it operates is impact investment. Whilst this is still in its infancy there are a number of influential people strongly advocating for it. Are Christians, as one interviewee suggested, lagging behind in this regard?

### *c. New opportunities?*

Whilst some pointed to the pressures of finding funding for evangelism in a secular society, the director of an organisation that supports young Christians and Christian education abroad was cautiously optimistic that funding for Christian

causes is getting easier. He attributed this change to the ripple effect of the very public demands of Muslims in the UK making faith more visible in society: *'Muslims pushed this country to recognise that religion belongs to the public square more than what the English or the British wanted. And that reflected positively on Christians because Christians were always the first victims to be silenced because in this country you almost have to apologise for being a Christian.'* Muslims have then reminded us *'that faith can be positive in the society and we should be proud of our faith'* (CO: BB). A young entrepreneur engaged in fundraising for a church planting initiative is confident about raising funds for this cause – *'I think people are really willing to give to spiritual transformation and gospel work'* – but added that:

*'Oftentimes I think charities themselves just aren't – and Christian leaders themselves aren't – giving people that encouragement to do it, or presenting the need to do it… But when you've got really effective ways of doing mission and doing church planting, we see a lot of results for the money invested. Then, you know, people will give to that, absolutely'* (CO: M).

Finally, many Christians feel the social pressure to tone down more explicitly evangelistic ambitions. As one interviewee said: *'We've had to go underground, if you know what I mean. So, you know… and you see it all the time, you see it all the time in spoken and unspoken contexts. That, you know, oh we won't look at you because you're Christian, or, we won't fund you because you're Christian, or, you know, so on and so on'* (P: X).

Yet, although they feel that British society has lost its bearing, they see this as bringing new opportunities for greater boldness. *'I think maybe in the future there might be a space to become a bit more aggressive about, you know, onward Christian soldiers and, you know, Jesus is the way to go and what have you. There might be. I just don't think that we're there yet.'* Whether such an analysis is correct or not is immaterial from the perspective of Christian organisations, since if donors are becoming more open to Christian causes there is scope for asking for funding.

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