

# **Integral Mission, Relief And Development.**

**"Our Father who is in heaven,  
May your name be honoured.  
May your Kingdom come,  
May your will be done,  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we also forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil."**

**(Matthew 6 v 7-13.)**

**Dave Andrews**

## 1. Integral Mission

One of the difficulties that many of us have with the notion of *'integral mission'*, is that we're not sure what it really means.

The word *'integral'* means *'whole'* or *'made up of different parts which constitute a single undivided whole'*. So *'integral mission'* means *'mission that is made up of different parts which constitute a single undivided whole'*.

Sometimes when people talk about *'integral mission'* with its emphasis on *'mission that is a single undivided whole'* they used the term *'wholism'*, usually spelt *'holism'*.

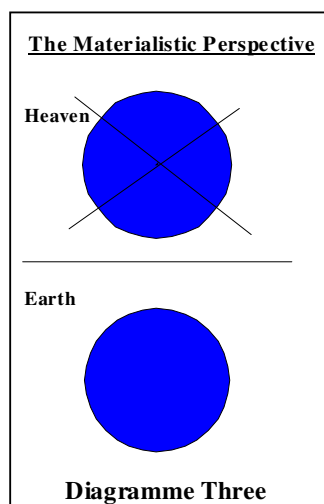
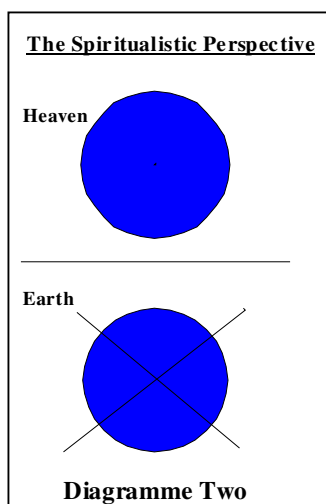
*'Integral mission'* (or *'holistic mission'*) is not a biblical term; but I would argue that it is a biblical notion. *'Integral mission'* (or *'holistic mission'*) is consistent with the scripture, and not only reflects but also reinforces a comprehensive scriptural perspective over and against the *'dualism'* that has been so dominant up until now - in religious circles - as well as in secular society.

Indeed, to appreciate the true significance of *'holism'*, we need to see it in the light of the fierce *'dualistic'* debates that have given rise to its current usage.

## 2. Dualism/Dualism.

The modern world - which developed out of the so-called 'enlightenment' - was based on a *dichotomous perspective of reality*. On the one hand - there was a *spiritual reality* - which could be best understood in terms of *religion*. And on the other hand - there was a *physical reality* - which could be best understood in terms of *science*. Though Christians argued that these two apparently separate *realities* were in theory actually related to one another, most Christians tended in practice to act as if these two apparently separate realities were in fact separate.

Not surprisingly Christians tended to divide into two camps. One camp seeing people *spiritually*, as *'sinners'*, in need of *'salvation'*. The other camp seeing people *physically*, as *'victims'*, in need of *'liberation'*. Evangelicals, who tended to see people *spiritually*, said people needed *'personal evangelism'*. Liberals, who tended to see people *physically*, said people needed *'social justice'*. Both camps tended to make their claims for *'personal evangelism'* or for *'social justice'* to the exclusion of the other. Evangelicals rallied round the cry for *'evangelism'* - not justice. Liberals rallied round the cry for *'justice'* - not evangelism.

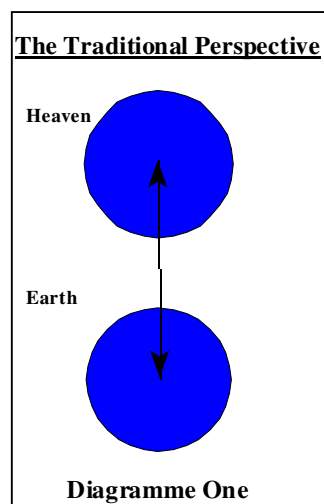


In 1974 Christians at the International Congress on World Evangelization tried to resolve this obviously unbiblical dualism by enthusiastically embracing some sort of holism. The catch cry of these Christians from then on was - "*the whole gospel to the whole world*".<sup>1</sup>

However, the sort of holism these Christians embraced still assumed the very dualism that they reckon they had renounced. Sure they repented of 'having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive',<sup>2</sup> but at the same time they proclaimed that '*evangelism*' and '*social concern*' are 'both part of our Christian duty' but 'in the church's mission ... *evangelism is primary*'.<sup>3</sup>

Ostensibly, everything had changed at Lausanne. Actually, nothing had changed at Lausanne. This became abundantly clear at Grand Rapids in 1982. In Grand Rapids a Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility affirmed that 'a person's eternal, *spiritual* salvation is of greater importance than his or her temporal or *material* well-being'.<sup>4</sup>

For many evangelical mission agencies 'nothing had really changed'. Since reality was 'still divided into *spiritual* and *material*' and, not surprisingly, 'evangelism was still the ultimate goal of mission' for evangelical agencies. All other activities were expected to play a subordinate role to *evangelism*.<sup>5</sup>



Since then evangelical scholars of note, like Ron Sider, have continued to struggle with the dilemmas surrounding the still, as yet, unresolved relationship between *evangelism* and *justice*. In the process of charting the terrain Sider has developed a map of four different, conflicting models of resolving the dilemmas - the 'Evangelical', 'Radical', 'Ecumenical', and 'Social' Models.

<sup>1</sup> Let the Earth Hear His Voice - International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland, 1975, World Wide Publications, 3-9.

<sup>2</sup> ibid 'Lausanne Covenant' 3-9, para 5.

<sup>3</sup> ibid 'Lausanne Covenant', 3-9, para 5 & para 6.

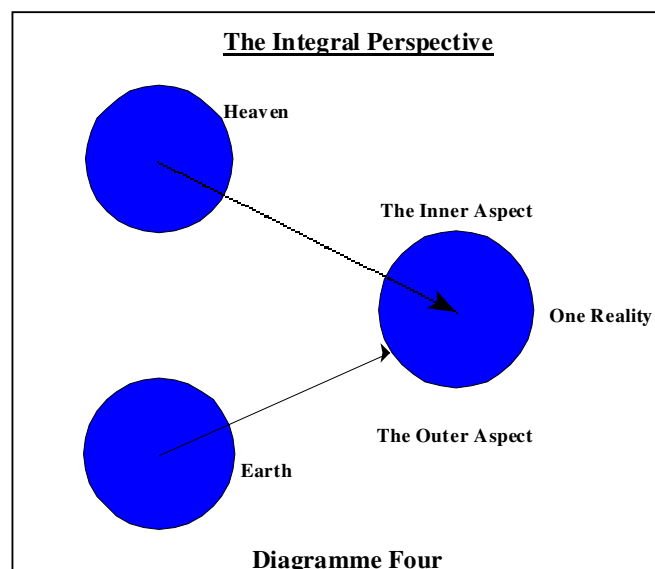
<sup>4</sup> The Grand Rapids Report on Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Comment, 1982, 183.

<sup>5</sup> Mathison, S. Unpublished Thesis, BCQ, Brisbane, 2000, 3

Model	Evangelical	Radical	Ecumenical	Social
Sin	emphasis on personal sin	personal and social sin, but emphasis mainly on personal	personal and social sin, but emphasis is mainly on social	emphasis on social sin
Gospel	salvation of the individual	good news of the kingdom	good news of the kingdom	possibility of real progress
Salvation	justification and regeneration of individuals	both justification and regeneration of individuals and the redeemed community of the church	1) justification and regeneration of individuals 2) church, 3) peace and justice in society outside the church also	justice and peace in society
Evangelism	only of persons	only of persons	persons and structures	only of structures
Mission	mainly the word	both word and deed	both word and deed	mainly the deed
Change	converted people become salt and light	converted people individually and collectively model the alternative	converted people change themselves and their society	converting the structures of society
Locus	mainly the church	mainly the church	in the church, but also in the world	only the world

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Sider, finds each of these divided - and divisive - models inadequate, and proposes instead a unified model, he calls, 'Incarnational Kingdom Christianity'.<sup>7</sup> And I agree with Sider when he says we need to reconsider the holistic concept of the 'Kingdom of God' if we are ever going to resolve the dilemmas of dualism.



<sup>6</sup> Sider R. Good News & Good Works Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 1999, 28-29 (abbreviated)

<sup>7</sup> *ibid* 45

The Micah Declaration on Integral Mission reflects a commitment to integral nature of incarnational mission that embodies the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth:

*“Integral mission or holistic transformation is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. If we ignore the world we betray the word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God we have nothing to bring to the world. Justice and justification by faith, worship and political action, the spiritual and the material, personal change and structural change belong together. As in the life of Jesus, being, doing and saying are at the heart of our integral task.”*

### **3. The Kingdom Of God.**

Of course the phrase the 'Kingdom of God' does not occur in the Old Testament. But the concept nevertheless implicitly and explicitly undergirds and energizes the entire narrative of salvation history that is recorded. God is frequently referred to as the 'King of Israel' (Exod.15v18, Num.23v21, Deut.33v5, Is. 43v15) and, indeed, the 'King of the Whole World' (II Kgs.19v15, Is.6v5, Jer.46v18, Ps.29v10; 47v2; 93; 96v10; 97; 99v1-4; 145).

At the centre of the Kingdom of God, manifested in the Old Testament, is God himself. For the most significant characteristic of the Kingdom of God is that it is God's. The Kingdom of God is special, because God - whose Kingdom it is - is special. Two words used in the Old Testament suggest the special distinctives of God's world order. One word is '*hesed*'; and the other word is '*malkuth*'.

'Hesed' could be defined as 'constant loving kindness' or 'steadfastness'. It is said to be the salient characteristic of God's relation to humanity. God is 'ever faithful', 'never fickle', 'continually righteous and gracious'. So that the psalmist could say: 'Thy loving kindness is better than life'. (Ps.63v3) Thus the Kingdom of God is characterized by a quality of love which obviates all need for fear.

'Malkuth' could be defined as 'rule' rather than 'realm'; it is dynamic rather than static; it is animated and alive. It is this active direction - with its corollary of coming intervention - that is the essential characteristic of God's involvement with humanity. God's rule is not mechanistic, unmoved and unmoving. The Kingdom of God is personal and responsive: it 'comes'; it 'sustains'; it 'changes'; it 'saves'.

God's vision for his kingdom was a vision of complete reconciliation between him and his people (Num.14v19) and between each person and his or her neighbour (Mal.4 v6). It was a vision of a world where there was an intimate knowledge of God (Is.11v9, Ps.72v18-19), personal salvation (Ps.145v1-4), political liberation (Ps.132v13-18) and the ideal of justice being established as a genuine socio-economic reality. (Ps.96v11-13).

The word most used in the Old Testament to represent this integrated

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vision of God for his kingdom was the word '*shalom*'. 'Shalom' indicated not merely the absence of strife or conflict; (though it was used in that sense in 1Chron.22v 9 and Prov.17v 1). 'Shalom' usually indicated the presence of an especially pervading, profoundly saving well-being that brought life to people (Ps.4v8), groups (1Sam 20v42), and nations (Ex. 18v23). It was *physical* (Lev. 26v6ff) and *spiritual* (Is.26v3) simultaneously.

However, the Old Testament records, the people of Israel deliberately distorted the *shape* and the *scope* of 'shalom' for their own vested interests.

From time to time they emphasized political liberation, at the expense of the knowledge of God or the necessity for justice. And it was left to the prophets to restore integrity to the *shape* of the vision; Hosea, with his emphasis on the knowledge of God; and Amos, with his emphasis on the necessity for justice.

The vision was always universal. It was the vision of a creator God who sought to restore the *whole* of his creation, inclusive of all peoples. While certain people were selected for service (Gen.2), it was only for the purpose of making the dream come true for all peoples (Ge.12v3). Those in the service of 'shalom' often tried to limit it. To keep it to themselves. But such an inexcusable lack of concern for others was constantly denounced by God to the likes of Jonah and co.. And any remnants of ethnocentric myopia were blown away by the breathtakingly beautiful universal vision brought to the people by the prophet Isaiah (Is. 49v1-7;v22-26;60v4-9;66v18-21). According to Isaiah the *scope* of the vision was not only to include the *whole* of humanity, but also the *whole* of the universe as well. 'New men' and 'new women' were to be created within the context of a 'new heaven and a new earth' (Is.65v17). The parched flatlands were going to be irrigated with fresh springs; the burning sands were going to be cooled with pools of water (Is.35v7). The desert was going to bloom (Is.35v2); and the wilderness was to going to become fruitful (Is.32v15). Peace would come to the *whole* world (Is.11v9), and the great sorrow of the world would be over - forever. (Is.35v10).

At the start of the earliest gospel, the cry goes out; 'The Kingdom of God is at hand' (Mk.1v14). What has been there in the Old Testament, at last comes into its own in the New Testament. It is as if a fix on the future had been taken by a zoom lens and, with a quick flick of the wrist, a sudden twist, that future had come into clear focus in the present. What has been a partial picture is complete. The vision of the Kingdom of God is here, glorious in its fulfillment (Lk.17v20-21).

Standing there in the middle of the Kingdom of God, infusing it with the glory of its fulfillment is Jesus of Nazareth (Lk.11v20). In the Old Testament record the nature of the Kingdom of God is defined by prophecy and refined in history. In the New Testament the same process continues; but the accent is on the presence of the future now. The Kingdom of Heaven is at work on earth in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who renounces his right to be king, assumes the role of a servant, and sacrifices his life to save the world.

Jesus does not take the focus away from God. To the contrary, Jesus constantly focuses on God himself. Jesus demonstrates that God is his central concern in both word (Jn.4v23-24) and deed (Lk.2v49;Jn.4v34,5v30,6v38,17v 41). At the very heart of the way of life Jesus advocates is an immediate (Mk.1v 14), intimate (Jn.17v3), total (Mth.6v33), and continual (Mth.10v22) orientation

towards the Kingdom of God.

According to Jesus, 'eternal life' - that is 'life of perfect quality, of infinite quantity, and of ultimate significance' - could only be discovered on earth in the context of the Kingdom of Heaven (Mth.19v16-23), and the Kingdom of Heaven is the Kingdom of God (Mth.19v23-24). Thus, for Jesus, meaningful life could only be lived out in a relationship with God, in pursuit of God's order for the world.

A relationship with God was not presented as an almost impossible attempt to apprehend the unknown, or, worse yet, to associate with an unavailing deity uninterested in the affairs of ordinary life. Rather, Jesus presented a relationship with God as akin to the spontaneous response of children (Math.10v14-15), living, without fear, in the light of the love reflected in the face of the Father, who not only cares *for* them (Mth.6v25-32), but also takes care *of* them (Mth.10v29-31).

With the cry of 'Abba' or 'Dadda', on his lips when talking of God, Jesus takes the quality of 'malkuth' - creative leadership - combines it with 'hesed' - or loving kindness - and creates a remarkable image of God. A God who is better than the very best Parent we could hope to have to help us grow up as people. (Lk.11v13).

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray he said, 'And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray:

"Our Father who is in heaven,  
 May your name be honored.  
 May your Kingdom come,  
 May your will be done,  
 On earth as it is in heaven.  
 Give us this day our daily bread  
 And forgive us our debts,  
 as we also forgive our debtors.  
 And lead us not into temptation  
 but deliver us from evil." (Mth.6v7-13.)

In this prayer the vision of God's will for the world is forcefully reaffirmed in its integrity and universality against the various attempts of groups to co-opt it and exploit it for purposes of their own making. As in the Old Testament record, so in the New Testament records, it's a vision of complete reconciliation between the people and their God, between each person and his or her neighbour. It is a vision of a world where there is intimate knowledge of God, personal salvation, political liberation, and the ideal of justice being established as a socio-economic reality. It is a vision of 'shalom' - peace.

In clarifying this vision Jesus asserted that love was the highest priority: primarily to God; and secondarily to neighbours. (Lk.12v23-31). The two imperatives to love were not the same; the love of God was not the love of neighbour (Mth.22v34-40, 1Jn.4v21). But the two imperatives were not separate; one could not truly be reconciled to one without being truly reconciled to the other (Mth.4

v23-24, 1Jn.3v17,4v20).The two imperatives were distinct but interdependent; the love of God overflowing into love of neighbour, and visa versa.(1Jn.3v16, 4v9-11, v21). A love so great, that it could reconcile a divided world, was by far the most significant dynamic Jesus advocated, to bring peace to our troubled world.

Jesus insisted that love should be universal. He took a loving person, considered a heretic by most pious people, and made him an example, in stark contrast with most pious people. (Lk.10v25-37). He told the respectable people that social patterns ought to be turned upside down to make real love more possible. He said that the first should be last, the last should be first, (Mk.9v35) and that a leader should be a servant of the community (Mth.20v26,27). He told the powerful people of the day that the economic trends ought to be reversed for the sake of love. He said that the rich should give to the poor, (Mth.19v21) and that they should give to them gladly, expecting nothing for themselves in return (Lk.16v30,35). He summed up his mission, saying -

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to preach good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim  
release of the captives,  
recovery of sight to those who cannot see,  
and liberty to all those who are oppressed'. (Lk.4v 1-19)

With his passionate love for God, and his compassionate love for neighbours, it is clear that Jesus was determined to do all he could, in the power of the Spirit, to change his world.

#### **4. Integral Mission in Relief and Development.**

From this quick overview of the Kingdom of God it is easy to see that the Hebrew view of the world - both in the Old Testament and the New Testament - is of a single 'seamless reality' which is 'subject to the rule of God'.<sup>8</sup> It is integral. In the light of this view 'spirituality' is not the opposite of 'physicality'; instead it is an integral approach to the practice of 'physicality' that reflects the 'rule of God'. In other words, 'spirituality' simply means - 'seeking to live our lives in response to, and cooperation with, the radically passionate and compassionate Spirit of God'.

Jesus the Christ, the One who came in the power of the Spirit of God, is, of course, our example in seeking to live our lives in a relationship with God and in pursuit of God's order for the world. We live in the time between his first and second coming, and in this time it is up to us to incarnate Christ's life ourselves. Like him, we need to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God in any way, and, in every way, that we can - through word and deed and signs and wonders. Like him, all of us need to renounce any right we have, in our own mind, to be a king, or a queen, assume the role of a servant, and sacrifice our lives for others. Like him, all of us need to strive for a world where there is an intimate knowledge

<sup>8</sup> Bradshaw, B. Bridging the Gap - Evangelism, Development and Shalom, Marc, 1993, 21-46.



of God, in spirit and in truth; where there is personal salvation, political liberation, and the ideal of justice being established as a genuine socio-economic reality; a world where the dream of peace - the longed for 'shalom' - comes true, at last!

Our hope, in this process, is not in our programs or our projects. These witness to our hope, but they are not our hope. Our hope is in the intervention of the Spirit of God who - to a greater or lesser degree - inspires our best practice. The advent of the Kingdom of God 'is an on-going, dynamic process whereby the Holy Spirit manifests the reign of God in people's lives and in the world at large'.<sup>9</sup> Our role - in partnership with the Holy Spirit - is to seek to apply the principles of the Kingdom of God to every aspect of our work for community development.<sup>10</sup>

But the question remains for most evangelical groups and organizations - as to how, in the world, can we combine our commitment to personal evangelism with our commitment to social justice in the context of relief and development? This is a great problem for evangelicals with an integral perspective.

Stuart Mathison, who worked for one of Micah's member agencies, writes, 'It seems to me that the application of wholism is even more difficult than the missiological meaning. In other words, it is possible to see the goal but not know how to get there. It is my opinion, however, that programmed evangelism and community development initiatives are like oil and water, they simply don't mix. To put it more strongly, it is my observation that one distorts the other, and what one ends up with is neither sound development nor effective evangelism but a corruption of both and ultimately a corruption of the gospel'.

'I contend it is virtually impossible to offer development services alongside programmed evangelism without communicating to the community that you are prepared to buy their allegiance to the Christian faith, and that your services are provided on the condition they eventually pay homage to your religious agenda. The transaction is not one-sided either. Some members of the community will happily "play the game" so long as there is the continuing likelihood of personal economic benefit. The poor often see the missionary enterprise as a soft touch and the missionaries as gullible people with money to burn. I am not necessarily saying that the motivations of any particular missionaries are deliberately corrupt, or that they have been blatantly unethical by exploiting the desperation of the poor in order to elicit a desired response, or that they are any more gullible than anybody else. At the end of the day, the motivations of the missionary are not as relevant as the way in which the target group perceives the missionary's actions'.

So it is not surprising that many evangelical groups and organizations give up hope of ever being able to combine our commitment to personal evangelism with our commitment to social justice in the context of community development.

Stuart Mathison says that many evangelical agencies simply 'divide their ministry into church planting and development departments'. This division, he says 'poses difficulties for the practice of mission among the poor. Rather than have a quasi-wholism that lends itself to manipulation, we communicate a (very) disjointed gospel. On the one hand, to be involved in church planting among people who are desperately poor while at the same time showing little concern

<sup>9</sup> Mathison, S. Unpublished Thesis, BCQ, Brisbane, 2000, 9

<sup>10</sup> *ibid* 14

for their daily struggle for survival inevitably communicates that the Christian faith is only concerned with things pertaining to another world. On the other hand, secular community development strategies leave many missionaries feeling that something fundamentally important is missing and they are right, for Christian mission and community development are not synonymous, even if they are closely related. Ultimately, for Christian mission to be whole there must be an on-going call to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ'.

'The tendency, then, for evangelicals, 'is to revert to trying to present a wholistic front, and at this point, we have returned to the basic problem of the incompatibility of community development and programmed evangelism.'<sup>11</sup>

Even people like Sider seem to be caught in this cycle. When it comes to theory, he affirms holism; but when it comes to practice, he advocates dualism. One moment Sider is proposing a unified model of holistic mission that he calls, 'Incarnational Kingdom Christianity.'<sup>12</sup> The next moment Sider is suggesting we need to distinguish between personal evangelism and social justice in order 'to protect the integrity' of the one against the other. As if, the integrity of personal evangelism is actually threatened by a concern for social justice, and the integrity of social justice is actually threatened by a concern for personal evangelism!<sup>13</sup>

I think that this problem can only be solved by redefining our understanding of personal evangelism and social justice and reframing our understanding of the relationship between personal evangelism and social justice in the process of relief and development.

Sider defines personal evangelism as an activity, 'the central intention' of which is 'to lead non-Christians to become disciples of Jesus Christ'; and he defines social justice as an activity, the 'central intention' of which is 'to improve the psychological or socioeconomic well-being of people for their life on earth.'<sup>14</sup> By Sider's definition we cannot possibly practice personal evangelism and social justice with integrity at the same time. As the 'intentions' are mutually exclusive. However, I would like to suggest that Sider's definitions are not gospel.

John Perkins, in The Call To Christian Community Development, says, 'Evangelism is not fast talk aimed at gaining converts; it is a ministry in word and deed that leads people to the place where they can activate *their* faith in the person of Jesus' for themselves. He goes on to say pointedly that 'Jesus never put evangelism and social action at odds with one another, so neither should we!'<sup>15</sup>

To me, evangelism is 'presenting the good news in word and deed; and so as long our good works convey the good news, then our struggle for justice may indeed be evangelistic. Actually, my intention in doing personal evangelism is no different from my intention in doing social justice. In fact, it is exactly the same - to witness to Jesus; to do justice to the gospel; and to share the good news with all the people that I come in contact with through good works that have integrity.

Now my friend Stuart Mathison would say - that might be all very well in theory, Dave, but you know as well as I do, it is nigh on impossible to combine

<sup>11</sup> ibid 14 (abridged)

<sup>12</sup> ibid 45

<sup>13</sup> ibid 161

<sup>14</sup> ibid 161

<sup>15</sup> Perkins, J. Beyond Charity: The Call To Christian Community Development, Baker 1993, 83

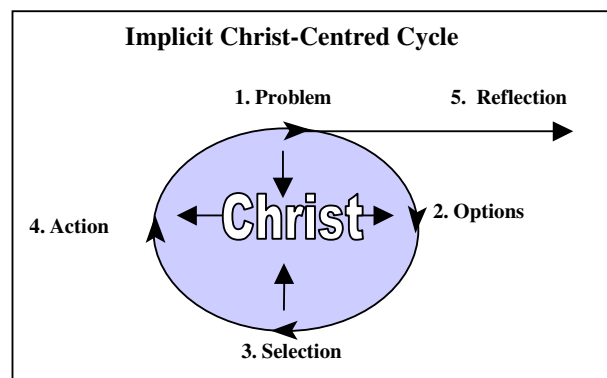
personal evangelism and social justice in practice. And I would say - it is only nigh on impossible because most people think of practice in program terms. In program terms there will always be a conflict in relief and development between projects competing for time, attention, resources and personnel. And town planning and church planting are no exception. However, I would like to say that programs are not all that there is to relief and development.

To me, personal evangelism and social justice can always be combined in community development *processes*, if not community development *programs*.

I agree with Perkins, when he says, 'Development cannot happen without evangelism. Evangelism brings us to Christ, who understands the way in which the poor suffer abuse, and encourages us through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit heals the gashes of our heart, comforts us in (our) loss, and affirms our dignity in the face of dehumanization. Conversion ... brings about development.'<sup>16</sup>

For me, the love of Christ is at the heart of every situation that we encounter in a community. And, the effective resolution of the problems inherent in each situation, depends on people being able to feel something of the love of Christ for themselves and for others; being able to be free to transcend their anger and guilt and inadequacy; and being able to act in a beautiful, radical, sacrificial, compassionate, Christ-like manner

Most of the people I work with are not Christians. So the challenge for me is to try to introduce them to the Christ in the context of my community work. I do this through a *simple centred problem solving process*.



I agree to work with people, struggling with the issues that are important to them, on the basis of *common sense* and *consensus*. Because I believe Christ is the source of all truth, and the truth is written, as the scripture says, on the hearts of all people, we believe that Christ's truth is often expressed in the *common sense* that people speak without their even knowing it.

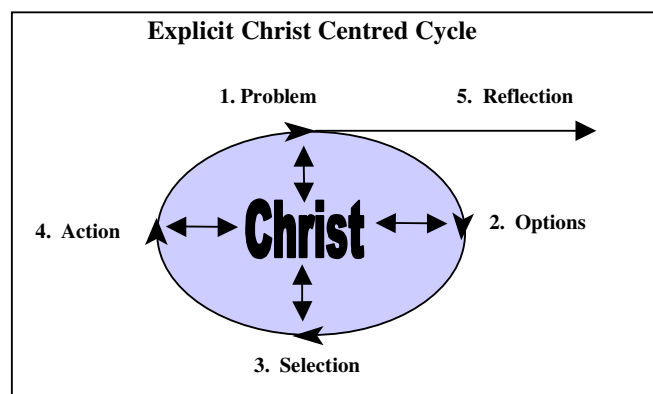
I dialogue with people about their problems and about possible solutions to their problems, and try to decide on a particular course of action that we can take together. Quite often, to the embarrassment of Christians, who claim to have

<sup>16</sup> ibid 87

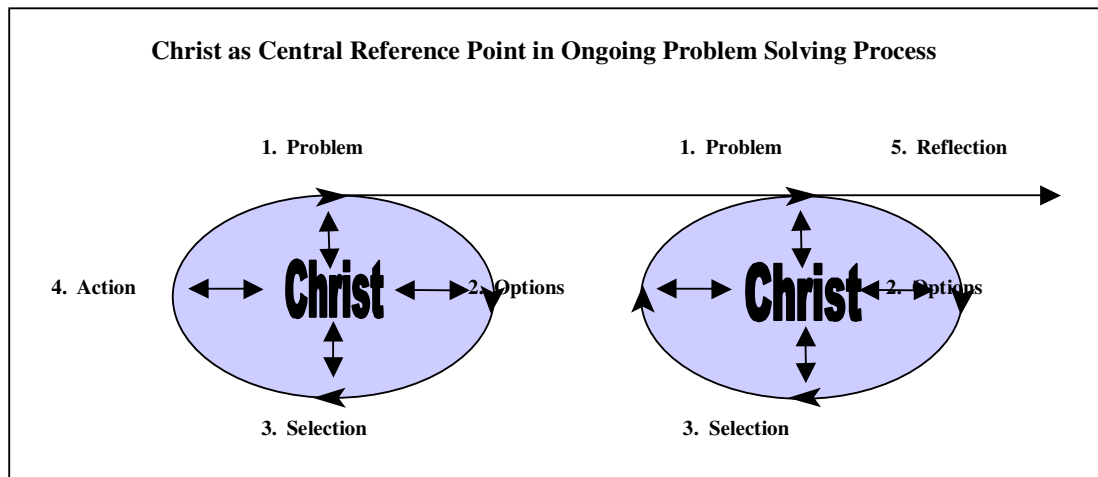
an exclusive rights to the truth, it is those who do not make any claims to have a corner on the market of truth, that seem to be more intuitively in touch with the reality of their problems, and the reality of possible solutions to their problems.

I will only decide on taking a particular course of action if I am personally convinced that it will move us in a *direction* that is true to the *compassion* of Christ, and demonstrates his *acceptance* and his *redemption*, in relation to the resolution of the problem. However, I can usually - if not invariably - come to *consensus* with the way sensible people want to go about solving their problems. Because - whether they know it or not - there is no fundamental conflict between the way sensible people want to go about solving their problems, and the way Christ want us to go about solving our problems. Neither want unethical shortcuts. Both want *genuine, loving, just, longterm, sustainable solutions*.

Sometimes the *implicit* connection - between the way that we have chosen to go, and *the way of Christ* - remains *implicit*. But oftentimes *the implicit* connection - between the way that I have chosen to go, and *the way of Christ* - becomes *explicit*. I love to tell people who are celebrating a successful resolution of a problem, that, believe it or not, their success is a result of their having taken the *way of Christ*, without knowing it. Regardless of their attitude to Christ, they cannot deny the successful resolution of the problem, or disregard the value of *the way of Christ* they have taken thus far.



As a result, *the way of Christ* becomes a significant *point of view*. Some see it as one *point of view* among many. But some start to see it as the one *point of view* by which the many may be judged. Thus the *way of Christ* becomes a significant *point of reference*. If people adopt the *way of Christ* as the *point of reference* for decision making in their ordinary everyday lives, then the process of conversion to Christ as a person, if not Christianity as a religion, has begun. And our dream of personal growth and social change in the light of the light of the love of Christ has begun to come true.



And that is one way that I try to practice personal evangelism and social justice through a simple non-dualistic holistic community development process.

## 5. The Gospel And The Squatters.

Let me tell you a story of how such a process took place among a group of people who were not only non-Christians, but decidedly anti-Christian. Together with my friends, we decided to get involved with a bunch of squatters. They were totally demoralised. They had no jobs. With no jobs they could not afford to pay rent. Because they had nowhere to live they squatted on land beside the road. Because this was illegal, they were constantly harassed by the police who would either demand a bribe, or break down their hutments and beat them up. As a result they were constantly on the move, trying desperately to stay one step ahead of the police. But there weren't many places they could go, so they always wound up back where they started, ready to go through the cycle again.

We got to know this group. Bonds of friendship formed between individuals and their families. They were demoralised, but what they lacked in dignity, they more than made up for in guts. Their struggle against seemingly overwhelming odds was fought with lots of courage and lots of laughter. We were encouraged and strengthened by their infectious style of heroism and sense of humour. They may have been demoralised, but they taught us valuable lessons about the morality of survival. As our friendships deepened, we not only learned from them the art of survival in an urban slum, we began to feel the anguish they felt in their struggle to survive. As we discussed with them the issues they had to face every day of their lives, we decided to work together with them and see if together we could find some long-term solutions that would not only minimise the anguish associated with their struggle for survival, but also increase their chances of surviving.

One day the group decided something had to be done about the continuing police harassment. Some wanted to attack the police station immediately with bricks. Bricks were a common means of settling disputes in the slum. As a con-

flict resolution technique, the people considered it a knockout. We encouraged the people to envisage in their minds what the result of throwing bricks through the window of the police station might be. They concluded that it would probably result in an even more violent visit by the police. The people began to have very serious doubts about the effectiveness of bricks as a conflict resolution technique.

So we began to discuss other possibilities for solving the problem. Someone suggested inviting the police over for a cup of tea and discussing the matter. The squatters treated the idea with scorn, but we supported it. The longer we discussed it, the more support it got. Eventually the police were invited. To start with, you could cut the air with a knife, but the tension was soon dispelled with a couple of jokes. The squatters and the police ended up having an amicable chat and as a result decided to call a truce. The squatters agreed not to cause the police any trouble and the police agreed not to beat up the squatters.

After the police had gone, we had a talk about, how the problem had been resolved. During the discussion one of us mentioned that the problem had been resolved exactly how Christ had suggested such problems be resolved. He said 'bless those who curse you' and, 'if your enemy is thirsty give him a drink', which is exactly what the group had done by inviting the police for a cup of tea. Everyone treated it as a joke. They were embarrassed that they had done anything remotely religious, even if unintentionally. But the squatters remembered the way they had solved the problem with the police and they also remembered that it was the way Christ suggested problems be solved.

Time went by. Week after week, month after month, we worked on a whole range of problems together. Everything from getting a regular water supply to improving nutrition and sanitation. Each time we resolved a problem together it would be on the basis of *common sense* and *consensus*. After the effective resolution of each of these problems, we would discuss how the decision we had taken fitted with the way Christ advocated that problems be dealt with. After each successful resolution of a problem there would be a celebration. It was during this euphoria that we would always explain how the success was contingent upon our having worked in harmony with God's agenda, as personified in Christ; and always there would be the mock groans, that if we carried on the way we were going, that they would all be Christians before too long!

About a year after inviting the police for a cup of tea, the council decided to clean up the city. Cleaning up the city meant getting rid of the squatters. They were notified to leave immediately. But they had nowhere to go. Then they got news that really freaked them out. The bulldozers were on the way. In a panic they considered their options. But there didn't seem to be any. Any promising options had to be discarded because they felt too powerless to make them happen. 'It's typical,' they concluded. 'Those big people can push us little people around as much as they like and there is not a thing we can do about it.' We were tempted to agree. Things looked hopeless. But somehow we knew that we had to believe that the impossible was possible. 'Surely there is *something* we can do!' one person said hopefully. 'Yeah?' asked one of the squatters. 'What? What would Christ do about it?'

Raising Christ, as a possible *point of reference* for solving the problem, had never happened before in our discussions with the squatters. It was a crucial time for this group. A time when Christ might become more than just *one point of view* among *many points of view*; a time when Christ might become *the point of reference for all their problem solving*. The time when the group might be converted to a faith in Christ through which their life might be transformed. It all hinged upon finding a Christ story that the group could use to help them to do *something* about their situation.

I racked my brain, wondering where on earth you could find a story in the gospels that helped a group of squatters deal with the threat of eviction backed by the might of bulldozers. I don't remember who it was, but someone suggested a story they thought may help. It was the story Christ told of a little old widow who was finding it difficult to get justice from a big crooked judge. She finally got justice by knocking on his door at all hours of the night for week after week. As we discussed the story with them, hope began to rise out of their hopelessness. As hope was born, so was a new sense of power. They started discussing the possible solutions in a whole new light. They decided to take up a petition to present to the city council and to persist until they got a fair hearing. They gathered hundreds of signatures and organised a march to the city council administration centre to present the petitions. Then they followed up on the people who could change the decision. Finally, through perseverance they had learned about in the story of the little old widow and the big crooked judge, they were granted an alternative place to stay where the community would have their own houses on their own land. Not only that, the council would help pay the expenses of their move.

It was more than they had ever dreamed possible. The move also opened up a whole host of new doors. Not only did they now have their own homes on their own land, they could now develop their own education, health and employment programmes. With the decrease in demoralisation came an observable increase in morale - and morality - in the community. There was a marked decrease in domestic violence and child abuse. People engaged in more constructive forms of work, and less destructive forms of recreation. There was a marked increase in happier couples and healthier children. Fewer people went to untimely graves. And those who survived, not only lived longer, they also lived fuller lives.

And at the centre of all this activity was a group in the community who remembered that the personal growth and social change had come about because they had followed the agenda of God personified in Christ. This group weren't content with their growth. They looked into the future, and saw the changes that were possible, if they were to follow in the footsteps of Christ, and, like him, live wholeheartedly for God, and his agenda of love and justice.

## Some Practical Issues For Christian Aid Agencies To Consider.

- 1) If evangelism is at the heart of the development process, how can Christian agencies take funds from the government that proscribes evangelism?

One possible answer is: that if the government proscribes evangelism then we shouldn't take any money for development programmes at all.

(Even though we might still take money for relief and for rehabilitation.)

Another possible answer is: that, though the government proscribes 'evangelism', the government is concerned about 'proselytisation' rather than 'evangelisation'; and, as long as we make sure there is no manipulation or exploitation of people in vulnerable circumstances for religious purposes, there should be no conflict of interest in government funding of Christian agencies doing evangelism in development.

- 2) How can agencies stop 'evangelisation' becoming 'proselytisation'?

Some would say that the only way to stop 'evangelisation' becoming 'proselytisation' is for agencies to avoid evangelism altogether.

But I would say it is impossible, by definition, for Christian agencies to avoid evangelism altogether, for we cannot help but witness to Christ. However, if we are going to witness to Christ with any integrity, then we must make sure 'evangelisation' never becomes 'proselytisation'.

Christ publicly criticised religious people who turned 'evangelisation' into 'proselytisation', (Matthew 23:15) 'targeting' people, 'scoring' converts, and destroying any possibility of real acceptance and respect. He condemned those who pretended to be on about the welfare of others when their only concern was for themselves and their cause (Matthew 23:25); and he called for a genuine concern for others, best summed up in the famous story he told about 'The Good Samaritan'.

According to the story, a badly beaten traveller lay bleeding by the side of the road, when a priest passed by. It was the perfect opportunity for him to *practice* what he *preached* about *compassion*. But the priest didn't stop to help. The priest was too preoccupied with his religious activities to spare the time to care for his neighbour. Then, a Samaritan, whom the priest would have considered a 'pagan', passed by. Unlike the priest, the 'pagan' was not so preoccupied with religious duties, that he couldn't spare the time to care for his neighbour. He *practised* what the priest *preached*. He stopped and helped the traveller. In doing so the Samaritan took a grave risk - at great cost. The Samaritan exposed himself to possible danger from the bandits, who had beaten up the traveller, and, who, for all he knew, were still lurking somewhere nearby, waiting to beat up anyone so incautious as to stop and help the traveller laying by the side of the road. As it so turned out the bandits did not rob the Samaritan. But, what the bandits didn't take, the doctors did. The Samaritan went to quite considerable personal expense, to pay the bill the hospital presented him with, to care for the penniless traveller.

When he had finished the story, Christ turned to those who heard him and told them to *stop playing games* like the priest, and *start caring for people more authentically* like 'The Good Samaritan'! (Luke 10: 25-37)

To Christ, '*evangelism*' consisted of *communicating the 'evangelium'* - '*the good news of God's love*' - in *specific, personal, sacrificial acts of un-conditional, non-controlling*



*care* - like healing *ten* lepers - though only *one* ever expressed any gratitude, and *none* became disciples. (Luke 17:11-19).

*For Christian agencies to witness to Christ with any integrity, we need to be as unconditional, and as non-controlling, in our care - as Christ.*

- 3) In order to avoid being non-manipulative and non-exploitative, do we need to have separate programs for evangelism and development?

While I would assert that personal evangelism and social justice should be combined in community development *processes*, I would agree with Stuart Mathison, that once evangelism has moved from being *implicit* to being *explicit*, it is important to set up separate evangelistic *programs*.

As Stuart Mathison says, 'I contend it is virtually impossible to offer development services alongside programmed evangelism without communicating to the community that you are prepared to buy their allegiance to the Christian faith, and that your services are provided on the condition they eventually pay homage to your religious agenda'.

He reminds us that 'some members of the community will happily "play the game" so long as there is the continuing likelihood of personal economic benefit. The poor often see the missionary enterprise as a soft touch and the missionaries as gullible people with money to burn. I am not necessarily saying that the motivations of any particular missionaries are deliberately corrupt, or that they have been blatantly unethical by exploiting the desperation of the poor in order to elicit a desired response, or that they are any more gullible than anybody else. At the end of the day, the motivations of the missionary are not as relevant as the way in which the target group perceives the missionary's actions'.

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