

Anthropological/Missiological Reflections

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Development programs are facing a major crisis. Many have failed to deliver what they promised, and most have not produced self sustained development. As David Korten points out, despite decades of developmental efforts, we live in "a world of dehumanizing poverty, collapsing ecological systems, and deeply stressed social structures" (1990:1).

Some argue that this failure is due to the secular worldview of many NonGovernment Organizations. If this is so, can Christian agencies bring about more lasting beneficial changes in human communities? This book begins the discussion of the unique strengths and contributions that Christian wholistic ministries have to offer. The approach is the analysis of specific cases of planned ministry to learn from them.¹ The strength of this approach is that it tests theories against multivariant realities of life to determine their value. Theory and practice are linked to each other. I will examine these cases from the perspective of a Christian anthropologist.

Each case is obviously unique, and, in some sense, different from the others. This reflects the particularity of history. Nevertheless, underlying many of them we see basic similarities which reflect the systemic nature of human societies, and our common humanity. It is some of these similarities that I would like to examine.

Christian Wholism

Running through the cases there is the discussion regarding the nature of wholism. It is apparent from this that wholism is not simply the programmatic integration of evangelism and

social concern. It is not trying in some way to reach a fifty-fifty percent balance between leading people to Christ and helping them better their lives. Our western problem with wholism is the dualism that rends our worldview into two unrelated halves. We sever the natural world from the supernatural, material from spiritual realities, mind from matter, science from religion, public truth from private opinion, science from faith, and social concern from evangelism. We turn to science to solve our earthly needs, and to Christianity to give us spiritual peace and eternal salvation.

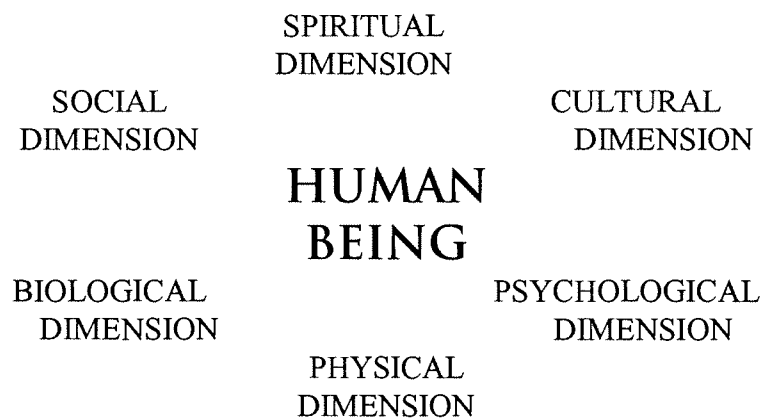
Wholism is not simply trying to reach a balance between the two. If our worldviews are divided into segments, our ministries and programs will be divided. We are like the missionary doctor who said, "During the day I heal the people's bodies, and in the evening I visit the wards to minister to their souls." Wholism demands the response of a missionary doctor who made it clear to each patient by his compassion, testimony and prayer that his medical ministry was in the name and power of Christ.

Wholism must begin by challenging this divided worldview. We must distinguish between creator and creation, but see the later as a whole. The biblical begins with the one creation--visible and invisible, temporal and eternal, body and soul, spiritual and material. It holds that the evils against which we fight are the consequences of sin--injustice, poverty, broken relationships, damaged personalities, diseases, ruination of the earth, death and eternal lostness and separation from God. The biblical worldview also offers a total salvation that includes salvation and fellowship with God, forgiveness and reconciliation between humans, victory over sin, deliverance from demonic oppression and from structural evils, justice, peace, health and

meaningful lives. In other words, it offers *shalom*. It sees this salvation as both personal and corporate. God transforms people, and he transforms their societies and cultures.

Such a worldview requires that we abandon the linear concept of mechanistic causality that shaped early modern science. In this there was no room for God's acts or human choice. Rather, we must move to a systems view of causality. Humans are physical, biological, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual beings at the same time. If any part goes wrong, symptoms of the malady are manifested throughout the system. For example, social oppression can lead to psychological illnesses and spiritual depression. Similarly, spiritual rebellion leads to broken lives and bad relationships (figure 1).

Figure 1
A Systems View of Human Beings



Similarly, we need to see societies and cultures as systems made up of interacting constituent parts. Societies are made up of economic, social, political, legal and ideological subsystems; cultures of symbols, myths, rituals, beliefs, feelings, values and worldviews. Evil in any part affects the whole. For example, economic oppression can hinder spiritual and social

growth. Similarly, change in any one of these spreads throughout the system.

A systems approach to humans has profound implications for wholistic ministries. In dealing with evil, we must treat both the symptoms that appear in the various subsystems, but we must also deal with the root cause of the evil. For example, we must help the poor to improve their lives, but until we transform the social systems that give rise to poverty, we will continue to have the poor with us. Similarly, we can help people to cope with psychological problems, but until they are transformed as persons through the power of Christ, these solutions are only temporary. If we take a linear view of human needs, as Maslow does in his hierarchy of felt needs, we will first have to deal with economic needs, then psychological and social needs, and finally spiritual needs. In the end, we become so involved in the lower levels of need that we never get to their greatest need, namely the transformation of their whole beings.

The cases in this book manifest this wholistic worldview. Some used medicine (cases 1,4,7), some economic development (1,2,3,5, 6), and some human rights (1) as the points of *entre* into ministry. All, however, share a common vision of the total transformation of persons, and of their sociocultural systems. It is the clarity of this wholistic vision that, I believe, is the basis for much of the success reported in these cases.

Culturally Appropriate

A second theme underlying many of the cases is the need for culturally appropriate ministries. It is important for us to know Scripture well, for it is the foundation for our lives and mission. We must also know the people we serve so that we can communicate them in ways that

they understand.

We must learn the language and culture of the people we serve (1,2,7). This requires that we go as learners, not only when we enter a culture, but throughout our ministry. Ministry should not follow study. The two must go hand in hand. Ongoing research opens doors for ministry and makes it more effective, and ministry raises new questions to study.

We must build trust. This means we must be incarnational, living with the people and involving ourselves in their everyday lives as friends and fellow humans. As seen in these cases, we need to model multicultural and multiethnic teams that live together in harmony and mutual respect. We must include local leaders in planning, carrying out and evaluating the ministry.

These cases point out the need to make the Bible available to the people, and to teach them to study it for themselves. As Lamin Sanneh points out, nothing transforms and empowers the people more than this. It gives them dignity, and lets them know that God speaks to them directly. In communicating the gospel we need to use methods of communication appropriate to their culture. In oral communities we need to use stories, proverbs, pictures, dramas and songs, and, more recently, modern media such as oral Bibles, tape recordings, radio, movies and T.V. In literate societies we should add the printed page, and now computers.

We need to recognize that God speaks to the people in ways they are familiar with. In some, societies this includes dreams, visions and miraculous healings (4,7). In other societies the people see the hand of God in social and economic uplift, and in a new sense of dignity and worth (1,3 ,5,6). We need to build communities of Christian fellowship that create their own indigenous forms of worship, and formulate their own theological responses to the problems they

face based on their study of the Scriptures together.

Our mission, however, is not simply to communicate the gospel so that the people understand it. The gospel calls for a transformation of the people as individuals, and as communities. An uncritical contextualization affirms all humans and cultures as basically good, and does not challenge the evil in them. What we need is a critical contextualization (Hiebert 1984) that affirms what is good in every culture and society, and calls for transformation of everything that is sinful, oppressive and destructive. It is clear in these cases that one of the attractions of the Christian message is the hope it offers of a better life and a better world as well as eternal salvation.

Organizational Structures

A third theme running through the cases in this book is the need to develop new ways of organizing our ministries. Here two issues arise: first, the type of organization we form, and second, the problem of institutionalization.

Mechanical and Organic Organizational Structures

For the most part, structures in the west are based on mechanistic styles of organization (cf. Peter Berger et. al. 1974, Ellul 1964).² The principles underlying these structures often runs counter to essential Christian values, and to effective, self-sustaining wholistic ministries.³

Mechanical Organizations

- human engineering and control
- focus on institution, program and outcome
- stresses uniformity
- big is good

Organic Organizations

- God's work and leading
- focus on people, relationships and process
- recognizes and accommodates diversity
- appropriate size, small is good

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| - centralized and top down control | - decentralized, bottom up and empowerment |
| - rigid, clearly defined formal structures | of the people |
| - formal, mechanical roles | - flexible, often informal and ad hoc structures |
| - expatriate as leader, manager and trainer | constantly reevaluated |
| - professionalism | - negotiated relationships |
| - external inputs required | - expatriate as servant leader, catalyst and facilitator. |
| - goals, work and evaluation externally determined | - mobilize and disciple laity and new believers |
| - time driven | - self-sustaining programs |
| - western model of organization | - goals, work and evaluation internally negotiated |
| | - harvest principle, minister until self-sustaining work is achieved |
| | - indigenous forms of organization |

It is clear that the success of the projects we are examining is based to a great extent on their use of organic models of organization that involve the local people, not only in benefiting from the programs, but also in the planning, resourcing, carrying out and evaluating the ministry. This assumes that people have the capacity to solve many of their own problems if they are sensitized, empowered and organized. The emphasis is on building the community (not only individuals) by seeking consensus through group deliberations and reflections. Through this process, people participate in their own development and take ownership over the process of decision-making and change. By contrast, wholistic programs in which the outsiders distrust the abilities and choices of the people often fail, and are rarely self-sustaining (Ewert 1993).

Many of the problems in current wholistic Christian ministries arise out of the fact that the agencies are bridges between two organization worlds. They are organized and funded in the west, and are expected by their supporters to operate as modern corporate organizations, showing measurable results commensurate to the investment. They operate in societies where organic

forms of organization are most effective. We must work with and modify both models of organization. We need planning, financial accountability, good organization and clear visions. We also need flexibility, loving relationships and an openness to the unexpected serendipities of God at work in the situation. We need to wed professional knowledge with lay participation. To do so we need servant leaders. The successes we see in these cases occur most often when this bridge between organizational styles has been built.

Institutionalization

A second problem related to organization in these cases is that of institutionalization. New ventures are characterized by a clear vision, team fellowship, commitment and great sacrifice. As time passes and the institution grows, formal roles, specialization, communication and accountability systems and rules of operation are needed to keep the organization functioning as a whole. In the process, those involved, particularly at the lower levels of operation, lose sight of the bigger vision, and are caught up in the tasks and goals of their own departments. Commitment to ministry and sacrifice give way to institutional maintenance and job satisfaction.

There are several ways to counter this tendency to institutionalization as seen in our cases. First, effective institutions are able to maintain flexibility, good personal relationships, and a vision shared by workers at all levels of the organization. Second, institutions and individuals can be renewed through periodic gatherings in which outside input is introduced and the vision of the institution is reformulated and affirmed. This is true of a number of the projects we are analyzing.

Training Leaders, not Followers

A fourth thread running through these cases is the early discipling and empowering of local leaders to take responsibility for the work. Initially the expatriates must begin the work, but when new converts emerge, the expatriates' primary task becomes the discipling of these converts into positions of leadership. This does not happen naturally. Our tendency is to train followers because it is easy and gratifying. But training followers means that the work will remain dependent on outside personnel and resources. Discipling leaders must be an intentional strategy that involves our willingness to trust budding leaders, and to allow them the greatest privilege we allow ourselves, namely the right to make mistakes and learn from them. We must take pride not in our achievements, but in theirs.

The foundation for discipling is building relationships, not technical training. Its goal is not specialists, although leaders often require specialized training. Rather it is to prepare mature leaders who know the Scriptures, have a clear vision of ministry, and the people skills needed to be servant leaders. It begins with people where they are. We cannot expect to begin with mature, trained people. Discipling requires that we empower people early and respect their judgments. In the cases at hand we find that inductive Bible studies led by local workers is one of the best means of preparing them for leadership responsibilities.

For the most part, leaders are not the product of formal schooling in which the teacher sees his or her task to be the transmission of technical knowledge. Rather it occurs in the flow of life as expatriates disciple a small number of people by involving them in ministry, whether this be Bible teaching, agriculture, small loan systems and medical work. The leaders must be open and transparent with their disciples, and their teachings congruent with their actions. As seen in our cases, discipling also takes place at retreats, conference, seminars and other special occasions

where input from outside and reflection with in takes place.

Discipling is critical to team building and networking. Not only should expatriates disciple local leaders, but they should disciple one another. In this sense the team becomes a learning and ministering community that models for the world the nature of Christian community.

Discipling does not end when we have leaders. Too often we train leaders who then train followers. It is important for them to catch the vision that their primary task is also to train leaders. This was Paul's central strategy. He nurtured some twenty-seven disciples--nine of them women--into positions of leadership, and encouraged them to train other leaders (2 Tim. 2:2). Christian leadership is caught from good models.

Establishing Churches and Preaching the Kingdom

A fifth theme common to these cases is a clear vision of the mission of the program. This begins with ministry to humans in need sharing with them the transforming power of Christ in their lives. But the vision goes further. It focuses on building transformed communities of believers committed to ministering to those in need around them. In most of the cases the workers were actively involved in ministering as members in local churches, and the local congregations were involved in the ministry of the development agency. This mutual participation is a powerful witness to the importance the workers place on the church. It is these local communities that must hear God's word and carry out God's work in their neighborhoods. Without a living church, the Gospel is soon lost. Without the Gospel, we have no church.

Several of the writers of our cases point out the need for us to go further and recognize

that ultimately, mission is the mission of God. We need to recognize that it is God who is at work establishing his kingdom on earth, and it is God who has called us to enter into his ministry. He is at work in the lives of the people before we enter the scene, while we are there, and after we leave. This was the central message that Jesus preached. He referred to the coming of God's kingdom more than a hundred times. But seeing our ministry in the framework of the Kingdom of God does not take us far enough. If we start with the Kingdom, we can make it any utopia we wish--capitalist, Marxist or dictatorship. We must begin with the King--with Jesus Christ-- for it is he who defines the kingdom.⁴

Enduring Opposition

It is not enough to point out the successes of wholistic ministries. These cases make it clear that effective ministry leads to persecution. Neither Satan nor people opposed to Christ acting individually and corporately will let the work go on unopposed (1,4,5,7). Visas and permits are denied, new converts are beaten and ostracized, and leaders reviled. Opposition may also arise from within the existing churches as Christians fear change(6).

Painful as this persecution is, it often serves as a powerful testimony to the power of the Gospel. Christians unite to bear each others' burdens, people in the church for personal gain leave, and NonChristians are forced to take note of the courage and commitment of these new believers. As a result, many often believe in Christ and join the new persecuted community because of the powerful testimony of its faith, love and new life. New believers and old learn to trust in God and his ways, and to share the Good News of God's transforming power with greater boldness.

Learning from Our Failures

The value of the case study approach is that we can learn from our failures as well as from our successes. In cases we test our theories against real life. When they fail us, we are forced to reevaluate and learn from them. A young businessman asked a great executive how he had come to be so successful. The executive said, "by making good decisions." "I know, but how did you learn to make good decisions," the young man asked. "By making bad decisions," the old man replied. In ministry, too, failure can be a great teacher.

One of the enduring values of these cases is that we can read them again and again, and gain new insights into the nature of Christian ministry. As we read them, we automatically make mental applications to our own situations. We learn to examine the human dimensions of such ministry.

Prayer and Dependence on God

Finally, all the cases point out the importance of prayer and dependence on God in wholistic ministries. Wholism is not more sophisticated methods whereby we do God's work. It is rooted in the awareness that these ministries are God's work, and that with his call to service he gives strength and fruit. This is a lesson we need to constantly relearn throughout our lives.

1. The use of cases as research data was developed by K. N. Lewellyn and E. A. Hoebel (1941. The Cheyenne Way: Conflict and Case Law in Primitive Jurisprudence. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press). More recently A. Strauss and B. Glaser have developed grounded theory as a formal use of cases in developing theory (1967. The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research. Chicago: Aldine).

2. For an analysis of the emergence in the west of the mechanistic worldview on which this is based see E. J. Dijksterhuis. 1986. The Mechanization of the World Picture: Pythagoras to

Newton. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

3. An excellent comparison of more effective and less effective corporations is found in the working document of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (1987) for use in transforming the company into a private sector business.

4. For an excellent discussion of the Kingdom of God and the King see E. S. Jones. 1972. The Unshakable Kingdom and the Unchanging Person. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

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