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FEATURE

**The Gospel as Holistic Mission: The Challenges
of Contextualizing Relief and Development**

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***Abstract:** Contextualization of the gospel means that the gospel has not only been communicated but has also been understood, lived out, and has transformed individuals, and communities, as well as their culture. If we are to communicate the gospel message to other cultures, we must find ways to make it comprehensible without losing the message in cultural trappings. The gospel has multiple facets, of which relief and development are an integral part. Thus the integration of word and deed, being and doing, must always be the focus of true holistic mission.*

The task of contextualizing the gospel through relief and development ministries involves challenges and opportunities. Challenges occur because when the gospel is being contextualized through its work or its message, we run the risk of including more than what is necessary. We run the risk of including our culture as better, our behavior as ideal, our religion as superior, and our charity as a means to justify our moral and humanitarian ethics. At the same time we run the risk of not including what is really necessary.

Nevertheless, many people will see or hear the truths of the gospel for the first time during a crisis situation or through development programs, when those who render them physical, emotional, material, or educational help also share the spiritual truths of the gospel in an indirect way. This is hope brought to them.

It is important to note that even though there are challenges in the process of contextualizing the gospel through relief and development ministries, the opportunities are many and more efforts should be employed in this mission. Even when persons are not making a decision to join the church, the gospel is lived out and demonstrated, and as the Bible states, the seed will produce fruit at the harvest season.

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Contextualization¹ in Theory and Practice

For many years but mainly during the colonial era, Christian missionaries, mostly Protestants, understood that in order for non-believers (non-Christians) to become Christians they also had to become similar in culture to that of Westerners—they had to accept the culture of the missionary. Today many things have changed, especially in the way missionaries from the West have tried to be more sensitive towards non-Western cultures and the way they have adapted or contextualized the work and message of the gospel. For many, the gospel is above culture, but it must be understood in every cultural context.

Definitions

Critical contextualization helps us understand that the gospel comes or is presented as a message of salvation not from the West to East or from North to South, but from God to all people, cultures, and nations. The gospel as expressed in God's word judges culture, and as such, accepts what is good in the culture and also condemns and rejects what is bad in each culture (Hiebert, 1994, pp. 64, 75-92).

Bible translation is one of the best forms of contextualizing the gospel for other cultures. It is God's way of talking to people in their own language and culture. As Jesus continued to be God when He took human form, the same happens with Scripture—it continues to be God's divine revelation even when it is written in different languages. Therefore, true contextualization is much more than the simple communication of the gospel. It means that the gospel has been explained, understood, lived out, and fructified; that God is actively working in the hearts of people, transforming them into new creatures; that the eternal word has been transformed their lives, their societies, and their culture (Hiebert & Hiebert-Meneses, 1995, pp. 371-372). It means to adapt, incarnate, and transfer the message, the words, the example, and the work of Christ, so as to represent Him as He is—the word of God revealed to men and women.

To contextualize the gospel means to live the life of Christ in our life; to receive the living and written word and communicate it to others in a way they can understand. Even those that do not know how to read or write can understand the gospel if it is communicated to them in an appropriate form, or better, if the gospel is lived out in a way that represents the God of the gospel.

Contextualization is the communication or translation of the gospel in verbal forms that are understood by people in their own distinct cultures and

¹ For a more detailed study of contextualization from an Adventist perspective, please see Vol. 1, No. 2, of the *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* (2005). Berrien Springs, MI: World Mission Department, Andrews University. That issue was entirely dedicated to this subject.

specific situations (Nicholls, as cited in Hesselgrave & Rommen, 1989, p. 33). It is also the content of the gospel being practiced and lived out in a concrete and real way. Contextualization can also be a process with three distinct elements: revelation, interpretation, and application, through which there would be continuity of meaning (Yoder, as cited in Hesselgrave & Rommen, 1989, p. 201). Contextualization can also be defined as the process where the message of the word of God relates to the cultural context in which it is proclaimed; this means that the word of God must be brought to people where they live, to the culture where they are rooted, in such a way that they can identify themselves with the word, be at home with the word, and express themselves with the word in their own cultural forms (Lauersdorf, 1984, p. 2).

In order for relief and development ministries to be understood as holistic mission, the church must be engaged in comprehensive contextualization with some essential and foundational characteristics. Moreau (2006, pp. 325-327) has discussed seven of these characteristics stating that: 1) Comprehensive contextualization is concerned with the whole of the Christian faith; 2) It is both propositional and existential, as it must engage both the timeless truths about our faith as well as the way those truths are to be lived out; 3) It is grounded in Scripture; 4) It is interdisciplinary in its approach to culture; 5) It is dynamic; 6) It is aware of the impact of human sinfulness on the process; and 7) It is a two-way process in which all sides contribute.

The process of a comprehensive contextualization of the gospel must be seen and applied in various aspects of the church's ministry and mission.¹ As examples, some of the areas of mission where contextualization can be applied are the following: in the process of Bible translation (and all Christian literature); in the preaching of the gospel in a way that is understandable to the hearers; in the administrative structure and forms of ecclesiastical governance; in the discipline of new believers; in liturgy and worship, baptism, weddings, and communion; in music and hymnology; in communication, and in philosophy and methods of education; in health care, in relief and charity ministries towards the poor and needy of the world, and in development programs.

¹ Any Adventist engaged in holistic mission or ministry that requires serious contextualization of the Gospel should consult the principles and guidelines set forth by the SDA Church. They can be found in the official web site of the church under the title *Guidelines for Engaging in Global Mission*. This document has 5 parts, describing the following subjects: 1) Use of the Bible in Mission Vis-à-Vis "Sacred Writings"; 2) Transitional Organizational Structures; 3) Fundamental Beliefs and Preparation for Baptism; 4) Forms of Worship; and 5) Contextualization and Syncretism. This last point is the most relevant in the discussion, understanding, and practice of a contextualized ministry.
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Thus, it can be stated that the goal of a comprehensive contextualization “is to make the Christian Faith *as a whole*—not only the message but also the means of living our faith out in the local setting—understandable” (Moreau, 2006, p. 325). The life of the missionary must be contextualized; and so must his/her message as well as the approach and methodology of witnessing. Also, aspects of the Christian life such as worship must be contextualized. Even more important is the need to contextualize many of the aspects of the old culture.

Examples

Christ is the best example of contextualization of the eternal gospel. He is the incarnated Son of God. He lived and died to give us an example to be followed, and His Church is called to follow His footsteps. Most urgently, the world needs today what it has needed for the past two thousand years—a true revelation of Christ (White, 1905, p. 143). How then can Christ be revealed to the world? What are the forms and methods to be used? What does it mean to contextualize the gospel today, to people, cultures, and places where they live?

In this context Ellen White (1905) has written widely on the methods and principles that should be employed as we attempt to contextualize and live out the gospel of Christ:

Christ’s methods alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, “Follow Me.”

There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit. (pp. 143-144)

Here is a clear definition on the way the gospel is to be contextualized, especially in the area of the social ministries of the church. It is important to understand that the true contextualization of the gospel does not limit itself to the preaching or translating of the word, goes to the heart of the gospel which involves the lived out and practicing of the gospel—“Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). This is what Paul meant as he made reference to the ‘mystery of the incarnation.’ The incarnation was God’s way of contextualizing Himself to us as individuals, to our condition, and to our fallen world.

Here is another example of a personal and lived-out contextualization of the idea: Born in a Muslim home in Syria, Mazhar Mallouhi is a writer and has already published more than a dozen books. He is also a Christian missionary to the Muslims of the Middle East and there he lives to share the gospel and to declare the peace of Christ to the Muslim world, to Arabs, and also to Christians.

In an article written by Paul-Gordon Chandler (2003, pp. 54-59), Mallouhi is described as “Gandhi’s Living Christian Legacy in the Muslim World.” The conversion experience of Mallouhi is unique and extraordinary at the same time. For him Christianity was an oppressive tool of the colonizers, a western religion that continued its medieval crusades against the Arab people. Christians call Christ the “Prince of Peace,” but at the same time support war. The most beautiful thing of the gospel, the cross, was used as a weapon in the hands of those who participate in the crusades against us; and the cross, the means by which God embraces humanity, is transformed into a sword (Chandler, 2003, p. 55).

The example and life of Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) greatly influenced Mallouhi to consider Christianity. Gandhi, though he never became a Christian, considered Christ as his example and often stated the following to Christian missionaries in India: Do not speak about Christianity, only live as a real Christian and people will come to see the source of your power. Gandhi was able to do what missionaries were not able to do in fifty years—the eyes of India turned to the cross. The unintentional witness of Gandhi about Christ to the Hindus and Muslims of India reached and touched the heart of Mazhar Mallouhi. He saw the teachings of Jesus demonstrated and lived out in the life of Gandhi (Chandler, 2003, p. 54).

As Gandhi incarnated and incorporated into his own life the principles of the gospel of Christ, Mazhar Mallouhi, through the example of Gandhi, was drawn to Christ through His words that say: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

As a writer, Mallouhi presents the Bible in a way that is culturally accepted in the Middle East. Not long ago, in a quite large Muslim book convention in a North African country, a book written by Mallouhi, entitled *An Eastern Reading of the Gospel of Luke*, helped the Bible to gain access and become more accepted by Muslim people. It was the book that sold the most in that convention. That book portrayed Jesus as one who has roots in the Middle East, and as one who identifies Himself and relates Himself with the Muslims of the Middle East. In this context and in reality, Christianity is not a religion from the West; it is a religion from the Middle East first and foremost (Chandler, 2003, p. 58).

Mazhar Mallouhi’s dream is to find a home for the word of God in the hearts of the Muslim people of the world, so that many will understand the gospel and find the truth and lasting reconciliation in the Prince of Peace of

the Middle East (Chandler, 2003, p. 58). His is an example of true contextualization, which takes as a base the example of Jesus and Biblical principles. Jesus came to represent and reveal God to a fallen world. He came to personify God's divinity; to live out the gospel, as He Himself is the gospel. He did it while walking the roads of Galilee, while helping those in need, and as He called sinners to repent. He continues His work through His faithful followers when they also decide to fully and wholly live out and practice His holistic gospel.

Holistic Ministries from a Biblical and Missions Perspective

The Bible provides principles and instructions regarding our duty and care towards the widows, orphans, aliens, the poor and needy, the sick, the handicapped, and all those oppressed by sin and the devil. These instructions were given to us by a God who loves and cares for us. Several of these instructions are found in the following passages of the Old Testament: Exodus 22:21-25; 23:9-11; Leviticus 19:9-15; 25:25-28; Deuteronomy 10:17-19; 14:28-29; 15:7-11; 24:12-21; 26:12-13; 27:19; Job 29:12-17; 31:13-23; Psalms 68:5; 82:2-4; 112:4-9; 146:9; Proverbs 13:23; 14:31; 19:7; 22:22-23; 23:10-11; 29:7; 31:10; Isaiah 1:17, 23; 10:1-2; 58:6-10; Jeremiah 5:27-28; 7:5-7; 22:3; 49:11; Ezekiel 18:7; 16:49; Daniel 4:27; Hosea 14:3; Zechariah 7:9-10; Malachi 3:5.

The prophets were quite outspoken in regard to the laws and regulations dealing with relief and social welfare in the Old Testament. Oftentimes, a question is asked: How can the poor, homeless, and unemployed be helped in order to secure the blessings of God's providence and to live the life He intended man to live? Note the following pertinent statement:

If men would give more heed to the teachings of God's Word, they would find a solution of these problems that perplex them. Much might be learned from the Old Testament in regard to the labor question and the relief of the poor.

In God's plan for Israel every family had a home on the land, with sufficient ground for tilling. Thus were provided both the means and the incentive for a useful, industrious, and self-supporting life. And no devising of men has ever improved upon that plan. To the world's departure from it is owing, to a large degree, the poverty and wretchedness that exist today. (White, 1905, pp. 183-184)

The principles, lessons, and instructions of the Bible help us to understand the intention of God in regard to the needy. God wants us to be in connection with His word so that we can be His instruments of mercy and love to those who are suffering. Moreover, "it is God's purpose that the rich and the poor shall be closely bound together by the ties of sympathy and

helpfulness” (White, 1905, p. 193). This togetherness will prove to be a blessing to both of these groups. It will help both the poor as well as the rich in understanding God’s plan of salvation and the spiritual truths that can be revealed by a life of benevolence, and thus understood in the midst of distress and suffering. Accordingly,

Real charity helps men to help themselves. If one comes to our door and asks for food, we should not turn him away hungry; his poverty may be the result of misfortune. But true beneficence means more than mere gifts. It means a genuine interest in the welfare of others. We should seek to understand the needs of the poor and distressed, and to give them the help that will benefit them the most. To give thought and time and personal effort costs far more than merely to give money. But it is the truest charity. (White, 1905, p. 195)

Thus, it is only by our love and service for His needy children that we can prove the genuineness of our love for God (White, 1905, p. 205). True service comes from our true love for our Savior as demonstrated towards those He came to save and restore.

Jesus gives us an extraordinary example in telling us the story of the Good Samaritan (see Luke 10:25-37). In this incident where the gospel is contextualized through the person of the Good Samaritan, Jesus brought a new interpretation of what God had ordained in the old covenant, but that the Israelites of Jesus’ time had forgotten.

The New Testament also provides many examples that help us to understand how holistic ministries must be an integral part of the life and mission of both the believer and the church, who is the body of Christ. Jesus’ kind and gentle treatment of women also helps us to better understand how to contextualize the gospel; and an example of this is the story of the Samaritan woman (see John 4:1-26); another is of how Jesus reinterpreted or contextualized the message of God is the case of the woman caught in adultery (see John 8:1-11).¹

¹ Other examples of how the gospel of Christ touched the women are the following: The Canaanite or Syrophenician woman (Mt. 15:21-28; Mk. 7:24-30); Jesus’ mother (Jn. 19:25-27); Jesus encouraged Martha and Mary (Jn. 11:17-37); Jesus raised a widow’s son (Lk. 7:11-17); Jesus was anointed by a sinful woman and forgave her sins (Jn. 12:1-11; Mt. 26:6-13; Mk. 14:3-9; Lk. 7:36-50); Jesus healed and dialogued with a sick woman (Lk. 8:43-48; Mt. 9:20-22; Mk. 5:25-34); women were cured from evil spirits and diseases (Lk. 8:1-3); Jesus healed a crippled woman (Lk. 13:10-13); Jesus noticed the widow giving her offering (Mk. 12:41-44; Lk. 21:1-4); Jesus appeared to Mary (Jn. 20:10-18).
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The whole ministry of Jesus—by teaching, preaching, and healing—demonstrated His mission to save and to restore, to heal and to forgive. His actions confirmed His teachings, and

His miracles testified to the truth of His words, that He came not to destroy, but to save. Wherever He went, the tidings of His mercy preceded Him. Where He had passed, the objects of His compassion were rejoicing in health and making trial of their new-found powers. Crowds were collecting around them to hear from their lips the works that the Lord had wrought. His voice was the first sound that many had ever heard, His name the first word they had ever spoken, His face the first they had ever looked upon.

The Savior made each work of healing an occasion for implanting divine principles in the mind and soul. This was the purpose of His work. He imparted earthly blessings, that He might incline the hearts of men to receive the gospel of His grace.

Christ might have occupied the highest place among the teachers of the Jewish nation, but He preferred rather to take the gospel to the poor. He went from place to place, that those in the highways and byways might hear the words of truth. . . . Thus He went from city to city, from town to town, preaching the gospel and healing the sick—the King of glory in the lowly garb of humanity. (White, 1905, 19-22)

As noted above, Jesus' ministry was totally devoted to the salvation and redemption of human beings to their original wholeness. He preached the gospel to them, healed their sickness, forgave their sins, and restored them to a life that was complete—reconciled all with God through Himself.

Ellen White (1905) comments that “the Savior ministered to both the soul and the body. The gospel which He taught was a message of spiritual life and of physical restoration” (p. 111). Moreover, it was “by giving His life for the life of men” that “He would restore in humanity the image of God. He would lift us up from the dust, reshape the character after the pattern of His own character, and make it beautiful with His own glory” (p. 504).

This is, without any doubt, what we can refer to as the holistic gospel of Jesus Christ; a gospel that is able to heal and to save, to protect and restore—transforming human beings into heirs of God's kingdom by restoring in them the image of God. This is the work that must be done through the power of God's Spirit in order that many poor, sick, and needy persons might receive the grace of this holistic gospel of Christ and be transformed into His likeness.

By helping the poor we need to be careful not to make them dependent. Apostle Paul makes close reference to Christian development, as can be understood in today's context. He wrote: “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as

we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody” (1 Th. 4:11-12). It is clear that the believers should not depend on (be a burden to) others—dependency is against Christian principles. By living a quiet life, working with their own hands, and not interfering in the affairs of others, the believers would possess dignity, be self-reliant, and would become respected citizens of their communities. This indeed was the gospel, demonstrated in practical terms.

Holistic Development

Holistic transformation is the ultimate purpose of Christian development (see Kuhn, 2005, pp. 122-124). But in order for this transformation to occur, both the divine power and the human will must cooperate. Jesus showed us the way by loving and identifying Himself with us even to death. His mission was to bring complete restoration to men and women. “He came to give them health and peace and perfection of character. . . . From Him flowed a stream of healing power, and in body and mind and soul men were made whole” (White, 1905, p. 17).

Real development is more than just changes in behavior, traditions, or worldview; it is a transformation of the whole person, which affects the whole community. It is a transformation of both the poor as well as the non-poor. All need to be transformed and saved by God’s redeeming grace. Accordingly,

Ministry to the whole person is more than a series of activities in which an outsider makes things happen. . . . It is also more than processes of motivation and education in which social preparation, community participation, reconstruction, etc., changes a part of the community’s world view, structure, behavior patterns, etc. . . . Effective ministry to the whole person is a process whereby world view and values are transformed into a form pleasing to Christ and shaped by His word. As this happens, people increasingly fulfill their God-given potential and demonstrate righteousness in motivation and behavior. . . . Such radical and lasting transformation occurs when the Holy Spirit changes people and makes them like Jesus. Then, development [that is holistic] has begun. (Steward, 1990, p. 24)

In other words, and paraphrasing the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, it could be stated that if there is no love, there is no development. I can do many things, even impossible things, but if I do not love, I am nothing; I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no records of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always

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trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. . . . And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. (I Cor. 13: 4-8, 13)

The essence of transformational and holistic development is love, and the source or origin of genuine and altruistic love is God. Development then comes through the establishment of the kingdom of God as the members of the body of Christ, who form His Church, come together to worship Him, acknowledging Him as Creator and Savior. It happens through the embrace of peace and justice. Forgiveness is given and received, persons are restored (made whole), and God is worshiped in Spirit and in truth.

Development that is holistic comes from God, through the Son, and by the Spirit. It is given as a gift and when accepted individually and participated in with the members of the body of Christ, it transforms the whole person, the whole community. The results of this holistic development are the fruits of the Spirit, of which the most important is love (see I Cor. 13:4-8, 13).

The Gospel as Holistic Mission: Challenges and Opportunities

The contextualization of the gospel as holistic mission is always challenging, with risks and opportunities. Let's briefly discuss some of the possible challenges involved in this process.

Challenges

First, run the risk of lowering the gospel to a level so identical to a given culture that it does not have the power to transform either the culture or the people it is intended for; and the gospel becomes a prisoner of culture. One of the reasons is excess contextualization, or uncritical contextualization.

Secondly, and similarly, the contextualization of the holistic ministries poses another serious risk that these ministries will become an end in themselves, or will become the gospel in itself: An example would be that of the church becoming a large humanitarian agency. In other words, community services and welfare ministries, ADRA, hospitals, or our schools and universities in turn become churches in themselves or the gospel itself.

For the first challenge given above I will provide the following short examples from history and the Bible:

King Solomon - The wisest king that ever lived tried to contextualize God's plan according to what he thought was correct, according to his own way of thinking and reasoning. He allowed the worship of pagan gods within the walls of his own palace and in his nation—Israel's own territory. The result was predictable and terrible—pagan idolatry penetrated the

chosen nation and idolatry became part of the very culture of the chosen people of God.

The Traditions of the Pharisees - God's instructions were rejected, His divine counsels forsaken, and these were replaced by human ordinances: human will in the place of God's will. This is a type of contextualization where God's will and His instructions were replaced by human will and its traditions.

Likewise, we run the same risk in the Adventist church today, in our educational system, in the medical system, and in any institutionalized system of the church. If we are not very careful, we can end up accepting government curricula, medical practices, secularized management philosophies, and so on, added to our own human traditions, instead of God's revelation and instructions.

The Roman Catholic Traditions - This over-contextualization has happened with the Catholic Church, which replaced some of God's principles and commandments with its own traditions. In many occasions instead of preaching the gospel of Christ, the Roman church ended up becoming a herald for culture and human traditions, and instead of bringing the gospel, it became oppressive by forcing people to accept its own culture and traditions as the gospel itself.

In regards to the second aspect or challenge that holistic ministries turning into a huge humanitarian agency or a large social ministry enterprise, the following examples are provided:

Charity as a Means of Salvation - The practice of charity replaces the need of a Savior—this is called salvation by works. The poor and needy become instruments of salvation for those who are rich, and these in turn earn their salvation by sharing with the poor from their abundance. For the poor, on the other hand, the practice of a lowly and deprived life and the very condition of poverty are believed to merit salvation. There is no need of God, as poverty is a means of salvation. Almsgiving or being its recipient becomes more important than the sharing, preaching, accepting, or living and practicing the gospel in one's life.

The Social Gospel - Many social ministries begin with the noble purpose of sharing and witnessing for the gospel, but as time passes, gospel witnessing decreases and the sharing of God's love stops. Little or no reference is made to the gospel that transforms, restores, heals, redeems, and saves. Much is said about the fact that society is getting better, that social programs can transform and improve societies and communities, and that as a result God's kingdom will be established here on earth as people are getting better, progressing towards achieving holiness (see also Kuhn, 2004, pp. 129-135).

Health without Healing, and Treatment without the Gospel - The case of the Battle Creek Sanitarium and of Dr. John H. Kellogg is an example. It *April 2007, Vol. 10, No. 1*

seemed that the restoration of health became an end in itself. The spiritual side was neglected and the holistic gospel ceased to be practiced as instructed by God. Dr. Kellogg focused continually on new medical discoveries and new treatment techniques, forgetting to also help the sick to look to Jesus as the great physician. His understanding of God and nature as related to pantheism pushed him to a contextualization of the gospel that proved to be disastrous to him and to the church as a result.

Health, Social, and Development Programs that are outside the Gospel and outside the Body of Christ - Our hospitals and educational institutions, as well as the relief and development agency (ADRA) of the SDA church are at a great risk of losing sight of their real purpose and function, which is both to heal the sick and to transform communities, enabling them to have meaningful and abundant lives. The risk is that these ministries provide physical healing, social changes, and developed communities but lack the real transformation that occurs when the gospel is shared and lived out in word and deed (see Myers, 1999, pp. 126-128).

Opportunities

A comprehensive and critical contextualization of the gospel will yield many benefits and concrete opportunities. As the gospel and Christianity have needed to be constantly translated, adapted, and transferred to other cultures and other languages since the beginning, we also have to make sure that our holistic ministries are relevant and appropriate to the culture and people we are serving. This is done by attempting to contextualize one's life and the message, as well as the approaches and methods used as we present or live out the gospel holistically in any given context.

Thus one of the challenges that the church has, which at the same time becomes an opportunity, is to adjust its methods and its way of doing mission in order to cope and deal with the social changes taking place in this world. It must continually strive to express the eternal message in a form that is relevant to the emerging culture and to the current needs of a dying world without changing its principles (Pujic, 2003). A balanced and serious contextualization of the gospel will greatly help the church in fulfilling its mission. Some examples of real opportunities are as follows:

Translation and Production of Christian Literature - The church has an opportunity when it translates, produces and distributes Christian literature and resources in various languages to the most diverse people groups. Translation and distribution of Bibles and books that convey the message of God fulfill this purpose.

Christian Servant Leadership - When church leaders follow the example of Christ in a world where biblical values are not popular, they are fulfilling God's intended plan for them; they go forward against the dominant culture, they contextualize the holistic gospel of Christ exemplifying in their own life the loving character of the Savior.

The Whole Gospel - The church must teach, practice and live out the gospel in its wholeness. As such, Seventh-day Adventists have a unique and great opportunity of sharing the present truth for today's context and time. And this present truth must be contextualized as we witness, teach, and heal, so that the holistic gospel will be understood by those we reach.

Moreover, the Three Angels' Messages of Revelation 14 is a unique part of the message of the gospel and must be shared with all the nations, languages, and people of this world. Through teaching, preaching, and healing, the truths of the gospel as it is in Jesus will be imparted to those that are in need of redemption and of a Savior. All members, departments, institutions, ministries, and agencies of the church are called to participate in the sharing of Jesus' holistic gospel.

ADRA's Holistic Ministry - As ADRA workers enter a new territory, or a new place, it is imperative that they take the shoes off their feet as the place they are approaching could be holy ground. I believe God is at work with many people even way before individuals and agencies start their humanitarian activities at a given place. God also sends His servants as relief and development workers to places where no one has heard the gospel so His loving character can be lived out through these workers. Often times this is the way the holistic ministries of ADRA contextualize the gospel as the gospel is preached through the lives, words, deeds, and development programs—a gospel that is exemplified in principles, in practice, and in the lives of those who go and serve.

Conclusion

The silent and intentional witness of those who are willing to help the needy, even in far off countries where the gospel can not be preached is a distinct and effective way to contextualize the gospel, and it will yield positive results. We must follow the example of Jesus Christ that "went from city to city, from town to town, preaching the gospel and healing the sick—the King of glory in the lowly garb of humanity" (White, 1905, 22). He not only contextualized the gospel in form and meaning that can be understood by us all, He was the gospel Himself.

Development workers should not be ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation and transformation of those that believe (Rom 1:16). This power will accompany everyone engaged in holistic ministries, and as Christ who imparted life and salvation as He ministered to all—healing, teaching, and sharing the good news— they too will be vehicles of God's grace. In the end, we all need to understand that sharing the good news of the gospel and healing the human body is one and the same activity, an activity that is carried forward by individuals through the power of the Spirit.

The gospel becomes holistic mission when our life, message, and our methods are contextualized to the realities and needs of those we minister
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to; those who suffer. As church workers engaged either in humanitarian relief, educational and development activities, administration, preaching, or medical mission, we are the hands and feet of one Body—the Body of Christ. Thus, holistic ministries must be carried out together and in an integrated manner as we endeavor to live the good news of God in the wisdom and strength of the Spirit and in the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

So, what is our role in God's holistic mission? May God bless us as we continue to seek better ways to serve Him, contextualizing the gospel in word and deed wherever we are and whatever we do.

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