

## MISSION AS HOLISTIC MINISTRY: TOWARD A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST THEOLOGY OF MISSION FOR RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT

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*This article endeavors to develop a Seventh-day Adventist theology of mission for holistic ministry. The importance (and need) of a solid biblical theology of mission for relief and development activities is discussed. Such a task requires a well-defined theology of holistic ministries which is significant in view of the fact that both individual church members as well as church institutions are to be socially responsible towards their neighbors or those most affected by misfortunes and tragedies. This holistic and integrative approach to God's mission understands that relief, development, and Christian witness are the hands and feet of one body—the Body of Christ. Thus theological and biblical principles set forth in the Scriptures must be rightly understood and effectively put into practice.*

*Key Words: mission theology, holistic mission, relief, development, charity, poor, welfare, Seventh-day Adventist Church*

### 1. Introduction

After God had finished his work of creation he declared that “it was very good” (Gen 2:31).<sup>1</sup> It was perfect. Then, according to Scripture, sin entered and the fall occurred, which affected all creation. Man and woman realized they were naked, hiding from the LORD God because they were afraid and ashamed of their nakedness (sin). God came to their rescue, providing them with garments of skin to relieve them of their shame and nakedness (Gen 3:21), and also promising a way out, salvation (Gen 3:15). It was the first time in the history of humanity that a form of emergency relief—immediate clothing—was needed and given.

Throughout both the Old and the New Testament, the cause of the vulnerable, poor, sick, and destitute is regularly presented. God provides social, economic, and religious laws concerning their care and welfare, having as its ultimate model for holistic ministry the very person of Jesus Christ.

<sup>1</sup> The *New International Version* (NIV) of the Bible will be used in this study, unless otherwise indicated.

True relief and development find their origin, purpose, motif, and operating principles in the life of love manifested by the Son of God. His life of speaking, doing, and being good set the example for all to follow. Thus Christian relief and development must have their understanding and motivation primarily in the person, work, teachings, life, and even in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. His example has established the basis and authority on which the Seventh-day Adventist Church can build a theology of holistic ministry.

This article tries to develop a biblical theology of mission for holistic ministries (relief and development activities).<sup>2</sup> This is a task that is not only needed for the Christian church in general, but it is specifically needed for the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Adventist Disaster and Relief Agency (ADRA) as the church defines its role in the area of relief and development. A well-defined theology of holistic ministries is significant in view of the fact that both individual church members as well as church institutions are socially responsible towards their neighbors or those most affected by misfortunes, disasters, and tragedies.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Setting the Background: Examples and Definitions

In December 2001, representatives of both ADRA and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in a Central Asian country met with a government official to provide him with an overview of the work and activities of the church and ADRA in that country. The government representative was very pleased to know that ADRA was heavily involved with relief and development programs, which helped hundreds of thousands of refugees, Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and other vulnerable citizens. To everyone's surprise, he questioned what the local Adventist churches and its members were doing on behalf of the social problems in their communities. He wanted to know how the local Adventist churches and its members understood and put into practice their social responsibility towards their neighbors as Christians.

The government official seemed to understand that relief and development is not only a task that needs to be undertaken by ADRA, the relief and

<sup>2</sup> This study was first presented on November 16, 2006, as a keynote address for the "Higher Education Empowering Development" Forum, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS), Silang, Philippines. Generally, the oral presentation style has been preserved.

<sup>3</sup> See Wagner Kuhn, *Christian Relief and Development: Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives of the Holistic Gospel* (São Paulo, Brazil: UNASPRESS, 2005), 127–37.

development agency of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but that this task also needs to be carried out by the local Adventist church and its members.

Christian relief and development ministry is both an individual responsibility and a responsibility of the Christian church as a whole, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is therefore important that Adventist church members in particular and the church in general to understand the issues related to holistic development within the context of holistic ministry. Theological and biblical principles set forth in Scripture must be rightly understood and effectively put into practice.

Accurately understood, holistic<sup>4</sup> and transformational development has to do with the transformation (and redemption) of the whole person, the whole community. It is demonstrated through God's purpose of redeeming, healing, saving, and transforming individuals and communities into his likeness. Transformational development is not the preaching of the gospel or evangelism per se, but since it treats the whole person it will also try to meet the spiritual needs of the individual. Moreover, this transformational development which is holistic in nature has to do with the contextualization and adaptation of Christ's ministries though an integral (whole) and balanced approach to mission which brings about physical, mental, social, and spiritual transformation and well-being to the individual and the community he/she lives and interacts with.

A variety of articles and books on this subject have been published by evangelicals, however very little has been written on it with respect to the context of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and, more specifically, ADRA. Therefore there is a need for Seventh-day Adventist theologians and missiologists, as well as development professionals, to establish a biblical foundation of holistic mission. This is a difficult task, but it must be pursued.

So, what is mission in a biblical context? Is it merely the proclamation of the gospel and the establishment of churches? Or does it also refer to relieving human beings of suffering and misery? How is holistic development work, as part of God's mission, exemplified in the New Testament? Does the Old Testament have principles to guide the church in implementing holistic ministries and transformational development programs?

Before turning to the Bible, let us examine a few definitions of mission. Arthur Glasser and Donald McGavran, for example, have defined mission as

<sup>4</sup> "Holism" is the belief or theory that reality (things or people) are made up of organic or unified wholes that are greater than the simple sum of their parts. The term "holistic" has to do with holism and as such emphasizes the importance of the whole and the interdependency of its parts.

...carrying the gospel across cultural boundaries to those who owe no allegiance to Jesus Christ, and encouraging them to accept Him as Lord and Savior and become responsible members of His church, working, as the Holy Spirit leads, at both evangelism and justice, at making God's will done on earth as it is done in heaven.<sup>5</sup>

The members of the editorial committee of the American Society of Missiology series describe mission as "a passage over the boundary between faith in Jesus Christ and its absence."<sup>6</sup> Others have defined Christian mission as

The set of beliefs, theories, and aims of a particular sending body of the Christian world that determines the character, purpose, organization, strategy and action to evangelize the unreached world for Christ and to minister holistically to its needs.<sup>7</sup>

These definitions do not limit mission merely to the proclamation of the gospel but they also encompass services rendered toward the promotion of the physical, mental, social, and spiritual well being of people. Moreover, mission needs to be understood in connection with the overall mission of God in saving, redeeming, and restoring humankind. This mission is carried out or accomplished by God's designated instruments, be they his Son, his chosen people, his prophets or apostles, his community of believers (church) or individuals who are committed to his mission. It can also encompass holistic ministries as one of its parts, but it is not limited to this aspect of service only. Holistic ministry is more limited to the concepts and practice of welfare relief, social services, charity (humanitarian work), and transformational development. It has to do with restoring all aspects of the person: physical, mental, social, and spiritual.

The Bible defines the mission of God and the church. For example, the Bible shows that the mission of God is the salvation of humankind (John 3:16). It also indicates what my responsibility towards God, creation, self, and my neighbor should be (Matt 22:37-40). Scripture provides a balanced and complete package of principles, concepts, and practices on which to build a holistic theology of mission.

Such a biblical theology should outline the function and mission of the church, which includes gospel proclamation, teaching, Christian witness, individual and corporate worship, holistic development, transformational ministries, discipleship, nurture, and other service toward human beings.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur Glasser and Donald McGavran, *Contemporary Theologies of Mission* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 26.

<sup>6</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (American Society of Missiology Series 16; Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), xii.

<sup>7</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 84.

Whenever implemented through the power of the Holy Spirit, such mission will not only include the responsibility of preaching but also living out the gospel. It will encompass all necessary efforts in order for fallen human beings to be restored to the image of God. In this way a true biblical model of mission will need to be holistic as it will focus on the central theme of God's salvation and restoration of the human race as well as on his creation.<sup>8</sup>

This biblical theology of mission needs to demonstrate that God's revelation in Jesus Christ has also a missionary dimension and that this missionary dimension has its best example in the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>9</sup> As such it needs to reflect and exemplify Christ's self-sacrificing love and character in words and deeds.

### 3. The Need for a Biblical Theology of Mission for Relief and Development

The title of Ronald J. Sider's book, *One-Sided Christianity?*<sup>10</sup> poses an interesting question. Is there more than one side to Christian ministry? Apparently for Sider Christian mission appears to be one-sided, in that the church either focuses its attention exclusively on evangelism while forgetting other ministries or the church's only priority and preoccupation is with social services. In doing one the church loses its balance and priorities, becomes hampered, loses its vigor, and fails to fulfill its mission.

There are several places and areas in church ministry and mission that require a clear and balanced biblical understanding of mission. There is a need for a more balanced curriculum in our seminaries where pastors, teachers, and missionaries will be reminded that theology and ministry includes ministering to the whole person. Other institutions of higher learning, such as teacher training schools and medical schools, need also to teach its students a biblical theology of mission that enables them to be involved in the spiritual and social as well as physical restoration process.

The area of welfare and relief work would benefit greatly if a theology of mission for relief and development existed, because much of the ministry of Jesus was devoted to the healing and sustenance of the poor, the sick, and the destitute.<sup>11</sup> Most of what he did was directly related to welfare, re-

<sup>8</sup> See Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1903), 123–27.

<sup>9</sup> See David J. Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1980), 47–49.

<sup>10</sup> See Ronald J. Sider, *One-Sided Christianity? Uniting the Church to Heal a Lost and Broken World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> An interesting discussion regarding diaconal ministries as it relates to church life and mission (in the context of the Lutheran Church) can be found in the following book by

lief, and development work. Jesus' example should be important for the church to follow. A theology of such a holistic mission would also help the church in interpreting and applying Jesus' words as well as his deeds.

Although Jesus' works of compassion and relief activities were of a miraculous nature, such as the feeding of the multitudes (Matt 14:13–21; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17), they were an important part of his ministry and he used these miracles to teach his disciples important mission principles. On the other hand, we see that the apostle Paul accepted offerings from the members of the church in Antioch to be given to the members living in Judea (Acts 11:29). These examples show us that there is a need for various aspects of mercy—preaching, miracles and giving money. Furthermore, the Bible validates both individual and corporate relief efforts that require personal efforts (disinterested benevolence) as well as money, but it also makes it clear that a spiritual and loving concern must motivate all of these activities.

The Christian church must understand that evangelism and compassionate relief service and holistic development belong together in the mission of God.<sup>12</sup> This central principle justifies Christian welfare, relief, and transformational development, because they are part of the biblical mandate. This theology of mission emphasizes the restoration of body and mind without neglecting the spiritual realm. It teaches us why welfare and relief are necessary and how they should be carried out.

Jesus makes it clear that only those of his followers who have shown a loving character to those in need, will be rewarded at his second coming.

Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me" (Matt 25:34–36).

Furthermore, the relief that occurs through the development process requires external help (assistance) as in the case of emergency and relief pro-

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Reinhard Boettcher, ed., *The Diaconal Ministry in the Mission of the Church* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation Studies, 2006), 8, from which I quote the following paragraph: "In a world inundated with trite words and manipulated language, the 'church's body language'... its *diakonia*, may gain increasing significance for the credibility of the church and its message. This observation draws our attention to the ways in which Jesus proclaimed God's coming kingdom: by preaching and teaching, but also by healing and integrating the marginalized and excluded."

<sup>12</sup> See John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1975), 27.

grams. Often such work originates outside of those in need. Even for this type of work Scripture provides us with biblical examples and theological principles.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4. The Gospel as Holistic Mission: From Incarnation to Transformation and Redemption

God's plan of restoration and transformation originated from the outside. Christ's incarnation shows God taking the initiative to restore and save lost and fallen humanity. The Son of God did not stay in the safe immunity of his heaven, remote from human sin and tragedy. He actually entered our world. He emptied himself to serve (Phil 2:5–8). He took our nature, lived our life, endured our temptations, experienced our sorrows, felt our hurts, bore our sins, and died our death. He penetrated deeply into our humanness. He never stayed aloof from the people he might have been expected to avoid. He made friends with the dropouts of society. He even touched the untouchables. He could not have become more one with us than he did. It was a total identification of love (John 3:16). His incarnation was not a superficial touch down to us but he became one of us (yet he remained himself). He remained human without ceasing to be God. Now he sends us into the world, as the Father sent him into the world (John 17:18; 20:21). In this way our mission is to be modeled on his.

Indeed, all authentic mission is incarnational mission. It demands identification without loss of identity. It means entering the worlds of other people, as he entered ours, though without compromising our Christian convictions, values or principles. The apostle Paul is a good example. Although he was free, he made himself everybody's slave (1 Cor 9:19–22). That is an example of incarnation and thus a principle of mission. It is identification with people where they are.

The Bible and Christian history offer many examples which can help us in establishing a theology of mission for relief and development. There are many laws and regulations in the Old Testament<sup>14</sup> as well as examples and

<sup>13</sup> Before God expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, he came to their rescue and provided them with garments of skin to relieve them of their shame and nakedness (Gen 3:21). It is the first time in the history of humanity that relief was needed and thus immediately provided. This relief was an emergency relief, but it would last forever. It was and still is based on God's eternal promise (Gen 3:15).

<sup>14</sup> "Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt" (Exod 22:21; see also 23:9); "Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan" (Exod 22:22; see also Deut 10:17–19; 26:12–13); "If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not be like a moneylender; charge him no interest" (Exod 22:25); "Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits" (Exod 23:6); "For six years you are

instructions in the New Testament that show us how God wants us to work for the relief of human misery and that demonstrate the right interpretation of the gospel of Christ. Teachings such as the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), the final judgment as outlined in Matthew 25:31–46, and James' definition of true religion (1:27) are examples for ADRA and the Seventh-day Adventist Church today. There are dozens of other teachings as well as examples and miracles of Jesus, including the following: Jesus' special care for women: Jesus encouraged Martha and Mary (John 11:17–37); Jesus raised a widow's son (Luke 7:11–17); Jesus was anointed by a sinful woman and forgave her sins (John 12:1–11; Matt 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9;

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to sow your fields and harvest your crops, but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove" (Exod 23:10–11; see also Lev 19:9–15; Deut 14:28–29; 15:7–11; 24:14–15, 19–22); "If the man is poor, do not go to sleep with his pledge in your possession" (Deut 24:12; see also Lev 25:25–28, 35–43; Deut 24:13–21); "Do not deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge" (Deut 24:17; see also Lev 19:33–34; Deut 24:18–21; 26:12–13); "Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow" (Deut 27:19; see also Lev 19:13–15); "He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of their people. He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children" (Ps 113:7–9). There are major social concerns in the Old Testament, involving *personhood*: everyone's person is to be secure (Exod 20:13; 21:16–21, 26–31; Lev 19:14; Deut 5:17; 24:7; 27:18); *false accusations*: everyone is to be secure against slander and false accusation (Exod 20:16; 23:1–3; Lev 19:16; Deut 5:20; 19:15–21); *women*: no woman is to be taken advantage of within her subordinate status in society (Exod 21:7–11, 20, 26–32; 22:16–17; Deut 21:10–14; 22:13–30; 24:1–5); *punishment*: punishment for wrongdoing shall not be excessive so that the culprit is dehumanized (Deut 25:1–5); *dignity*: every Israelite's dignity and right to be God's freedman and servant is to be honored and safeguarded (Exod 21:2, 5–6; Lev 25; Deut 15:12–18); *inheritance*: every Israelite's inheritance in the promised land is to be secure (Lev 25; Num 27:5–7; 36:1–9; Deut 25:5–10); *property*: everyone's property is to be secure (Exod 20:15; 21:33–36; 22:1–15; 23:4–5; Lev 19:35–36; Deut 5:19; 22:1–4; 25:13–15); *fruit of labor*: Everyone is to receive the fruit of his labors (Lev 19:13; Deut 24:14; 25:4); *fruit of the ground*: everyone is to share the fruit of the ground (Exod 23:10–11; Lev 19:9–10; 23:22; 25:3–55; Deut 14:28–29; 24:19–21); *Sabbath rest*: everyone, down to the humblest servant and the resident alien, is to share in the weekly rest of God's Sabbath (Exod 20:8–11; 23:12; Deut 5:12–15); *marriage*: the marriage relationship is to be kept inviolate (Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18; see also Lev 18:6–23; 20:10–21; Deut 22:13–30); *exploitation*: no one, however disabled, impoverished or powerless, is to be oppressed or exploited (Exod 22:21–27; Lev 19:14, 33–34; 25:35–36; Deut 23:19; 24:6, 12–15, 17; 27:18); *fair trial*: every person is to have free access to the courts and is to be afforded a fair trial (Exod 23:6, 8; Lev 19:15; Deut 1:17; 10:17–18; 16:18–20; 17:8–13; 19:15–21); *social order*: every person's God-given place in the social order is to be honored (Exod 20:12; 21:15, 17; 22:28; Lev 19:3, 32; 20:9; Deut 5:16; 17:8–13; 21:15–21; 27:16); *law*: no one shall be above the law, not even the king (Deut 17:18–20); *animals*: concern for the welfare of other creatures is to be extended to the animal world (Exod 23:5, 11; Lev 25:7; Deut 22:4, 6–7; 25:4).



Luke 7:36–50); Jesus healed and dialogued with a sick woman (Luke 8:43–48; Matt 9:20–22; Mark 5:25–34); women were cured from evil spirits and diseases (Luke 8:1–3); Jesus healed a crippled woman (Luke 13:10–13); Jesus noticed the widow giving her offering (Mark 12:41–44; Luke 21:1–4); Jesus appeared to Mary (John 20:10–18). Jesus also healed all kinds of physical maladies such as the blind, the ill (in general), the deaf, the mute, the leper, the paralytic (crippled, lame), and the invalid; Jesus healed the sick (Matt 4:23–25; 8:16; 12:15; 15:29–31; Mark 1:32–34; Luke 4:40–41); Jesus heals the demon possessed (Matt 8:28–34; 12:22–23; 15:21–28; 17:14–19; Mark 1:21–28; 5:1–20; 7:24–30; 9:14–28; Luke 4:33–35; 8:26–39; 9:37–42).

The apostle Paul encouraged the practice of holistic relief and development by urging church members to do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers (Gal 6:10), but he also had a broader view of compassion to include even our enemies. He reminds us that “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink” (Rom 12:20). He affirmed the principles that everyone should work with their own hands, live a quiet life, not depend on or be a burden to others, and never interfere in the affairs of others. Idleness should not exist among believers but rather they should work hard. In doing so, they would possess dignity, would be self-reliant, and would become respected citizens of their communities (1 Thess 4:11–12; 2 Thess 3:7–8).<sup>15</sup>

Ellen G. White wrote 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.”<sup>16</sup> 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.”<sup>17</sup> Doubtless we can refer to the holistic gospel of Jesus Christ, a gospel that is able to heal and to save, to protect and restore—transforming and redeeming human beings into heirs of God’s kingdom. 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

<sup>15</sup> It is also important to note that the early Christian community was characterized by true fellowship. They had decided to abide in unity with Christ and with each other, having everything in common (Acts 2:42–44). It was because of this true fellowship that “there were no needy persons among them” (Acts 4:34). Thus, the act of sharing their possessions was what made it possible for the new believers to meet the needs of those who were in distress (Acts 4:32–47).

<sup>16</sup> Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1905), 111.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 504.

the graces of this holistic gospel of Christ and be transformed into his likeness.<sup>18</sup>

## 5. Bridging the Gap: Toward a Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Mission for Holistic Ministry

The search for a balance between evangelism and social ministries has always been at the forefront of the evangelical debate, especially when it comes to defining the mission of the church and to prioritizes its implementation. There are those who advocate merely the preaching of the gospel. They have argued that since the gospel is powerful it is enough to transform the condition of humans and thereby make social ministries secondary or irrelevant (unfortunately there are still many economically poor and socially marginalized Christians). Others have argued that what is needed is "action by Christians along with all people of goodwill to tackle the terrible problems of the nation, to free the oppressed, heal the sick, and bring hope to the hopeless."<sup>19</sup>

Redemption and transformation is the ultimate purpose of Adventist education and Christian development. 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 unto 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."<sup>20</sup>

Development that is holistic is more than just an infusion of innovations or changes in behaviors, traditions or worldviews; it is a transformation of the whole person, which affects the whole community. It is a transformation of both the poor as well as those with means. All need to be transformed and saved by God's redeeming grace.

The debate on what is acceptable mission for the church will not stop and there will always be those who argue one way or the other. This makes it even more urgent for the church to update, develop, and expand a theology of holistic ministries. Such a biblical theology of holistic mission will integrate development and Christian witness and in doing so the church

<sup>18</sup> See Roelf S. Kuitse. "Holy Spirit: Source of Messianic Mission," in *The Transfiguration of Mission: Biblical, Theological, Historical Foundations* (ed. Wilbert R. Shenk; Scottsdale: Herald, 1993), 120, who writes that God's "mission is sharing faith with others... [it] is acting in love toward the neighbor who is in need of our help and support."

<sup>19</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 136.

<sup>20</sup> White, *Ministry of Healing*, 17.

will be able to follow the principles and examples that Jesus gave us when he “cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind” (Luke 7:21). This theology will bring together the totality of instructions and examples in the Bible and will aim to integrate all aspects of mission by addressing the whole person and by providing the basis for individual and community transformation.<sup>21</sup>

A biblical theology of holistic ministry is so important for the Adventist church because it would help the church find a balance in its witnessing approach. It would help the church as a whole to understand that the gospel of Christ is not a social gospel, nor can preaching salvation be done in a vacuum without considering people’s temporal needs. A holistic ministry will attempt to respond to the needs of people at all levels. The church and its members need to practice what they preach. As the Bible says, “Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives” (Titus 3:14).

The balance between word and deed and between being and doing is always at the forefront of the discussion when it comes to holistic ministries as carried out by the church. It is for this same reason that the Seventh-day Adventist Church (and ADRA) regularly needs to review its mandate, its purpose, its operating principles, but this has to be done within the context of a biblical mandate (that is, in the context of a theology of mission).

Furthermore, ADRA would benefit greatly by having a well-defined and clearly-stated biblical theology of holistic ministries in order to understand its mission and to articulate its purpose. Although ADRA has attempted to include a discussion of its mission in its *Operations Manual*, it has done so without engaging the whole church and its staff in a discussion of a biblical mandate for doing development and relief work.

In many countries, programs are implemented with little consideration as to whether these activities are part of the holistic ministry of the church. Often the church does not know what ADRA is doing, nor can ADRA give an explanation as to why and exactly how it implements such activities. That becomes more problematic when donors want ADRA to implement programs that are not part of ADRA’s portfolio or when programs conflict with the church’s purpose or theology of mission. This has created a tension

<sup>21</sup> See Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, eds., *Mission as Transformation: A Theology of the Whole Gospel* (Irvine: Regnum, 1999), ii, where V. Samuel uses the word *transformation* in connection with the definition of mission, stating that “Transformation is to enable God’s vision of society to be actualized in all relationships, social, economic, and spiritual, so that God’s will may be reflected in human society and his love be experienced by all communities, especially the poor.”

between the church and ADRA because often the implementation of mere "humanitarian" programs are not seen as part of the mission of the church.

Thus, a well-defined and clearly formulated theology of holistic ministries for ADRA is far more important than its strategy and methodology in winning donors' confidence and grant funding. It is important because in the very center of the donors' ability and willingness to grant ADRA their money is their perception of what ADRA is and does. This perception is directly related to ADRA's own understanding of its mission, purposes, and operating principles, as well as its theology of holistic ministries, and the way it carries out and implements its activities.

## 6. Adventist Mission as Holistic Ministry: Integrating Relief, Development, and Christian Witness

The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church is carried forward mostly through preaching, teaching, and healing ministries. It is a mission aimed at reaching and touching the spirit, the mind, and the body. Such focus denotes an effort to consider the mission of the church as an all encompassing and holistic ministry. More often than we think, individual believers are sent by God and the Church to distant and difficult places to minister and serve those in need. Accordingly, many committed missionaries go to preach the Good News and in addition find themselves involved in challenging circumstances where providing physical healing, emergency resources, and educational development is a priority.

It is not uncommon for these individuals to involve themselves in educational and development activities, as these types of ministries provide a venue whereby people and communities can have an opportunity for change and transformation. Many times the motivation behind these types of educational and development initiatives is to help provide opportunities for those who are poor or discriminated against.

In the past such educational and development initiatives, motivated by a spirit of humanitarian benevolence and charity, inspired the establishment of several schools and universities in Europe and throughout the world, many of which still exist today. Michel Riquet makes the following comment regarding the establishment of the Sorbonne in France and other European universities:

It was in fact in order to enable sixteen poor men, Masters of Arts aspiring to the doctorate, to pursue their studies at the University, that Robert de Sorbon, chaplain to St Louis the king, founded the College of the Sorbonne in 1257. It was the same at Orleans, Salamanca, Oxford and Cam-

bridge. In these university centres the Friars Preachers for many years fostered a flame of fervour and charity.”<sup>22</sup>

For these missionaries, the charity which is inspired by the spirit and fervor of the gospel must encompass all forms of Christian life and practice—evangelistic, educational, medical, pastoral, and others.

Christian believers must continually be aware that God provides them with an excellent opportunity to reach and touch people through education, as education means development which leads to transformation and redemption. Education and development have to do with the restoration of human dignity. Such development encompasses every dimension of human existence: physical, moral, psychological, social, and spiritual. In this case, our holistic ministry’s philosophy is based on the assumption that love is the foundation for a Christian vision of human development (1 Cor 13) because development is relational. Although development will include material, technical, and capital inputs, these alone are inadequate. A person without dignity is a person who is not loved and valued. Thus, the goal of holistic development is a person-in-community transformed by love, whose dignity has been restored, and who has found a productive and socially responsible role in the community.

True education and development are achieved when the poor, the oppressed, the sick, the vulnerable, and the miserable of society have been enabled to participate as responsible members of the community, each one contributing to the realization of a just and free society. When their basic needs are met, individuals become responsible members of a community and participate in shaping their own future, because they have access to resources and opportunities. This kind of education and development is multi-dimensional, encompassing every part of human life.

Individual or community holistic development in all its perspectives and forms is a radical concept. It involves all aspects of life. It has to do also with the redemption and transformation of the structures and powers that hinder and obstruct the person from experiencing the abundant life Christ wants everyone to enjoy (John 10:10).

Personally, I have come to the firm conclusion that development as understood and practiced from a holistic Christian perspective offers much more hope and has a better chance to succeed than does a mere secular education and development that dichotomize between body and soul, between the physical and spiritual realities of life. A holistic approach to mis-

<sup>22</sup> Michel Richet, *Christian Charity in Action* (transl. P. J. Hepburne-Scott; *The Church in the Modern World: Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism* 105; New York: Hawthorn, 1961), 124–25.

sion as holistic ministry will seek to be inclusive and integrative, aiming at addressing the whole person. In this sense, it is in Christ that we have the best example. Any philosophy, theology or practice of holistic ministry, especially for missions, should carry on the principles of Jesus' holistic gospel which aims to transform the whole human being—body, mind, and spirit.

It was with this aim in mind that Ellen G. White went forward with the vision to establish an institution of higher education—the Loma Linda College of Medical Evangelists in 1906. The purpose was that the healing of the sick and the ministry of the word should go hand in hand.<sup>23</sup> This purpose must continue, and not only at Loma Linda University, but in all educational, medical, and other institutions of the church—integrating the teaching of the word and healing of the body.

God's mission must continue through hospitals that not only heal but also teach the words of the great Physician, through relief and development agencies that not only provide humanitarian aid but also words of hope in the God that loves and cares, and through educational institutions that not only teach the established curriculum but also build men and women of noble character. God's holistic mission must continue through churches, missions, conferences, unions, and divisions that not only manage but also live and preach the good news of the gospel in word and deed. God's mission must continue as the members of the church learn, live, and practice the holistic gospel of Jesus.

Christian believers and missionaries who are involved in holistic ministry and mission (humanitarian relief and transformational development programs along with being a Christian witness) need to be careful to follow the principles and concepts presented in the Bible. They must study the life of Christ to see how he imparted life and salvation as he ministered to all—healing, teaching, and preaching the good news. Because, in the end, we all need to understand that preaching good news and healing the human body are one and the same activity, an activity that is carried forward by individuals and the church through the Spirit.

Thus, holistic ministries must be carried out together and in an integrated manner as we endeavor to live out and share the good news of God in the wisdom and strength of the Spirit and in the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

<sup>23</sup> See Richard A. Schaefer, *Loma Linda University Medical Center Legacy: Daring to Care* (Loma Linda: Legacy, 1995), 162.

## 7. Conclusion

A biblical theology and perspective of mission will help missionaries engaged in either humanitarian relief, educational and development activities, administration, preaching or medical mission to understand that they are the hands and feet of one body—the body of Christ. Those who are engaged in ministries of compassion towards the sick, the poor, orphans, widows, and the oppressed must understand that their work, both in word and deeds, is a work of redemption and transformation. This work not only provides food or medicines, or implements programs that aim to educate the communities, or provides loans for the poor so they become empowered to improve their own lives, it is much more. Holistic development ministries are part of the biblical gospel that needs to be lived out by individuals, churches, and communities, contributing to the total restoration of human beings.

Moreover, understanding that evangelism and holistic development belong together in the mission of God is central for the Christian church, because it will justify Christian welfare relief and development as legitimate ministries. Such a biblical theology of mission will emphasize the restoration of body and mind, without neglecting the spiritual needs of a person. In this way, the Seventh-day Adventist Church will continue to fulfill its important God-given role in transforming individuals and communities through its many integrated ministries, but especially through humanitarian relief, and educational, medical, and development activities—activities that are a witness of the transforming power of Jesus Christ.