Evangelical Review of Theology

EDITOR: DAVID PARKER

Volume 33 · Number 3 · July 2009

Articles and book reviews reflecting global evangelical theology for the purpose of discerning the obedience of faith

Published by

Paternoster:
thinking faith

WEA
World Evangelical Alliance
Theological Commission

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e. Policy Formulation

- The church must advocate and work with governments and civil societies to formulate economic development policies to foster development in all areas of the nation—economic, educational, infrastructural, agricultural, housing, health, and create a favourable environment for such activities to take place.

V Conclusion

If the church does not want to become irrelevant to society, a holistic gospel is the answer. A holistic gospel will give credibility to the message and acceptance of the church in society. The church should not be viewed as anti-development or anti-progress. Rather, the church should be concerned about human dignity. For humanity to live a dignified life, development of the whole person must be taken seriously.

A holistic gospel will also provide the way for the church to make the love of God and his concern for the wellbeing of humanity more obvious to the world. Compassion and mercy are essential attributes of God. Throughout the Bible, we see God providing for human needs whenever and wherever he meets them. He provided for individuals like Elijah, David, and groups like the Israelites in the wilderness.

Furthermore, the gospel has certain implications for our lives in society. We are called to partner with God in bringing everyone under the Lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ and God's 'shalom' to humanity. It means the message of the gospel must be holistic to address both the spiritual and the physical needs of humanity. Both are critical for humanity to experience God's 'shalom'. We must also hold the two together.

When the church preaches a gospel that only saves the soul but does not feed the hungry, take in the stranger, or clothe the naked, it is not preaching a holistic gospel (Matt. 25:31-40). A holistic ministry also addresses creation—the issues of deforestation, pollution of the atmosphere, contamination of our rivers, and the extinction of animal species. The message of God to the Israelites was comprehensive; it addressed every facet of their lives. The prophets and Jesus accused those who made the spiritual a priority and neglected the material and physical needs of the people as not following the ways of God.

The whole debate around 'holistic' mission is a critical one. The church has followed different traditions over the years, but the issue is not 'either-or' but 'both -and'. The attempt to prioritize evangelism or social action is, I suggest, based on a western dualistic presupposition that has its root in the enlightenment tradition and has no place in non-western and biblical thoughts.

The gospel of Jesus Christ must transform the whole person. Therefore, the gospel must not be polarized by those who communicate its message. African view of life is holistic and any ministry that does not deal with its entire world view would not be effective and transformational. Jesus' ministry was holistic and he expects his followers to engage in holistic ministry. Therefore our mission must follow the pattern of Jesus.

ERT (2009) 33:3, 213-220

Holistic Gospel in a Developing Society: Some Biblical, Historical and Ethical Considerations

Justin Thacker

KEYWORDS: *Lausanne Covenant, Grand Rapids,* missio Dei, *Micah Declaration, utilitarianism, virtue ethics, Integral Mission*

Introduction

Lausanne 1974 and afterwards

Some controversial issues seem never to depart from evangelical shores, and the precise relationship between evangelism and social action remains one of them. On the one hand, there are those who argue that all that matters is our eternal destiny, and therefore our primary responsibility is to verbally proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ so that the unsaved might trust in him for their salvation. On the other hand, there are those who argue that in response to the biblical mandate to seek justice we need to work at improving the material conditions of the lives of the poor, that issues of eternal destiny are beyond our control, and our only responsibility is to demonstrate the love of Christ by our actions towards people.

According to the first of these views, Christian social action is a distraction from what should be our main activity, the verbal proclamation of the gospel. According to the second, to ignore the material conditions of people's lives is to embrace a neo-platonic Christianity that is a travesty of the actual gospel preached and practised by Jesus Christ.

Despite this polarisation, the vast majority of evangelicals now agree that both evangelism and social action are needed if we are to pursue salvation in the biblical sense. Enough academic work has taken place to demonstrate that the concept of salvation in the New Testament is not restricted to our eternal destiny, but embraces a far wider canvas. Michael Green writes,

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> The raising of the dead, the cleansing of the menstruous woman, the healing of the sick, the opening of the eyes of the blind are all messianic activities; they are signs of the presence in the world of the promised salvation. Furthermore they make abundantly plain that the concern of Jesus was with the whole man and afford no justification whatever for the disjunction between the physical and the spiritual, the sacred and the secular, that has long typified the church doctrine of salvation.[1]

The 1974 Lausanne Covenant was seminal in bringing us back to this more holistic understanding of the gospel. Its fundamental message—that evangelism and social action must go hand in hand—has been repeated ever since.[2] Yet having said that, there remains an inherent ambiguity in how we see these two tasks inter-relating. That they do relate is a given, but how they relate remains uncertain.

Little attention was paid to this at the time of Lausanne, but in 1982 at the Grand Rapids summit a major report was produced which explicitly addressed the issue.[3] Three conclusions were reached. The first of these was that social action was a 'consequence of evangelism'.[4] It is worth remembering that the command in the so-called 'great commission' was not that we make converts, but that we make disciples, '*teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*' (Matt. 28:20). Hence, if we fulfil this commission then the transformation that takes place is not merely cognitive—a new set of beliefs, but also practical—a new set of behaviours. Such reoriented praxis would presumably include a greater concern for compassion and justice, and therefore social action among the poor and marginalised.

The second form of relationship identified in the Grand Rapids document was that social action may be a 'bridge to evangelism'. It has frequently been noted that 'empty bellies don't have ears', and therefore if we want people to hear our gospel proclamation, it is imperative that they are not treated as detached Cartesian minds. As John says, 'If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth' (1 John 3:17). Having acknowledged this, the report goes on to stress that we must never be in the business of using our social action as a 'bribe' to evangelism. Our service of the poor must always be out of genuine compassion for their needs, and not because of some 'ulterior motive'.

Finally, the report notes the way in which evangelism and social action should be seen as partners. 'They are like the two blades of a pair of scissors or the two wings of a bird…[Jesus'] words explained his works, and his works dramatized his words. Both were expressions of his compassion for people, and both should be ours.'

This, then, is how the Grand Rapids report articulates the relationship between social action and evangelism. Since then, a number of scholars have questioned whether *Evangelism and Social Responsibility* went far enough in identifying the necessary integration between these two aspects of our ministry. In the course of these deliberations, the concept of 'integral mission' or 'holistic mission' has been adopted, and many of its proponents would argue for a stronger sense of integration than was evident in the Grand Rapids report. In particular, there is a concern amongst some that *Evangelism and Social Responsibility* continued with such a dipolar view of mission that inevitably each could be conceived as existing on its own. David Bosch writes:

> The moment one regards mission as consisting of two separate components one has, in principle, conceded that each of the two has a life of its own. One is then by implication saying that it is possible to have evangelism without a social dimension and Christian social involvement without an evangelistic dimension. What is more, if one suggests that one component is primary and the other secondary, one implies that one is essential, the other optional.[5]

In fact, *Evangelism and Social Responsibility* itself acknowledged this issue of primacy when it wrote:

> Seldom if ever should we have to choose between satisfying physical hunger and spiritual hunger, or between healing bodies and saving souls, since an authentic love for our neighbour will lead us to serve him or her as a whole person. *Nevertheless, if we must choose, then we have to say that the supreme and ultimate need of all humankind is the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and that therefore a person's eternal, spiritual salvation is of greater importance than his or her temporal and material well-being.* (Emphasis added)[6]

Yet, as Bosch has said, 'One has to ask whether this approach is *theologically* tenable'.[7] The 2001 Micah Declaration on Integral Mission was one attempt to address this issue by signalling a greater sense of integration without conflating evangelism and social action. It states:

> Integral mission…is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love

1 Michael Green, *The Meaning of Salvation* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2000), 120.

2 *Lausanne Covenant* available at: www.lausanne.org/lausanne-1974/lausanne-covenant.html

3 *Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment* available at: www.lausanne.org/grand-rapids-1982/grand-rapids-1982.html

4 'Three kinds of relationship' in *Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment*.

5 Bosch, David J., *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 405.

6 'The question of primacy' in *Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment.*

7 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 406.

and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ.[8]

In contrast to *Evangelism and Social Responsibility*, the Micah Declaration does not specify whether evangelism or social action should be considered as prime, and thereby it might be concluded that the Declaration is moving away from the position articulated at Grand Rapids. However, apart from that implied stance, it is not immediately clear that this declaration takes us any further beyond the Grand Rapids report. Evangelism and social action are still both necessary, and both relate to each other. The implicit questions regarding primacy and ultimate aims remain in the background.

A Paradigm Shift?

More recently, Vinoth Ramachandra has suggested that we need to develop this sense of integration even further. Referring to the paragraph above from the Micah Declaration, he writes:

> This is often taken to mean that there can be no authentic Christian social action that is not accompanied *at the same time* by the verbal proclamation of the Gospel ('evangelism'), just as there can be no authentic proclamation that is not accompanied *at the same time* by social action. This approach then tends to understand 'integral mission' as holistic practice, a strategy or methodology for our missionary outreach. The search then begins for 'models' of such 'integral mission' across the world for us to emulate.

He then goes on to suggest:

> Whatever the intention of the framers of the Micah Declaration, can the lingering sense of ambiguity be dispelled if we understand 'integral mission' less in terms of the church's activities and more in terms of what the church is called to *be* (which, of course, includes its actions in the world)?....The emphasis lies, then, not so much in the practical 'balancing' of our various activities, but rather in the firm refusal to draw unbiblical distinctions. When, for instance, Jesus voluntarily engaged a social outcast like the Samaritan woman (John 4) in face-to-face conversation was he doing 'evangelism' or was he performing a 'political action' in challenging the political taboos of his society?...When the Rev. Martin Luther King confronted the white racism of American society in the name of the living God of Scripture who had declared all human beings equal and reconciled them to each other through the death of Jesus, was he evangelizing the nation or engaged in political action?...To raise these questions is to take the Micah Declaration in a direction that challenges the whole church of Jesus Christ, and not just those who are professionally involved with the poor. It is not only the case that...Gospel proclamation has 'social consequences' and social involvement has 'evangelistic consequences', but also that all such actions can be narrated under other, alternative descriptions with more profound implications for our lives. When Jesus was asked to sum up what God required of us, he did not answer in terms of either a set of 'projects' to be performed or a set of 'doctrines' to believe. Instead we are called to love God with our whole being, and to love our neighbour in the same way we love ourselves.[9]

I believe that Ramachandra is on to something profound here—perhaps even a paradigm shift in our concept of integral mission. For too long, we have interpreted these activities—evangelism and social action—by means of our limited frame of reference as 'activities of the church'. To use some UK based examples, we are either 'running a soup kitchen for the homeless', or we are 'doing evangelism' by running an Alpha course or preaching a particular kind of sermon. What we are not doing, however, is simply being the people of God. We have adopted the viewpoint of the strategic manager who is positioning his staff for maximum effect. Indeed, in our churches we even have the 'social action' team, and the 'evangelism' team—and we somehow conclude that because we have both, we are doing 'integral mission'. However, as Tim Chester has said, 'The New Testament does not describe development projects or, for that matter, evangelistic initiatives. Its focus is on Christian communities, which are to be distinctive, caring and inclusive. Integral mission is about the church being the church.'[10] Surely, it is time for a new approach and a new understanding.

What makes this interesting is that this new understanding is in fact an old one, and is one that was highlighted by John Stott some thirty years ago in the book published after the Lausanne congress, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*. Reflecting on his own change of understanding and in relation to the Great Commission, Stott wrote this: 'I now see more clearly that not only the consequences of the commission but the actual commission itself must be understood to include social as well as evangelistic responsibility, unless we are to be guilty of distorting the words of Jesus.'[11]

Stott then moves on to draw attention to the Johannine version of the Great Commission in John 20:21: 'As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.' He makes the fairly obvious point that the character of our mission should be determined by the character of Christ, which he describes as one of 'service', 'authentic love' and 'sentness'.[12] He states that when we are characterised by a spirit of service expressed in love, and when, with that character, we find ourselves amongst

8 'The Micah Declaration on Integral Mission' in Tim Chester, (ed), *Justice, Mercy and Humility* (Paternoster: Milton Keynes, 2002), 17-23.

9 Ramachandra, Vinoth, *What is Integral Mission?* available at: http://en.micahnetwork.org/integral_mission/resources/what_is_integral_mission_by_vinoth_ramachandra

10 Tim Chester, 'Introducing Integral Mission' in Chester, *Justice, Mercy and Humility*, 8.

11 John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1975), 23.

12 Stott, *Christian Mission*, 24ff.

those in need, then one consequence of being amongst them is that we will see what their needs are. We will observe their distress—in whatever form it takes. But this then is how love works itself out, as we relate what we have / are in the power of Christ to what this other person needs. He writes: 'If I do not relate what I "have" to what I "see", I cannot claim to be indwelt by the love of God.'[13] And then he makes this very profound statement:

> I may see spiritual need (sin, guilt, lostness) and have the gospel knowledge to meet it. Or the need I see may be disease or ignorance or bad housing, and I may have the medical, educational or social expertise to relieve it. To see need and to possess the remedy compels love to act, and whether the action will be evangelistic or social, or indeed political, depends on what we 'see' and what we 'have'.[14]

All of this may not seem that significant or unusual, but actually it represents a paradigm shift in our thinking about evangelism and social action that has still not been entirely appropriated. For, according to Stott in these pages, the locus of evaluation is no longer the actions we are performing, and the results of those actions—the predominant ethical framework of the late 20th century. Rather, the locus of evaluation is the person doing the task. Do they have a Christ-like character? Do they display the virtues of love, humility, and service to which we are called?

One of the problems with the late twentieth century debates about evangelism and social action is that they have been paralysed by a utilitarian ethical framework in which the morality of our actions depends upon the consequences of those actions. According to such a framework—which we must not forget is fundamentally secular in origin—we evaluate what we do by its results. When applied to the evangelism/social action debate this means that evangelism becomes the only activity worthy of merit because only evangelism has eternal consequences.

In contrast, what Stott is doing is working with a virtue or deontological ethical framework. According to virtue ethics, the morality of an action is determined by whether they are motivated by the presence or absence of particular virtues. According to a deontological view, the most common Christian version of which is divine command theory, the morality of an action is determined by whether it is divinely ordained. Hence, on these paradigms, both evangelism and social action are equally necessary if they spring from the right virtues and are in response to God's commands. The outcome of these actions does not determine their moral worth—as a utilitarian approach would dictate—it is rather their origin.

So, Stott writes:

> To sum up, we are sent into the world, like Jesus, to serve. For this is the natural expression of our love for our neighbours. We love. We go. We serve. And in this we have (or should have) no ulterior motive. True, the gospel lacks visibility if we merely preach it, and lacks credibility if we who preach it are interested only in souls and have no concern about the welfare of people's bodies, situations and communities. Yet the reason for our acceptance of social responsibility is not primarily in order to give the gospel either a visibility or a credibility it would otherwise lack, but rather simple uncomplicated compassion. Love has no need to justify itself. It merely expresses itself in service wherever it sees need.[15]

As we have already seen this is precisely the conclusion that Ramachandra reached much more recently. For Ramachandra, the locus of evaluation is no longer the activity—Ramachandra speaks of 'projects'—and the necessity of then deciding whether its evangelism or social action and how they relate, or which is important. Rather the locus of evaluation is the character of the whole person doing the action, the extent to which they are characterised by a spirit of love. Ramachandra calls this 'alternative descriptions', and I think what he is articulating here is simply the fact that what is required is an alternative ethical paradigm. Such a paradigm was always there for us in the Scriptures, but in the West at least we have missed it because our cultural blinders have hidden it from us.

Paul's Integral Mission

Moreover, this is precisely the kind of approach that we find in the letters of Paul to the early churches. In those letters, we do not particularly see him emphasizing their duty to go out and do 'evangelism', nor do we find him carping on about their welfare programs. And yet, both of these things are precisely what the early church was particularly effective in. They did go out and spread the word, and they were known for their care and compassion for the communities around them.[16] Paul's emphasis in letter after letter is simply this. 'Be who you are in Christ.'

So, in Ephesians, the turning point of the letter is this: 'I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received' (Eph. 4:1). He has spent the previous three chapters spelling out in detail the wonderful salvation that is theirs in Christ, and the following three chapters are consumed with what this means in terms of practical obedience, and so the pivot is what we find in 4:1: '(B)ecause of all you are in Christ, go now and live in the light of that.'

A similar theme is evident in Romans, where repeatedly Paul's mantra is that 'now because God has done this, we should live like this' (chapters 6 through 8, and 12 onwards). Similarly, in Colossians 3:12 Paul states, 'Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.' And again in Philippians 2:1: 'If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.'

13 Stott, *Christian Mission*, 28.

14 Stott, *Christian Mission*, 28.

15 Stott, *Christian Mission*, 30.

16 See Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

Paul's strategy, then, in encouraging 'evangelism' and 'social action' was not so much to mention them, let alone spell out particular programs, but rather to encourage us to reflect on what it means that we are the children of God, and then encourage us to consider how that might work out in relation to those around us. If we think about it, this of course makes sense. The mission in which we are engaged is not *our* mission, but *God's* mission. Hence, it will be effective only if we understand our own identity in terms of God's identity. In God there is a perfect unity between words and deeds, character and action, and so to the extent that we are truly united to Christ, our lives will similarly display a consistency between everything we are and do.

It is not *our* compassion that is relevant, but *God's* compassion flowing through us. It is not *our* evangelism or social action that matters, but *God's* work in the world exercised through us. That is why knowing who we are in Christ, reflecting on God's perfect character is what enables us to become integrated people. It is *Christ's* integral mission we join in rather than our own. Hence, it is not about dividing up particular *activities*, labelling them as one or the other, and then making sure we have a healthy mixture of both. Rather, it is about being the people of God in light of a world in need.

ERT (2009) 33:3, 221-227

Holistic Mission Revisited: Theological insights from Argentina

David A. Roldán

KEYWORDS: *Integral mission, political theology,* mission Dei*, mega-church, education*

I Theoretical Backgrounds

In Argentina we have been talking about 'integral mission' since the 1980s, with the first (and main) publication of René Padilla,[1] and the various works of the Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana (FTL, Latin American Theological Fraternity). Although this was one of the most relevant contributions of FTL, it must be said that the biblical and theological foundations of this approach were inaugurated and developed in many cases in movements such as Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina (ISAL, Church and Society in Latin America), where José Míguez Bonino[2] and Richard Shaull were prominent theologians, and the Liberation Theology movement, where theologians such as Juan Luis Segundo,[3] Gustavo Gutiérrez,[4] Enrique

1 René Padilla, *Misión integral. Ensayos sobre el Reino y la Iglesia* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Creación, 1986).

2 José Míguez Bonino, *Christians and Marxists* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976); José Míguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); José Míguez Bonino, *Toward a Christian Political Ethics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); Paul Davies, *Faith Seeking Effectiveness: The Missionary Theology of José Míguez Bonino* (Netherlands: Boekencentrum, 2006).

3 Some selected works are: Juan Luis Segundo, *¿Qué mundo? ¿Qué hombre? ¿Qué Dios?* (Santander: Sal Tarrae, 1993); Juan Luis Segundo, *El hombre de hoy ante Jesús de Nazaret* (Madrid: Cristiandad, 1982); Juan Luis Segundo, *Liberación de la teología* (Buenos Aires: Carlos Lohlé, 1975); Juan Luis Segundo, *Teología abierta para el laico adulto, 5 vols*. (Buenos Aires: Carlos Lohlé, 1968)

4 Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teología de la Liberación: perspectivas*, 15° ed. (Salamanca: Sígueme [orig. 1971], 1994); Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Hablar de Dios desde el sufrimiento del inocente: Una*

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