

HOLISTIC MINISTRY/MISSIONS: REFLECTIONS & RESOURCE MATERIAL

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INTRODUCTION

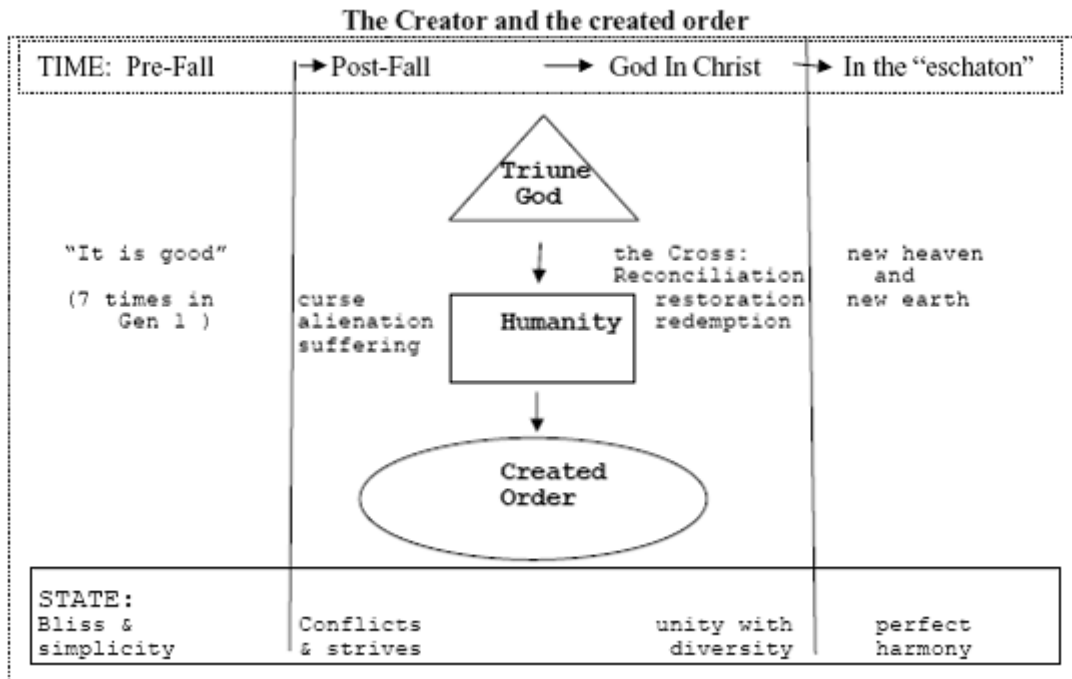
This paper begins with a proposed definition of “holistic ministry/missions,” followed by reflections in the form of reviewing three selected publications, and concluded by listing some helpful resources of publications and websites. The purpose is providing a simple but helpful primer for the readers on the topic.

PROPOSED DEFINITION

There are many definitions on “holistic ministry/missions” pending on the theoretical orientation, theological stance and contextual variation of scholars. The following definition is proposed, based on the author’s assumptions that there is an ontological reality that requires interdisciplinary approach to epistemologically understanding the complexity involved:

"Holistic ministry/missions" is understood to be “Christians motivated by their love for God and neighbors (within or without one’s socio-cultural context) , mobilized to be engaged in multi-dimensional services to HIM by serving others inclusively caring for the spiritual, psychological, social, physical, etc. well beings of others, with multi-facet (religious & charity, public & private, etc.) services and at multi-levels (personal and institutional, local and global), in the framework of reconciliation vertically with God, horizontally with humanity and hierarchically with the created order."

The figure below is a diagrammatical presentation:



REFLECTIONS

The reflections are of three categories: theological, theoretical and practical. There is one publication being reviewed for each category – informing, illustrating and stimulating the reflective process. And the proposed definition of “holistic ministry/missions” serves as the common theme under girding the three reflections in progressive manner, from theological to theoretical and practical.

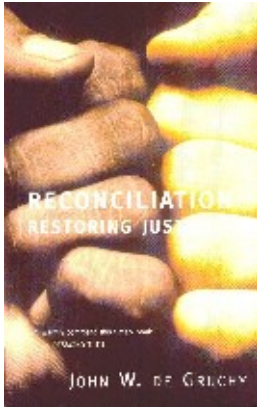
#1 - THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK – “RECONCILIATION”

The proposed definition for “holistic ministry/missions” may seem to be long and cumbersome to some; yet it can comprehensively communicate the major concepts and practical outworking of the “what,” “why” and “how” of holistic ministry/missions.”

The created order was in harmony prior to the Fall of man who was commissioned “to rule and subdue” (“cultural mandate” and “covenant of work”) while the created order was characterized by ignorance and bliss. However, the Fall altered everything: broken relationships between the Creator and the created order resulted in conflicts and strife, discord and disunity.

The New Testament dispensation is marked by the fact that God in Jesus Christ reconciled “to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.” (Col 1:19-20). He also broke down the dividing walls between Jews and gentile. (Eph 2:14-18). The entire created order is

groaning for restoration (Rom 8:18-27) but God has entrusted us with the Gospel of reconciliation (2Cor 5:17 - 6:1). This is the theological basis for “holistic ministry/missions.”



Helpful for the reflection above is the work of John W. de Gruchy who is an outstanding researcher and scholar with a strong background personally and professionally in South Africa. His book, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice* (Fortress Press 2002) provided an excellent case study on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa. He masterfully articulated the theme of reconciliation. He believed that “the gospel is about overcoming alienation and estrangement between God and ourselves, between us and others, and between all of us and creation.” (2002:1)

He wrote with “the conviction that reconciliation is about the restoration of justice, whether that has to do with our justification by God, the renewal of interpersonal relations or the transformation of society. (2002:2) To him, therefore reconciliation is both theological, spiritual, political and global.

Readers can feel the heart beat of the author in the following exchange.

AN INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR DR. JOHN DE GUCHY BY GLOBAL MISSIOLOGY on May 5, 2004

Editor of GM:

What is your view on "holistic ministry"?

Dr. de Guchy:

I have a very positive view of 'holistic ministry' as it reflects the totality of the gospel. Jesus' ministry was holistic, I believe, and it sets the agenda for the ministry of the church.

Editor of GM:

How do you think "holistic ministry" is related to Christian missions?

Dr. de Guchy:

I think David Bosch's treatment of mission is one of the greatest and clearest accounts of mission from this perspective, and continues to influence those who are familiar with his work. I share his perspective on the issues.

Editor of GM:

Can you provide readers of Global Missiology of your unique perspective (South African, American female, Latino)?

Dr. de Guchy:

In the struggle against apartheid we were continually made aware of the holistic character of mission and witness. Questions of justice could not be separated from spirituality, for example. Indeed, the struggle against apartheid was a struggle to restore human dignity and wholeness within the framework of justice, so it encompassed every dimension of personal and social life. One cannot separate things out. I have been very influenced in this regard by Bonhoeffer's critique of 'thinking in two spheres'. Such dualistic ways of thinking and acting undermine the core of the gospel.

Editor of GM:

How do you see your publications (e.g. Healing a Broken World, Reconciliation, Restoring Justice, etc.) as an example of "holistic ministry"?
Can you share with the readers about your publication(s)?

Dr. de Guchy:

My writings, I believe and hope, reflect this understanding of ministry and mission. My latest book on 'Reconciliation: Restoring Justice' is certainly shaped by this perspective. But so too are my other books, most recently 'Christianity, Art and Transformation', and my forthcoming book on 'Being Human'.

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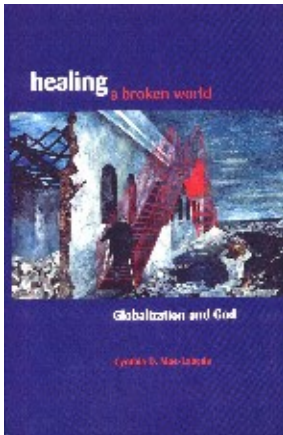
#2 - THEORETICAL FRAME WORK – ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION

Another stimulating publication, influenced my reflections on “holistic ministry/missions” as shown in the proposed definition and comments above, is Professor Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda’s title, *Healing a Broken World: Globalization and God* (Fortress Press 2002).

The author teaches Christian ethics at Seattle University published two other works: *Saint Francis and the Foolishness of God* (1993) and *Say to This Mountain* (1996). She worked as a healthcare missionary in Honduras where she witnessed first hand poverty, inequality and suffering. She observed the “stark reality emerged: global economic arrangements threaten the survival and dignity of many impoverished Central American people.” (2002:xiii).

Being rooted in the Lutheran heritage, her “paradigm shift” led her to “a feminist liberationist” orientation. The following quotation, though long but informative, depicts the process of her “paradigm shift.

My insistent hunger to see North American Christians heed that call stirred me to this journey between worlds. I refuse to believe that we are called by God to paths of subversive faithful love without also being empowered by God for that walk. Seeking guidance toward that moral-spiritual power, I turned to faith forebears whose relationship with Christ and Spirit living in them empowered such love. They are many. This book unfolds my encounter with one, Martin Luther. God’s power and presence, Luther insisted, “fills all things,” and may be written as “a fiery flame on the heart, mak[ing] it...burn with love and delight in whatever pleases God...creat[ing] new courage so that [one]...serves the people” and this good Earth. (2002:xiv)



Readers of this e-journal of evangelical orientation may not appreciate her feminist liberationist stance. Yet nobody should dismiss her without a close examination of how she is able to wove together two seemingly incompatible frameworks together, i.e. Lutheran heritage and feminist liberation. Upon closer examination, reader may be surprised to see her masterful ability and careful articulation of merging the two into her coherent synthesis and constructive agenda with passion and power.

The author saw a “contemporary moral crisis” in the negative aspect of economic globalization, i.e. global economic injustice. She thus offered a prophetic cry to affluent Christians in North

America:

The undertaking is part of my larger desire to contribute theologically, theoretically and practically to the emergence of North American Christian praxis in which intimate communion with God and critical analysis of globalization engender moral agency—the agency required to resist a dangerous form of globalization and live toward economic ways that support planetary flourishing and human dignity. (Moe-Lobeda 2002:2)

The first three chapters of the book described the paradigm of economic globalization, its demoralizing power on moral agency and democracy, and ideologically “undermining the capacity to imagine and perceive more socially just and ecologically sustainable alternatives” to the prevailing paradigm. (Moe-Lobeda 2002:4-5)

The last three chapters are devoted to the inquiry into the interplay between moral agency and relationality with the immanent God,” (Moe-Lobeda 2002:5). Here she presented her intriguing integration of Luther’s 15th century reformation paradigm and the contemporary “feminist theo-ethical” orientation. She sought to arrive at her “constructive proposal” stemming from her conviction:

My overarching hope is that, empowered by God's indwelling presence, we might live differently. The vision of ordinary people resisting systemic economic brutality and crafting economic ways that enable the web of life on Earth to flourish my word...practically, in the everyday lives of materially privileged North Americans, to be habitation of God, who "fills all things." (Moe-Lobeda 2002:5)

Moe-Lobeda masterfully unmasked the façade of global market capitalism which functions as a religion of the privileged exploiting the massive humanity and planet earth. I found her match-making efforts marrying spirituality with ethics admirable and her passionate appeal to Christians in North America masterful.

#3 - PRACTICAL FRAMWORK – AIDS CRISIS

Another publication, being informative and stimulating in my reflection on "holistic ministry/missions," is Donald Messer's book, *Breaking the Conspiracy of Silence: Christian Churches and the Global Aids Crisis*. (Fortress 2004)

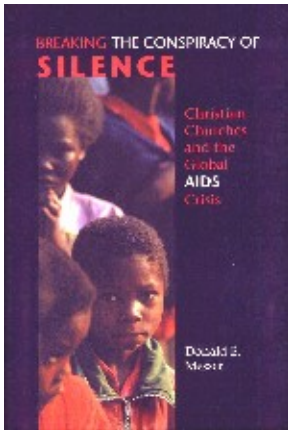
This book is by no means an easy read, neither due to its theological profundity nor theoretical complexity; because it presents the sobering facts of the worst health crisis in centuries (i.e. global AIDS crisis as a global emergency), and raises the soul-searching questions such as "where is the Church that is to be salt and light in the world?"

HIV/AIDS is the widely used acronym for *human immunodeficiency virus* and *acquired immune deficiency syndrome* by medical and social professionals internationally. After extensive travel and conducting field research in Africa, Asia and Latin America, Dr. Messer "borrowed words from Esther" and called "for a new mission and ministry in our churches, theological seminaries, and religious institutions." (Messer 2004:xiii)

Donald Messer was convinced that "each of us is a part of God's family –in Christ we are one." So he wrote this book "to motivate and challenge Christians, both laity and clergy, to take leadership and form partnerships with Christians around the world in the struggle against HIV/AIDS." Messer 2004:xiii).

From the back cover:

Donald E. Messer is Henry White Warren Professor of Practical Theology and Director of the Center for Global Pastoral Ministries at Iliff School of Theology, Denver. President emeritus of the school and of Dakota Wesleyan University, he is also widely experienced in global ministries. His nine books have addressed ethical issues ranging from abortion and assisted suicide to homosexuality and politics. His latest: *The Befuddled Stork: Helping Persons of Faith Debate Beginning-of-Life Issues* (co-editor with Sally B. Geis; 2000).



The desire to motivate and mobilize Christians worldwide to take action prompted Dr. Messer to extend an invitation to his readers who are “seeking more information and/or involvement opportunities to contact me at the Center for the Church and Global AIDS (dmesser@iliff.edu)” (Messer 2004:xx). This on-going open invitation shows his compassion for the AIDS victims and his passion to mobilize Christians globally for action.

In this volume, the author described the global epidemic of AIDS by using facts and figures. He first delineated “the scientific quest for vaccines, new prophylactics, and palliative solutions” (Messer 2004:149) then decried “the inaction and indifference of the Christian Church of decades.” (Messer 2004:157). He also provided hopeful models of partnerships and “constructive engagement—for individuals, local congregations, denominations, and divinity schools—offer hope for a future world without AIDS.” (Messer 2004:163).

This book is more than lip service calling for “holistic ministry/missions.” It is a guidebook for practice unifying all available forces and utilizing all resources to confront and counter the threat and impact of global AIDS crisis.

HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR “HOLISTIC MINISTRY/MISSIONS”

1) As a starter, readers of www.globalmissiology.org may visit the following websites and be oriented:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/113/34.0.html>

Christianity Today, Week of March 27

Do Evangelicals Practice Holistic Outreach?

World Evangelical Fellowship focuses on broad demands of Great Commission.

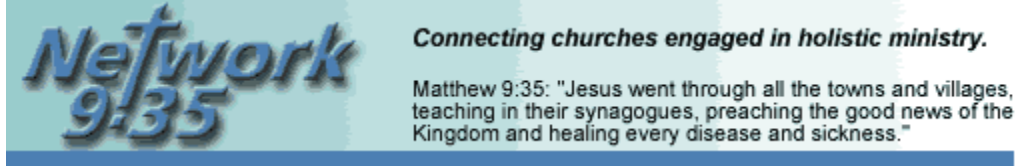
By Jeff Taylor in Larnaca, Cyprus | More than 70 church and mission agency leaders from 33 countries gathered in Larnaca, Cyprus, on February 21-24 to discuss the challenges facing evangelicals during the next two decades. Sponsored by World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF), the consultation raised a wide range of issues, including postmodernism, poverty, leadership development, AIDS, abuse of women, growth of the Internet, and globalization.

http://www.lausanne.org/lcwe/assets/LOP33_IG4.pdf

“Holistic Mission: Occasional Paper No.33. Produced by the Issue Group on this topic at the 2004 Forum for World Evangelization hosted by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization in Pattaya, Thailand, September 29 to October 5, 2004

“A New Vision, a New Heart, a Renewed Call”

<http://www.network935.org/about/about.html>



<http://www.usa.om.org/omindia/gsh.htm>

“Good Shepherd Holistic Ministry Teams” - India

<http://www.gbod.org/children/information/w01/p3.html>

"Out of the Basement: A Holistic Approach to Children's Ministry" by Diane C. Olson

<http://www.fh.org/jobposting-micah-phxcoord>

Food for the Hungry: Meeting physical and spiritual needs worldwide

http://www.afrikapamoja.org/temak/Holistic_Ministry.htm

Teenage Mothers & Girls Association of Kenya
P.O. Box 3531, Kisumu 40100, Kenya, East Africa

2) For those interested in theological understanding of “holistic ministry/missions” may enjoy the

graduate level course at Fuller Theological Seminary:

MD 540 – Theology of Holistic Ministry taught by Dr. Stephanie Smith in

Pasadena,

California.

3) For those who are interested in further reading, here is a list of selected references:

Bosch, David J. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Mayknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991.

Dennison, Jack. *City Reaching: On the Road to Community Transformation*, William Carey, 1999.

Greenway, Roger. *Discipling The City: A Comprehensive Approach to Urban Ministry*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992.

Guder, Darrell L. Editor. *Missional Church, a Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998

Hanks, Thomas. *God So Loved the Third World*. Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2001.

Reader including essays and articles by N.T. Wright, Karl Barth, Bryant Myers,
John Paul II, Newbigin, Guitierrez, and others.

Herrington, James, Mike Bonem, James Furr. *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000.

Kraakevik, James H. and Dotsey Welliver, Editors. *Partners in the Gospel, the Strategic Role of Partnership in World Evangelization*, Wheaton: Billy Graham Center, 1992.

Linthicum, Robert. *City of God, City of Satan, A Biblical theology of the Urban Church*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991.

Myers, Bryant. *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practice of Transformational Development*, Maryknoll, NY and Monrovia, CA: Orbis and World Vision, 1999.

Sider, Ronald J. *Good News and Good Works. A Theology of the Whole Gospel*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999.

Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, Editors. *Mission as Transformation, A Theology of the Whole Gospel*, Irvine, CA: Regnum Press International, 1999.

Volf, Miroslav. *Exclusion and Embrace*. Abington Press, 1996.

Yamamori, Ted and others. *Serving with the Poor in Asia, Cases of Holistic Ministry*, Los Angeles: World Vision International, 1995.

Yamamori, Ted, and others. *Serving with the Poor in Africa, Cases of Holistic Ministry*, Los Angeles: World Vision International, 1996.

Yamamori, Ted, and others. *Serving with the Poor in Latin America, Cases of Holistic Ministry*, Los Angeles: World Vision International, 1997.

