DEVELOPING MISSION AND MISSIONING DEVELOPMENT[1]

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SCENES FROM CAMBODIA, 1999

It is late in the afternoon. In the gathering gloom of a tropical storm, with a group of Avondale students, we walk through one of the killing fields of Cambodia.[2] In the ground we see pits now overgrown with tropical vegetation. Some are labelled in Khmer and broken English as places where bodies were buried during the barbarous Khmer Rouge regime of the 1970s. We see the trees against which babies were killed and view the modern-style "stuppa" where hundreds of skulls of the victims are stacked neatly on shelves. As we look at the bare earth tracks we detect fragments of human bones and remnants of clothing.

On the following day we spend the morning in the markets of Phnom Penh and enjoy the game (for us at least) of bartering down from already ridiculously low prices (by our Western standards). Numerous beggars, from young children to retired soldiers, many lame, continually accost us. They see any Westerner as rich, even though our students have scraped and saved and borrowed money to pay their way for an experience of service and adventure. The afternoon brings an even greater assault to our senses and sensibilities as we walk around Tuol Sleng, the Museum of Crime. This former high school was turned into a place of horrendous torture for its victims who in some way had offended the Khmer Rouge.[3] As we view the former classrooms, we see the instruments of torture and photographs of the last victims as found by the Vietnamese army.[4] When we walk further into the complex, we see the crudely built holding cells created from a large classroom, together with the hundreds of photographs that the Khmer Rouge had meticulously recorded just like the Nazi regime in a similar Holocaust. We enter the room in which are hung a survivor's graphic paintings of

the tortures to which his fellow victims had been subjected. Then the final exhibit – on the wall a large mural of human skulls arranged in the shape of the map of Cambodia. The enormous Mekong River and the huge Tonle Sap Lake are represented by blood-coloured paint. As we come out of the Museum members of the team are lost in their individual thoughts as to the enormity of "man's inhumanity to man" and the sheer reign of barbarity and evil that existed just a few years ago so close to our homeland of Australia. It takes us some time and the distracting antics of a street monkey before we can talk to each other.

The images described above are constantly reinforced over the next three weeks as we travel into neighbouring provinces and see the land-mine warning signs, the non-governmental organisations clearing the mines and the numerous amputees.[5] As we talk to ADRA's Khmer workers we discover that virtually everyone had been directly affected by the Khmer Rouge regime; often they were the sole survivors from their families.[6] Not only have the Khmers suffered grievously in the recent past but their country is among the poorest of nations. Education, health and nutrition indicators all tell of a very sorry situation.

MISSION ON THE EVE OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Cambodia raises many issues for Christian mission. In such a context of what Yancey calls "ungrace"[7] how can/should Christians "do mission?" The Khmers seem remarkably resigned to their recent past but this may be due more to their Buddhist acceptance of suffering rather than forgiveness as understood by Christians. Does the "telling" by traditional Christian evangelists have a role in Cambodia? Or do the Khmers need a "showing" of God's grace and love? Or both?

The scenes from Cambodia show a new face of mission. ADRA is helping to re-build the fabric of civil society in Cambodia and other desperately impoverished nations, often being the only "Adventist presence" in some such societies. It does this by drilling wells, rehabilitating ancient irrigation systems, teaching literacy, raising awareness of AIDS, organising cow banks and other micro-credit schemes, running postal services, feeding the hungry, and numerous other activities.[8]

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This paper argues a dual thesis: first, there is a need to understand that Christian, including Adventist, mission must include ministering to the social needs of humanity as an activity in its own right, and not only an "entering wedge" to an evangelistic end. It is a Christian thing to do good for the sake of doing good, rather than doing good so as only to obtain baptisms. We need to develop our concept of "mission."

Second, we need to ensure that our humanitarian, or development activity, does indeed have a mission: that of silently showing the love of God to a suffering world. Thus we dig wells and teach better agricultural practices not just to do good, but because in so doing we demonstrate God's love and concern for the holistic well-being of all of humanity. Thus our mission must include humanitarian development and our development must include mission.[10]

Social Ministry as Mission[11]

Until the late 19th century, Protestants did not generally make a dichotomy between evangelism and social ministry. Well-known evangelicals such as John Wesley, William Wilberforce, and William and Catherine Booth sought to evangelise as well as reform aspects of English society. In the late 19th century, as the social gospel arose among liberal Protestants, particularly in the USA., the evangelical churches retreated into giving evangelism sole priority to what has been called "The Great Reversal."

Since the 1950s evangelicals have rediscovered their heritage of social involvement. Early pointers of changing attitudes were the establishment of various Third World aid agencies such as World Vision in 1950 and TEAR Fund in 1968, together with an increasing distancing of evangelicals from the social withdrawal of the fundamentalists. The International Congress on World Evangelization held in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1974 was a turning point in reversing "The Great Reversal," at least by the institutional church. In 1979, Sider, an evangelical theologian, who initiated the US-based Evangelicals for Social Action, published his influential book[12] which has been a catalyst for a revolution in the thinking of many Christians. Since the 1970s the

evangelical churches have had a broad commitment to both world evangelism and social involvement.

Adventists have shown parallel development in their thinking and practice. Despite a strong isolationist stance, the early Adventists established a fund for poor Americans in 1863, before the Seventh-day Adventist Church was even organised. In 1874 the Dorcas Welfare Society organised Adventist women in community welfare work. There was no dichotomy between missionary and welfare activities as shown by the creation in 1893 of the Adventist Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association to establish health care services in various countries in keeping with the Church's philosophy of health.

In 1918, Adventist overseas humanitarian work began with a special offering collected from local congregations to assist Adventist Church workers and members in countries suffering from the dislocation of World War I. In response to the larger scale devastation of World War II, the Adventist Church established warehouses in New York and San Francisco to process materials received from local Dorcas societies.

In 1956 this welfare program was formalised as the Seventh-day Adventist Welfare Service, Inc (SAWS).[13] The organisation was given broad terms of reference: relief aid, rehabilitation of war victims, running social services and the reconstruction of facilities including factories and agricultural projects. SAWS was to be financed by a bi-annual (now annual) Disaster and Famine Relief Offering. A separate but parallel development was the establishment by the General Conference of an *ad hoc* Committee for Institutional Development in order to access grants from various European official aid agencies for the funding of Adventist educational institutions in the Third World. In 1983 this committee and SAWS were merged to form ADRA, signalling a significant move from a mainly relief-oriented organisation to a development agency. However, as with the broader evangelical community, some Adventists see social ministry as a distraction from the task of evangelism.[14]

Developing Mission

The Bible portrays an integrated view of the vertical and horizontal

dimensions of life. The vertical relationships are those that connect us to God and are in the realm of the spiritual and eternal. The horizontal relationships are those that connect us to other human beings, and are in the realm of the social and temporal. Isaiah uses the image of a building site to illustrate this integration: "I will make justice the measuring-line and righteousness the plumb-line" (Isa 28:17). To ensure the structural integrity of a building requires attention both to the horizontal dimension as indicated by the measuring-line, and to the vertical dimension as indicated by the plumb-line. In the Old Testament, righteousness, our relationship to God, is linked and equated with justice, our relationships with each other. In the New Testament James states that true religion is as much about helping the weak and powerless (or being just) as it is living a pure (or righteous) life (James 1:7). Christ, in part quoting the prophet Micah, indicates that the weightier matters of the law involve our horizontal (mercy and justice) and vertical relationships (faithfulness) rather than religious rituals.[15]

A re-reading of the "Gospel Prophet," Isaiah, will quickly dispel any notion that God is only concerned about our relationship with Him. In fact Isaiah seems to suggest that the material and social are even more important for God's people than the religious and spiritual. Interestingly for Seventh-day Adventists the oft-quoted text about restoring the Sabbath (Isa 58:13) is in the context of our social ministry.

The example of Christ is instructive – a person who "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). Christ understood the pedagogic value of showing or demonstrating, as opposed to mere telling or proclaiming: it is well established that we learn more from seeing/experiencing than we do from hearing. The gospel needs to be demonstrated in acts of disinterested service as much as, if not more than it is spoken about. Perhaps it is not without significance that in kindergarten children are involved in "show and tell" not "tell and show." The Christian Church, and Adventists in particular, have excelled in the "telling." Maybe we need to refocus on the "showing." We need to be good at creating communities of grace by *being* good news as much as by *proclaiming* good news. Christ began his public ministry reading from Isaiah 61:1 (Luke 4:17-21) and announced that He would *be* good news. The

Jubilee ("the acceptable year of the Lord") was a socio-economic restoration that demonstrated the faithfulness of God's people.

The Great Commission is to teach others what Christ has commanded us. The two elements of his Great Command are to love God and to love others. The context of Christ's response that prompted this statement clearly shows the integration of these two dimensions. Thus the Great Commission extends to such matters as the relief of sickness, hunger and poverty, and to the correction of injustice and socio-economic exploitation. Our concept of mission needs to be developed to fully embrace outreach to the social needs of humanity. As Chester aptly remarks, "...evangelism without social action is bad evangelism, and social action without evangelism is incomplete social action."[16]

Missioning Development

Of course, social ministry may be accepted by some in the church as it can be used as a front for evangelism or "an entering wedge." However the example of Christ is that he did good works because of their intrinsic value of demonstrating the goodness of God. So ADRA for example, has taken a clear stance that it is not about proselytisation. Its *Operations Manual*[17] clearly states that ADRA's work is called for "irrespective of the chances for potential or actual proselytising."

However the other extreme is to assume that doing good works and social ministry in themselves are sufficient. If this is so then why should the Adventist Church or indeed any Christian Church support a social ministry? The answer must be that the social ministry of the Church is a means of "speaking well of God," that Christian action should be a witness to the goodness and grace of God. ADRA's mission statement expresses it well: "to reflect the character of God through humanitarian and developmental activities."[18]

This witness to the goodness of God is most powerful at the level of the individual social activist. In Cambodia we met a Cambodian ADRA employee who had been hired because his engineering expertise was needed for an ADRA-led irrigation system rehabilitation project. This Buddhist observed the quiet and consistent example of an expatriate

Christian ADRA worker. The Cambodian was intrigued and attracted to Christianity by this silent witness and has become a baptised member.

The power of individual witness does not preclude institutional witness, as another example from Cambodia illustrates. ADRA/Cambodia employs over 200 Cambodian Buddhists and has a very small core of Christian expatriate advisers. How does an organisation convey its Christian value system to its non-Christian employees? A more difficult challenge is to convey the essence of Christianity to its clients, all of whom are non-Christian, via the medium of its non-Christian workers. In response ADRA/Cambodia has identified a small set of core spiritual values which are generally accepted not only by Christians but also by Buddhists: compassion, integrity and respect.[19] These values are built into all the programs run by ADRA and are upheld in the voluntary staff "worships."[20] Just as our mission must include the horizontal, so our social ministry should include the vertical not to proselytise but to show the goodness of God.

AVONDALE'S ROLE

In the 1950-70s Avondale's role was clear – to produce pastoral and educational graduates who could go as "missionaries" to the South Pacific. On the eve of the 21st Century the situation is considerably less clear. First, in many of the South Pacific nations the percentage of the population claiming to be Christian is considerably higher than in either Australia or New Zealand! This is even more noticeable when comparing the Adventist proportions. So where are the Christian (and Adventist) heartlands today? Second, and of more immediate concern to current graduates, is the fact that the demand for career expatriate missionaries in these South Pacific nations has shrunk dramatically as a result of the excellent work done in the mid 20th Century by the then Avondale graduates.[21] Nationals now rightfully fill most of the pastoral and teaching positions. In a sense the former missionary activity successfully made itself redundant.

This trend is being seen in several parts of the non-Christian world. One response has been the emergence of the short-term missionary who responds, often on a volunteer basis, to a highly specific need that cannot

readily be filled by the local resources. Avondale has responded to this situation in several ways.[22]

Student Missionary Program: Avondale has supported the Student Missionary program for many years. Students volunteer, usually for between 6-12 months, to serve in some aspect of the Church's program in the Third World, paying their airfares and subsisting on a small stipend. More recently this scheme has been expanded to include Taskforce volunteers who serve in Western countries. In 1999, nine Avondale students were volunteers in places such as Thailand, Korea, Scotland, the USA as well as New Zealand and Australia. These volunteers gain valuable experience in frontline Church work as well as making a contribution to the host community. One of the expatriate ADRA workers in Cambodia who worked with the Avondale team in 1999 is an Avondale graduate completing his second volunteer stint with ADRA/Cambodia.

Fly 'n' Learns: Since 1990 Avondale has run very short-term overseas projects in conjunction with ADRA. These projects give students a taste of the new face of mission and an insight into the work of ADRA. The objectives for these projects are:

- to enable Avondale students (usually Western and relatively affluent) to experience life in a Third World culture
- to enable Avondale students to volunteer their time, energy and finance to help others - without any tangible reward
- to assist a local community achieve a developmental goal
- to enable Avondale students to experience first-hand aspects of the Church's mission.

During the decade, these projects have evolved from being traditional "Fly n Repairs" renovating Adventist mission schools in the South Pacific, to more developmentally oriented "Fly n Learns" often to non-Adventist communities in Asia. On the eve of the New Millennium they have been renamed "The Avondale/ADRA Project" to signify the increasing formal collaboration between Avondale College and ADRA.

International Development Studies Course: In 1999, Avondale launched, at BA degree level, an innovative major in International

Development Studies (IDS). International Development is about ways of improving the quality of life of the world's poor by empowering poor people to move from a situation of dependency to one of self-reliance so that their life-choices and life-chances are enhanced. The academic content of this program is set unambiguously in the context of Christian compassion and service. It will better prepare those graduates who wish to work in the poor areas of the world with ADRA or similar Non Government Organisations (NGOs) on either a short-term volunteer basis or on a longer-term career basis. The course aims to produce graduates who amongst other attributes have a concern for and commitment to Christian service on behalf of the poor, and a commitment to a life-style that is consistent with a concern for social justice and equity.

This IDS program has unique features compared with similar programs in state universities. First, IDS students at Avondale are required to spend some time in a development activity in a third world country. This may be fulfilled by participating in the annual Avondale/ADRA project (see above) or spending a couple of months with an NGO in the third world on an individual basis. Already some individual IDS students have had "internships" in Laos, Cambodia, Rwanda and Mongolia. No other Australian universities have a required overseas experience component.

Second, ADRA/Australia is involved in the teaching of part of one of the subjects in the degree. Thus the Avondale IDS program has a very clear NGO focus and emphasis on the role of civil society in social transformation. Only one other Australian university – and then at the graduate level – has a similar collaborative partnership with an NGO.

Further this is the only undergraduate program in NSW, though IDS is common in the Victorian state universities. It is also the only undergraduate IDS program in the whole of the global Adventist English-speaking university community.

DREAMS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Some dreams for the future of IDS in relation to the new face of mission include:

- Avondale as a recognised and respected centre for the undergraduate education of aspiring workers in the Christian NGO sector: the place of choice for young Christians interested in development service in the Third World.
- a growing number of students, who see themselves as world Christians with a vision of compassionate service for the poor and marginalised, rooted in their understanding of God's grace.
- a growing group of Adventists who have a passion for social justice and issues of equity and who take Micah 6:8 as their talisman.

Cambodia and many, many other places on this earth are in desperate need of a convincing demonstration of God's love. May Avondale continue to contribute to creating communities of grace that speak well of God.

NOTES:

[1]The views expressed in this chapter are those of the author and are not necessarily held by Avondale College or ADRA (the Adventist Development and Relief Agency).

[2]These students were participating in the 1999 annual Avondale/ADRA "Fly n' Learn" project.

[3]Even the wearing of spectacles was reason enough to be killed by the Khmer Rouge as spectacles indicated that a person was literate and so could read, think and question the authority of Pol Pot and his henchmen.

[4]The Khmer Rouge came to power in 1975 and ruled until ousted - at least in most of the country - by the invading Vietnamese army in 1979.

[5]One person in every 230 is an amputee. Cambodia has the distinction of having the highest ratio of amputees of any nation on earth. The land-mines are the legacy of the conflict as the Khmer Rouge retreated to the more remote areas of the country.

[6]Estimates of the number of Khmers killed vary from one to two million. The population today is still less than 11 million.

[7]Phillip Yancey, *What's So Amazing About Grace?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 30.

[8]David Syme describes the role of ADRA in mission in David Syme, "Crossing Boundaries - ADRA and AWR" in Jon L. Dybdahl, (ed) *Adventist Mission in the 21st Century* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1999), 198-205.

[9]Development is defined here as those activities that help people move from a position of dependence and subjection to one of self-reliance and being able to influence their own futures.

[10]Barry Oliver suggests that rather than a dichotomy between mission and social ministry, social ministry - comprising service and justice - should be an *integral* part of evangelism: essentially this is what is being argued in this paper. See Barry Oliver, "Mission" in R McIver, & R Roennfeldt, (eds) *Meaning for the New Millennium: the Christian Faith from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective* (Cooranbong, NSW: Avondale Academic Press, 2000), 259-64.

[11]This section is adapted from an unpublished paper, H Lockton, *Christians and the alleviation of world poverty: a case study of ADRA* Unpublished paper in partial fulfilment of higher degree requirements. (Melbourne Vic: Deakin University, 1996).

[12]Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: a Biblical Study* (London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 1978).

[13]In 1973 the name was modified to Seventh-day Adventist World Service, Inc (SAWS) to indicate a shift from an exclusive welfare focus towards development programs.

[14]Rudi Maier alludes to this in the article Rudi Maier, "Evangelism and Development – Friends or Foes?" in Dybdahl, 80-87.

[15]Matthew 23:23 quoting Micah 6:2

[16]T. Chester, *Awakening to a World of Need,* Leicester, UK: Inter Varsity Press, 1993).

[17]ADRA *Operations Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: ADRA International Central Office, 1998), C-3.

[18]ADRA *Operations Manual*, B-4.

[19]ADRA Cambodia *Annual Report 1998* (Phnom Penh: ADRA/Cambodia, 1998), 2-3.

[20]Use is made of the book by Beatrice Neall *Building a Better Cambodia* (Phnom Penh: SDA Mission, 1998). This compilation by a retired theologian

and former missionary to Cambodia, contains short stories from the Christian and Asian religions that point towards reconciliation and service to others: each story is printed in English and Khmer on facing pages.

[21]See Barry Oliver, Alex Currie, & Doug Robertson, eds. *Avondale in the South Pacific: 100 Years of Mission* (Cooranbong, NSW: Avondale Academic Press, 1997).

[22]The following discussion does not include the STORMCO program which was successfully adopted at Avondale in 1999 when approximately 60 students were involved in community and evangelistic outreach in two NSW outback towns. In addition, in 1998/9 a group of about 15 students were involved in running a series of weekend Somersault camps for economically disadvantaged and emotionally damaged children under the auspices of Centacare, a Christian social welfare agency in Newcastle.