

Micah Network Integral Mission Initiative

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| RESOURCE CATEGORY Theology | RESOURCE NUMBER IMI-THE-001 | SOURCE Vinoth Ramachandra |
| RESOURCE TITLE What is Integral Mission? | | |

The Micah Declaration and Beyond

The expression 'integral mission' has increased in popularity ever since several evangelical development agencies from around the world met in Oxford, England, in 2001 to form the Micah Network. The term, which follows the Spanish 'misión integral', was felt to be a less misleading expression of concern for the whole person than earlier language that spoke of 'holistic mission' or of 'transformational development'. The Micah Network issued a 'Declaration on Integral Mission' which stated that:

'Integral mission or holistic transformation 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 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. If we ignore the world we betray the word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God we have nothing to bring to the world.'¹

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. This creates tensions for those who work in situations of human suffering where the open proclamation of the gospel is not possible or where the latter is likely to be so misunderstood (perhaps because of a history of bad practice- so-called 'unethical conversions') as to lead to the suppression of all works of compassion initiated by Christians.

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)? Integral mission, in other words, has to do with the Church's *integrity*. A man or woman of integrity is someone who is trustworthy, with no inconsistency between what he or she is in public and what he or she is in private. Integral mission is then a way of calling the church to keep together, in her theology as well as in her practice, what the Triune God of the Biblical narrative always brings together: 'being' and 'doing', the 'spiritual' and the 'physical', the 'individual' and the 'social', the 'sacred' and the 'secular', 'justice' and 'mercy', 'witness' and 'unity', 'preaching truth' and 'practising the truth', and so on.

¹ 'The Micah Declaration on Integral Mission' in Tim Chester (ed.), *Justice, Mercy and Humility: Integral Mission and the Poor* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2002) p.19

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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 outcaste 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?² When the early Church rescued infants left to die on the rubbish heaps outside cities in the Roman empire, or visited and fed enemy prisoners, or refused to join in the sacrificial cult of the emperor, were they political subversives or were they simply living out the Gospel in their world? 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?

Surely the answer to these questions must be: ‘both’. 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 (as the Declaration puts it well) 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.³

I know of no Christian parents who do not love their children: they all desire for their children that they have a decent education, adequate nutrition, access to the best available health care, and a meaningful and well-paid job when they finish their schooling. Whatever we may say (in our particular church theology) about ‘saving souls’ as the most important work to which God has called us, or of Christians being ‘not of the world’ and so on, it is obvious that all of us spend the bulk of our time making sure that we and our children are safe, comfortable and secure in *this* world. But the moment we are asked, ‘Don’t you want to work for a world where *all* children have access to adequate nutrition, healthcare, education and a decent job later in life?’, many of us throw up our hands in pious horror, and exclaim, ‘Isn’t that the “social gospel”?’

This fundamental hypocrisy in many so-called ‘evangelical circles’ in South Asia (and beyond) needs to be exposed. The underlying anthropology also needs to be challenged. Everyone of us is socially embedded. From the moment of our birth, if not before, we are social beings. We grow up in a family and ethnic network, learn a language not of our choosing, practise a worldview and a set of customs that are shared with a wider social group. What we call ‘society’ is found not simply outside the ‘individual’ but within;

² Is it significant that the nouns ‘evangelism’ or ‘social/political action’ never appears in the Scriptures? In contemporary English-speaking evangelical usage, it is the noun forms that dominate, thereby reinforcing the tendency to compartmentalise them in neat categorical boxes.

³ Mk.12:28-31. Of course the command presupposes that we believe certain truths about Yahweh. But our understanding of those truths also depends on our practical obedience.

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indeed, the individual does not emerge without the society of which she is a part. This means that we cannot divorce the personal from the social, economic, ideological and political environments within which we live and move and have our being. Just as transformed individuals with a new vision of a better world transform their social environments through their political agency, so transformed social environments in turn help change individuals. As the example of apartheid in South Africa, or the caste-structure in India, have amply demonstrated: sometimes we need to change the society before the individual even becomes aware of the structural evil in which he or she is complicit.

The issue we all face then is not *why* we should be socially involved, but whether our present social involvements (the daily work that we do, where we have chosen to live, where we shop, how we earn and spend money, our voting habits, and so on) are Christian or unChristian- that is, whether they serve God's purposes for the world, or actually run counter to them. Closely related to this question is another: not *how* we should preach the Gospel, but *what* Gospel are we preaching? Integral mission flows out of an integral Gospel.

Rethinking the Gospel

In my pastoral experience, if people have been exposed to an understanding of the Gospel that is framed primarily in individualistic terms ('justification by faith'), or of 'salvation' as basically life in another world after death (and 'faith' as the insurance policy that gets us there), it is almost impossible to move them on to a position from where they see how their work and cultural involvements in the present world have anything at all to do with the Gospel. They will, at best, think that it is the special calling of a gifted few within the Church ('the intellectuals', perhaps) to work towards social and cultural transformation, while the 'real calling' of everybody else is to 'preach the gospel'. If social action make people open to the gospel, then well and good; if not, then it is dispensable.

I propose that the Gospel is not primarily about *my* needs and how God can satisfy those needs. It is *about* the world -what the Triune God has done, is doing and is going to do for the world he created and loves. The Gospel announces God's intention, and the inauguration of that intention through the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, to renew, recreate and reconcile the world to himself. Well-known texts such as Ephesians 1 and Colossians 1 present the Gospel's redemptive scope as embracing persons, cultures and the entire cosmos. Furthermore, it is precisely because it is *about* the world that the gospel is *for* the world. It announces the world's future. While I am called to respond personally to that message, and so receive God's gracious gifts of justification and reconciliation, the content of that message is far bigger than my response.

For whom is such a message Good News? For those who yearn for a different world, who have no stake at all in the present idolatrous and oppressive world-system. In Mary's Song (The Magnificat), the mother of our Lord celebrates the coming of 'God my Saviour' (Lk. 2:46) and spells out the implications of his saving

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rule: scattering the proud in the imagination of their hearts, pulling down the powerful from their thrones, sending the rich empty away...(vv.51-53) Evidently, the Lucan understanding of Messianic salvation was quite 'this-worldly'; it was certainly more than social reversal, but, equally certainly, not less.

Little wonder, then, that those who opposed the coming of God's saving rule in the ministry of Jesus were those who benefited from the status quo (for instance, the rich, the socially powerful, and the religious leadership), while those who received him- and for whom his message was Good News- were those excluded from salvation as defined by the former. It is interesting that Jesus never insists that such folk (for instance, tax-collectors, lepers, Samaritans, prostitutes) must first change before they can experience his salvation: not because they had no personal sin, but because they needed no reminders of their moral failures. To such people he simply opens his arms in forgiveness and unconditional acceptance. Tax-collectors such as Zacchaeus are so shocked by the generosity of Jesus that they respond spontaneously in repentance. To whom does Jesus directly preach repentance and the need for 'new birth' (or, alternatively, to 'become like little children') if they are to receive the kingdom of God? To the 'pious' who were assured that their seats in the kingdom were already booked, to the rich whose riches isolated them from God and their fellow men and women, and to the powerful to whom Jesus' way of humble service towards those at the bottom of society was a threat to their own power-base and their privileged positions.

In the New Testament the church is central to the content of the Gospel- the church understood not as just another religious institution dispensing religious services to the faithful, but as a new community of those who have tasted the powers of the coming age and who live as signs of that 'upside-down' kingdom. The church is the place where social and economic barriers are being broken down in demonstration of the reconciling power of the Gospel. That is why the disunity of the church is a denial of the Gospel and a sign not of God's grace but of God's judgment. A fragmented and divided church has no message for a fragmented and divided world. Isn't this perhaps the biggest blind-spot of the south Asian- if not the entire global- church today?

Grace, hope and love, then, are characteristics of the true church. The church has been entrusted with a Gospel, with good news. When we privatise and individualise the Gospel (a message only about *my* needs and *my* future), we betray the Gospel. When the church loses sight of its calling to be the bearer of the Gospel for the world, it turns into another religious club, simply looking after the needs and interests of its members. When the church loses the good news of grace, she turns her message into a religion of duty, a moralistic legalism that identifies middle-class respectability and charitable deeds with being a Christian. When she forgets the message of hope, she ends up sanctioning the *status quo*, instead of subverting it. Instead of living today in the light of what is to come, she idolises the present, even identifying every oppressive system as not only necessary but God-given.

With such an understanding of the Good News, what we label 'evangelism' now becomes, in the words of the South African missiologist David Bosch, 'enlisting people for the reign of God, liberating them from

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themselves, their sins, and their entanglements, so that they will be free for God and neighbour...To win people to Jesus is to win their allegiance to God's priorities.⁴

Rethinking the 'Great Commission'

Since the late eighteenth-century many evangelical churches and para-church mission agencies have come to base their theology of world mission on the words of the risen Lord in Matt 28:16-20. This is often referred to as the Great Commission. In the remainder of this essay I shall try to present a closer reading of this text that calls into question the conventional evangelical usage.

The first thing to observe is that this text begins with a *Great Affirmation*: 'all authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto me' (v.16). This is another way of saying that Jesus is Lord.⁵ These are truly remarkable words when one considers that they are uttered by one who had been crucified recently as a criminal against the Roman state, and whose battered and broken body had been hung outside the walls of a city in a remote corner of the Roman empire as a deterrent to all who dared subvert the Pax Romana. Jesus' authority, which he receives as a gift from the Father by way of the obedience of the cross, is one that embraces 'heaven and earth', that is, all creation. Every sphere of activity, human and nonhuman, comes under his sway. As the great Dutch theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper famously put it: 'There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over *all*, does not say: "Mine".'⁶

The universal mission of the Church flows out of the universal lordship of Jesus. It is the great affirmation that leads to the *Great Commission*: 'make disciples'⁷ of all nations' (v. 19). The traditional English translation obscures the emphasis of Jesus' words. The stress is not on the 'going' but on the 'making of disciples'.⁸ A disciple is an apprentice, one who attaches himself to a Guru to learn a skill or a way of life. The first disciples of Jesus, women as well as men, were all Jews as Jesus' ministry was confined to the people of Israel. But now, in the same way that he had invited them to learn from him and follow him, they are to invite others from the Gentile world (*ta ethne*) to become part of his disciple-community, the true Israel of God. *Ethne* is the regular Greek term for Gentiles, and the phrase *panta ta ethne* ('all nations') has

⁴ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1991) p.418

⁵ Most scholars recognize the influence of Dan 7:13-14 here (also cf. 7:29; 9:6; Jn.17:2).

⁶ From the inaugural address at the Free University of Amsterdam, 20 October 1880, in James Bratt, ed., *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998) p.461

⁷ Gk. *mathéteusate*

⁸ Jesus' instruction includes an imperative surrounded by three participle clauses: one should make disciples by going, baptizing and teaching. It should strictly be translated, 'as you go' or 'on your way' make disciples...

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been used previously in 24:9,14; 25:32 in contexts which probably all include Israel in 'the nations'. As Craig Keener notes, 'The Gentile mission extends the Jewish mission- not replaces it; Jesus nowhere revokes the mission to Israel (10: 6), but merely adds a new mission revoking a previous prohibition (10:5).'⁹

They are to explore, as Jesus goes ahead of them into that world, what the confession 'the crucified Jesus is Lord' means for the cultures they enter. They go to invite fellow-learners, baptizing men and women into the disciple-company of Jesus. Baptism in the ancient world was a sign of transfer to a new ownership, a new allegiance.¹⁰ Christian baptism was an act of incorporation into the Body of Christ, a new family within which men and women learned to follow the risen Christ and practise a new, shared humanity. John Meir points out that baptism 'implicitly rescinds the command of circumcision and so rescinds that fidelity to the Mosaic law' which marked the public ministry of Jesus. 'A ministry restricted to the land and people of Israel could hardly be carried out otherwise than with fidelity to the Mosaic law, just as an unrestricted mission to the Gentiles would hardly be conceivable- let alone successful- without the rescinding of such Mosaic prescriptions as circumcision.'¹¹

Moreover, the trinitarian Name that the church confesses is significant.¹² The mission of the triune God is the source and basis for the mission of the church. Indeed, until the sixteenth century the term 'mission' was used exclusively to refer to the Trinity- the sending of the Son by the Father and of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son (as formulated in the Western church's trinitarian tradition). The Jesuits were the first to use it in describing the spread of the Christian faith among people (including Protestants) who were not members of the Catholic church.¹³ This use of the term unfortunately coincided with the colonial expansion of the European powers, with the result that the term has acquired distasteful overtones of cultural hegemony and aggressive conquest that linger to the present day.

The emphasis on the Triune God as the subject of mission delivers the church from both an idolatrous self-centredness and also a narrowing of the scope of mission. The *missio Dei* points to God's reaching out in redeeming and reconciling love to all the creation. Participation in, and being recreated by, the dynamic flow of trinitarian relationships is what constitutes discipleship to Jesus. 'It is not the church that has a

⁹ Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) p.719

¹⁰ *in the name* is literally 'into the name', implying entrance into an allegiance.

¹¹ John P. Meir, 'Salvation History in Matthew', in *The Mission of Christ and His Church: Studies in Christology and Ecclesiology* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1990) p.130

¹² The trinitarian formula is established by the period of the earliest extant Christian documents (1 Cor.12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14) and widespread in the church (1 Pet 1:2; 1 Jn. 3: 23-24; Did. 7:1-3).

¹³ Cf. Bosch, op.cit., p.1

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mission of salvation to fulfil to the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church, creating a church as it goes on its way.¹⁴

Disciple-making is impossible without teaching. The church is to teach men and women 'to obey everything that I have taught you to obey' (v.20). If the essence of discipleship is to obey all that Jesus taught, then the essence of disciple-making is to teach others to do the same. Clearly, we cannot make disciples of others if we are not disciples ourselves; and the way to know if we are in fact disciple of Jesus is to see if we are practising what he taught. So Matt 28: 20 drives the readers back into Matt 5:2ff where, according to the evangelist, the teaching ministry of Jesus begins.

Matthew 5 is addressed primarily to Jesus' disciples (v.2) and begins with an eightfold description of the attitudes and qualities of the true disciple, one who has accepted the demands of God's kingdom. Firstly, disciples of Jesus are men and women who are 'poor in spirit' (v.3)- they are not 'in control' of things, but are powerless in the world, broken and dependent wholly on God in whom they trust; secondly, they 'mourn' (v.4) - over their own sins and the suffering and sins of the people among whom they live; thirdly, they are 'meek' (v.5)- not cringing cowards, but those whose ambitions do not centre in themselves, so that they are able to stay in the shadows and renounce positions of honour and privilege; fourthly, they 'hunger and thirst for justice' (v.6) - disciples are known as people who have a passion for God's justice, who yearn for God's vindication of the oppressed; fifthly, they combine the hunger for justice, which on its own can make people hard and even self-righteous, with the ability to show mercy (v.7) to both the victims and the perpetrators of injustice; sixthly, they are 'pure in heart' (v.8)- meaning not so much blamelessness as singleness of motive and undivided loyalty of heart; seventhly, they imitate God in being 'peacemakers' (v.9)- they take the initiative to enter situations of conflict and violence, whether in families or cities or nations, to build bridges and restore relationships between peoples at enmity with each other; and, finally, disciples are persecuted- both for the sake of justice and on account of bearing faithful witness to Jesus (vv.10,11) - since, in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's words, 'suffering is the badge of discipleship'.¹⁵

Jesus goes on to speak of such disciples as being like 'salt' and 'light' in the world: like salt in arresting the corruption and decay of society and like light in expelling the moral and spiritual darkness. The Sermon on the Mount goes on to teach about loving one's enemies, forgiving one's debtors, sharing one's possessions with the needy, trusting God for life's necessities, setting the kingdom of God above all other priorities in life, and so much else. And we are still only in the first quarter of Matthew's Gospel! The modern disciple who wants to learn how to make disciples of others, according to the Great Commission, must then study the rest of Matthew's Gospel to learn what Jesus taught his disciples to observe¹⁶ - and then to do the

¹⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. M. Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1977) p.64

¹⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (1937; New York: Macmillan paperbacks, 1963) p.100

¹⁶ Summaries of Jesus' teaching in Matthew are found, apart from chs.5-7, in chs.10,13,18 and 23-25.

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same with Mark, Luke and John. If we are unwilling to do this, out of laziness or indifference or sheer unbelief, we forfeit the right to be called Christians.

So, let us return to the logic of Matt. 28:20. If disciple-making is about 'teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you', then the disciple-maker must also be diligent in obeying everything that the Master taught. So how dare we be selective in our reading of Jesus' teaching and reduce this text to 'preaching the Gospel' or 'planting churches'! It is ironic to find that those who claim to be 'Bible-believing' Christians are usually the worst culprits when it comes to distorting the biblical text in this manner. The risen Jesus expects that his disciple-community which is preaching the Good News among the nations is also striving at Christian unity, is sharing its resources with the poor and needy, is engaged in costly initiatives of peacemaking, and hungering and thirsting after God's justice. If Jesus calls us to obey 'everything that I have commanded you', then even though, as individual Christians, we have different giftings which incline us towards specific ministries which differ from others, we cannot compromise where Christian character is concerned. Moreover, as a Church we have no liberty to 'prioritize', let alone 'pick and choose' what to obey. Local churches and denominations should not be distinguished by their 'priorities', and especially not by differing 'methodologies'.

Before we leave our text, it is important to note its comprehensiveness. 'All authority... has been given to me...make disciples of *all* nations... teaching them to obey *everything* that I have commanded you...I am with you *always*, to the end of the age.' The Great Commission is grounded in the Great Affirmation and accompanied by a *Great Promise*. 'The promise of God's presence often accompanied his call to service in the Old Testament (Ex.3:12; Jos.1:5); it is not so much a cosy reassurance as a necessary equipment for mission.'¹⁷ The promise of the abiding, empowering presence of the risen Christ is only given to a Church that follows him into the world, bearing witness to the Great Affirmation in *all* areas of life.

Rethinking 'Church Planting' methodologies

Some missiologists, usually based in southern California, have developed a grand strategy of world evangelization by interpreting the phrase *ta ethné* (Matt 28: 18) as meaning 'people groups', and then identifying the key missionary task as one of establishing viable, indigenous churches *within* the people-groups of the world. Much ingenuity has gone into how to define and classify these groups. Mission is then reduced to a quantifiable goal that, in the most optimistic projections, can be fulfilled within the present generation.

Thus, Ralph Winter and Bruce Koch claim that 'We are in the final era of missions. For the first time in history it is possible to see the end of the tunnel, when there will be a church movement within the language and social structure of every people group on earth, powerful face to face evangelism taking over in all peoples'. They continue: 'We need only a small percentage of dedicated believers to be mobilized and

¹⁷ R.T France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985) p.416

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equipped....Notice how more do-able the mission task seems when we focus on the size of the potential mission force and on penetrating people groups. Instead of talking of evangelizing 2 billion individuals, we can talk of beginning in approximately 3000 ethnolinguistic peoples and then finishing in maybe as few as 10,000 unimax peoples. Within a very short time all of the 3000 “least evangelized” ethnolinguistic groups will be targeted and engaged by some mission-sending structure in the world.’¹⁸

The great value of such people-group thinking is that it alerts us to the existence and special needs of communities that we might otherwise overlook in mission. However, apart from defined by language and perhaps ethnicity, the application of the concept to other human groups is problematic. The boundaries between people, and their self-identifying markers, are always porous and constantly shifting. (Even definitions of ethnicity are usually political acts, and what constitutes a ‘cultural heritage’ for one generation is understood differently by the next).¹⁹ But, more importantly, from a theological perspective, the moment we make ‘planting churches within peoples’ groups’ the aim of Christian mission even in heterogeneous geographical areas, we show that we are working with an understanding of the Gospel very different to what I outlined earlier.

That Winter and Koch are heirs to the ‘homogenous unit principle’ legacy of an earlier generation of American missionaries is evident from the following comment: ‘The fact is that the Gospel often expands within a community but does not normally “jump” across boundaries between peoples, especially boundaries that are created by hate or prejudice. People can influence their “near neighbours” whose language and culture they understand, but where there is a prejudice boundary, religious faith, which is almost always bound up with many cultural features of the first group, simply does not easily “jump” to the next group, unless that group desires to adopt the other’s culture in preference to its own.’²⁰

This sociological observation becomes a missiological principle. Critics inevitably question what is the content of a Gospel that no longer confronts the idolatries of a community and its culture. What has happened to the Gospel when it no longer challenges those baptized in the name of the trinitarian God to ‘obey everything that Jesus taught us to obey’, specifically in identifying with the ‘outsider’ and even the ‘enemy’ of our community and nation? Proponents of ‘peoples’ group’ based church growth methodologies always respond that such reconciliation between peoples will come with the passage of time. Thus Winter and Koch, in the article above, speak of ‘the bright hope of the Gospel’ that ‘new Christ-following

¹⁸ R.D. Winter and Bruce A. Koch, ‘Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge’, in *Mission Frontiers*, June 2000 : ‘A unimax people is the MAXimum sized group sufficiently UNified to be reached by a single indigenous church planting movement. “Unified” here refers to the fact that there are no significant barriers of either understanding or acceptance to stop the spread of the Gospel.’ (p.25)

¹⁹ Much of popular ‘Peoples Group’ methodology is reminiscent of colonial ethnographies and catalogues of colonial peoples which codified the bewildering varieties of India peoples into categories of caste, race, religion, and occupation seen not just as dynamic and evolving but as a more or less static inheritance from the distant past. These codified divisions then served to shape colonial administrative policy.

²⁰ Op.cit., p.23

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movements in such settings of strife will work for the healing of enmities between peoples.²¹ However, not only does this rarely happen, but for Jesus, forgiveness and reconciliation are not an optional 'higher teaching', separate from the Gospel, that can be given at a later time to the Church; but rather is intrinsic to the very constitution of the Church and fundamental to the repentance that the Gospel demands.

The content of a Gospel that makes no demands in respect of justice and reconciliation suggests, in the words of Orlando Costas, 'a conscience-soothing Jesus, with an unscandalous cross, an otherworldly kingdom, a private, inwardly limited spirit, a pocket God, a spiritualized Bible, and an escapist church. Its goal is a happy, comfortable, and successful life, obtainable through the forgiveness of an abstract sinfulness by faith in an unhistorical Christ'.²²

Concluding Remarks

Integral mission flows out of an integral gospel and an integrated people. There is a great danger that we transform the mission of the church into a set of special 'projects' and 'programs', whether we call them 'evangelism' or 'socio-political action', and then look for ways to integrate these methodologically. Rather, the mission of the church is located in the adequacy and faithfulness of its witness to Christ. Our core business is neither the take-over of the world's systems nor the maximising of church membership.

Moreover, we need to remember that the primary way the church acts upon the world is through the actions of its members in their daily work and their daily relationships with people of other faiths. A congregation with huge social welfare projects or many 'church-planting' teams may be far less effective in secular society than congregations which have none of these things but train their members to obey Christ in the different areas of civic life into which they are called.

'Integral mission' has to do with this basic issue of the integrity of the church's life, the consistency between what the church is and what it proclaims. On this understanding, what makes an 'evangelical' politician truly 'evangelical' is not that he adds gospel preaching onto his daily political activities, to make the latter more 'holistic'; but rather that his political outlook and agenda are profoundly shaped by a vision and values that spring out of the Evangel (for instance, defending the most vulnerable- whether unborn children, the mentally disabled, cultural minorities or downtrodden tribal groups, working for ethnic reconciliation, and so on).

We also need to remember what was so obvious to the church of the first century, but forgotten in our technique-driven age, that mission is a divine initiative not a human enterprise. Recovering the content of the Gospel in our churches will lead to a radical questioning of many imported evangelistic methodologies.

²¹ Ibid.p.26

²² Orlando E.Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate: Mission Beyond Christendom* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1982) p.80

Micah Network Integral Mission Initiative

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| RESOURCE CATEGORY Theology | RESOURCE NUMBER IMI-THE-001 | SOURCE Vinoth Ramachandra |
| RESOURCE TITLE What is Integral Mission? | | |

We are called to be witnesses to the present, though hidden, reign of Jesus Christ through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Mission then becomes, in the words of Lesslie Newbigin, 'a kind of doxology, a glorifying of God in the midst of a world that turns its back on him'.²³ Newbigin continues, 'I think that the only thing that can make the gospel credible, the only thing that makes it possible to believe that the ultimate authority over the whole universe resides in a man nailed to the cross, is a company of people who live in the biblical story so that they know it as their own story and as the clue to the whole human story.'²⁴

²³ Lesslie Newbigin, 'Reflections on the History of Missions' in *A Word in Season: Perspectives on Christian World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1994) p.141

²⁴ Ibid. p.146