

Fuller Theological Seminary,
School of Intercultural Studies.
Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies.

Title: Toward a Holistic Approach to Relief, Development, and Christian Witness: With Special Reference to ADRA's Mission to Naxcivan, 1993-2003.

Name of researcher: Wagner Kuhn

Adviser: Wilbert R. Shenk,
Ph.D.

Date completed: 2004

328 pp.

This dissertation examines the principles of relief and development from a biblical and theological perspective (Part I). It helps the reader to understand that relief, development, and Christian witness are the hands and feet of one body--the body of Christ. This biblical perspective also demonstrates that those who are engaged in ministries of compassion towards the needy, oppressed, sick, poor, orphan, and widow, are in fact by word and deed, implementing a work of redemption and transformation.

This study also deals with Christian charity relief and development from a historical and contemporary perspective (Part II). It demonstrates that the practice of charity in the early and medieval periods of the Christian Church was mostly motivated and inspired by Christ's love, demonstrated through his life's ministry in serving those in need.

The Reformation, and subsequently, the evangelical revivals of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, brought a better understanding and renewed the way charity relief and development was practiced. However, the theological shifts that occurred within evangelical Christianity after the 1950s promoted a more holistic practice of welfare relief and development. These changes have helped to create policies that provide freedom, education, health care, and a better life to many people around the world.

Holistic development in all its perspectives and forms is a radical concept. It involves all aspects of life: physical, mental, social, and spiritual. It has to do with the redemption and transformation of individuals, structures, and powers that hinder and obstruct the person from an abundant life (Jn 10:10).

This study suggests that an integrative approach to relief and development as understood and practiced from a holistic Christian perspective (Part III) offers much more hope and has a better chance to succeed and yield long-lasting positive results than does the practice of a mere secular development that dichotomizes between body and spirit, between the physical and spiritual realities of life. ADRA's relief and development program in Naxcivan, Azerbaijan (1993-2003), has attested to the appropriateness of holistic Christian development theory and practice.