

THE INTEGRATION OF DEVELOPMENT AND EVANGELISM

■ Do frontier missionaries really face a choice between development and evangelism? Or does it simply take more bold and imaginative steps to integrate the two in our missionary outreach?

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In June 1983, participants from a broad spectrum of Evangelical churches, missions and aid agencies met at Wheaton College to discuss the issue, "The Church in Response to Human Need." The consensus of those meetings as found in the resulting "Wheaton '83 Statement" was that "we do not emphasize Evangelism as a separate theme, because we see it as an integral part of our total Christian response to human need."¹ The declaration and the main body of the Wheaton '83 Statement highlight a struggle on the part of evangelicals to move from a separatistic understanding of the relationship of evangelism and social action to a more holistic or integrated understanding of the relationship between the two.

The beginning of an evangelical consensus is documented as early as 1974 when the Lausanne Covenant proclaimed that, "Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of Christian duty."²

Although this early statement advocated that both evangelism and social action are part of Christian duty, thus implying that the results of evangelism should impact society, the nature of that relationship was not spelled

out.³

Almost a decade later the consensus of the "Consultation on the Relationship Between Evangelism and Social Responsibility" held in Grand Rapids in 1982 was that social action is an adjunct to the task of evangelism. Development was seen as a "consequence of evangelism," a "bridge to evangelism" and "a partner to evangelism."⁴

Commenting on the growing consensus in the evangelical community on the relationship of evangelism to development, Tite Tienou in his paper given at the Wheaton Consultation in 1983 noted that,

"Social transformation is part of the message of and a natural outgrowth of evangelism... (but) it will likely not take place through a dead evangelism: evangelism will likely not result in social transformation unless the church and Christian community witness by their lifestyles that they have been transformed. If we really mean business let us deflate our empty words and inflate our actions."⁵

Today, some seven years after the above statements were made, we have gathered to discuss once again, as members of the evangelical world community, the relationship between development and evangelism. It seems that consultation statements and an overall consensus of opinion do not necessarily bring about policy changes or action within the larger evangelical community! The question that springs to mind is WHY? If in fact, after almost two decades of discussion and dialogue,, we have really arrived at a consensus, why then is it not being more widely practiced by the Church in the world?

I believe the answer is to be found in a number of obstacles which impede the progress of the implementation of the holistic mission of the Church around the world today.

Obstacles to the Integration of Evangelism and Development

1. *A continuing separation of evangelism and development.* (A narrow understanding of evangelism.)

In spite of the rhetoric of the Wheaton '83 Statement, the fact remains that the evangelical community at large remains to this day committed in large part to a "separatistic" concept of the relationship of development to evangelism. Development and evangelism are still regarded by a majority in evangelicalism as two distinct, if necessary "duties" of the Church. The use of such terms in the above statements on the relationship of evangelism and development as "linking," "bridging," "consequence of," "partner to" betray a continuing bifurcation of the relationship of these two important entities. They are different parts of the same mission, we are told, two sides of the same coin. The key point being that they are "different" concepts and only related to each other as independent parts of a broader Church mission.

This mindset is enhanced by, or perhaps enhances, the structural distinction of two separate organizational components of the broader Church movement, the Mission and the Aid Agencies. At the very least, these two components are different departments within the same denomination, at the most they are entirely independent organizations, the one seen as focused on

"spiritual" ministry and the other on "socio-economic" work. They are often "linked" by the "add on an evangelist" syndrome where development projects are given spiritual credibility by the addition of an evangelist who is related to a separate department or organization.

I believe that this continuing tendency to separate development and evangelism is the result of a truncated concept of evangelism. This concept sees evangelism as "spreading the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures."⁶ The verbal expression of the Good News is seen as evangelism. It is proclamation oriented and dedicated to the verbal presentation of the Gospel to all mankind. The myth perpetuated by this understanding of evangelism is that hearing the Gospel is the equivalent to "being reached."

I would be the last to deny that this is what evangelism is about. It is, however, not the whole picture. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not just a WORD, it is a LIVING WORD. The Gospel is LIFE, which includes the making of propositional statements about its nature but at *best* it is the INCARNATION of the Word of God into the cultures and lives of mankind. It is "doing the Gospel" which is mandated by Scripture. Jesus Himself is our model. As we read in John 1:14, He "became flesh" (all it meant to be man) and "dwelt among us" lived with us as one of us) and was "full of grace and truth" (the Gospel). As a result, "we beheld His glory" (we saw the truth by His grace). Jesus was the first evangelist and His method of incarnation remains what evangelism is all about today.

Evangelism is about enabling the Gospel of Grace in Jesus Christ to be born into our lives, our cultures, our societies, our organizations, our traditions. It is about enabling that Gospel to live in and permeate us and our context in such a way that it "transforms" us and our context to become what we and it are meant to be in Christ. Evangelism is transformation, transformation is development and development is evangelism in a very real sense.

There is a need to replace the narrow concepts of evangelism held by many today with a more Biblical understanding of the holistic nature of evangelism. Until we do this we will remain bound

in the confines of our separatistic thinking, robbing evangelism of its natural process in all of life and development of its power.

2. *A secular definition of development.* (A constrictive interpretation of development.)

Since development is persistently separated from evangelism in the minds of many Christians, it is easy to see how, for them, development becomes a concept defined not by the teaching of God's Word but by the secular mind that coined the term. As long as development is perceived of as separate from evangelism, in whatever way, it will continually fail to be defined in a way consistent with the Word of God. As long as development is defined in a secular manner there is no possibility of integrating it with the biblical concept of evangelism.

The influence of the secular mindset is strong. It is based on normative value premises about what is or is not desirable that are often in conflict with the teaching of the Word of God. It is geared toward indicators of success which often have little to do with development as understood from a biblical perspective.

An example of this can be seen in the economic mindset of secular development which is focused on economic growth as its ultimate goal. Even at the micro level of grassroots development projects this mindset persists. As its goal is to increase income, the focus is individualistic and often pits individual entrepreneurs against each other in competition. The better off poor minority are its target since they are more likely to succeed, given the economic definition of success, than are the poorest majority. It is an up and out mode of development based on Adam Smith's famous notion that "if each individual consumer, producer and supplier of resources pursues self-interest, he or she will as if by an 'invisible hand,' be promoting the overall interests of society."⁷

More important for us than the fact that Adam Smith's principle is not working in Third World settings today is the fact that the whole economic mindset with its focus on individualism and self-attainment is in total contrast to the Word of God. The focus of God's Word is on the good of the group or

"body." It teaches self-denial and service to others as the way life should be lived. Its central theme is to love God above all else and to love others as we love ourselves. A development mindset which is based on individualistic self-attainment is totally contrary to the basic thrust of God's Word and as such needs to be rejected as a definition of what development is about for the Church.

The secular development mindset both repels and appeals. On the one hand it puts the term "development" into a conflictive position with evangelism and accuses it of being less than spiritual. As a result development programs connected to the Church are accused of bringing spiritual death or of squelching the growth of the Church. On the other hand, the secular mindset often dictates the norms for both policy and procedure, for both programs and the standards for evaluating those programs within Christian development organizations.

What is needed badly is a critical evaluation of the secular development mindset which will determine which aspects of that mindset are consistent with and which opposed to the Word of God. As Christians, our definition of development must stem from the principles and values of God's Word and not from the theories of secular development. Our theology must dictate our development principles and values. The Word of God must be the norm from which all of our development theory is drawn. If the Church does not re-interpret the meaning of development in the light of Scripture there is no way that development can be integrated with evangelism. However, if development is interpreted by the Word of God, both development and evangelism will be found to mesh and merge until they are firmly integrated.

3. *A crisis of faith.* (Theological infidelity.)

Tite Tienou's statement that social transformation (development) will not occur through "dead evangelism" is an important point.⁸ He defines "dead evangelism" as that done by the Christian community that has not been transformed and is not living out that transformation in their lifestyle. The immediate question that springs to mind is how can there be dead evangel-

ism within the Church of Jesus Christ given the nature of the Gospel and its power to transform? From my experience of almost twenty years in holistic ministry in Thailand, I am convinced that the answer to that question is that there is a crisis of "faith" in the Church today which is sapping it of its "transforming power."

According to God's Word in Romans 1:16-17 the Gospel is "the power of God for salvation." The power of the Gospel lies in the fact that it reveals God's righteousness which is given freely to all men. The only requirement is that they, in faith, accept God's righteousness and as a result experience His transforming power. In short the Gospel is completely and solely a word about what God has done for man by His GRACE.

Moffatt has noted that "The Bible is a religion of Grace or it is nothing at all... no grace, no gospel."⁹ God's purpose is to bring mankind to salvation by the power of His Grace and not by the efforts or personal goodness of any man (Ephesians 2:8-9). In the Gospel only what God has done and will do counts. The problem is that every fiber of man's nature causes him to think that he can earn God's favor and indeed that he must if he is to be accepted by God.

I am deeply concerned about what I feel is a departure from the Gospel of Grace in the Church today. The focus of a large segment of the Church today is on "LAW" and not "GRACE." The emphasis of much Christian teaching is on being good enough to please God. Law and obedience to the law are held up as the indicators of a person's salvation, this in spite of the Word of God in Romans 3:20 which tells us that there is no way man can be saved by obedience to the law. In fact, the basic function of the law, according to God's Word, is to drive mankind to despair of his own ability to save himself and to cast himself in dependence on the Grace of God in Jesus Christ. It is *only* by the power of God's Grace that we can be saved and transformed into all that God desires us to be.

I feel that the Church is often "duped" by the "religious" value system of the society it is in which teaches that man must work at being

morally good in order to please God and find salvation. The overriding concern becomes morality and the method and message become LAW. The basic problem with this way of thinking is that it is not the Gospel. God's Word is that man is not and cannot be good enough to please God by obedience to the law. There is not one good but God (Luke 18:19). This goodness (righteousness) of God is free to all who believe and accept it (Ephesians 2:8-9). This goodness of God is the power of God (Romans 1:16-17) which will utterly transform man to become what God intends him to be (Romans 12:2).

This is development in the true sense

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of the word. It is also evangelism of the best kind. As the Church truly understands and believes the Gospel of God's grace and not only accepts it personally but lives that Gospel of Grace out in every aspect of its organizational life and work, the power of God's grace enables the ongoing transformation of both the Church and society around it. By God's grace evangelism and development are bound to each other. Both are empowered by the Grace of God and both are the expressions of God's grace as it is lived out in the Church and society.

4. A cultural insensitivity. (Cultural imperialism.)

Perhaps one of the greatest obstacles to the Church being the source of social transformation within its own society is the fact that the Church today, in most settings, is a foreigner culturally in its own culture. Especially in Third World countries this is true. The Church has been established with the motto "the West is best" in mind. Formal correspondence is the model on which most Third World churches are based and Western Christianity is the model to which they have conformed. Local cultures are seen as "sinful" and not

measuring up to God's standard. The Western churches' form and expressions are seen as the Christian expression of the Gospel today and anything departing from this norm is seen as syncretistic and heretical.

In fact this very Western formal correspondence Christianity is the most syncretistic of all. Although the form of the Church remains that of the West more often than not the content (values) remains that of the local culture. The problem is two-fold. On the one hand the form of Western Christianity is foreign to most cultures of the Third World (if not to its own Western diversified culture). It does not have *entre* into these cultures and is not understood by them. On the other hand, if the Western form of Christianity is always an outsider and is rarely understood in non-Western cultures then what it houses (its content) which is the power of the Gospel of the Grace of God never has a chance to impact the hearts and minds of the people of a

given non-Western culture. If this, in fact, is the case, as it certainly is from my study and experience, then it is no wonder that the Church is unable to impact its society with the power of the Gospel. Evangelism and development are dead because Western Christianity blocks the effective communication of the Gospel of Grace which alone is the dynamo empowering the Church's movement into society.

The overall problem is a lack of cultural sensitivity on the part of the Church today. Cultural sensitivity provides the means for enabling the power of the Gospel to address clearly the context of any culture and thereby bring about the necessary transformation of society. There are two basic aspects to cultural sensitivity. First cultural sensitivity enables us to use local forms and expressions to communicate clearly and effectively the Gospel of Grace and its implications in a way that can be easily and simply understood by people of that culture. This is what Jesus did when he "became flesh" and "dwelt among us." Secondly, cultural sensitivity enables us to pierce to the core of the local culture and detect those aspects of the value system that need to be confronted and trans-

formed by the Grace of God. As these are detected and the Gospel is clearly and simply communicated (lived out in culturally appropriate ways, it confronts the local value system with the power of God and transformation (a change in values and lifestyle) results.

A Case In Point (Holistic Ministry In N.E. Thailand)

For the past 19 years I have been struggling, along with my wife and a growing number of N.E. Thai co-workers (138 to date), with the implications of the holistic mission of the Church in N.E. Thailand. We are doing what we call "Integrated Holistic Development." It is *development* in that it seeks to transform people from what they are to what they are meant to be in Christ. It is *holistic* in the sense that it deals with the whole man and all areas of his life. It is *integrated* in that all aspects of the ministry are tied together and could not exist or function independently.

We began our integrated holistic development ministry with the establishment, in 1977, of the Center for Church Planting and Church Growth in N.E. Thailand (CCPCG). Its original purpose was to plant "contextualized dynamic equivalent" churches in N.E. Thailand, the poverty belt of Thailand. Since that time, the Center and its ministry have grown. It has given birth to over 32 "mother" churches and 165 "daughter" churches and has started the Issaan Development Foundation (IDF) to deal with the social, economic and physical needs of the people of N.E. Thailand. Today the CCPCG and the IDF are actively working to enable local "mother" churches which have been planted to reach out into their local communities with the holistic Gospel of Christ. The basic goal is to equip the local "mother" churches to become the source of the ongoing holistic transformation of society at large.

Both the CCPCG and the IDF are operated by the same staff who are committed to the same integrated ministry. Due, however, to the realities of organizational life in Thailand, each organization is structurally related to different aspects of the holistic ministry. The CCPCG is focused on the areas more directly related to the churches' faith and practice including church planting, faith (theology) and culture,

music (local instruments and songs and dance). The IDF is concerned with enabling the local church in the social and economic and physical areas with programs such as the development of local integrated agricultural production systems (eco-system cooperatives), vocational training at the village level (sewing and mechanical repairs), meeting the "basic needs" of the rural poor and community and primary health training. The local "mother" church is the focus of all programs and becomes the "resource center" from which the programs impact both daughter churches and the surrounding community. All programs focus on the participatory activity of groups of people (not individuals) who are involved in the development process from the beginning.

An important part of the Foundation is the Udon Patina Farm. It is a 100 acre integrated farm system which integrates fish, pigs, cows, ducks, chicken, rabbits, trees and vegetables. The Farm exists for a number of very crucial reasons. It is the economic support base for all operational costs of the CCPCG and the IDF. It is the basic resource center for support, materials and technology for all socio-economic development projects. It is the basic model for all eco-system cooperative projects done at the village level. It is a N.E. Thailand agricultural experimentation and adaptation center. Nothing is introduced at the village level before being tested at the farm.

The CCPCG and IDF work together in an integrated way to establish new communities of "being transformed" people in N. E. Thai society, and to help them grow in a new relationship with God, man and nature, as well as to develop a dynamic new lifestyle as the result of a value system change in response to God's Grace.

Core Principles

In order to understand the process of Integrated Holistic Development as it exists for the CCPCG and IDF, it is important to know the basic principles which permeate all areas of the process. There are 7 basic principles which lie at the heart of our ministry.

1. Authority.

Thomas J. Peters and Robert H.

Waterman, Jr. in their important book on management, *In Search of Excellence*, have quoted Thomas Watson, Jr. (President of IBM) concerning the importance of beliefs or values in the success of any organization. He writes:

".....I firmly believe that any organization in order to survive and achieve success must have a sound set of beliefs on which it premises all its policies and actions. Next I believe that the most important single factor in corporate success is faithful adherence to those beliefs. And, finally, I believe if an organization is to meet the challenge of a changing world, it must be prepared to change everything about itself except those beliefs, as it moves through corporate life."¹⁰

What Mr. Watson has said in the above quote about the management of business organizations applies just as well to the Christian Church.

Central to all of our activities is a firm belief in the authority of the Word of God. Stemming from this is a belief in and commitment to the Grace of God in Jesus Christ, which is the heart of the Gospel. The Gospel of God's Grace with all of its implications is the set of beliefs on which all policies and practices of the CCPCG and IDF are based.

2. Integration.

Every aspect of our ministry is tied together (integrated) by the Grace of God. We manage our organization and our lives by Grace. We plan, implement, evaluate and correct problems, always referring to the principle of the Grace of God in Jesus Christ as our model and guide, and always depending on the "power" of Grace to do the work. Our belief in God's Grace is applied to every area of organizational and personal life. This ties all aspects of our work together. There are no spiritual and secular distinctions to our work as all are tied together by the Grace of God into one ministry of integrated holistic development.

3. Flexibility.

We are concerned to do everything possible to allow the Grace of God in Jesus Christ to be clearly communicated to the N.E. Thai. We are willing to change anything and everything about our organization to clearly communicate the Grace of God which alone can transform man.

4. Contextualization.

Knowing that people can communicate clearly only to the extent that they share a common culture and that effective communication must be receptor oriented because communication is what is "heard", not necessarily what is sent, we have worked from the start of our ministry to enable Christ Jesus and His Gospel of Grace to be born into N.E. Thai culture. The worship and life of the Church (the songs, the language, the ceremonies) as well as the structure and management system and development programs are the result of enabling the Gospel of God's Grace to impregnate and be born in and live out of N.E. Thai culture.

5. Power Encounter.

As the Gospel of Grace is incarnated into both N.E. Thai culture and every area of our holistic ministry it is brought to bear on the local cultural value system in a powerful and effective way. The result is transformation at the level of values and mindsets. The power encounter between the value system of the Gospel and that of the local culture is the critical point in "evangelism/development" at which change occurs within the heart and mind of people. As this change begins (it is a process) conversion starts and continues by the power of God's Grace.

6. Local Church Focus.

The local church is the focus of the holistic development ministry of the CCPCG and the IDF. We feel that the local church as the basic unit of Christian society is the obvious starting point of holistic development. The final goal of such holistic development is that the church becomes the local development organization which itself impacts its own larger community with the transforming power of God's Grace as it is expressed and lived out in holistic terms. The results of a recent study done by Esman and Uphoff (1984) of 150 local development organizations has reinforced the need of establishing intermediate development organizations (such as the CCPCG/IDF) which in turn enable the establishment of local development organizations at the village level (such as the local church).¹¹

7. Process/Broker Approach.

The CCPCG/IDF sees itself in a process/broker relationship with the local church. This approach has been defined in detail by Gow (1979) who from a study of the approaches of 41 development organizations found that those having the greatest success in enabling the poor to help themselves were development organizations which followed a process/broker approach.¹² The "process" part of the approach is seen by us as the "down and in" point of holistic development. This "process" approach starts with the people themselves. It uses a dialogical methodology to involve the poor (the local church in a participatory process of holistic devel-

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opment. The approach is both flexible and adaptable. It is area specific and not broad and expansive. It starts small and sees development as progressing over an evolutionary timeframe. In this approach the poor are both the focus of the development process (from CCPCG/IDF) and the determiners of both the nature and progress of that ongoing process in the local community (from the local church).

The "broker" function of IDF is seen as the "up and out" aspect of its work. The IDF acts as a link from the local development organizations (local churches) to the extra-local settings and resources. It facilitates the accessing of markets, knowledge, supplies, technology and other resources necessary for the local development organization's effective functioning.

Some Conclusions

Given both the concepts and the practice of integrated holistic development which have been briefly outlined in the first part of this paper, what implications does this have for us in Christian development circles? The following are a few of my own brief conclusions which are obviously not ex-

haustive or written in stone.

1. *There is a danger in being coopted by the secular mindset.*

There is a real danger in secular donor organizations setting up the basic principles for development programs which do not coincide to either the tenets of God's Word or the development needs at the grassroots level. The basic question is which takes priority, funding sources or local development programs based on the tenets of God's Word?

There is also a danger of funding sources dictating the standards on which success will be evaluated. The danger of being driven by quantitative economic indicators of success are all too clear for anyone who has worked in development at the grassroots. At the very least it forces development organizations to concentrate exclusively on those poor who can help achieve those quantitative goals. At the most it usurps the Gospel's emphasis on qualitative de-

velopment indicators. What is needed today is the development of indicators which are drawn from the basic principles of the Word of God and can show progress made in the direction of transformation.

2. *There is a need for us to see our role as holistic and not single faceted.*

It is easy and perhaps natural (given the separation of "development" and "evangelism") for Christian aid and development organizations to assume that the Church is spiritually mature and capable of accepting their socio-economic programs without disruption. This assumption, however, is not true in the majority of cases. In the implementation of any socio-economic development program there must be a concurrent emphasis on the spiritual dimension of the process. Values of local church members must be progressively challenged by the transforming power of God's Grace if socio-economic development programs are to effectively enable the Church to "do the Gospel" in its society. It is not enough to add on an evangelist, nor is the problem solved by ceasing to focus development programs on the local church. What is needed is holistic accountability. Accountability for the use of funds for

socio-economic programs is not enough. There needs to be accountability for the spiritual maturity and stability of the Church that is being helped. Christian aid and development agencies need to see that they are as much responsible for evangelism and its effects on the Church as they are for development and its effects on the Church. Only as the dichotomy which separates evangelism and development is dealt with organizationally will this be possible.

3. *There is a need to allow the Grace of God and its implications to permeate our organizations and determine our policies and actions.*

Bishop Lesslie Newbigen once noted that, "It is a sign of our spiritual weakness that we lust for tight organizations where everything is governed by a set of inflexible rules. The multiplication of rules is a sure sign of spiritual decay."

We need to combat the "LAW" oriented organizational mindset with a "GRACE" oriented mindset. As the Grace of God becomes the basis of all of our organizational operations, the results will be two-fold: one, the power of God will infuse our organizations and two, the dichotomy of "spiritual" and "socio-economic" will disappear. In effect, the integration of evangelism and development will occur.

4. *The effectiveness of aid agencies at the grassroots level would be increased if the saw themselves not only as "broker" agencies but also "Process" organizations.*

This would involve a participatory approach to all development projects funded by aid and development agencies. It would be costly both time wise and financially but would reap benefits for all involved, especially the local poor. It, however, would require long term involvement and a detailed understanding of the local development scene.

It would also weld more securely the relationship between evangelism and development. The inherent danger of aid and development agencies too far removed from the grassroots struggle of development is that they can easily become "technically" focused and forget the reality of the spiritual dimension that infuses all effective Christian development programs. If Christian aid and development agencies are involved in the grassroots "process" of development, the need for the inte-

gration of development and evangelism will become clearer to them and the potential for integration closer to achievement.

5. *We need to avoid the search for simplistic answers to development.*

I am convinced that we are easily enamored by the sensationalism of "GLOBAL" thinking and planning. Especially we as Westerners have a tendency to want to generalize answers to problems. It would be magic to be able to develop a global answer to the problem of poverty. In reality, given the cultural diversity alone of the various settings in which we work in of the world, it is totally impossible to do so. What is needed is an "area specific" focus which results in a variety of holistic development programs each aimed at the needs and situations of each different setting and each cultural-ly sensitive to that setting.

I think that we also need to resist the "resource development syndrome" thinking which seeks to simplify and sensationalize in order to stimulate funding. If development programs which relate to real grassroots situations can't stimulate the Christian community at large to contribute to their success then the education of that larger Christian community to a holistic development point of view should be the approach taken, not capitulation to its jaded values.

6. *We need to focus on enabling the local church to do holistic development.*

Too often we as Christian development organizations do development ourselves and don't equip the local church to do the work. Enabling the church to be the resource base for ongoing development in any community will have more far reaching effects than a development organization doing it for them. The best possible initiators of local development programs are local people. The local church is the obvious focus of any "Christian" holistic development work as it is the basic unit of Christian society. When the fact that evangelism and development have the potential of being clearly and effectively integrated at the local church level is added to the argument it becomes especially hard to deny the need to move in this direction.

To enable the ongoing integration of the critical ingredients (evangelism/development) of the Church's mission

at the local church level should be our role as Christian aid agencies, missions and local development organizations, for this is where the transformation of the Church and society begins. As the local church in every culture is enabled and equipped to reach into its own context with the power of God's Grace, evangelism and development will truly merge to bring about the true transformation of society. ■

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