THINGS MISSION AGENCIES SHOULDN'T SAY #6

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No, your mission agency is not unique!
Category: Observations

Mission agencies are all different, they do different things and they work in different places. Naturally enough, in their publicity they will often focus on the things that they specialise and which other agencies, perhaps, don't do. My own agency, Wycliffe, talks a lot about Bible translation, which is their particular focus. It makes perfect sense.

The problem occurs when agencies imply (or even state outright) that they are unique or that they do something that no one else does.

There are a couple of problems with claims of this sort. The first is that they are really difficult to prove or to justify. I've spent a lot of time looking at mission agency publicity over the last few years and I can honestly say that I am not aware of any that are unique. They all overlap with each other in one way or another. After all, they are all involved in Christian mission.

The other problem is that agencies are never the sole actors in their work. Let me give an example. Wycliffe, could plausibly claim to be involved in more Bible translation projects than any other organisation. However, this is only possible because, a) Wycliffe is a large family of different organisations around the world and b) (most importantly) translation is carried out in partnership with churches and other organisations. Wycliffe does not and could not carry out its work without the support and manpower of a myriad of different partners. The same is true for every mission agency under the sun (whether they admit it or not).

Claims to uniqueness ignore the fact that we are interdependent. I think Paul's metaphor of the body is one that can be applied to churches and mission agencies. Yes, the arm can say that it is unique, but that misses the point, without the rest of the body, the arm can't do anything anyway.