ASIAN MISSION CONSULTATION

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Category: Mission

I've just returned home after a 24 hour consultation on Emerging Mission Movements in Asia, which was held at Redcliffe College. I have had very little experience of working in Asia; just a few trips to conferences in Thailand and one short visit to Bangladesh. Given my position as a bit of an outsider to the field, I was asked to give a ten minute summary and feedback session at the end of the consultation. This meant that I had to keep listening and taking notes all of the way through the meetings; which was unusual for me. My normal *modus operandi* in these circumstances is to attend the most interesting looking sessions and then use some of the other parts of the conference for discussions with colleagues who work with other organisations or in other parts of the world.

I don't want to put all of my feedback here, but I thought I'd just give a few bullet points on issues that I picked up on during the 24 hours.

- It was good to meet up with people that I know from other contexts and to chat over meals. It was also good to make a few new contacts with people I didn't know before, but probably should have.
- Asia is big! We were told that 60% of the world's population live there - a figure that I find hard to conceptualise.
- There is also a huge amount of variation in Asia; it is hard to say exactly what Asia is, or what it is like. There is simply too much of it.
- Because of this, there is no one clear mission strategy that is useful for reaching the continent. It was intriguing that the two keynote addresses highlighted very different approaches to engaging with people who are not Christians. One speaker advocated a very dialogical approach, while the other was suggesting a more confrontational, argument based approach. My suspicion is that this was due to the different contexts that they worked in.
- I was given much food for thought by the discussions on missions resources which are present in Asia. There is no shortage of people (the percentage of Christians is low, but the absolute numbers are huge) and finance and other resources are there too.
- That being said, there was a great deal of stress on the need for mutuality in resource sharing. The West is still materially wealthier than much of Asia, so we should be prepared to be generous, but we should also be looking to receive other blessings from Asia.

All in all, it was an interesting and thought provoking day.