MODELS OF PARTNERSHIP

Posted on February 4, 2011 by Eddie

Category: Mission

Recently, I had the embarassing experience of asking someone to prepare a talk for an event which I subsequently had to cancel. Thankfully, the person concerned, Simon Cozens, took it all in good part and even recycled his talk as a blog post. The least I can do, is to point you to Simon's post, which would have made an extremely thought provoking presentation. In his article, Simon takes a hard look at the way that mission agencies are structured and explores whether they set up in such a way that they can truly participate in authentic international partnerships. The article is dense and it is hard to pull out quotes that do it justice, but here is a start:

> *can we really separate who we are from what we do? Can we speak about the need for equal partnership between, say, Western mission agencies and non-Western churches if we are not practicising partnership between Western missionaries and non-Western missionaries? The best way to develop meaningful, sacrificial and servant-hearted cross-cultural relationships outside our mission agencies is to learn how to develop them within our missionÂ agencies.In short, our structures have to model our convictions. What insights we have about the Christian nature of power, about service, about washing the feet of others, about valuing the voices of the weak as well as and instead of the strong cannot merely apply to our mission praxis. As Lundy points out in the quote at the beginning of this article, itâ€™s not just the numbers that matter; itâ€™s about our heart attitudes and mindsets towards a global understanding of mission. If we really have taken these attitudes to heart, they should shape what we do. This is the only way that to witness that we actually believe what weâ€™re saying about partnership - that weâ€™re prepared to let our operation and our structures be changed by the things that we profess to be important. We need, in short, to be smoking what weâ€™re selling. We have to practice these attitudes and principles in the â€œhome officeâ€ before we are credible spreading them as foreignÂ policy.*

Of course, the question that I have to ask myself is how does Wycliffe measure up to the standards that Simon lays out. While we could always do better, I believe that the international Wycliffe family actually comes out quite well when examined against Simon's paper. Our openness to true partnership is reflected in the way that Wycliffe Bible Tanslators International has recently changed its name to The Wycliffe Global Alliance.