GOOD STUFF OTHER PEOPLE HAVE SAID

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Categories: Africa, Bible & Mission, Bible Translation, Computing/Internet, Theology

I could quite get into this "round-up of the week's best posts" thing. It is certainly easier than coming up with something creative myself. Here are a few more blog posts that say things that I wish I had said, but which say them better than I would have done.

To me, Three Cups of Tea is a normal breakfast, but in the US it is a humanitarian movement/charity inspired by a book. However, a number of recent exposes seem to indicate that the whole edifice has been built on a rather dodgy foundation. Mark draws some good lessons about the nature of foreign aid and development work from the situation:

> *Unfortunately Western culture likes things to be simple and straightforward. When people give to charity they like to feel that they have done something significant, so when an organisation promises that your small donation can help to build a school, or give a mosquito net and save a life, this is very attractive. But this simplistic approach to fundraising, awareness raising and volunteer recruitment causes multiple problems:*
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> - *It is demeaning to the people who are being â€œhelpedâ€ . If we really think that things are so bad and the solutions are so simple, then people and their governments must be pretty helpless, or ignorant, or bad, not to do anything. Are we really so superior to these ignorant people that a well-intentioned unskilled worker from the West can go and help these governments to solve their problems?*
> - *It perpetuates bad practice in aid and development. It is easy to build schools, but who will teach in them? Who will train the teachers? What language will the children be taught in? If it is in a minority language, who will develop the curriculum? It is easy to send mosquito nets or t-shirts to Africa, but what about the local traders who will be put out of business when the market is swamped? Where will people buy mosquito nets from in 5 years when you have lost interest and there are no local suppliers any more?*

Onesimus obviously finds it as difficult as I do to come up with good ideas for blog posts because he has posted an essay on salvation by one of his students, a Kenyan woman. It really is very, very good.

> *The most important reminder from my reflection on salvation has been that I am saved for relationship. Every relationship comes with responsibility and this relationship with God is no different. More than anything, it is this understanding that affects what I do and how I choose to live. While it is true that I cannot earn the gift of salvation, it is also true that God cannot work in my life unless I allow him to do so. And understanding that salvation is a relationship means a constant awareness that what I do either draws me closer or farther away from God, and hence calls for vigilance in my walk lest I fall by the wayside. Above all else, it spurs within me the desire to give my very best, my all, to this most important relationship in my life.*

I will be teaching some sessions at Redcliffe College soon. I wonder if some of the students there would like to write a blog post for me?

Unsurprisingly, the prolific Beaker Folk have come up with some good stuff this week. (Where do they find the time?) I very much enjoyed Eileen's debunking of Easter. However, what the Beaker Folk do best are bitter sweet musings with a sting in the tail. Today's Maundy Musings was asimply beautiful reflection on Judas.

> *I wouldn't say he did it for the money. Â Annas and Caiaphas may have thought that was all that mattered to him - but when the deed was done the money didn't matter. Maybe, in the end, Judas didn't matter much either. Just a cog. Without the betrayal the authorities would still have got Jesus another way. The Cross would still have loomed, the nails would still have bitten, the Devil would still have had what he thought was his day - and he would still have woken up a loser on Sunday morning.*

Back to my day job: barely a week goes by without Google telling me that someone somewhere has written an authoritative guide to English Bible translations. These guides always say that there are two types of translation; literal (or word for word) and dynamic (thought for thought). Joel Hofman elegantly points out why this is simply not true and in the process comes out with one of the best pithy blog comments I have ever seen:

> *Bible translation largely exists in its own insular world, cut off from the realm of translation.*

Another commentator adds:

> *The terminology of Bible translation annoys me somewhat, because in the real world of professional translation, these terms donâ€™t exist. Thereâ€™s mainly just good translation and bad, with some genres requiring more lexical rigidity than others. Preserving the word order and other idiosyncrasies of the source language is always inadvisable. Language is a vehicle for conveying thought. When your focus becomes preserving syntax instead of thought, youâ€™ve missed the point.*

Good challenging stuff for we Bible translator types.

The last thing to mention today is a good overview of the current situation in Ivory Coast from the UN.

> *The political crisis which paralyzed CÃ´te dâ€™Ivoire came to an end last week, when incumbent Laurent Gbagbo was captured by Alassane Ouattaraâ€™s forces. While Gbagboâ€™s removal was key to ensuring that CÃ´te dâ€™Ivoire didnâ€™t descend into*

> *full-scale war and effectively ended the crisis of leadership, it does not signify the end of the humanitarian and economic crisis for the country.*

No - the picture at the top does not signify anything (it's one I took in Prague last year and it fills the space nicely).