ISSUES IN MISSION: ECCLESIOLOGY

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Categories: Bible & Mission, Mission

Churches and mission agencies have lost the vision for mission; that is the major theme of Rollin Gram's first post on issues in missions today.

I don't particularly want to disagree with what Grams says, but it does seem to me that he skirts around an issue which is key to his blog post, without ever facing up to it head-on: that is the issue of ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church). I've looked at the issue of the Church in relation to mission on a number of occasions over the years (here and here, being the best examples).

I don't want to repeat stuff that I've already written (so please read my earlier pieces - and the comments on them by others), but I'll make a few brief remarks.

Firstly, I believe passionately that the local Church is God's prime agency for mission to the world. This doesn't mean that there isn't a place for mission agencies, but they should exist to serve the Church, not to do the Church's job for it.

I also believe that too many Churches have effectively sub-contracted mission to the agencies; they send money or people and believe that their job is done.

Not only that, but too many churches have also sub-contracted mission to individuals. Rather than seeking God together about what he would have the church do and then working out how they can support this mission through prayer, by sending people or by giving time or money; churches all too often are passive - waiting for someone to have a call and then looking at whether they should support them or not. Sadly, we seem to have built our theology of Â a "missionary call" on the experience of a few extraordinary individuals such as Hudson-Taylor and CT Studd, rather than on a thoroughgoing understanding of the nature of the Church.

Of course, these situations can only exist because the mission agencies allow them to (or even promote them). I see a big need for a good forum for Churches and agency leaders to reflect together on the nature of the Church and its role in mission. The problem is, when leaders get together, they tend to try and develop a quick fix to a problem, rather than identifying what is really going on (which leads me to the next post in this series).