MISSIONARIES AS LISTENERS?

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Category: Observations

Last night I was speaking at the Wycliffe Live event in Northern Ireland. My theme was the way in which the growth of the Church around the world coupled with a slow decline in the influence of Christianity in the West poses a particular challenge for mission agencies such as Wycliffe. This reminded me of an essay I wrote for my MTh a few years ago which covered this same theme.

> *There are cultural and economic reasons which underlie the Â imbalance in influence between Westerners and their Southern brothers and sisters, but the impact of the Biblical message should challenge these and bring about a situation which is more equitable. If we are to break down these barriers, then first responsibility of the missionary must be to listen to the voice of the local Church. The role of a listener is not one which comes naturally to many missionaries (who are generally selected on their ability to teach and train others rather than on an ability to listen and reflect). But it is only by listening that the missionary can be certain that they are doing something which the host Church considers to be of value. Palmatier gives the example of teams from the US building Church buildings in Mexico which the Mexican Churches did not really want and which they had no ability to maintain in the long term.*

You may find the whole thing interesting. At the very least, it will point you to some stuff you might like to read.