THE CROSS AND MISSION FINANCING

Posted on March 28, 2014 by Eddie

Would reflecting on the Cross change the way we think about some of the problems inherent in funding mission projects?
Category: Observations

At one level, the question of financing world mission seems dead simple. People in the rich world give money and those in the developing world benefit from it. No problem.

If only it were that simple.

I've dipped into this question numerous times over the years, but I recently had an epiphany that helped me rethink some of the issues. Firstly, what are some of the issues that make this question so thorny?

- The first problem is that a continual drip-feed of finance from the rich world can breed an unhealthy dependency, by discouraging local generosity and initiative.
- It can make the recipients feel as if they have nothing to contribute to the work they are doing.
- The other side of the coin is that it can develop an unhealthy sense of power among the donors. It is depressing to see how many Christian fund raising videos and such highlight the way in which Westerners have changed the destiny of a village or people group through their gifts.
- When funds come from outside, they are often used to meet the goals of the donors and agencies, which may or may not line up with the goals of the local community.

I could go on. In an unequal world, problems like these are part and parcel of the world of mission and development; we all struggle with them. That being said, this doesn't obviate the Christian responsibility of rich people to be generous to those who are not so well off.

The only way to work through these issues is through open and honest dialogue. However, my experience has been that these dialogues are often pragmatic - what should we do. Recently, I found myself wondering whether we shouldn't take a step back and begin our dialogue at the Cross; where he who was 'rich beyond all splendour, all for loves sake, became poor'. Would reflection on the cross and the call for all of us to lay down our lives change the way we reflect on these questions?

I'd love to see it happen.