HOW LONG HALT YE BETWEEN TWO OPINIONS?

Posted on May 8, 2014 by Eddie

Being reflective about mission practice can leave you in some uncomfortable places.
Category: Musing On Mission Themes



My mother had a liking for a good biblical turn of phrase and would quote Elijah's words (in the AV) at me whenever I failed to make my mind up about something as important as whether I wanted fish fingers or sausages for tea!

I still find it difficult to decide what I'd like to eat, but I also find myself caught between opinions on issues that are far more complex.

We recently received some brilliant news about the Jesus film in Kouya.

- *As for the Christians, they were very happy. Some non-Christians, in the beginning they came to mock, but as the film progressed, they grew very quiet. When Jesus said, â€˜The first will be last,â€™Â* ***all the mockers shut up.***
- Some said they used to go to church but stopped but that now, they will start going again.
- The morning after the first showing, the team had lots of visits, people wanting the film on CD or their phones.

Read more about the story on the Wycliffe blog.Â

After all these years, it is wonderful to see all that is happening among the Kouya and I'm delighted at the reception of the film.

Meanwhile, here in the UK, I've been working on a paper for a mission think-tank. Here is a short quote:

> *In the film, Jesus is played by a long-haired, light-skinned Englishman, Brian Deacon, who brilliantly portrays the conventional image of Jesus in European art. For the North American or European, this is non-controversial as Deacon represents Jesus as we have come to believe he looks. However in other cultures this can serve to reinforce the colonial stereotype of Christianity as a Western religion. This impression is supported not just by the way that Deacon looks, but also by the way in which he acts; during the Last Supper, Christ is portrayed as passing food to some of his disciples with his left hand; something which simply wouldn't happen in many parts of the world.*

I won't quote more of the paper (not least because I haven't finished it yet), but the main point is that

there are some significant problems involved in tying up the text of Scripture (drawn mainly from the book of Luke) with visuals that reflect a western aesthetic and way of telling stories.

If we are thoughtful about our approach to mission, we will continually run up against conundrums like this. There are problems associated with just about every mission model and resource, but that doesn't mean we should stop and wait for the perfect solution to arrive.

However, I do think that we need to be open and honest about the problems and questionsÂ that we have; this is the only way that we will learn and improve what we are doing. Politicians will vociferously defend their actions to the last, even when it is clear that their policies are leading nowhere. We should not be like that.

I rejoice in the way in which the Jesus film is being received amongst the Kouya, in Madagascar and around the world. But I also hope that with time, someone will produce updated versions of the film which areÂ more suited to international audiences.

In the meantime; I am halt between two opinions!