POSTURE: TAXONOMY OF MISSION 4

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Category: Observations

Is mission a task that we can and must complete, or is it a constant challenge which is renewed in every generation?

Task Orientation

Over the last hundred years or so, there has been a move towards seeing mission as a manageable task, which we have a responsibility to complete. This approach,Â divides the world up into various chunks and identifies whether or not they are reached with the Gospel and then strategises how to the Gospel might extend to the unreached peoples. Various plans for reaching every people group have been drawn up and costed over the years.

Lifestyle Orientation

As opposed to seeing mission as a task which can be completed, the lifestyle orientation sees it as something which is an ongoing need in every part of the world at all times. In this view the idea that a people group are 'reached with the Gospel' is seen as rather irrelevant. Our responsibility is to make disciples, not to 'reach' people. Every new generation needs to be taught how to follow Jesus, so the task is never ending.

Evaluation

There is no secret here, I definitely *don't* fall into the task orientation camp. I am unconvinced both by the biblical and theological underpinnings of the approach and by the managerial and statistical way in which mission is portrayed. That being said, the drive to preach the Gospel in places that it has not reached is a good one and I wouldn't want to dismiss all of the mapping and statistical work that has been done over the years.

I am fully aware that by talking about Task and Lifestyle orientation, I am making something of a value statement. The problem is that I couldn't think of a better way to describe these two positions in a couple of words. For the record, there are many wonderful people who are driven by a task orientation, but for whom mission is very much a lifestyle. If you would like to know more about why I think the way I do, you can find more in my ebook on the Great Commission.