TENNENT ON MISSIO DEI

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Category: Observations

> *The starting point of missions must be theÂ missio dei. Missions must first and foremost be about what God is doing in the world, not what we are doing. Missions must step back from the competitive, pragmatic, market-driven impulses, which tempt us to think about missions in anthropocentric or institutional ways. Instead, missions must be conceptualized within the larger framework of God's redemptive plan, not ancillary actions of the church for self-aggrandizement through institutional expansion, even on a global scale. If we are honest, we must recognize that much of our missionary activity is overly preoccupied with human plans and institutionally driven strategies built largely upon the foundation of the social sciences. While acknowledging the abiding value of the insights of the social sciences, and even insights from the business world, we nevertheless insist that* ***missions cannot be built upon or constructed in this fashion without, in the long run, producing missionary movements that have fundamental design flaws****. The "nuts and bolts" of missions must be theologically driven.*

FromÂ Invitation to World Missions (Invitation to Theological Studies)Â by Timothy Tennent p.487-8 (emphasis mine).Â

I have to say that this resonates with my experience. I have seen missions massive, organisation wide change introduced on the basis of the latest business strategy book without any significant time being given over to biblical or theological reflection on the issues at hand. My perception is that the reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, missionaries are by nature activists and are rarely disposed to invest the time needed for serious reflection on biblical and theological issues. Secondly, and controversially, I am not convinced that missionaries always have the background training needed to equip them to allow them to engage with the issues in a theological fashion.

That being said, I do believe that things are changing for the better. I see a real desire amongst some mission agencies to wrestle with these sorts of issues, though the ability to do so is often lacking.