CATCH 2021

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Some thoughts on the "catch" that mission agencies face in a changing world. Vaguely inspired by Joseph Heller.
Category: Observations

> *There was only one catch and that was Catch-22, which specified that a concern for one's safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions. Orr would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn't, but if he were sane he had to fly them. If he flew them he was crazy and didn't have to; but if he didn't want to he was sane and had to. Yossarian was moved very deeply by the absolute simplicity of this clause of Catch-22 and let out a respectful whistle.*

From Catch 22 by Joseph Heller.

I love the simplicity of this problem. You have to be crazy to fly bombers in a war zone, but if you say you don't want to fly, you are obviously sane and will have to fly. "It's some catch, that catch 22."

I sometimes think that missionary agencies are caught in a similar catch; Catch 2021 (work out the derivation for yourself). In may ways, agencies are at the cutting edge of what God is doing in the church around the world. They see the growth of church in the majority world and the way in which the role of missionaries is changing as a result. They are aware of the problems of dependancy and the complexities of raising funds from the West for use in the developing world. However, they agencies are dependent for their funding and manpower on a church in the West who are less aware of these issues. If they talk about the changing realities, they may well find that this has a negative effect on their fund-raising and recruitment efforts. However, if they don't talk about the real world they live in, donors and recruits will become disillusioned and may well go elsewhere. Catch 2021.

Not all agency leaders and boards think in these terms or are aware of these issues, but they are not going to go away. Things are even more complex when you add in the different theologies of mission which exist in the western world, not to mention in the majority world church.

Over the next few years, I hope to spend a significant amount of my time looking at Catch 2021 in association with Leeds Trinity University. We are still sorting out the paperwork.