THE HOMOGENEOUS UNIT PRINCIPLE

Posted on July 28, 2015 by Eddie

A long quote, leading to this killer sentence! "No missionary methodology can be built without a solid biblical theology of mission as a basis." But yet we keep doing it!
Category: Quotes

Please excuse this long quote, but I think it's rather good and rather important:

> *I agree that the quantitative growth of the church Â is a legitimate concern of missionary work, that the church indeed often hasÂ success in specific social or cultural contexts where people do not have to cross cultural barriers, that God can cause the conversionÂ of entire people groups as the "church growth movement" has emphasised, and that sociological and anthropological categories may beÂ very helpful in formulating strategies of evangelism and missionary outreach. This does not change the fact however that's in regards to the linguistic meaning of the Greek term 'ethnÄ"'Â a collective plural has an all-embracing force and that it is illegitimate to read a contemporary socio-anthropological definition back into the phrase 'panta ta ethnÄ"'. Further it is doubtful on biblical and theological grounds whether the "homogenous units principle" is valid as a guideline forÂ missionary strategy and church growth the following five arguments needs to be considered:*
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> 1. *The early church proclaimed the gospel to all people; Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, rich and poor. There is no evidence for a strategy that took into account social or cultural identities and peculiarities for the"effectiveness" of church-planting efforts.*
> 2. *The removal of barriers that separate people from each other is not simply a result of the gospel, but an essential part of itsÂ nature. Conversion means integration into aÂ community; a new humanity, the people of God whose identity is defined no longer by race, social status or gender butÂ Jesus Christ.*
> 3. *The early Church did not just grow; it grew across cultural barriers: despite difficulties, Jewish Christians and GentileÂ Christians lived together in local congregations.*
> 4. *Each congregation was expected to demonstrate the unity of his members. Unity is not the unity of different congregations but rather the unity of the different believers in the local congregation. Unity of the church is not to be confused with the uniformity of church members, suppressing or eliminating their diversity.*
> 5. *The apostles never attempted to disprove the accusation that believers in Jesus Christ abandon or betray their culture. The apostle Paul especially was concerned that the unity of the church not be compromised a result as a result of social or ethnic reasons.*
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> *RenÃ© PadillaÂ argues that if the conclusions of the "church growth movement" are correct, "it is quite evident that the use of the homogenous unit principle for church growthÂ has no biblical foundation. Its advocates have taken as their starting point aÂ sociological observation and developed a missionary strategy; only then, 'a posteriori', having made attempts to find biblical support. As a result the BibleÂ has not been allowed to speak. ... The analysis above lead usÂ to conclude that the "church growth" emphasis on homogenous unit churches is in fact directly opposed to the apostolic teaching and practice in relation to the expansion of the church.* ***No missionary methodology can be built without a solid biblical***

> ***theology of mission as a basis. What can be expected of a missiology that exhibits dozens of books and dissertations dealing with "Church Growth" approach, but not one major work on the theology of mission?"***

Emphasis mine. This quote fromÂ Early Christian Mission Vol 1: Jesus and the TwelveÂ sums up a recurring concern of mine. By the way, this is a large book and I'm less than half way through the first volume, so expect more quotes in the future.