OLD HABITS DIE HARD

Posted on March 30, 2016 by Eddie

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At home we have a broadband and TV service that gives us the choice of far more TV channels than we are ever likely to watch. Most evenings we sit down at around nine pm and scroll through the channels to see what is being shown.Â As often as not, we'll decide that there isn't anything we particularly want to watch, but that the documentary on atomic physics looks interesting and so we'll give it a go.

What we almost always forget, is that our TV service also provides us with a catch-up facility that allows us to watch just about anything that has been transmitted in the last few weeks. We are not restricted by what is being broadcast at the time we want to watch, but old habits die hard.

The same is true of world Christianity. The church has changed beyond all recognition in my lifetime, but we still talk as though the Western world were the centre of world Christianity. Old habits die hard.

It is understandable, when people who have not travelled a great deal haven't grasped the enormity of the change in the church. However, it is surprising (and just a little worrying) when people who write and think about world mission do not recognise the shift that we have lived through.

Jehu Hanciles says the following:

> *â€œThe main problem is that Western missiologists are stuck with definitions, models, and instruments of measurement associated with Western operations and ill-suited for evaluation of new non-Western initiatives. For starters, the term â€œmissionaryâ€ is generally linked with â€œcommand and go structuresâ€ and is typically applied to individuals â€œsentâ€ by an organisation to a foreign country (usually outside the West). The initiatives, movements, and sheer numbers involved in the non-Western missionary movement are of a scale and magnitude that defy statistical analysis; nor are they driven by the results-orientated calculations with which the American missionary movement is notoriously obsessed. The reasons are not hard to find: Non-Western initiatives are disconnected from structures of domination and control, freed from the bane of triumphalism (and the militant aggression associated with it), less resource-dependent/-oriented, and bereft of territorial understanding of mission. But these developments hint at something far more significant. The new â€œcentreâ€ is radically different and failure to appreciate this fact impoverishes our understanding of its profound historical implications.â€*

From:Â Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration and the Transformation of the West

In other words, Western students of mission are watching analogue TV in a digital age and because of this we are in danger of not grasping the profundity of the changes that we are living through.

Yup, that seems about right.