WHAT COULD WORLD MISSION LOOK LIKE?

Posted on May 16, 2008 by Eddie

Category: Mission

In a comment on an earlier post, Chris wrote:

> *What world mission would look like if it wasnâ€™t funded (and run?) by the west.*

and Peter replied...

> *Dare I suggest, a lot healthier? At least if â€œrunâ€ is the main point of change. ... The churches in Ethiopia and China grew far faster when cut off from the west than the churches in countries swarming with missionaries.*
>
> *Meanwhile western churches should be spending their spare money mainly on putting their own house in order - or else on giving without strings.*

This risks turning into another series, but at this point I'll try just to give a few brief thoughts.

- Increasingly, world mission is being run from the South and East. In my own organisation the majority of the International board and the International leadership team are non-Westerners. This is a relatively new situation and it will take a while for us to see exactly how that works out. It is good to see that the people involved in training new missionaries in the UK are increasingly drawn from outside of the Western world too.
- I suspect a non-Western mission would be much more holistic in world view. The strong divide between sacred and secular that we have in the West is not a universal and is certainly not Biblical. Jesus call to announce the kingdom of God involves far more than a challenge to *get people saved.* A non-Western led mission would be much more involved in combating injustice, bringing peace and caring for the environment than has been the case for post-enlightenment Western missions.
- Non-Western mission is likely to be less target driven than Western missions have been. The last half-century has seen an explosion in detailed plans for reaching the whole world and strict targets and explanations of how to do it. There is a need to plan and to use resources wisely, but you can go over the top with it.
- Non-Western missions are likely to have a far higher acceptance of the supernatural. Western missionaries in Africa have actually been a secularizing force. By saying that there is no such thing as bush spirits or witchcraft, missionaries have effectively turned a lot of people away from any contemplation of the non-material world at all.
- Non-western led missions will still include a lot of Westerners. There is a place for Western missionaries all over the world - as there is a place for African and Asian missionaries to come and work with Western churches. The riches of the Christian faith lie in it's diversity and we need mission from everywhere to everywhere if we are to experience the fullness of what God has created in his Church.

- Money! I hear what Peter is saying and I also agree that Western money needs to be given with far fewer strings. (Some strings are probably inevitable, but these need to be talked through and worked out between all the parties, not just imposed from the rich countries.) I disagree with Peter though that Western Christians should be spending their spare money on putting their own house in order. Actually, they should be giving far more away both to extend the Kingdom at home and overseas.

A lot more could be said, but this will do for a start.