

Integral Mission Forum
Global Change: Exploring Current Trends in Mission
Tuesday 14th October 2014

Salesman or Servant? Underlying trends, fundamental questions

1. Setting the scene 'Licensed commentator'

Historical development, the protestant church until early 20th century, tended to keep social action integrated with evangelistic outreach. Social action seen as natural overflow of gospel outreach. (Wesleys, Whitfield, Carey, Wilberforce, Fry, Shaftesbury etc) 'The great reversal' 1900-1930. Growth of CNGOs. Lausanne 1974.

Integral mission = Holistic mission? Legacy of Greek dualism in West, not in 'South'.

Variety of mission models for variety of objectives, examples from Tearfund, OCMS, my church. 'Horses for courses, or courses for horses?'

2. Current Trends

A. Aims and objectives

What type of mission? Evangelism/Church planting? Social action/Advocacy? Holistic?

B. Overall context

Secular West, Religious South. Godless West, Christian South. Spiritual awakenings. Role of Western missionary societies. Partnership? Initiators? Ownership? Still imperialistic? Accountability?
Wars and rumours of wars? 'Islamisation'. Ebola.

C. The role of the Church

In South: Growth of involvement with social action, *and* Growth in prosperity gospel. Fast growth, lack of trained leaders.

In West: Growth in social concern and community action locally. Mission minded churches support missionaries personally, problem for mission societies. Individualism, 'do-it-yourself' mission. Theological liberalisation, lack of evangelistic zeal. Lack of understanding of mission and holistic mission. 'When helping hurts'.

D. Secular/Christian relationship

Relationship between local church and mission.
Difference between Christian NGO and secular NGO
Relationship between CNGO and secular NGO on field.
Increasingly good relationship between CNGO and secular funders, DFID, UNAID etc.

E. New initiatives

Social Entrepreneurship. Christian Social Entrepreneurship? CSLewis' 'clever devils'
Work among Children, and Students.
Short term opportunities.
Specific invitations for short term training.

3. Metaphors for Christian living and Mission, implication for training

Physicist, Engineer, or Football Supporter?!

Models of training: theory>practice or internship (integration and partnership)?

4. God's view of mission: Misseo Dei. The way forward.

' . . . participation in God's mission to his multicultural world.' All Nations mission statement.

God looks on the heart. God works through our mistakes! God asks for obedience, not success.

If we want to prosper holistic mission, to transform communities, we must work through the local church.'

References

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Outstanding questions, from current trends:

- A.** How far, in practice, can we make our mission holistic (or integral) or will it inevitably be either focussed on evangelism or on social action?

If we are involved with 'church planting' how can we ensure that we are developing a culturally appropriate model?

If we are providing material aid how can we ensure that our 'helping does not hurt' and causes dependency?

Is it realistic to have a partnership with the South where we genuinely are their servant, where they set the agenda, and we are accountable to them?

In applying accountability how can we ensure that we assess what is important and not just what is measurable? Who are we accountable to? Does 'he who pays the piper *have* to call the tune'?

Do the trite metaphors Salesmen and Servants 'ring any bells'?

Should 'wars and rumours of war' influence our choice of destination? How do we prioritise? Should we? How do we find God's will when there are so many places needing God's gospel and love.

- B.** How far is it desirable/possible to work with, within, the local church in the South?

How can we mitigate the dangers of the 'prosperity gospel'?

How can our local, home churches be 'educated' in appropriate mission methods?

How can a well-meaning, committed, rich Western Christian best help those living in poverty?

- C.** What are the significant differences between a Christian NGO and a secular NGO?

Are there situations when a Christian NGO can not work with a secular NGO?

- D.** Can a Christian Entrepreneurship be promoted which is more than just 'good business', and one which genuinely promotes Christian values and benefits the whole community?

- E.** It has been said that 'much of our Western missionary movement appears to have had an excessively cerebral understanding of faith'. Would you agree?

Would our mission work be more effective if we promoted more of an engineering (problem solving) model of Christianity rather than that of a physicist (seeking to understand the ways of God) – or would we be better applying a 'football supporter' model?

What would be the practical implications of the different metaphors for our mission methods?

NB. The terms the 'West' and the 'South' are used as a shorthand, as in common Christian usage, and are not meant to be taken in the geographical sense!