

1. Introduction

If you skip this introduction, you will risk misunderstandings!

I am not sure who will end up reading these papers, so I had better introduce myself. I am a missionary from the UK to Kenya, now in my 5th year here (after 3 years being mentored in a church-planting situation in the UK). Possibly you, the reader, are somewhat familiar with me and/or the circles I work in, or perhaps just with missionary work in general. If you have no interest in either me, Kenya or missionary practice in general, you might find these papers uninteresting!

This collection has been prompted by the situations and churches which I personally know, and the many conversations I've had in different settings whilst in Kenya. I have chosen to speak particularly to the situation of the group of churches I am especially involved in Kenya. (These are some of the “Reformed Baptist” churches, whose understanding of the Bible is generally summarised in the 1689 Second London Baptist Confession of faith, which you can find on the internet if you are unfamiliar with it.)

This decision might seem to limit these papers' usefulness. I hope that the truth will be the opposite. I hope that, by my example of trying to apply God's truth and wisdom to my own situation, I will stimulate others to do the same in theirs. We all need to think through the Bible and a local situation, and work out how to move forward to bring the two together. I love the churches and people in my group. I want to see the work, right here on the ground where I am, go forward. Particular, targeted suggestions are what we need – otherwise I would have only done half my job.

Now for some short “disclaimers”:

- This is a personal contribution. It is the result of my thinking, and gives my own suggestions and conclusions. It is a set of proposals which come from some serious Bible-reading and heart-searching and which I believe deserve weighing up seriously.
- By its nature, some papers are controversial because they suggest changes, sometimes changes to long-established habits. However, there are no proposals of change for its own or my own sake, but for the gospel's. Having said that, I know some acquaintances think a lot of the ideas in these papers are old hat or obvious. If they just make you grateful you have avoided certain mistakes and encourage you to continue, I will be pleased!
- These papers are not about specific individuals or situations. That is, there are no suggestions like “That church is a real mess” or “Mr. X, frankly, should go home”. Of course, every trend is built up from individual people and situations. But there are no cryptic references to particular events or digs at particular people, nor hasty generalisations etc.
- When I have critiqued existing problems – and that can be painful to read – I have also tried to propose positive and practical solutions. These papers are about the way *forwards*.
- I am particularly thinking about attempts to plant town churches. My experience is mainly in those churches, and I have tried to think through how we can have a viable movement that plants in the towns – with the aim that the gospel will then spread out from them. In rural situations there will be a different range of problems and suitable solutions. They will need further analysis.
- Additionally, in particular I am focussing on the majority population, the poor. This is a different world from the enclaves of wealthy people that are growing in the major towns and have their own sub-cultures.
- My suggestions set out ideals. In this life, we cannot finally achieve ideals in the church. We are fallen and have a powerful and cunning enemy. But ideals give us something to aim for; something to be both humbled and inspired by.

Some readers might know nothing about Kenya, but only other places. I think enough of what I write is general enough to be helpful in many missionary situations, and for those “back home”. Too often (I

include myself in this), those “at home” have a view of mission that is part romantic (from hero-worshipping biographies), and part simply delusional (also informed by selective missionary newsletters – perhaps to keep up the good publicity for the work, to encourage incoming funds, to ward off personal feelings of discouragement, and the like). A more realistic view of the hard challenges that are there would be great. In today’s “small world”, some challenges come to those at “home”. Real problems come from avoiding those challenges. One paper is particularly written to the “home churches”.

I hope would-be missionaries especially to poorer countries will find these papers helpful. No doubt learning “the hard way” has unique advantages. But some preparation is always helpful. I think such folk will find here many real issues to wrestle with that are not often dealt with in academic training.

I hope nobody will take the ideas in these papers and make them the new inflexible and pride-inducing orthodoxy. The Christian faith has some demands which must never change. There is the truth revealed in the Bible, the way of salvation in Christ, the priority of holiness, the task of evangelism to the ends of the earth and so on. In these papers I have given some interpretations of Biblical teachings which I think apply everywhere; but in other places I have suggested how to respond to a number of issues where Christianity meets with culture in Kenya. Culture is also moving and changing, and we must always be looking afresh at our challenges and responses.

I do not say that these papers are definitive or comprehensive. They attempt to apply the Bible to a complex cultural situation, and point a way forward. They papers do not all need to be read in the order presented, but some will make more sense that way – for example, where one paper tries to analyse problems in a particular area, and the next one proposes solutions. We start with the glory of Christ and the reformation of worship, and that is where all true reform must begin.

There are many people whose ideas and conversations have helped me in developing the ideas in these papers. Under God I owe an especial debt of thanks to Dr. Gareth Crossley for my time working under him. I am also very grateful to God for David Cooke, my time under his pastoral care and his help in proof-reading these and other writings.

David Anderson, Eldoret, January 2012