Nurturing Partnerships in Missions

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Introduction

The Apostle Paul thanked God every time he remembered the church at Philippi and always prayed with joy because of the partnership of the church in the gospel.[1] The partnership in the gospel that Paul was thankful for and rejoicing over in the 1st century needs to be rediscovered by today's church.[2] In recent years, it has become 'fashionable' to speak of relationships between/among different groups of Christians in terms of partnerships.[3] This is true for the relationships between churches and movements in the Two Thirds World (TTW) and the West, and also between churches and mission agencies within the TTW as well as within the West. The basic characteristic of the partnership is that the groups share a commitment to act cooperatively with common vision and values to fulfill a common goal.[4] Mission partnerships usually have formal mission agreements that describe what each partner will do to help accomplish the stated mission purpose for a specific mission field in a specific period of time.[5] How might we further understand partnerships in missions? More importantly, as Christians, how might we nurture partnerships in missions?

Before we attempt to respond to the latter question above, we would look back at some historical and biblical aspects with regards to partner-

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[1]Philippians 1:3-5.

[2]Internet file on GCOWE95 Task Force: Partnership Development.

[3]J. A. Kirk, *What is Mission?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000) 184.

[4]GCOWE95... A partnership should be distinguished from a "network". The basic characteristic of a network is the sharing of information of common interest to the individuals/groups.

[5]Internet file from LCMS World Mission, *Partnership,* 1.

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ships. This is essential to help us to be clear in our understanding of God's intention for partnerships in missions. Having considered those aspects we would attempt to crystallize the reasons/needs for partnerships. Only then would we be in a proper stage to deliberate the ways that should be employed in the nurturing of partnerships in missions. We would also consider the hindrances and hazards that might arise in mission partnerships.

Historical Background to Mission Partnerships

The idea of "Partnership in Obedience" was proposed in the International Missionary Council at Whitby, Canada back in 1947. Although not so much is remembered about the conference, Bishop Stephen Neill said that it was much more important than is recognized with regards to mission partnerships.[6] According to Neill, Whitby "acknowledged the 'younger' Churches 'as the primary factor and the principal agent in the evangelization of the world.'" It was a partnership idea that recognizes the equal standing of the newer churches in the TTW with their "parent" churches in the West. This was also the start of the period of decolonization, e.g. the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947. Increasingly, it became common to talk also of "independent" and "autonomous" churches.[7] These were in reference to those, which had been formerly established by the churches and mission agencies of the West. However, the proposed concept of partnership did not really work out well in practice over the next few decades. In the late 60's and early 70's there was a debate on or call for a moratorium of Western missionaries. Instead of a maturing partnership that enhances world evangelization, "too often the missions became entangled in the internal affairs of the Churches with frustrations on both sides."[8] A Philippine Christian, Emerito P. Nacpil, wrote in the *International Review of Mission* that the " most missionary service a missionary under the present system can do today in Asia is to go home!"[9] This resonated with the strong sentiment among many Christians in the TTW that missionaries from the West had stifled and inhibited the growth of a truly indigenous faith. It was timely then that

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[6] R. E. Hedlund, "A New Partnership for Mission", *Readings in the Third World Missions* (ed M. L. Nelson; Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1976), 227.

[7] Kirk, *What is Mission?*, 185.

[8] Hedlund, "New Partnership", 228.

[9] Kirk, *What is Mission?*, 186

Hedlund urged for a re-direction of the missionary partnership but not an end to it, in his article "A New Partnership in Mission". [10] He pleaded to the "Western mission structures, why go your own way? Why go away? ...Restructure if necessary, join hands and hearts with your brothers in the East..."[11]

Another vital area of mission partnerships concerns the relationship between the modality (i.e. the church) and the sodality (i.e. the mission agency). Ralph Winter has argued that these two "redemptive structures" have been crucial to the Christian missions throughout the history of the church since the New Testament times.[12] There were the NT church (the modality in NT), "a structured fellowship in which there is no distinction of sex or age" and there was Paul's missionary band (the sodality in NT), "a structured fellowship in which membership involves an adult second decision beyond modality membership and is limited by either age or sex or marital status"[13] This phenomenon with the *functions* of modality and the sodality continued on through the Roman Empire, the Medieval Period, after the Reformation and till today ... though not with the exact *forms*. With the Reformation, the Protestants attempted to do without any sodality structure. Johnstone wrote "The Reformation led to a healthy reformation of theology but an unwitting, tragic deformation of structure in the biblical model of the Church."[14] By their dismantling the monastic structure (i.e. the sodality structure of the Roman and Medieval eras), the Protestants lost much in terms of missions. Fortunately, they recovered the crucial contribution of the sodality structure in the late 18th century with William Carey's proposition of "the use of *means* for the conversion of the heathen."[15] In spite of this 'recovery', there continues a deep con-

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[10] Hedlund, "New Partnership", 230.

[11] Hedlund, "New Partnership", 233.

[12] R. D. Winter, "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission", *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (eds Winter & Hawthorne; Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999), 220-230.

[13] Winter, "The Two Structures", 224.

[14] P. Johnstone, *The Church is Bigger than You Think* (Manila: OMF Literature Inc., 1998), 154. In the next 2 chapters of the book 155-183, Johnstone argues cogently from scriptures and history that there was and there needs be a partnership of the tripartite structure for mission, i.e. the ecclesial or gathering structure, the sending or apostolic structure and the discipling or training structure.

[15] Winter, "The Two Structures", 227.

fusion about the legitimacy and proper relationship of these two struc-
tures among the Protestants for the fulfillment of the Great Commis-
sion.[16]

However, with the dramatic growth of missionary societies/agencies,
the missionary nature of the church both at home and on the field has
unfortunately diminished in the in the later part of the 19th and the early
part of the 20th centuries. "Today the vast majority of missionaries being
sent out, are being sent by interdenominational missions."[17] Following
the 2nd World War, the technological advances have opened up the
worldwide door of the local church as never before. Prior to the 2nd WW,
there was the widespread tendency within evangelicals to view the local
church as merely a medium for world missions. They are now freed from
the 'utter dependence' upon the sodality structure in their engagement in
global missions. The local church may now be the *message* of God's
mission, as well as the *medium* for evangelism to reach the lost world.
Engel & Dyrness contend that the church "is far more than an institu-
tional source from which funds and missionaries are sent or agency-
developed programs carried out. Indeed it is both the message and the
medium expressing the fullness of the reign of Christ."[18] There is, there-
fore, a need for the rediscovery of the responsible partnership in which
the mission agencies (compare to the arms) would serve the churches
(compare to the body) in constructive ways.

Biblical Perspectives on Mission Partnerships

Neill had said, "Partnership starts with the recognition that the
source of fellowship is in common obedience to the living Word of
God..."[19] Indeed, the motivation and the means for partnerships in mis-
sions must find their source from the Bible. It is probably true to say that
the many parachurch agencies and missions that have arisen have organ-
ized themselves around the Great Commandment and the Great Commis-

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[16]Winter, "The Two Structures", 228-229.

[17]J. F. Engel & W. A. Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions*
(Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 75.

[18]Engel & Dyrness, *Changing the Mind*, 74.

[19]K. Rajendran, *Which Way Forward Indian Missions?* (Bangalore:
SAIACS Press, 1998), 176.

sion passages in the Bible.[20] Likewise, the church has no rationale for meaningful existence apart from its calling to be part of the *Missio Dei*. This is the essence of the church. However, Kirk argues that "partnership in mission also belongs to the essence of the Church: partnership is not so much what the Church *does* as what it *is*."[21] God has called believers "into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord"[22] In the letter to the Ephesian believers, Paul exhorted them to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope...one Lord, one faith...one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."[23] Kirk feels that the nearest word to partnership in the New Testament may be *koinonia.* "Its most basic meaning is 'partaking together in' a group which has a common identity, goals and responsibility."[24]

As the church in the New Testament grew and expanded across cultural, racial and linguistic boundaries, both Paul and James were confronted with Christians of diverse backgrounds with the potential for disunity within the body of Christ.[25] There were the fast-growing Gentile believers tending to marginalize the Jewish Christian minority in Jerusalem and elsewhere in the Roman Empire. But Paul was also conscious of the minority Jewish Christians attempting to assert their superior heritage. James was there at the Jerusalem Council, the first church council. Based on scriptures and the experiences of the apostles as Peter, Paul and Barnabas, James summed up the importance of partnership of the Jewish and Gentile believers in the faith and in missions. James in his letter also admonished the rich in the church not to dominate or marginalize the poor. Later on Paul called for a wide-scale Christian collaboration among believers in Asia Minor and Greece to help the material needs of the Jerusalem church.[26] The above are some examples from ministries of Paul

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[20]J. W. Nyquist, "Parachurch Agencies and Mission", *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (ed Moreau; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 723

[21]Kirk, *What is Mission?,* 187.

[22]1 Cor 1:9.

[23]Ephs 4: 3-6.

[24]Kirk, *What is Mission?,* 188.

[25]V. Samuel & C. Sugden, *Partnership for Mission – A View from the Two Thirds World* (Bangalore: Naveen Mudran Pvt. Ltd., 1983), 31-32.

[26]Engel & Dyrness, *Changing the Mind,* 96.

and James who saw the necessity of true partnership in the diverse body of Christ.

In his prayer before his arrest and crucifixion, Jesus prayed at least four times that ultimately God would enable all believers to demonstrate a marvelous unity so that the world may believe that God indeed has sent Jesus (John 17: 11, 21-23). Taylor writes, "surely there is some relationship between partnership in mission and the prayer of our Lord..."[27] Therefore, partnership in missions is not only in obedience to the Word of God, but will bring much delight to the heart of God.

The Reasons for Mission Partnerships

Do we need this section? Have we not already discussed the historical and the Biblical bases for partnership in missions? It is upon the Biblical and historical bases that we are really staged to attempt to crystallize the reasons/needs of mission partnerships, and later on too, the ways of nurturing such partnerships. We shall try not to overlap and reiterate those historical and biblical considerations in this section. By now we should already have a clearer understanding and conviction about God's intention for partnerships in mission.

First, let us consider the negative consequences for the global church if we neglect to develop mutual and responsible partnerships in this 21st century. It is stated in the Lausanne Covenant of 1974 that our *testimony* would continue to be "marred by sinful individualism and needless duplication" if we fail to be closely united in fellowship, work and witness.[28] Indeed, Christians and unbelievers have observed the ministries of churches and mission agencies, and remarked that they are like "a team of horses pulling in different directions."[29] The separatism between the modality and the sodality may be due to financial or theological considerations. The former consideration is quite obvious; the latter consideration could be due to the mis-conception of the churches that they are "the

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[27]B. Taylor, "Lessons of Partnership", *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (eds Winter & Hawthorne; Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999), 752.

[28]R. Winter & S. Hawthorne (eds), *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999), 759.

[29]S. Guthrie, "New Paradigms for Churches and Mission Agencies", *Mission Frontiers 24:1* (Jan-Feb 2002), 7.

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only legitimate sender of missionaries. Independent boards are seen as, at best, necessary evils, because the church hasn't gotten its mission act together."[30] These sort of non-cooperation causes a credibility gap between reality and the gospel message. A continued Western paternalistic relationship with the TTW churches would *inhibit the development of indigenous resources*, both people and funding.[31] Without genuine partnerships, there is a tendency for foreign mission agencies to launch programs and initiatives that are conceived in the West but not critically contextualized for application in the TTW. "Not surprisingly, such efforts more often than not prove to be inappropriate and even harmful in other contexts."[32] Again, it would only curb the development of the indigenous churches.

Secondly, let us consider the positive consequences, when we have developed responsible and mutual partnerships between Western and TTW churches and mission agencies. Instead of duplication and waste of time, money and human resources, there will be a tremendous *synergy*. Working closely together in mature partnerships would enable the production of creative ways in missions. Challenging past stereotypes and correcting past mistakes could also be facilitated where necessary.

With the reality of globalization with its complexity today and the also the existence of the global church and mission, Engel & Dyrness expressed the need for a truly global conversation and collaboration to achieve a synergistic impact for missions.[33] This happens only when mission alliances, made up of agencies and churches, both indigenous and expatriate, move in obedient partnerships for the mission of God. When the churches are willing to partner constructively with the mission agencies, there are significant *benefits for the churches*. They will be exposed to a better understanding of the global mission challenges and opportunities. It will result in better focus in the mission education of the church, and may help to bring new ideas for urban evangelism and social ministries to the neighborhood communities.[34] Butler, the President of Interdev, has two helpful insights as to the positive consequences of mission

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[30]Guthrie, "New Paradigms", 7.

[31]Engel & Dyrness, *Changing the Mind,* 20.

[32]Engel & Dyrness, *Changing the Mind,* 20-21

[33]Engel & Dyrness, *Changing the Mind* 96,

[34]Internet file from LCMS World Mission, *Partnership,* 1-2.

partnerships. *Partnerships model the power of community witness*[35]. People from 'traditional societies' normally live their lives as an integral part of the extended family or even the whole village. Missionaries should be able to offer a Christian community at least as strong and relational as the one from which the converts have come. Another insight is that *partnerships are the most effective way to develop a church*[36]. Missionaries may plant churches but the ultimate goal is always that they become a functioning local body of Christ. Mission partnerships provide the variety of contacts and giftings, necessary for the congregation to be wholesomely integrated and viable for the Kingdom of God.

Undeniably, the reasons for partnerships in mission vary considerably, and much more than has been discussed above or can be discussed in this paper. Among the other reasons are *fear and joy!* The declining missionary population from the West in contrast to those in the TTW has raised the issues of control, with the motivation of fear as the basis for cooperation of the traditional mission agencies in particular.[37] However, we would end this section with a truly positive reason, i.e. great joy. Jesus said of the harvest of souls, "'One sows and another reaps' is true...so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together." [38] "There is a profound joy that we can experience only when we enter the labor of others as true partners."[39] Co-laboring in true mutual partnership will be our supreme joy and will also give God the greatest glory.

Nurturing Mission Partnerships

As Christians in TTW, how could we nurture partnerships for missions? What are some important factors to look for in enhancing the development of genuine and viable partnerships? While considering these,

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[35]P. Butler, "The Power of Partnership", *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (eds Winter & Hawthorne; Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999), 755.

[36]Butler, "The Power of Partnership", 755.

[37]T. A. Steffen, "Partnership", *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (eds Winter & Hawthorne; Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999), 727.

[38]Jn 4:36-37.

[39]L. Keyes, "A Global Harvest Force", *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (eds Winter & Hawthorne; Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999), 747.

we would also reflect upon several important issues that could pose as hindrances to the nurturing of mission partnerships, e.g. accountability, paternalistic partnerships and the lack of ongoing evaluation. It behooves upon us to be alert to these, and to minimize or to avoid altogether their detrimental effects to partnership in missions.

Communication

"Fundamental to the success of any strategic partnership is trust."[40] Trust is built upon open and sincere communication among the partners. Frequent communication should be started even in the stage of "exploration", and continued on in the formation and operational phases of the mission partnership. Meaningful communication requires attentive listening with regards to the various needs, giftings and circumstances of the potential partners. From his experiences, Bill Taylor shared, "Listen before entering a partnership, and be willing to learn from mistakes and try again."[41] We could reduce and minimize mistakes in mission partnerships when we are willing to listen and not to "unilaterally" moved ahead of our partners. Often in the enthusiasm of the "richer" partner, financial and human resources are spent in the wrong projects. It is crucial to take the time to listen and truly communicate in partnerships. It is through an open and continued communication that the terms of partnership could be worked out and clearly understood and adjusted by the partners over the whole duration of the cooperation.

Common Objectives and the Choice of Partners

As indicated above, most agencies and churches involved in missions would subscribe to the overarching goals as stated in the Great Commandment of love and in the Great Commission. Notwithstanding, there could be such diverse objectives and varying strategies that must need to be considered before we decide on the choice and alliance of partners. An example from Kirk is:

> Thus, for example, it would be difficult to cooperate in evangelism if some people held that it was inappropriate to share the message with people of (some) other religious traditions, or if some believed that

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[40]Steffen, "Partnership", 727.
[41]B. Taylor, "Lessons of Partnership", 749.

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salvation depended on joining a particular church, or if some were convinced that salvation was possible outside Jesus Christ.[42]

We have seen how partnerships can offer tremendous synergy and joy. But they must be entered with wisdom, humility and a teachable spirit.[43] Taylor would counsel potential churches to consider the motives, expectations and the short and long range objectives of their potential partners. Wise churches will also recognize what they can and cannot do and will seek to partner with those who could assist them in their mission objectives. Areas that churches might be assisted in include missionary training, field-based member care and on-going hands-on training.[44] According to Taylor's evaluation, mission partnerships tend to work well when "there is a commitment to a common objective, and the recognition that the partners truly need each other."[45] Therefore it is vital that the choice of partners must be carried out with due consideration of one another's common objectives. But let us also be mindful of the principle, "Unity in essentials and Freedom in nonessentials."[46]

Relationship

The relationship, that has been established through open and honest communication and a commitment to the common objectives for the mission task, needs to be nurtured and sustained. It must not be taken for granted. If the mutual trust is replaced by suspicions of one another's motives, or if personal conflicts and ego are allowed to fester unrecognized, the partnership would soon become ineffective and possibly breakdown. Sometimes the "pragmatic, let's get-it-done, we've got-the-funds and-the-technology people, like the Americans",[47] with their great programs and managerial skills can become problematic to the nurturing of relationships among other partners. Potential strengths can become weaknesses in cross-cultural mission partnerships, if we are not sensitive to personal relationships! Partners need to develop a *real concern* for one another.[48] Relationship is much stronger when there is a commitment not

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[42]Kirk, *What is Mission?*, 202..
[43]B. Taylor, "Lessons of Partnership", 750.
[44]B. Taylor, "Lessons of Partnership", 751.
[45]B. Taylor, "Lessons of Partnership", 751-752.
[46]Rajendran, *Which Way Forward Indian Missions?*, 176.
[47]B. Taylor, "Lessons of Partnership", 751.
[48]Kirk, *What is Mission?*, 202.

just to a particular mission task, but to a deepening sense of responsibility and care for each other. There should be a growth in Christian love and fellowship among the partners. Unity in relationships would enhance the shared ownership of the mission project. *Committed, skilled servant-leaders* would certainly need to be mindful of the significance of relationships among the mission partners as well as between the missionaries and the local populace.

Cross-cultural Understanding

Every culture has features that are good, neutral and bad. The good aspects might have been derived from divine revelation and should be affirmed; the neutral features might be of human origin and could be accepted or tolerated; the bad aspects might well be of demonic origin and should be rejected. All cross-cultural missions/missionaries need to be mindful of not just the culture of the recipients of the gospel, but also the missionaries' own culture, and the culture of the Bible. Additional wisdom is obviously needed with an international partnership in missions. The aim of missions is to plant or to transplant the *seed* (the gospel or the Word of God) onto 'foreign soil', but not to do so with a *potted plant* (the gospel with the cultural context of the missionary or even that of the Biblical world). "Unfortunately, some church and mission leaders still operate from their monocultural framework of values and behavior."[49] It is not only the Westerners who have the monopoly on this sort of harmful attitude. We, from the TTW, are equally vulnerable to have this lack of cross-cultural understanding. On the other hand, mission agencies and partnerships that are truly internationalized would often prove to be a better model in partnerships.[50] The principle of unity in diversity is being worked out through these internationalized cooperations. There is also a better chance that resources would be the better and more wisely distributed by them.

Accountability

The strengths of mission agencies have tended to lie with their entrepreneurial leadership. Historically and biblically they have the tradition of being quite autonomous, even though they receive their financial

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[49]B. Taylor, "Lessons of Partnership", 751.
[50]Kirk, *What is Mission?*, 203.

and human resources from the ecclesial structure. A board or a council of individual people who do not necessarily act as the churches' representatives often governs them. Therefore there is often a lack of accountability outside the parachurch organization itself, and particularly to the local churches.[51] "As long as they can persuade the general Christian public to support their venture financially, they can continue without having to answer for their decisions...Again there are exceptions"[52] It behooves upon the churches who have mission partnerships with these parachurch organizations to conduct responsible reviews of the partnering agencies. In reviewing them, the churches should "go far beyond the 'bigness is a sign of greatness' mentality so prevalent today."[53] The evaluation of the agencies should go beyond a description of numerical data; it should consider the documentation of "sustained outcomes over time in the lives of individuals, a community and a whole nation."[54] Partnerships tend to be viable and effective when what have been agreed upon are maintained, and when a partner would not change responsibilities mid-stream without communication with and consent from the other partner(s). The understanding of the concept of accountability is critical.[55] Accountability is not quite tantamount to control. The following are the words of a Missions Pastor in his exhortation to mission agencies, to help elucidate what might be expected of in accountability by the mission agencies:

> On behalf of churches that want more involvement than sending paychecks, I encourage you to understand that we do not abdicate responsibility for our missionaries to you when they go. We have invested much in them and want to remain vitally involved. We want feedback from you and interaction with you...Finally, it frustrates me to see such need around the world, yet to see agencies erect unnecessary and artificial barriers that stifle cooperation. Please keep the big picture in view.[56]

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[51]Nyquist, "Parachurch Agencies and Mission", 723.

[52]Kirk, *What is Mission?*, 200.

[53]Engel & Dyrness, *Changing the Mind,* 126.

[54]Engel & Dyrness, *Changing the Mind,* 127...There are available, ministry evaluation tools to assist agencies in this kind of assessment.

[55]B. Taylor, "Lessons of Partnership", 752.

[56]P. Speakman, "Two Case Studies on Church-Agency Partnerships", *Mission Frontiers 24:1* (Jan-Feb 2002), 11.

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"Parternalistic Partnership"

A true spirit of partnership would be eroded when any participant assumes a dominant role, and not willing to function with a spirit of mutual submission and interdependency. Whether intentionally or not, mission representatives have often been the offenders, when they adopt the posture of those who "have" coming to those who "have not".[57] This issue will remain problematic for the global church so long as material resources are so unevenly distributed. This is true of missions, whether coming from the West or some of the more affluent TTW countries. However, in addition, among Western mission representatives and missionaries, "an unfortunate spirit of expatriate missionary imperialism often infuses alliances and partnerships between Western entities and their Two-Third counterparts."[58] Often there is a tacit operational understanding that indigenous bodies who receive support from the West are to conform to their Western missiological stances. To put it more bluntly and metaphorically, the outsider drives the program, or the one who pays the piper calls the tune. Not only does this run counter to true partnership, the indigenous churches and agencies "cannot set its priorities for mission independently of priorities set by the western partner agency."[59] On the other hand, "a bad conscience about former patterns of relationship inclines (some) Western mission agencies to respond by giving without accepting the responsibility of genuine consultation with the recipient."[60] Indeed, both TTW Christian leaders and Western mission agencies need to change their minds as to who should be in the "driver's seat". It should be a Paul-Barnabas, rather than a Paul-Timothy relationship at this era of mission history.[61] The infant church in many TTW countries has come of age.

Ongoing Care and Evaluation

Just as members need to be continually cared for, so does the mission partnership. Participants need to progressively revaluate the personal relationships, the purpose, the procedures, and the performances of the

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[57]Engel & Dyrness, *Changing the Mind*, 96.

[58]Engel & Dyrness, *Changing the Mind*, 96.

[59]Samuel & Sugden, *Partnership for Mission – A View from the Two Thirds World*, 3-4.

[60]Kirk, *What is Mission?*, 192.

[61]Engel & Dyrness, *Changing the Mind*, 97.

partnership.[62] Taylor puts it more dramatically, "If the partners don't treat the venture like a living organism, it will die"[63] We need to be particularly careful with the strategies of many new agencies subsumed under the relief and development movement.[64] They are able to raise a lot of money and are not burdened with the history of the colonial past. They are often for the "short-term". Long-term partnerships with the local Christians and the fostering of relationship with the local populace are not given prior importance. Sometimes misguided relief and development might even cause damaging social repercussions. Ongoing care and evaluation will also help the partners to discern when the objectives of the project have been completed. The dismantling phase then needs to be carefully planned by the participants. "Every joint venture has a scheduled life cycle, which will end sooner or later."[65]

Conclusion

How might the church in Asia nurture partnerships in mission? First the objectives, strategies and methodologies of mission partnerships must be clearly motivated and underpinned by Biblical principles and also clarified in their applications by historical bases. The source of fellowship of the partners should ultimately lie in the common obedience to the Word of God. We have looked briefly at history and have already noted the shortcomings and failings of the Church in partnerships. Much has been learnt from past mistakes; many responsible leaders in missions have called for a rediscovery for true partnership in missions, both in the West and in the TTW.

Secondly, there is legitimacy for the functional structures of modality and sodality, though they may not be quite in the same forms as before. They need "to work together harmoniously for the fulfillment of the Great Commission and for the fulfillment of all that God desires for our time."[66] The Church needs to rediscover that its essence is missionary. It is not just the medium for missions but it is intrinsically by its very nature the message of the *Missio Dei* as well. On the other hand, the mis-

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[62]Steffen, "Partnership", 728.

[63]B. Taylor, "Lessons of Partnership", 752.

[64]Samuel & Sugden, *Partnership for Mission – A View from the Two Thirds World*, 19-21.

[65]Rajendran, *Which Way Forward Indian Missions?*, 177.

[66]Winter, "The Two Structures", 229.

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sion agencies need to recognize that the "local churches are the key to world missions."[67] The mission agencies need to rediscover that they are not just a stopgap measure to compensate for the inadequacy of the churches; they were, are and will continue to be an essential component of world evangelization. They bring great synergy and benefits to churches as together they labor in the missionary task.

Thirdly, the section on "Nurturing Mission Partnerships" has noted and discussed some significant factors and issues that need to be borne in mind in the enhancement of mission partnerships. It is far from being comprehensive because of the constraints of time and space and also the limitations of the writer. There are still factors and issues, relevant to the diverse mission contexts that are significant for the nurturing of partnerships that have not been raised in this essay.

Finally, notwithstanding our human shortcomings and sinful imperfections, let us not lose heart in our partnerships in mission. Let us not be deterred in striving to work together towards true partnership. Let us remember that true partnership in missions bring great joy to both the sower and the reaper in the Harvest of the Lord. John Piper in his book, *Let the Nations Be Glad* writes:

> All of history is moving towards one great goal, the white hot worship of God and his Son among all the peoples of the earth. Missions is not that goal. It is the means. And for that reason it is the second greatest human activity in the world.[68]

He argues that the greatest human activity is worship and it is going to abide forever. If we cannot be true partners in missions on earth can we truly worship together in eternity? So let us be true partners in mission and in worship.

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[67]Guthrie, "New Paradigms", 8.

[68]J. Piper, "Let the Nations Be Glad", *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (eds Winter & Hawthorne; Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999), 50.

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