

An Historical Overview of Partnership in Missions

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Introduction

The dramatic growth of the church worldwide coupled with the dynamics of globalization has created a significant discussion on the present role of the missionary, the current viability of indigenous church principles and the rapid growth of mission partnerships nationally and internationally. The shift of the center of gravity of global Christianity from north to south and from west to east is having a significant impact on who is doing missions in the 21st century. The very word partnership is a concept searching for a meaning, even as the word missions has lost a sense of biblical meaning. At times it appears that business and secular principles frame the partnership dialogue. Ray Wiseman writes, “Christians tend to use agreements modeled by business and government and apply them to contracts between various arms of the church worldwide.”¹ Power and control characterize the agenda of partnerships in Western society, yet this falls short of the mark of what a biblical partnership might look like across cultures. Some national spokesmen have called for support of national evangelists as the way to speed the Great Commission. Others suggest that wealthier churches have an obligation to provide what is lacking to poorer nations. Missionaries who work in countries where a maturing national church exists are trying to find their place in service.

With this proliferation of mission’s efforts and the ease of international travel, it seems appropriate and necessary to look again through the lens of history at partnership in light of indigenous church principles.

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Objectives of this Essay

It is my purpose in this essay to explore historically the development of partnership in missions. This will be done first by a review of the history of missions from the 1850's, focusing particularly on the development of indigenous church principles. The emphasis on partnership in missions to reach the people groups of the world should be seen historically in the context of the indigenous church. It is only when you have a mature national church body that most partnership agreements can be initiated. In seeking to identify where the concept of partnership came into play, I will review the writing of several authors, including Melvin Hodges and Morris Williams, and identify at what point and how their teaching coincides with indigenous church principles. Also, I will look briefly at the Apostle Paul's missionary work to explore what a biblical understanding of partnership includes.

In a review of current literature, this paper will look at the contemporary ideas of partnership, and discuss their applicability in the setting where the national church is established and growing. Should there be additions to the work or *timeline* of Williams and Hodges? Can new metaphors be added to the discussion of partnership that will positively impact the current mission setting? Are there voices from the Two-Thirds world that can help define partnership? Our discussion will conclude with suggested ideas for engaging in partnerships as a mission working in a mature national church setting.

Through this paper, I will suggest that partnership is as much a spirit and a reciprocal relationship as a program or agreement that can be quantified. Further, I would propose that partnership methods without a commitment to the indigenous church will produce poor results.

It is my hope that this essay will engender discussion and action toward our mission being intentional in developing deeper relationships with national church leaders. From these relationships, it is my belief that shared vision for ministry will increase which will include the proportionate sharing of responsibilities and contributions, and the result will be increasing numbers of people brought into Christ's Kingdom.

The Foundations of Indigenous Church Principles

The concept of the indigenous church, also known as the Three-Self formula was popularized by two mission executives, Henry Venn, an Englishman who headed the Anglican Church Mission Society, and Rufus Anderson who led the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission in the mid-1800's.² Although there is some evidence that three-self principles were emerging in the early 1800's, it was the extensive writing of Venn and Anderson along with their organizational positions that allowed for implementation of these principles. In a time when the non-denominational mission organization focus was on individual conversion and a "Gospel without a church"³, and the employment of nationals to be partners in gospel work with the missionary as the overseer, Venn and Anderson arrived at a church planting formula of self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating independently of each other. They saw this as a formula to "speed up the pace of world evangelization by moving missionaries on to new places while the leaders of the churches they started would complete the task of local evangelization."⁴ Venn "was deeply committed to the goal of the genuinely native church. He saw "the missionary organization as subservient to the church. Later he described the mission structures as 'scaffolding', while the indigenous church was the 'edifice'."⁵ His great ambition was to see a native church become self-governing under a native bishop."⁶ Venn believed that "unless the foreigner made himself unnecessary he was frustrating the purpose of God."⁷ To this end he coined the phrase "the euthanasia of a Mission."⁸ However, after providing that the native church was not under the domination of the foreign missionary, he did see a place within the structure of the church for the missionary to continue to serve.⁹

Anderson found in the work of the Apostle Paul, "the lasting norm and model for Christian missions."¹⁰ Apostolic mission according to Anderson was preaching to the heathen, gathering converts into churches under the care of native pastors relying on "the promised aid of the Holy Spirit. The main success was among the middle and lower classes of society; and the responsibilities of self-government, self-support, and self-propagation were thrown at once upon the several churches."¹¹ He called churches that

exhibited these three principles "the life, strength and glory of missions."¹² Anderson believed that the church which was "self-governing and self-supporting from the beginning will be self-propagating."¹³ To Anderson self-propagating was not simply local evangelism but that native churches should become sending churches also. As an interesting side-note, Anderson wrote much on the anticipated "pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh...a blessing the world is yet waiting for"¹⁴ and saw this as critical to the triumph of the gospel around the world. On the continuing role of the missionary, when the work was fully established, "the missionary, having 'no more place in those parts,' should go and preach the gospel elsewhere."¹⁵

Another strong advocate for Three-Self principles in church planting was John Nevius, missionary to China in the late 1800's. Nevius described two systems of missionary work that were functioning during his time, both ultimately seeking the establishment of,

independent, self-reliant, native churches, the Old System strives by the use of foreign funds to foster and stimulate growth of the native churches in the first stage of their development, and then gradually discontinue the use of such funds; while those who adopt the New System think that the desired object may be best attained by applying principles of independence and self-reliance from the beginning.¹⁶

Nevius focused most of his attention to the issue of self-support, carefully developing the argument based on Scripture and end results, arguing that the system of supporting native workers will hurt the work of missions.

Roland Allen in his book *Missionary Methods, St. Paul's or Ours?*, written in 1912, described three symptoms on the mission field that caused him to be disturbed, "everywhere Christianity is still an exotic, everywhere our missions are dependent, everywhere we see the same types"¹⁷ or uniformity. Allen's answer to this condition was in essence the return to the New Testament and the principles of self-government, self-support and self-propagation along with a strong dependence on Holy Spirit.

We have seen further that the power in which St. Paul was able to act with such boldness was the spirit of faith. Faith, not in the natural capacities of his converts, but in the power of the Holy Ghost in them...If we have no faith in the power of

the Holy Spirit in them, they will not learn to have faith in the power of the Holy Spirit themselves.¹⁸

As to the role of the missionary working in a place where a previous foundation had been laid, Allen stated, “He can live his life amongst his people and deal with them *as though he would have no successor*...He disappears, the church remains.”¹⁹ In his detailed development of this statement, Allen encouraged the missionary to work closely with the congregation in matters such as “the management of funds, the administration of baptism, the selection of ministers for the congregation, the exercise of discipline.”²⁰ Allen had not read Venn’s or Anderson’s works, yet in studying the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul, advocated similar principles of establishing the church.

Each author I have quoted grew up during a period of colonialism and at a time when the missionary typically established compounds or centers of activity and employed native workers to assist in the establishment of the church. Over the years, these three principles have continued to influence the modern mission movement.

Roland Allen’s book was catalytic to the thinking of early Assemblies of God missionary Alice Luce, and later to Melvin Hodges who began to apply these principles in Central America in the 1930’s²¹. They became accepted mission policy in the Assemblies of God through the practices and writings of both Melvin Hodges and Morris Williams.

The Entrance of Partnership Principles

It was in the context of the growth of the indigenous church that the idea of partnership was developed, at least in the Assemblies of God. Without understanding the historical context, the consideration of partnership in missions loses its foundation. Even though the three self principles of the indigenous church were not thoroughly embedded in every nation, Morris Williams set the scene in his book, *Partnership in Mission*,

But what happens after the indigenous church comes into being? What happens to the missionaries of the sending church? Do they go home? Has the Great Commission ceased for them? Have they nothing more to do in the country to which the Holy Spirit has led them? Does their nationality and their race bar them from an ongoing witness? The Partnership Concept is the answer to the

above questions. Given the right attitude and understanding, there is no reason why there cannot be continued and effective ministry for the missionary. But his relationship with the national church will have to be clear. He will no longer be in control. He will cooperate fully with the national leadership. He will in no way be a threat to it, but rather strengthen it.²²

Williams spends several pages in the earlier portion of his book discussing the importance of each aspect of the three-self formula. He particularly focuses on self-support, saying that the "support of the whole church depends upon proper teaching at the time of conversion."²³ The necessity of tithing from the individual member to the pastor and the local church is stressed so that the national church can carry out its responsibilities. "If the individual believer fails to tithe, the whole support of the church fails."²⁴ A financially stable indigenous church is dependent on the training of local believers to tithe and become good stewards of their finances, be it small or great. This is particularly noteworthy since partnerships usually involve the giving and receiving of funding.

It is in the context of the successful establishment of a national church that the question of continuance of the missionary is posed? Williams believed "where the sending church has 'taken its hands off the national church' and works with it in partnership, the growth is phenomenal."²⁵ In the Assemblies of God, from the point that the church adopted indigenous church principles, the overseas church grew from less than 500 thousand believers in 1950 to over 50 million in 2006.²⁶

Interestingly Williams does not give a clear definition of partnership, but does offer three essentials for success: love, communication and definition of roles.²⁷ Williams takes significant time to diagram the relationship possibilities between the sending church and the national church and how partnership is possible. This includes partnership with local churches, the national church and international partnerships. He stresses that a proper relationship between any two entities is based on the sending organization giving direction to its team as to "philosophy, missionaries and ministries...with the leadership structure carrying out that directive."²⁸ In other words, leadership is given responsibility for implementing the partnership principle.

Williams suggests a growth continuum in the relationship between a sending body and a receiving church. This continuum begins with the establishing of the national

church. In those beginning days, the missionary is the father. Over time, if the missionary is not careful, he can develop a “paternalistic” lifestyle where he is always in the superior role with the national pastor or worker. In time, if paternalism is not ended, the nationals will rise up in resentment. A second option that Williams offered is fusion, which is often a reaction to paternalism. In fusion, the missionary becomes a member of the national church, he assimilates and becomes the same as any national worker. The national church is the parent and missionaries are the children in this situation. A third option is parallelism, which according to Williams is a “service agency approach that provides for a separate program alongside that of the national church, but not connected to it administratively.”²⁹ These programs will at best complement the efforts of a national church body that will either use or reject them. Parallelism is a separate track that may assist a local entity, but is not a partnership in design. The ultimate that Williams offers in his timeline is partnership where there is “co-ordination of national church/sending church ministries—a united effort based upon written or vocal agreements.”³⁰ Today in almost every nation, the Assemblies of God works with an established national body where as missionaries we are attempting to work out the practicalities of partnership. Williams offers a tool for the sending church missionary officers and national leaders to discuss the work, which he calls the *partnership meeting*. This forum offers opportunity for fellowship, communication and definition of roles. Partnership then flows out of and is defined as supporting the indigenous church principles of self-government, self-support and self-propagating.

Melvin Hodges in his book *The Indigenous Church and the Missionary* states that the role of the missionary going to a developed national church “is primarily that of an evangelist, church planter, and church developer”³¹ Hodges uses the same illustration as Henry Venn when he compares the missionary to the scaffolding on the building in his book *The Indigenous Church*. Yet he clarifies this metaphor saying, “The statement that the missionary should consider himself as scaffolding of temporary usefulness *was intended to emphasize the need of the missionary to plant a church that would be able to support itself, govern itself, and propagate itself.*”³² According to Hodges, the missionary “may still be required for the extension and maturing of the church in different areas.”³³ He appealed to the scripture where Paul says, “I planted the seed and

Apollos watered it, but God made it grow," (I Corinthians 3:6 NIV) as justification for continued missionary involvement. He offered avenues for possible service of the national body including teaching, literature development and evangelism in unreached areas of the country. Partnership between the national church and missionaries is also what Hodges feels is the ideal situation, where "the missionary is neither *over* nor *under* the national church, but working alongside the church as a fellow worker."³⁴ The practitioner comes out as Hodges offers the reader ways to build a strong partnership relationship and touches on the areas where tensions often happen. He also suggests structures for communication which are joint sessions between missionary and national church leaders. For Hodges, partnership is seen in the context of strengthening the national church.

The issue of funding is briefly addressed. According to Hodges, giving should not diminish the sense of responsibility of the national church or make the church dependent. He offers a question as the criterion for giving financially, "Will this gift make this church more dependent on me or the mission, or will it help the church realize its own identity under God and function as a true church." He adds that "mission help should be given to help the church attain its goals. Mission help should never be a *substitute* for self-help."³⁵

Both Morris Williams and Melvin Hodges supported indigenous church principles and dealt with the subject of partnership from their practical experiences as field missionaries and mission leaders. Although their work is foundational, the growth of partnership paradigms and discussion on this subject in the last 30 years has moved ahead rapidly. An important new factor in this discussion is the reality of a new missionary force coming from the Two-Thirds world. The Two-Thirds world mission movement is growing significantly faster than missions from the West. What role should the Western church play in supporting this new mission force? Other new factors that contribute to the present discussion on partnership is the work of anthropologists and social scientists regarding the worldview of the receiving culture and how these findings have highlighted the validity of contextualization of the gospel in modern missions. Other contributors to the current discussion on partnership are theologians and missiologists who have researched and written on what partnership meant in a New Testament context,

and finally organizations such as Partners International have offered a steady stream of books and articles. These new dynamics in missional relationships need to be addressed in this timeline of relationships, especially if we are to sustain as valid the principles of the indigenous church.

The Apostle Paul and the Biblical Foundations of Partnership

In the New Testament it is the Apostle Paul that expresses the missionary-church relationship in his brief phrase, "...I always pray for you with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now," (Philippians 1:4b-5 NIV). Partnership is the word *koinonia*, which Thayer translates as: fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse.³⁶ This depth of meaning takes us much further than the definition of partnership as it is considered in many current publications. Peters in analyzing Philippians states that Paul uses the word four times: "fellowship in the gospel (1:5), fellowship in the Spirit (2:1), fellowship in sufferings (3:10), fellowship in my affliction (4:14). In 4:15 a related word is used to express the fact of financial sharing in his life and ministry."³⁷ The missionary-church relationship described here was partnership in the full sense of the word. Peters suggests that "neither dichotomy (parallelism) nor merger would have fitted his pattern...Paul's partnership relationship was one of full participation in the life of the churches—in their mobilization and enlistment of prayer, personnel and finances."³⁸ In his analysis of the book, Peters finds several Pauline principles for partnership. Partnership included the free sharing of all resources for the proclamation of the gospel, partnership was natural since it was introduced from the very beginning of ministry, partnership was not demanded or legislated but solicited from the stance of a humble brother, and partnership relationships grew out of deeper levels of fellowship—"fellowship in the Spirit, fellowship in sufferings, fellowship in the apostle's afflictions."³⁹

Frampton Fox writing in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* about *koinonia* states that it "has definite implications for understanding partnership in missions...in interpersonal relationships through: identification with each other as equals, empathy

with those who suffer, participation in suffering, and sharing of material resources.”⁴⁰

Fox goes on to say that

Partnership, per se, is a highly workable and pragmatic concept that is certainly compatible with the teachings of the Bible. Depending on how we define partnership, we may even assert that ‘partnership is biblical.’ However, it may be more accurate to say that partnership can be affected in a biblical manner. Broadly speaking, partnership is a neutral term like the word relationship.⁴¹

This is a helpful insight as we consider how others describe what partnership is. It is truly a word that can have many shades of meaning.

In the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, the work of Luis Bush and Paul McKaughan attempted to identify other key biblical foundations for partnership, one being that it is based in God’s nature going all the way back to the purposes of the Trinity from the time of creation. Bush goes on to apply partnership as a metaphor to the body of Christ, “being gifted as a fellowship to demonstrate Christ to the world. This foundation in the nature of God and the nature of man is the strongest biblical underpinning yet for the necessity of seeking partnerships in ministry.”⁴² In spite of these foundational thoughts, Bush’s definition of partnership takes on a more business-like approach: “an association of two or more autonomous bodies who have formed a trusting relationship and fulfill agreed upon expectations by sharing complementary strengths and resources, to reach their mutual goal.”⁴³ It is beyond the scope of this paper to look more thoroughly at these biblical foundations, but suffice it to say there are strong Biblical foundations that provide an important framework and ethos for working through contemporary issues of partnership in missions.

Current Partnerships Paradigms

There are organizations that spend their full time encouraging national and international partnerships. Partners International, founded in Seattle, Washington in 1943, was one of the first organizations to focus on developing partnerships. Partners traces the dramatic increase of strategic partnerships in missions primarily to the emergence and success of a Two-Thirds world mission force that has challenged

traditional Western missions, and the ease of international travel and communication that has allowed more direct involvement on the part of donors. Daniel Rickett states that the old pattern of missions which was “make your plans, send your people, and you will make progress” has been broken since “few places remain where North Americans should pioneer a ministry without at least conferring with local Christians and others who are also active in the area.”⁴⁴ In the new world, “the rule will be: Build alliances, coordinate your strategies and you will make progress...the world is changing in ways that make partnerships virtually essential to world evangelization. Partnerships are simply a better way to do missions.”⁴⁵ Rickett offers an Alliance Continuum to describe types of cooperative structures. The continuum has a vertical axis which measures the level of involvement “ranging from casual association up to highly integrated participation. The horizontal axis is a measure of interdependence, ranging from modest transactions to permanent relationships.”⁴⁶ The potential alliances described by Rickett are association, service alliance, multilateral alliance, joint venture, complementary partnership and merger.⁴⁷ The continuum diagram (see Appendix 1) clearly describes the variety of structures that exist today and helps to identify the various stages a partnership may go through. Compared to Morris Williams’ writing concerning partnership, this diagram would be like going from a black and white picture to color in seeing the variety of ways that independent groups work together today. This continuum is also helpful to the missionary leader to determine where his relationship with a national church entity is at the present time.

I have given space to the Partners International diagram and thinking since they reflect a more highly developed model that is shaping missions endeavors today. Rickett writes that to have a productive partnership, “we must have vision, relationship, and results. No one of these can be ignored.”⁴⁸ To briefly develop this further, vision would mean “shared vision, compatibility and ground rules”; relationship would include “alliance champions, intercultural understanding and mutual trust”; and results would mean “meaningful results, documentation, learning and change.”⁴⁹ It must be remembered that Partners International connects Western para-church ministries, Western local churches and non-denominational mission entities with overseas entities. It seems that Partners International presumes an indigenous national church body that the

Western partner is working with, although Rickett does not use the term. The work of this organization does reflect a general move away from denominational missions.

In a very basic comparison of this diagrammed continuum with the thoughts of Morris Williams, the *complementary partnership* of Rickett would come closest to the partnership that Williams describes. The *merger* according to definition would be closest to the fusion of mission and national church which Williams describes. The balance of the options listed in the continuum would be various degrees of parallelism.

Partnership Principles and Indigenous Church: Friend or Foe?

A major difference between the approach of partner oriented ministries and the work of mission pioneers such as Roland Allen, Melvin Hodges and Morris Williams is the important issue of promoting or nurturing indigenous church principles. It should be noted that the subject of partnership received little attention during the formative period of Western missionary activity when Venn, Anderson, Allen and Nevius were writing. Their stress was on establishing the missionary work in its proper relationship with a developing national church. Their concerns and writings were a Biblical response to the colonial mentality that existed in many mission efforts. That era has now passed.

The present subject of partnership needs further reflection to help Western mission organizations navigate the cross-currents of opinion and practice. Are the current partnership paradigms compatible with the indigenous church? Have the basic guidelines of Hodges and Williams become obsolete or outdated in the highly charged culture of Two-Thirds world missions and the Western churches desire for a highly personal missions experience? Is there a proper working relationship between the older concept of indigenous mission work and the modern understanding of partnership?⁵⁰ The three-self movement is often portrayed as an obstacle to partnership, promoting a dangerous autonomy in the global body of Christ in this age of interdependence, being an obstacle to the free flow of support of poorer evangelists and missionaries, being a hindrance to humanitarian assistance, and an excuse to allow wealthy Christians to not be generous.⁵¹

Fox suggests that partnership can complement indigenous church principles but he says “we need to separate western cultural values from our definition of indigeneity.”

Quoting William Smalley,

it seems to me, first of all, that the criteria of ‘self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating’ are not necessarily diagnostic of an indigenous movement... It is the way the funds are administered, the way the decisions are made, the purposes to which they are put that are diagnostic of an indigenous church, not the presence or absence of foreign funds.⁵²

Smalley suspects “that the three ‘selfs’ are really projections of our American value systems... based upon western ideas of individualism and power.”⁵³ I believe he makes a valid point. Plueddemann suggests there is a phase beyond independent (self-governing), which is the ultimate goal of a biblically mature church. Hans Finzel offers an integrated model that allows for both the indigenous church and partnership to co-exist. Fox, quoting Finzel, lists a seven phase continuum of indigenization that attempts to strike a balance: 1) initial entry, 2) first fruits, 3) training nationals to become leaders, 4) partners in leadership, 5) initial national control, 6) complete nationalization and withdrawal, and 7) networking with the global Christian community.⁵⁴ Based on this model, indigenous principles “properly applied are the parent and friend of contemporary partnership theory.”⁵⁵

Although Finzel’s continuum is helpful in identifying the phases of a mission’s work, especially in phases 1-5, is it truly necessary for the foreign worker to withdraw before the national body is able to successfully network with the global Christian community? There are examples around the world in the Assemblies of God where phase six involving withdrawal was not requested or appropriate, even as there has been successful networking in the global Christian community. Also, this continuum may apply more to a non-denominational mission setting, but where there is a national church body that is already relating globally, it seems this phase is not mandatory in context of real partner relationships. That being said, the continuum offered by Finzel is helpful.

Historically it was the position of Melvin Hodges that partnership does not have to contradict indigeneity.

It is an inadequate concept to maintain that any area of the church’s life must

permanently be supplied from a foreign country. However, these concepts were never intended to convey the idea that the missionary had nothing left to offer the national church once a national leadership is developed...his ministry may still be required for the extension and maturing of the church in many different areas.⁵⁶

Williams authored his book, *Partnership in Mission*, from the premise that partnership was the manner and spirit through which the mission and the missionary would continue to work with a national church. His work is seminal to balanced thinking on the subject, but in the light of the changing mission world and the critical nature of partnership, I believe his work should be expanded upon in the Assemblies of God context.

Partnership through the Eyes of a Receiving People

In all of my reading, with the occasional exception of a few books and selected quotes from a national leader with international standing, the conversation on partnership is coming primarily from the western writer, the western organization and the western mindset. Having the time to reflect and the organization and funding to publish, the current history of writing on this subject is a decidedly slanted to a western perspective. What does the indigenous church and partnership look like to the receiving of host culture? It is my belief that partnership may have a different emphasis if it was being defined by an Asian as compared to a Westerner. The defining of partnership in an Asian context is a part of making theology understandable to a given culture or people. This is the essence of contextualization. Flemming defines contextualization as "the dynamic and comprehensive process by which the gospel is incarnated within a concrete historical or cultural situation...seeks to enable the people of God to live out the gospel in obedience to Christ within their own cultures and circumstances"⁵⁷ Contextualization is a step beyond the indigenous principles of Venn, Anderson and Allen. The Western partner must be sensitized to listen and understand what is important to the host culture.

Sherwood Lingenfelter describes a workshop he led in Africa among African church leaders and expatriate mission leaders on ideas of partnership. The missionaries consistently described partnership in terms of task and time, while the African leaders

described it “as a person focused and lifelong relationship... reciprocal and related to their whole lives.”⁵⁸ From my experiences in an Asian context, these same differences between missionary and national leaders would apply. If we are going to develop meaningful partnerships, it will mean that missionaries will need to understand non-critically what a partnership relationship looks like in the host culture through listening and building relationships. Principles will transfer from culture to culture, but relationships on which partnerships are built will take time and care to build.

In *Searching for the Indigenous Church, A Missionary Pilgrimage*, Gene Daniels gives national believers the opportunity to speak, even as he admits his own mistakes and weaknesses in doing missions in an unreached Muslim city in Central Asia. Through this book, I was given a window into how far western workers must come to understand the worldview of our host cultures. Daniels’ use of stories is a powerful conveyor of what he learned. To illustrate, after a lengthy conversation with a Muslim follower of Christ that lasted for several hours, where the author was patiently waiting to seek advice on a shopping list of problems, he quotes his friend, “You came to see me without a plan, and that’s the right way to do things in our culture. When someone comes to me with a list of things to discuss, they show that I’m only their ‘business,’ a project to be done. But ministry is not business, it is all about relationships.”⁵⁹ In our rush to plant the church or to have measurable results, partnership can look like a runaway train with the foreigner at the controls. In another conversation, Daniels quotes a believer who exclaims, “Missionaries are often difficult to work with...they don’t treat us with very much respect...Sometimes they ask our opinion, but they don’t really want to know what we think. They actually just want us to agree with their ideas and plans.”⁶⁰ Is this what partnership looks like to a national believer? Daniels admitted,

I could push my own agenda by exploiting the tremendous respect I am given as a missionary, or I could draw on this respect and influence the ideas that arise indigenously...until now I had actually missed the meaning of the word *indigenous*. I had failed to see that it means a way of thinking that I as a foreigner would never completely understand.⁶¹

Seeing the world and a project through the eyes of the host partner will take time. The author deals with the propensity of Western partners to want to build structures rather than taking time to build people, as well as the difficult subject of when the

missionary's task is ready to hand over. To a national leader, partnership is often a hurried conversation which involves money, people, agreements and control. Daniels states that "real friendships are built on equality and reciprocity, things that do not develop when everything is a one-way street."⁶² Even when the worker is trying his best, due to time limitations of the visiting partner, developing partnerships are not easy. These are the realistic challenges of 21st Century partnerships.

Partnership: New Ways of Thinking

The blessing and challenge of developing meaningful partnerships call for new ways of thinking and practice. It is clear that the worldview and priorities of a western partner must be flexible enough to allow the host church's culture to impact the way the relationship develops. Without this, we do not have partnership in a biblical sense of the word. In my experience, the key factor of any successful venture is establishing and nurturing deep and trust-filled relationships over a long period of time.

Paul Hiebert, author and anthropologist, writes that the discussion today has moved beyond independence issues to partnership and suggests the need for new metaphors "to explore models of partnership, particularly with regard to power and resources".⁶³ He offers the metaphors found in Matthew 25:14-25 where Jesus speaks of three ways that people deal with resources, misers, accountants and stewards. The miser mentality according to Hiebert keeps Christians focused on their own needs to the detriment of the lost. The accountant mentality is focused on long range planning, goals and reports. But the steward "had the right to use and invest these resources as they best saw fit and to take risks for the sake of great gain."⁶⁴ When it comes to partnerships, Hiebert warns against an attitude of self-sufficiency on the part of the western church and suggests that in a stewardship mentality "each member views the others as full equals with the rights and responsibilities of joining together in a common venture."⁶⁵ Hiebert's metaphors strike at the heart of many partnership discussions, which involves the area of funding, decision making and control.

With so many people talking about partnership, where do we as a mission go from here? Let me begin by asking where is partnership still needed? Samuel Chiang in

Evangelical Missions Quarterly quotes David Cho from Korea, “western missionaries are still needed though not in the traditional sense. Rather they are needed as side by side co-workers The two overwhelming needs of the new world missions harvest force are training and funding. The two are linked . . . if funds are available, missionary training would be accelerated throughout the world.”⁶⁶ To me these statements are too limiting as to the role of the western missionary today, but they do highlight that our role is linked to the development of the national church.

In Assemblies of God World Missions, I believe we are in a period of redefining the role of missionaries and partnership. Since the writings of Williams and Hodges, the variety of our mission activities has expanded dramatically. As an example, where compassion-based ministries in the past were only small parts of our mission work, today we have fully embraced healthcare, feeding programs and many other “touching” ministries. The Assemblies of God in embracing compassion and specialized ministries also created international organizations and structures for them to exist. These structures could best be called parallel entities to the national church rather than partnership-based entities. These ministries come alongside and can be accepted or rejected by the national body. On occasion, these ministries are active in a nation but work without close cooperation with the host church body. Second, missionaries have felt called to work in these ministries but in many cases have not had the foundational teaching concerning indigenous church principles or partnership through which to filter how these ministries may function. This creates tension when ministries are seen as operating independently of the national church. Third, we have discovered that Assemblies of God people give to a variety of compassion-based ministries millions of dollars each year with many of these having no connection with the local church. In response we have promoted our own compassion ministries to the constituency, and developed new efforts to serve in the needy areas of the world. This has offered unprecedented opportunities for our mission but not without its challenges. How do these compassion efforts square with our commitment to partnership with independent national churches? Have we taken a step away from the indigenous church in the area of self-support by funding major relief and development efforts? It appears we have not always built the necessary relational bridges so that these ministries are appreciated and develop through a shared vision.

As another example, individual U.S. congregations want to work with national church congregations using the mission only as a conduit for funding. In this situation partnership becomes even more challenging to implement since the local missionary team may have minimal involvement and the U.S. church leaders are not sensitized to intercultural communication issues and the time necessary to develop strong relationships. The fallout of these relationships affects the missionary and his work in the nation, for good or bad. The principles of Hodges and Williams have enduring value, but field workers and local U.S. churches would benefit from further education. The partnership principles outlined need review and expansion in keeping with our commitment to indigenous church principles and the biblical sense of true partnership.

Concluding Thoughts

We have entered in the past three decades into a new era of missions. The western missionary movement has been successful in transplanting church and mission vision to the east and the southern hemisphere. In April 2007, I was in Buenos Aires, Argentina for a Two-thirds world mission conference sponsored by the Argentina Assemblies of God. Over forty nations were represented, mostly from Latin America. The focus of the evening services and workshops was on the doing of cross-cultural missions. I met Latin American missionaries serving from Afghanistan to East Asia, and discovered that mission mobilization is sweeping the continent. The Westerner is no longer the only missionary in a country. He is now relating to a national church and also to some degree to other missionaries from other nations. This conference showed that beyond a singular partnership between a western organization or church and a national entity, there is a growing need to develop multi-national partnerships for the purpose of obeying the Great Commission. For this to happen, we will need *honest brokers* who seek to bring people together advocating cooperation and joint efforts.

At this point, I would suggest several directions in pursuing this somewhat elusive relationship we call partnership. First we must realize that the western concept of partnership falls short of the principles outlined by Paul in Philippians. To quote Peters:

Partnership is a relationship rooted in the mission's identification with churches on the deepest levels of fellowship in the Spirit, and in mutual burdens, interests, purposes and goals. Partnership is not circumstantial, it is a matter of life, health and relationship. It belongs to the nature of Christianity. It is not optional, it is bound up in Christian fellowship and progress.⁶⁷

I believe as westerners, we must intentionally strive for deeper interdependence with our national brethren. Morris Williams and Melvin Hodges have done a great work in laying a foundation for our mission in terms of seeing the importance of a fully indigenous national church and in stressing the ongoing role of the missionary. But in the rush to do missions, we cannot forget their principles. Williams suggested a timeline of the relationship between missionary and national church: from parenting to autonomy and then partnering continues to be a useful continuum to evaluate progress. Some of what Williams wrote concerning the practices of partnership is yet to be implemented in the real world of missionary-national church relationships. Yet for all of this good, I believe we need to revisit and update his work. Partnerships take time. The results oriented west must learn to make haste slowly!

Second, contributions of sociologists and anthropologists have opened our eyes to the importance of worldview. National leaders are advocating that their views of Scripture are equally valid and that contextualizing Biblical truth is vital to reaching nations and peoples. In terms of partnership, we must allow for the meaning to also come from the worldview of the host culture. In revisiting and updating the basics laid down by Morris Williams, a contextualization of partnership based on the worldview of the host culture will be vital. This is not to put down the one meaning or to lift up another, but it will be a way to build on a firmer foundation. The western missionary must make room for the host culture to inform our ideas. We may even agree on the components of a basic definition, but as Lingenfelter pointed out, the emphasis of the missionary may be different than his national host. A willingness to contextualize will be a step toward a more meaningful partnership relationship.

Third, there must be greater equality and intentional collaboration between mission and national church leadership in decision-making, personnel and finances. The western missionary must see his host national church as an equal at the table. If we are going to work together, we must relinquish the power position to become servant-leaders,

letting our influence come through relationships and not the money we can provide. We as westerners are too prone to think task and accountability. Our Asian brethren want relationship and reciprocity, where everyone is adding to the final result as equals and money is not the only measure of importance. Greater equality will mean bringing to the table our differences and then work toward mutual understanding. To relinquish the power position will mean that decisions regarding the approval of new missionaries and their assignments, the approval of priority projects and finances will be the subject of partnership meetings. Rey Calusay, General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God in the Philippines wrote that "partnership is for the purpose of obeying the Great Commission. Pursuing a common goal; proportionate sharing of responsibility; mutual caring; contribution of resources"⁶⁸ are the components of a healthy relationship.

Simply put, I believe that our national churches are asking for an adult to adult relationship. Stephen Covey in the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* presents interdependence as the highest stage of personal or interpersonal development. He refers to it as the relational developmental stage at which "I have the opportunity to share myself deeply, meaningfully, with others, and I have access to the vast resources and potential of other human beings."⁶⁹ Personally I prefer the term partnership since it does have biblical foundations, yet interdependence captures the vitality of his relationship.

In my opinion, for this adult to adult relationship to happen, it will take a missionary without a history of parenting of national leaders, a missionary who has no prejudice but sees his national brethren as his friends and partners in the work of God. It will be very difficult for a missionary who has had a parent-mentor relationship to make this change. Even if he is willing, the national will be slow to adapt to his new role, and will continue to offer him respect based on the previous patron-client relationship.

Therefore partnership must be intentionally taught and encouraged to the new generation of missionary that is coming. It must be reemphasized as a mission priority, integrating the importance of intercultural sensitivity with our long held commitment to the indigenous church. Instead of sending laborers with personal vision, we must listen carefully to the type of workers that our host church is calling for, and then intentionally seek to find those kinds of people. I have felt that screening for a new missionary today

must be a match that includes the needs expressed by our national brethren as well as the personal call of the candidate.

Fourth, as a mission we must be intentional and encourage structures that allow for joint efforts in the work of missions. In the Philippines, the current missionary fellowship entered into a partnership project with the national church called *bayanihan*. It was the national church that expressed the need for assistance in giving existing congregations their first permanent building. The project involved constructing metal buildings for local churches who own their own land. The mission provides the metal building materials. The local people with help from contractors construct the shell. The finishing of the building including the walls, windows and doors are in the hands of the local congregation. The team that decides where buildings are constructed is headed by a national leader. A joint committee reviews progress. A structure was created so that the partnership could grow.

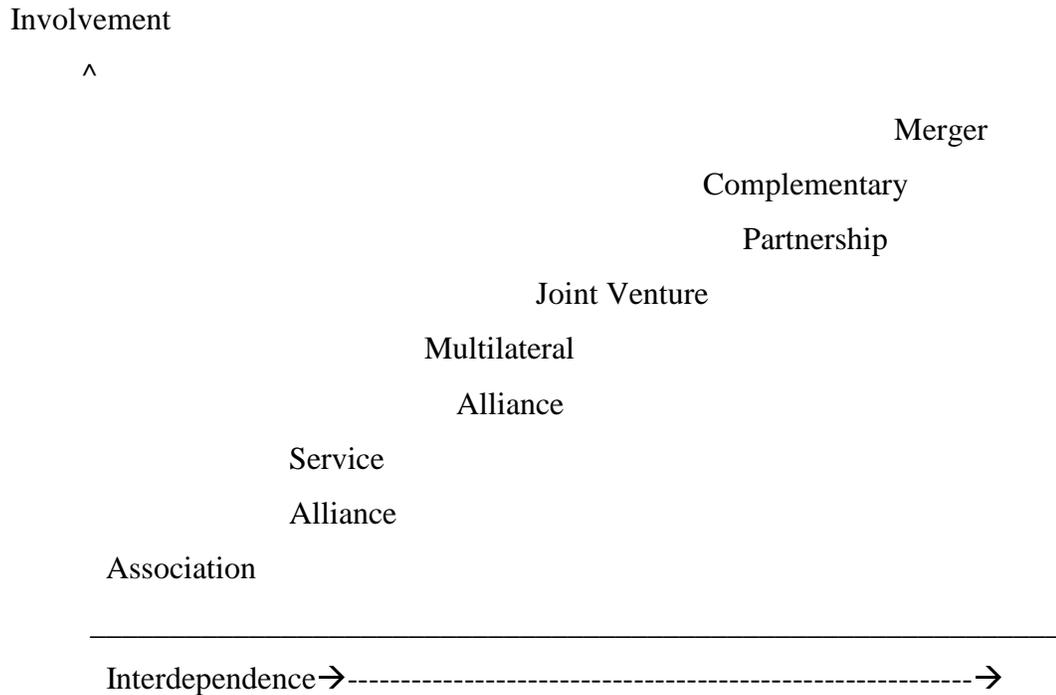
Fifth, some have suggested that the indigenous church principles are a hindrance to creative partnerships. History suggests that these critics are wrong. Indigenous principles are a gauge for whether we have planted a mature church. If the church is self-supporting, it will be self-governing and self-propagating. I would offer that self-theologizing should be part of the healthy national church where the western partner sees Biblical principles through the eyes of the national believer. We can only be enriched in our understanding. The commitment to indigenous principles simply means to me that a mature national church has an equal place at the table in determining their future and the priorities of their efforts. Having stated that the indigenous principles are valid, I believe in the life of a mature or maturing church, deep sharing in partnership and community is not only Biblical but it is the way of the future.

Finally, it is my observation that for all the talk regarding partnership, we must be more intentional in seeking deeper relationships with national churches. This must happen on several levels including in the training of new missionaries, experiential learning opportunities for on-field personnel, and intentional efforts on the part of overseas based mission leaders. We should be the initiators. Partnership must be an area that becomes a priority. In July 2007, I was part of an AGWM subcommittee to develop a position paper with universal principles to guide our partnership development with

national churches, including suggestions for new nomenclature that would eliminate concepts of prejudice and dominance. The result of the subcommittee was not a position paper but a series of evaluation questions for each strata of leadership. The subcommittee suggested that effective partnership in mission involving AGWM and the national Church would necessitate more intentional collaboration in several key areas. These areas were "the approval, preparation and placement of new missionaries; the planning, initiation and sustaining of projects and ministries; the appropriation, allocation, and use of funds."⁷⁰

Partnership is the methodology of missions for the 21st century. I believe in the Assemblies of God, we have a good foundation upon which to build. But if we are to continue to make a long term contribution to our fields of service, organizationally and individually, we must renew our commitment to doing missions together with our national leaders. From personal experience, I have discovered the truth of the African proverb, ". . . if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together."

Appendix 1: Alliance Continuum



An abbreviated definition for each of these alliances follows:

An *association* is an affiliation of independent ministries with common interest for mutual encouragement and limited exchange of resources. (EFMA, NAE, WEF)

A *service alliance* is an association of independent organizations in which one supplies resources or services to the other. (Foundations, shipping companies, etc)

A *multilateral alliance* is an association of independent ministries that correlate separate action toward a common purpose. (Scripture translation, broadcast, medical work)

A *joint venture* is the short-term alliance of independent ministries for a limited or specific purpose. (Water wells, primary health care, water purification)

A *complementary partnership* is a long-term alliance of two or more organizations that share complementary gifts and abilities to achieve a common purpose. By this definition, partnership involves making the partner an extension of your own ministry.

A *merger* is the incorporation of one ministry into another whereby personnel, finances, and programs are integrated into one organization.⁷¹

¹Ray Wiseman, "The Fundamental Question in Mission National Partnerships", *Didaskalia* 9 #1 (Fall 1997): 53-64.

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³David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 331.

⁴Robert Reese, "The Surprising Relevance of the Three-Self Formula," *Mission Frontiers* (July-August 2007): 25.

⁵Wilbert R. Shenk, "The Origins and Evolution of the Three-Selfs in Relation to China," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 14:1 (January 1990): 28-35 (29).

⁶R. Pierce Beaver ed, *To Apply The Gospel, Selections from the Writings of Henry Venn* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1971), 25.

⁷Ibid., 26.

⁸Ibid., 63.

⁹Ibid., 86.

¹⁰Ibid., 14.

¹¹Ibid., 16.

¹²Ibid., 23.

¹³Ibid., 31.

¹⁴Ibid., 50.

¹⁵Ibid., 96.

¹⁶John L. Nevius, *The Planting and Development of Missionary Churches* (Hancock, NH: Monadnock Press, 2003), 18.

¹⁷Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods, St. Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1962), 141-142.

¹⁸Ibid., 152.

¹⁹Ibid., 153.

²⁰ Ibid., 154.

²¹ Warren B. Newberry, "Contextualizing Indigenous Church Principles: An African Model," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 8:1 (2005), 104.

²² Morris Williams, *Partnership in Missions* (Springfield, MO: Morris Williams, 1979), 160-161.

²³ Ibid., 154.

²⁴ Ibid., 155.

²⁵ Ibid., 150.

²⁶ "90 Years of Mission", *The Pentecostal Evangel*, January 1, 2006.

²⁷ Williams, *Partnership in Missions*, 161.

²⁸ Ibid., 207.

²⁹ Ibid., 225.

³⁰ Ibid., 227.

³¹ Melvin Hodges, *The Indigenous Church and the Missionary* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1978), 6.

³² Ibid., 18.

³³ Ibid., 19.

³⁴ Ibid., 23-24.

³⁵ Hodges, *The Indigenous Church and the Missionary*, 59.

³⁶ Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 352.

³⁷ George W. Peters, "Pauline Patterns of Church-Mission Relationships", EMQonline.com, January 1973, https://bgc.gospelcom.net/emqonline/emq_article.read.php? ArticleID=2520 (accessed August 25, 2007).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.,

⁴⁰ Frampton Fox, "Partnership—More than a Buzzword", EMQonline.com, July 2001, https://bgc.gospelcom.net/emqonline/emq_article.read.php?ArticleID-3103 (accessed August 25, 2007).

⁴¹ Ibid., 2.

⁴² Ibid..

⁴³ Luis Bush & Lorry Lutz, *Partnering in Ministry: The Direction of World Evangelism* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1990), 46.

⁴⁴ Daniel Rickett, *Making Your Partnership Work* (Enumclaw, WA: Winepress Publishing, 2002), 19.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 24.

⁵⁰ Fox, "Partnership—More than a Buzzword", 5.

⁵¹ Robert Reese, "The Surprising Relevance of the Three-Self Formula," 26-27.

⁵² Frampton Fox, "Partnership—More than a Buzzword", 5.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁵⁵ Ibid.,.

⁵⁶ Hodges, *The Indigenous Church and the Missionary*, 19.

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⁵⁸ Sherwood Lingenfelter, "Power Giving Leadership: Transformation for a Missional Church", In *Appropriate Christianity*, ed. Charles H. Kraft, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2005), 285.

⁵⁹ Gene Daniels, *Searching for the Indigenous Church: A Missionary Pilgrimage* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2005), 28.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 87.

⁶¹ Ibid., 90.

⁶² Ibid., 66.

⁶³ Paul Hiebert, "Partnership in the Gospel: Misers, Accountants, and Stewards," *Direction* 28 #1 (Spring 1999): 55-62.

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⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Samuel Chiang, "Partnership at the Crossroads: Red, Yellow, or Green Light?" EMQonline.com, July 1992, https://bgc.gospelcom.net/emqonline/emq_article.read.php?ArticleID=2991 (accessed September 9, 2007), 2.

⁶⁷ George W. Peters, "Pauline Patterns of Church-Mission Relationships", EMQonline.com, January 1973, , https://bgc.gospelcom.net/emqonline/emq_article.read.php?ArticleID=2520 (accessed August 25, 2007).

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⁶⁹ Stephen Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1989), 51.

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⁷¹ Ibid., 21-23.