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PRESENT-DAY MISSION PARTNERSHIPS

ABSTRACT

The centre of gravity of the church and of mission-sending has shifted from the North and West to the South and East. Currently, as many full-time cross-cultural missionaries are sent and supported by churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America as those sent from Europe and North America. In this new reality, there is an urgent need to discover and create new patterns of missionary partnership among Christians worldwide. It is urgent that church leaders, mission executives, and mission practitioners talk together, analyse, critique, and articulate the possibilities and pitfalls of partnership in mission in the 21st century. This article reflects on three aspects of present-day mission partnership, namely the broad contexts of mission partnerships; issues related to the structures for mission partnerships, particularly the modality-sodality mission relationships, and some pitfalls of paternalism facing all those in mission partnerships.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is an honour to be invited to contribute a chapter in the Festschrift for my friend, Prof. Dr Pieter Verster. I have known Pieter for a number of years. We have partnered together in leadership formation, particularly with the formation of a new generation of theologians and missiologists in Latin America. Pieter's irenic spirit, commitment to cooperation and collaboration in mission, love of the Scriptures, and deep appreciation of people have been an inspiration to me. Some years ago, I had the joy of being

with Pieter and the Faculty of Theology of the University of the Free State. I visited several classes that Pieter was teaching at the time and had an opportunity to watch first-hand his joy in teaching, his love for the Bible, his deep faith in Jesus Christ, and his commitment to listen, accompany, and appreciate personally each student in his classes. A consummate teacher, mentor, and missiologist, it has been a privilege to know and work with Pieter. These experiences with Dr Verster reminded me of discussions in which I have been involved, over many years, regarding mission partnerships. That led to the topic of this chapter. During our times together, Pieter and I often talked about mission partnerships, particularly as that issue impacts on the praxis of mission in Africa. I write from a North American and Latin American perspective, but I believe that our struggles in developing healthy mission partnerships are parallel to those experienced by many in Africa and Asia.

I will discuss three matters in this chapter:

- Set a broad context of present-day mission partnerships.
- Remind us of issues related to the structures for mission partnerships, particularly the modality-sodality mission relationships.
- Suggest some pitfalls of paternalism that we all face in mission partnerships.

We are aware of the fact that over 1.5 billion people worldwide profess themselves to be in some way Christian followers of Jesus, and that roughly two-thirds of all Christians now live in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Oceania. The center of gravity of the church and of mission-sending has shifted from the North and West to the South and East. Currently, as many full-time cross-cultural missionaries are sent and supported by churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America as those sent from Europe and North America. In this new reality, there is an urgent need to discover and create new patterns of missionary partnership among Christians worldwide. On a global scale, with missionary activities moving from everywhere to everywhere and from everyone to everyone, partnership in mission in the 21st century will involve combinations of the following:

- Church-with-church.
- Mission-with-mission.
- Sending-mission with receiving church.
- Sending-church with receiving mission.
- Formerly receiving church, now a mission sender, partnering to serve a new receiving church or mission.

- Multicultural teams that draw support from, and are accountable to persons, churches or mission agencies worldwide.
- Local congregations (especially mega-churches) that send their own missionaries, cooperating with older or newer receiving churches or mission agencies.
- Global, multilateral cooperative mission endeavours.

Patterns of partnership are increasingly complex. It is difficult for

- Local congregations to partner with denominational and/or sodality structures;
- Mission sodalities to partner with congregations within a modality tradition;
- Mission sodalities or missionary orders to partner with other sodalities, or with denominational structures or church hierarchies, and
- Mission agencies or denominational mission groups (sodalities) to partner with NGOs or other agencies made up of members of churches even within the same tradition.

Across the globe, we all need to examine the “beam in our own eye” (Matt. 7:3) and listen and learn from each other to find new ways of partnering together in world evangelisation. Recently, Lederleitner (2010:34) wrote

In order to work together well we need to listen to one another. We need to not only deeply grasp how our partners feel and what they believe but also take the additional step to understand why such feelings and beliefs are wholly logical within a given context. If we can see the logic of a person’s worldview, if we can value it as being wholly reasonable given a unique cultural heritage and history, from that place of mutual respect and dignity we can find new and creative ways to overcome obstacles and work together. If we never take that step, at some level within our hearts we will continue to demean how others think and function in the world.

From a Latin American perspective, Cueva (2015:xvii) suggested the need to “replace the old concept of partnership with what we shall call reciprocal contextual collaboration”.

In this article, I focus on international, long-term, cross-cultural missionary activity. Many of the issues I will mention also impact on short-term and local mission praxis, but the dynamics differ. During my years of missionary service in southern Mexico, I was involved in mission partnerships with the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico,

in partnership with the Reformed Church in America. I have personally experienced every one of the pitfalls of paternalism that I will mention in the last section of this chapter. In the interest of space, I will simply describe nine syndromes of paternalism. Before considering some pitfalls in mission partnerships, it is important to review and remember some of the issues that have faced the Christian church in terms of the diverse missionary structures that have emerged over time.

2. MISSION STRUCTURES, A BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to trace the history of Christian mission structures. That could be the topic of a fascinating and much-needed Ph.D. dissertation in Missiology. Allow me to simply mention some of the salient points regarding mission structures that have influenced the assumptions and patterns of missionary partnerships.

2.1 Paul and Barnabas – and their missionary teams

One of the first mission structures involved the mission team created by Paul and Barnabas for their first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-3). Their new mission structure included John Mark and possibly other men and women. There was a problem with John Mark. However, due to the family relationship between Barnabas and John Mark and to Paul's lack of patience and tolerance for John Mark's having left them during the first missionary journey (Acts 15:36-41), Luke (Acts 15:39) tells us that "[t]hey had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company". One mission structure thus became two or more. This sounds rather familiar nowadays.

2.2 Diaspora and dispersion mission during the first several centuries

In a general sense, we could summarise the mission structures of the first three centuries of the Christian era as mission through diaspora and dispersion. The Nestorians went east, probably all the way to China; tradition has it that some disciples headed south to India; other followers of Jesus went west all the way to Ireland; some disciples went north to what is today Lebanon. Mission structures involved persons, groups, and families who migrated to new places where they testified concerning their faith, evangelised those living around them, and contributed to the growth and geographic expansion of the church. Mission partnership, if it could be called such, was informal, collaborative, and somewhat unplanned.

2.3 “*Cuius regio eius religio*” of the Holy Roman Empire, and after the Reformation

After Constantine (c. 272AD-337CE) and during the next nearly thousand years, Christian mission was essentially the work of the pope, emperors and kings who expanded their rule both politically and religiously throughout what became known as the “Holy Roman Empire”. Church, government, and the military combined to expand the power of both the Western and Eastern churches. Mission structures were essentially church and political structures. The rule of the day was that “whose reign” determined “their religion”.

3. ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSIONARY ORDERS, MONASTICISM AND CHURCH HIERARCHY

With the discovery of new lands beyond the boundaries of Europe, missionary orders emerged as a new kind of mission structure. The relationship or “mission partnerships” between the Roman Catholic missionary orders and the church hierarchy is a fascinating topic for another book. That partnership varied according to the particular missionary order and the specific geographic contexts. The impact of the missionary orders on the growth and expansion of the Church of Jesus Christ worldwide cannot be underestimated. It contributed to the church becoming a global reality. The Latin American religious landscape was totally transformed not only by the conquests of Spain and Portugal assuming the “*cuius regio eius religio*” principle, but also because of the phenomenal work of Christianisation and civilisation carried out by the missionary orders. I grew up in San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, where the missionary orders (Dominicans, Franciscans, and Augustinians) exerted great influence on the so-called Christianisation of the local Mayan peoples.

4. PROTESTANT MISSION “SOCIETIES”; DENOMINATIONAL MISSION STRUCTURES; SODALITIES AND MODALITIES, “TWO STRUCTURES OF GOD’S MISSION”

One of the reasons often given for the lack of missionary action on the part of 16th-century Protestant Reformers is that they had no monastic movement to train and send out long-term, full-time emissaries to other parts of the world.

The Protestant churches rejected monasticism for theological reasons ... The dissolution of monasteries and convents in Protestant territories effectively destroyed the only mission structures that existed at the time. There was nothing to take the place of those monastic structures until the rise of the Protestant missionary movement two centuries later (Pierson 2009:148).

According to Latourette (1970:vol. 3:26), “Protestants lacked the monks who for more than a thousand years had been the chief agents for propagating the faith”.¹ The Latin American missiologist Rooy (2003:74) summarises the issue:

The perspective of the (Sixteenth-Century Protestant) reformers with respect to the priesthood of all believers implied the rejection of the monastic orders of the Roman Catholic Church. This left the churches of the (Protestant) Reformation without an effective organization to carry out the mission that during the Middle Ages had been the task of the orders, at least in part. In the Sixteenth Century, with the territorial expansion of Portugal and Spain, whole regions of the conquered lands were assigned to the (missionary) orders for them to “Christianize.” Effectively, the Dominicans, the Franciscans, the Augustinians, and – after 1580 – the Jesuits carried out a great work in doing this task in Latin America. We could call the monastic orders the “mission agencies” of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. By rejecting the (missionary) orders, the Protestant churches were left without mission agencies (my translation, CVE).

Lacking the monasteries, the missionary monks, and the monastic missionary movement, 16th-century Protestantism was unprepared and unable to carry out the long-term, professional, international type of mission that the Roman Catholic orders had been doing for centuries prior to the Reformation. The importance of this factor can best be appreciated by considering the phenomenal impact that voluntary missionary societies would have in subsequent centuries.

It took nearly 200 years for Protestantism to create voluntary societies whose role in catalysing Protestant global mission endeavours was similar to, though not as effective as the monastic movement. Walls helps us put this development in historical perspective:

It is surprising how little attention the voluntary society has attracted in studies of the nineteenth-century Church, considering the immense impact on Western Christianity and the transformation of world Christianity which (through its special form in the missionary

1 See also Terry & Gallagher (2017:139).

society) it helped to effect. The origins of the modern voluntary society lie in the last years of the seventeenth century ... Let the American missionary statesman Rufus Anderson describe (the voluntary society's) progress ... Anderson identifies the characteristically Protestant form of organization for this purpose as the voluntary association, "organized with a view to the conversion of the world" (Beaver 1967:64).

Anderson recognises several important features of the voluntary association: its instrumental character, its relatively recent origin, and its special structure. It differed from all previous structures in that it was open in its membership, that lay people were as much involved as ministers, and that its organisation was rooted in a mass membership, who felt responsibility for it and contributed generously to its support.

As Anderson puts it, in a voluntary association, individuals, churches, and congregations freely act together for an object of common interest. It is essentially a pragmatic approach. Increasingly more societies were developing for mutual support in the Christian life, or for more effective expression of Christian teaching.

Untheological development as it may have been, the voluntary society had immense theological implications. It arose because none of the classical patterns of church government, whether episcopal, Presbyterian, congregational, or connexional, had any machinery to do the tasks for which the missionary societies came into being. By its very success, the voluntary society subverted all the classical forms of church government, while fitting comfortably into none of them. Suddenly, it became clear that there were things – and not small things, but big things such as the evangelisation of the world – that were beyond the capacities of the churches. (This gave rise to what became known as the "fundamental principle".)

Our design is not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy, or any other form of Church Order and Government ... but the Glorious Gospel of the blessed God to the Heathen: and that it shall be left ... To the minds of the Persons whom God may call into the fellowship of His Son from among them to assume for themselves such form of Church Government, as to them shall appear most agreeable to the Word of God.²

It was the voluntary society which first made the laymen ... of real significance above parish or congregational level. As the societies developed, people, whether clerical or lay, who had previously been

2 Walls is quoting from Lovett (1899:21).

of no particular significance in their churches, came to be of immense significance in the societies. (The voluntary society) depended for its very existence on regular participation; it developed means of gaining that participation at local level. The society was rooted locally among Christians all over the country. The society took a local embodiment, developed a broad spread of participants, gave scope to lay commitment and enthusiasm. The voluntary societies and the missionary societies in particular, created a new reading public and used it to sensitize public opinion. (The new missionary societies) represent a development of the voluntary society rather than a totally new departure. The voluntary societies have been as revolutionary in their effect as ever the monasteries were in their sphere. The sodalities we now need may prove equally disturbing (Walls 1996:241-254).³

Some time ago, Winter called on mission thinkers to understand that, in the history of the church, there have been and should be what he called “two structures of God’s redemptive mission”. Winter called one structure a “modality” structure and the other a “sodality”.⁴ The Roman Catholic hierarchy was structured as a modality. The monasteries were structured as sodalities.

It would appear that every human society, whether secular or religious, needs both *modalities* (that is, overall, given, governmental structures) and also *sodalities* (that is, other-structured, decentralized and especially voluntary initiatives). I recognize and value both the synagogue (modality) and the Pharisaic missionary band (sodality) in the Jewish community before Christ. Both the New Testament church (modality) and the Pauline missionary band (sodality) are reasonable and helpful borrowings of those two earlier structures. The diocese (modality) and the monastery (sodality) are later functional equivalents. As already mentioned, we can apply this distinction to the contrast between bishop and abbot, secular and regular priests, and fairly recently in Protestantism to the uneasy distinction between *denomination* or *congregation* (modality) and *Christian movement, society* or *para-church structure* (sodality) (Winter 1979:142-143; italics are in the original).

Modality structures such as denominational organisations tend to be vertical, hierarchical, and chain-of-command structures. Sodality

3 In this description of the “voluntary society”, Walls draws from Beaver (1967:59-76).

4 *Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (2001:1812) defines sodality as follows: “1. Fellowship; comradeship. 2. An association or society. 3. Rom. Cath.: A lay society for religious and charitable purposes”.

structures such as faith-mission agencies, or Christian non-governmental organisations tend to be horizontal, more associational, cooperative fellowships of persons who share a particular vision and agenda. Modality structures tend to carry out many different types of activities. Sodality structures tend to focus on doing one kind of activity with a specific, focused purpose.

At one point, Winter (1970:52-62) called this the “warp and the woof” of mission.⁵ Winter (2009:225, 249) affirmed:

In failing to exploit the power of the sodality, the Protestants had no mechanism for missions for almost 300 years. At many points there was rivalry between these two structures, between bishop and abbot, diocese and monastery, modality and sodality, but the great achievement of the Medieval period is the ultimate synthesis, delicately achieved, whereby Catholic orders were able to function along with Catholic parishes and dioceses without the two structures conflicting with each other to the point of a setback to the movement. The harmony between the modality and the sodality achieved by the Roman Church is perhaps the most significant characteristic of this phase of the world Christian movement and continues to be Rome’s greatest organizational advantage to this day.⁶

Tennent concludes that

the dismantling of the sodality structures made it exceedingly difficult for Protestants to extend their message beyond the walls of Christendom. The fact that nearly two hundred years passed from the birth of the Reformation to the sending of the first Protestant missionaries indicates, in my view, both theological and structural problems within Protestantism (2010:450).⁷

There was an important structural problem within Protestantism ... there were no sodality structures available to support the sending out of Protestant missionaries across cultural boundaries. So, even though there were Protestant missionaries prior to Carey, it was

5 See also Winter (1979:142-145). Winter (1969:74-89) talks about “vertical” and “horizontal” structures. See also Winter (1971:89-100; 1973; 1979:139-178). Pierson (2006) offered a thought-provoking reflection on the matter of sodality and modality structures for mission.

6 I have sometimes joked with my Roman Catholic missiologist colleagues – half in jest – that the problem with the Protestants, in terms of the relationship of modalities (denominational structures) and sodalities (mission agencies), is that we have no Pope to hold it all together.

7 Latourette (1970:26) observed that “Protestants lacked the monks who for more than a thousand years had been the chief agents for propagating the faith”.

Carey who set forth a new *structure* which enabled the mainstream church to enter into and engage in cross-cultural missions in a way that was unprecedented in the Protestant churches (2010:453; italics are in the original).⁸

The issue of *modalities* and *sodalities* as structures for mission is important in terms of mission in the 21st century. Beginning with William Carey's formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792, a number of important sodality mission associations, societies, or faith missions were keys to the growth of global, international missionary involvement by European and American Protestants. Among others, we could mention the London Missionary Society (begun in 1795); the founding of the British and Foreign Bible Society by William Wilberforce and Thomas Charles (1804); the creation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in the United States in 1810, and J. Hudson Taylor's founding of the China Inland Mission (1865). These were early precursors of Protestant voluntary mission societies. They were not denominational mission organisations, nor were they under the control or authority of hierarchical modality church structures. Participation in, and funding for these mission societies was voluntary and included people from numerous modality church organisations.⁹ In a sense, these early mission societies marked the birth of a kind of Protestant monastic missionary endeavour.

This mission history is important because, after the Second World War, the emergence of sodality mission organisations transformed global mission-sending in the United States. Although denominational mission endeavours in the United States were still strong, important sodality mission organisations emerged before and after World War II. Some well-known examples of such organisations in the United States are, among others, Interserve (1852); Gideons International (1908); HCJB Radio (1931); Wycliffe Bible Translators (1934); InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (1938, with roots in student Bible study groups in England that began in 1877); Missionary Aviation Fellowship (1945); Misión Amén (founded in Peru in 1946); World Vision International (1947); Campus Crusade for Christ (1951), and Youth with a Mission (1960).

The InterVarsity-sponsored triennial Urbana Missions Conference represents the largest mission convention of its kind in North America, with 18,000 to 20,000 college-age young people gathered for Bible study,

8 Tennent (2010:453-457) devotes the remainder of the chapter to discussing the relationship between modality and sodality in current contexts of mission.

9 William Booth's founding of the Salvation Army (1865) was a unique kind of hybrid between a modality local congregation and a sodality mission society.

prayer, listening to world-renowned mission thinkers, and considering their participation in world evangelisation. The first gathering was in 1946. At each Urbana, over 260 missionary organisations set up booths to exhibit their particular approach and contribution to mission. The vast majority of these organisations are sodalities, many of them small, mom-and-pop initiatives, each with a very particular, sometimes rather narrow focus. The diversity and creativity of these sodalities is impressive. But they desperately need to find more effective ways to cooperate better among, and with each other and with modalities worldwide.

Nowadays, global mission endeavours may need both modality and sodality mission structures, as Winter emphasised some years ago. Both kinds of structures represent unique opportunities and challenges. The need for mission sodalities arose as a by-product of the unfortunate fragmentation of Protestantism and the the Protestant Reformers' rejection of the monastic movement.

What makes this picture more confusing, challenging and inspiring is the fact that, for the past 40 years or so, the rise of very large mega-churches has spawned a new kind of hybrid, a mission sodality within a church modality. A host of mega-churches have spawned their own sodality mission organisations. At the other end of the spectrum, there is a rise of individual "mom-and-pop shops" of persons or families who create their own support base, run their own non-profit, and do their own "thing" in mission. In both instances, partnership with other Christian and mission structures is often unclear, challenging and, at times, difficult.

The two structures carry out their missionary endeavours in very different ways. They differ, for example, in terms of recruitment, fund-raising, power-sharing, authority, accountability, reporting, decision-making processes, patterns of partnering with other Christian groups, flexibility, and long-term continuity. Persons, Christian groups, or churches interested in participating in mission-sending anywhere in the world need to learn about the phenomenal variety of mission structures now available to them, especially in terms of the difference between modality and sodality structures. Issues, challenges and problems related to modalities and sodalities in mission structures are now being reproduced, copied, and, in many instances, improved upon by similar mission structures in African, Asian, South Pacific, and Latin American mission-sending organisations. India, Nigeria, South Korea, and Brazil are among the largest mission-sending countries in the world. The total number of long-term, cross-cultural, international missionaries now being sent from the South and East of the globe outnumbers the total being sent from Europe and North America combined. In Latin America, there are now over 600 mission agencies that send over 9,000 full-time,

cross-cultural, international missionaries to all parts of the globe. Some are modality-structured mission endeavours, and some are sodality-structured mission initiatives. The new mission organisations in the global South and East are experiencing many of the same difficulties and confusion about mission structures with which European and North American mission-sending agencies have struggled over the past 200 years.

The latter part of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century saw the rise of many new forms of mission partnerships, both as modalities and as sodalities. A listing of these is beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to mention a few that come to mind:

- Mission networks such as, for example Lausanne, WEF, Global Kingdom Partners;
- InnerChange – a Protestant missionary order;
- Local congregations doing their own mission praxis;
- Mega-church mission praxis, and
- Mission from Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

This leads us to consider the dangers of paternalism in mission partnerships. Irrespective of the structure, the pitfalls and temptations of paternalism influence long-term, international, and cross-cultural mission endeavours.

5. PITFALLS IN MISSION PARTNERSHIPS: THE MANY FACES OF PATERNALISM IN MISSION PRAXIS

In an outline, summary fashion, I offer the reader some portraits of paternalism. Over the years, I have personally witnessed all of these, and, if space would permit, could illustrate each of the nine syndromes described below. I would invite the reader/listener to look in the mirror to see if any one of these faces appears there. For too long, the concept of paternalism has been primarily ascribed to Western missionaries' cross-cultural "colonial" mission among the peoples of Asia, Africa, Latin America, Oceania, and such. Nowadays, the dangers of paternalism influence mission praxis from everywhere to everywhere, and from everyone to everyone. It might be interesting to look in the mirror again to see whether the "beam" in our own eye may be blinding us so that we cannot assist with the "speck" in the mission praxis of others.

Paternalism may be found in many places and in many forms, often hiding behind subtly contrived masks. Paternalism involves some kind of extreme in our interpersonal relationships with those whom we seek to serve in mission and ministry. Although the following categorisations may appear to some as trivial knit-picking, and to others as exaggerated caricature, I believe that each contains an element of truth. If we carefully and honestly study these syndromes, we may recognise in them some dangerous tendencies in our thinking, ministry, and mission praxis.

5.1 The financier syndrome

- a. Giving money only if we can control its use, or it is guaranteed to produce the results WE want, or
- b. Not giving money because we feel that it “would not be good for them” – the ultimate of the “self-help” syndrome, or
- c. Giving money in such a way that it makes the recipient of our witness totally dependent on us, because there are no provisions made for continued support of the programme on the part of the recipients, or
- d. Giving money and, in an attempt not to be “paternalistic”, we exercise no discipling, training, accountability, or cooperation at all, but “dump” it in “their” laps, and then feel either impotent or angry, or both, if the administration is not done the way we wanted it done.

5.2 The smothering syndrome

- a. Deciding what the recipients of our mission REALLY need and fomenting change accordingly, regardless of whether they realise that they need it or not, or
- b. Hearing the recipients of our mission say that they need something but decide that they really do not. Or deciding independently from the recipients that, even though they may in fact need something, we do not need to be concerned about it – “it’s their problem”.

5.3 The organisation syndrome

- a. Designing a programme by ourselves, and then asking the recipients of that programme to ratify it – a kind of “take it or leave it” approach. Or manipulating the recipients in such a way that they have no choice but to receive the services already predetermined for them, or
- b. Running a programme for the recipients of our mission without asking them anything about it – “We do our thing; you do yours”.

- c. For example, bringing in services and/or structures which the recipients never asked for, teaching things we have decided “would be good for them to know”, bringing in experts to tell the recipients what they need without allowing the recipients the opportunity of contributing to their own development, or
- d. Doing nothing until we have been asked first. “I only do things by special invitation ... and then only when the event is well-planned, long in advance, and done right.”

5.4 The invasion syndrome

We bring in services and people, we create programmes, or budget money and locate all this in a setting without the petition, participation, or oversight of the recipients of these services. We thus minister to (and not with); do things for (and not alongside) the recipient. We think that we know best what the recipient needs without listening carefully to the recipient, in order to discover that no one knows the needs of the people of the area better than the recipients themselves. In fact, the recipients themselves should be the judges of the appropriateness of new plans and programmes. Careful incarnational mission will be ministry of the receptors, by the receptors, and with, and alongside the receptors – with the facilitating, enabling, ennobling, encouraging, and active participating on the part of the donors, in the midst of close, loving relationships between donors and receptors.

5.5 The isolation syndrome

- a. This is an insidious doublethink that wishes to assert the autonomy of the recipients, but from an isolationist point of view. It is like parents who, not wanting to influence their child’s thinking, never give advice, guidance, or suggestions, either. People caught in this syndrome decide independently of their recipients those arenas about which they will talk, and those arenas of mission and ministry to which they will remain aloof, independent, and isolated. Even when the recipients wish to consult about some issues, the isolation syndrome will cop out by saying “That is their problem”. This syndrome assumes that “self-governing” categorically eliminates mutual cooperation and that any cooperative efforts in joint participation on the part of the donor will automatically be paternalistic. In order to avoid being “paternalistic”, this syndrome paternalistically decides, independently from the recipients, not to actively participate with the recipients in issues and agendas that may be important to the recipients, but are not important to the donor, or

- b. The flipside of this syndrome is the “co-opting” syndrome. Rather than being isolationist, this syndrome invites the recipients to join with the donors in joint committees, but the most basic and influential decisions are not made by that joint committee – they are either pre-decided or directed after the group gathers. The recipients are “co-opted”, because they were present at the gathering at which something was talked about, were able to voice an opinion, but in the final analysis, did not have the power to influence the direction of the projects. If the donor organisation has “policies” decided outside the context of ministry which cannot be negotiated, either side of the isolationist syndrome will tend to take effect. If the participants themselves have pre-determined agendas or are not willing to respect and actively support the joint decisions, either side of this syndrome will take place.

5.6 The big cheese syndrome

- a. Deciding not to do something (even though it may be important now), because “they could never carry it on or keep it up when we are gone, so we will not do it at all”, or
- b. Thinking that our time is so valuable that we can only do big, important things such as political advocacy, management of funds, administration of personnel, preaching and teaching, walking in the courts and in the city hall, relating to the church uptown, to denominational judicatories, to relief agencies. It is for the recipients to deal with the person on the sidewalk; to do witnessing, sharing faith, and listening to the woes of their people, and to do the preaching, pastoral care, healing, and general ministry.

5.7 The prince-and-the-pauper syndrome

- a. Living so far above the standard of the people we serve that we never experience life as they live it, or
- b. Being overly conscious of our status and trying too hard to hide it by living in such poor conditions that all we have time for is to try to stay healthy and survive the conditions in which we have chosen to live.

5.8 The professional “fix-it” syndrome

The idea that we give services to recipients in an essentially impersonal fashion without getting “personally involved” in the lives of the recipients. Once the services have been provided, we retreat to our own living space and our own personal relationships that may be completely disconnected

from (and sometimes contradictory to) the lives of the people to whom we want to minister.

At times, in mission and ministry, we begin to believe that we can quickly fix things, without seriously considering the long-range, systemic difficulties, and the fact that we may ourselves be part of the system that perpetuates the problems we seek to fix.

5.9 The “reproducing ourselves” syndrome

- a. This mode of thinking has influenced North American mission endeavours particularly in denominational (modality) polity, theology, and perspective (including content and style of theological education) that are reproduced in the recipient culture. On the other hand, sodalities have sometimes tended to reproduce themselves, their agendas, their structures, and their methodologies, and even, at times, their names. We see “Latin America Mission Churches” in Central America and “African Inland Churches”, where the mission structure was simply carried over into national church structures. If our agenda is agriculture, based on management-by-objective, with well-defined target dates for local autonomy, the entire structure will tend to be reproduced in the receptor culture. Politically, the donor may be anxious to create political structure in the host culture, like we do it back home. Socially, the donors may tend to create family structures like those in which the donors were reared (thus polygamy, for example, may be out of the question), or
- b. The flipside of this syndrome is to think that all cultures are so unique that nothing of the sending culture is applicable. All polity, policies, methodologies and goals of the donor agency are considered foreign and, therefore, irrelevant, not useful, or possibly harmful to the receptors. Thus, we think that new indigenous churches only need the Bible and that they can, subsequently, create their own polity, theology, and corporate life. Twenty centuries of church history are thus irrelevant, and new indigenous churches must thus create their own local theologies, and essentially re-invent the wheel. Theological education becomes facilitating local reflection. Agriculture becomes non-technical self-help, digging in the trenches alongside the indigenous people. Healing becomes Christianising the local diviners. And sociopolitical and economic issues become solely the problem of the recipients in relation to their own tribe and nation, and not open for discussion by the foreign mission donors.

- c. Either side of this syndrome tends to retard the development of leaders who are both indigenous in their content, style, and method of leadership, and transformational in bringing to their own culture new directions and insights garnered from foreign sources and adapted to the host culture. Letter “a” above tends to produce leaders very rapidly, but they will be so foreign to their own culture that the host culture will, ultimately, tend to reject them, and will then need to begin again in its leadership development. Letter “b”, on the other hand, will retard leadership development, because the host culture will tend to muddle around for decades trying to find appropriate models (that may or may not be found in the host culture), always rejecting anything that seems to borrow from something foreign. To avoid this, a model will finally be taken, baptised as indigenous, and uncritically adopted.

6. CONCLUSION

It is obvious that paternalism is an ever-present danger in mission and ministry. It appears mostly when we hold to some position or idea in a doctrinaire fashion, or take some action regardless of the circumstances, opinions, wisdom, or feelings of the people we are called to serve or walk alongside. Can we escape paternalism in mission partnerships altogether? Probably not. Maybe all we can do is be aware of these traps. Maybe senders and receivers, donors and recipients, initiators and followers need to talk together about how they view and experience these pitfalls in mission partnership. In each decision, in each circumstance, at the initiation of each programme, in the training of each new person, we need to listen carefully, be open to self-critique, and pray a great deal for wisdom and sensitivity before ceaselessly evaluating our thinking, values, and behaviour in relation to those traps.

We need Christ’s mind for Christ’s Church, participating in Christ’s mission. Ultimately, we need to be aware that there is one Spirit, one Body, and one hope and calling (Eph. 4:1-6). Together, as international, multicultural members of one Church, seeking to work together as mutual partners, we seek to be Christ’s Church in a particular place and specific culture. There need not be any “us-and-them” mentality, because we all seek to be obedient to one Lord in a specific place. When donors and recipients share their visions, their goals, their strategies, and their work as adult, equal, actively cooperative, and mutually accountable partners, some of the pitfalls outlined earlier can be avoided, and healthy, loving, visionary, and creative mission can be undertaken.

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