

A MISSIONARY PARADIGM OF PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH

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1. INTRODUCTION

We are Peruvian missionaries sent by the Iglesia Misionera Evangelica (IME) of Huancayo Peru, to work in church planting among Spanish-speaking people in London where there are more than 300,000 Latins. I am married to Noemi and we have two children: Noemi Delia (15) (Peruvian), and Claudia (7) (Spanish).

Historically: Mission was originally developed as a one-way process - from the North to the South.

Theologically: In the sphere of hermeneutics, “partnership” might be interpreted in terms of , “koinonia”, mutuality, interdependency, companionship etc.

Ecclesiologicaly: I believe in the local church as the major agent of mission according to Acts 13.

Missiologically: Mission used to be understood in terms of “sending churches” and “receiving churches” but since the international mission conference, held in Whitby, Canada in 1947, somehow the idea has changed slightly, taking account of “Partners in Obedience”. I should say that this was a claim from the South rather than a real change in interpretation of the term, “partnership” in the North. It was an ideal rather than something that was acted upon, but today we can learn lessons from history and also take our missionary paradigm from everywhere - the North and the South, St James’s and IME Peru, as a new paradigm of partnership.

2. THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

We can clarify the meaning of “partnership” in three ways: **First**, this word has been used missiologically to define the idea of relationship between churches based on trust, mutual recognition and reciprocal exchange. **Second**, partnership expresses the theological idea of covenant where two or more persons agree to participate in a determined vision, action, purpose, target, methodology, strategy, etc, in order to accomplish one or more things cooperatively. **Third**, partnership is used in the secular world to define a couple living together without the public commitment of marriage, or can define a business or political relationship. Therefore we have to be aware of these meanings when we try to use “partnership” in the context of a good relationship in fulfilling the missionary task.

Let me say that God’s mission is done through his church around the world as we partner with him in His mission. God’s church must be working in close relationship with the *Missio Dei*. It means that every local Christian church must be a church in mission united

in respect and love to others. There is no dichotomy between mission and unity. We could name this type of partnership as “diversity” (*denominations*) in unity (*the purpose*). But theology of partnership is vital to prevent competition because, as members of Christ’s church, we are partners in a common witness: to make Christ known by preaching the Gospel in word and deed, and to extend God’s Kingdom around the world.

3. BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

The word “koinonia” in the New Testament is possibly the nearest in meaning to “partnership”. “Its most basic meaning is partaking together in a group which has a common identity; goals and responsibilities”(Kirk:188).

Now I will summarise four aspects of this partnership, as described by Andrew Kirk(:188-190)

a. Sharing in a common project

In Phil. 1:5 the phrase “because of your partnership in the gospel” means that the local church in Philippi was a partner (“*Koinonia*”) with Paul in defence and confirmation of the gospel. “Paul envisages the partnership in terms of giving and receiving on both sides according to Phil. 4:15.

b. Sharing of gifts

The gifts of the Holy Spirit were given to every Christian “for the common good” (I Co 12:7), and Paul stresses this because the exercise of the gifts was bringing serious dissension into the body. The gifts were being interpreted as “greater” and “lesser” gifts in the church.

The purpose of the gifts is for the health and the well being of the whole body; to equip the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ to reach maturity (Eph 4:11-13). This is “organic growth” (each person is dependent on the gifts given to all the others).

c. Sharing in suffering

The apostle Paul had to suffer different experiences in partnership with Christ’s sufferings (2Co 1:7; Col 1:24). He invites us to participate in the same way (2Co 4:7-18): “we always carry around in our body the death of Jesus”. We, as Christians sometimes have to suffer under the example of Jesus when we are rejected, persecuted, insulted, accused without any reason, etc. Our mission task must fall within the model of the incarnational suffering of Jesus Christ, who went to the cross in solidarity with human beings. The presence of Christ in the world is a “partnership” with his church to redeem everything through him and for him (Col 1:16-22). We should practice self-sacrifice.

d. Sharing of material resources

The apostle Paul develops the biblical requirement that the church in Macedonia share its material resources with the other local churches in Judea because of their needs. (I Co 8:1-5). The Macedonian churches were generous in responding to a crisis in another part of the body of Christ.

An appeal was made in the church in Achaia to help in the same way (2 Co 9:1-14). Paul argues that the collection made by Titus will enable the needs of other Christians to be met, generating equality by this action. Macedonia and Achaia's churches are in partnership together helping the church of Judea.

I would like to add the following points:

1. Sharing with others invites more prayer for others (2 Co 9:14).
2. Sharing with others provides more resources (2 Co 9:8-10).
3. Sharing with others generates praise and thanksgiving to God (2 Co 9: 12-13).
4. Sharing with others is an expression of
5. Obedience to the gospel of Christ (2 Co 9:13).

4. BASIS FOR HEALTHY PARTNERSHIP

In order to summarise our partnership in mission with St James, I would need to define it by way of the following points that in my understanding are fundamental to constructing a real partnership in mission. This summary is therefore applicable to every context.

1. **Confidence.** We have to generate confidence and trust in our partner and also know that they trust us.
2. **Honesty.** We have to be transparent and to give a clear explanation of what is our call.
3. **Openness.** We have to try to understand each other culturally, theologically and missiologically.
4. **Patience.** It is important to wait until God has done something. Don't flit from church to church.
5. **Vision.** Without a clear vision we will perish. We need to know where we are and where we are going.
6. **Spiritual maturity.** Support one another in word and deed.
7. **Friendship.** It takes time, and real friendship comes from God. We need a "chemistry that comes from heaven".

5. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF REAL PARTNERSHIP

1. Starts with what you have in your hand.
2. Give what you have.
3. Share as if it is your own mission project.
4. Give unconditionally.

6. OUR MISSIOLOGICAL PARADIGM

I have to recognise that I never thought of working with Anglicans, but God had already determined that the perfect missionary plan for our ministry in this country would be in this denomination. In this respect, God's contact for our missionary plan has been our missionary friend Alex Ross, the Vicar of St. James, who was very open to us, despite our not having any formal reference. Today I interpret this action as God's perfect plan working in two ways at the same time, in our hearts and in his (Alex's) heart. I cannot explain this experience in any other way. Our initial plan was to get a spiritual umbrella within the Baptist church, because that was our context in Barcelona.

Our first visit to London was in 1985, when I came with my wife for our honeymoon. God allow us to develop a strong ministry in Peru until 1991, at which point we were sent as missionaries to plant a church in Barcelona, Spain. There we established an IME church, and then in 1997, called by God, we came to London to plant another missionary church among the Spanish-speaking people.

Our Latin American model of mission is developed through the Local Church. In this way our sending church is the **Iglesia Misionera Evangelica(IME)**, that actually also has a non-denominational mission structure called Mision IME Internacional(International IME mission).

Our model of support is a "faith mission " one, in which every missionary has to provide his or her own financial support. Our sending church supports us with 10% of the budget and the difference is covered by relatives, friends and other churches we have links with (iglesia amiga). In this way St. James should be included as a (iglesia amiga) supporting church. Mission organizations do not have any participation in our finances.

Now I would like to mention some points that St James has provided for our ministry that have been a great experience in building our partnership:

1. **Use of building for our Spanish speaking church.**
We can use the building on Sundays, Thursdays and whenever we need for special activities, with no payment.
2. **Spiritual support.**
We have received pastoral support and friendship from the vicar and the staff.
3. **Financial support**
We receive a small but regular financial support for our ministry.
St. James pays for my car insurance.
4. **Practical support.** St. James's has helped to buy a building for the IME church in Cerro de Pasco and has made a "Christmas appeal" to enable the IME church to rent a place in Lima.

On the other hand we have been supporting St. James in the following ways:

1. Motivating the British church in global mission
2. Sending **short-term mission teams** to Peru every two years.
3. Strengthening the prayer meeting services every Friday at 6 am

4. Being part of the staff of the new 5PM service.
5. Supporting the World Mission Group, the committee that leads missions.
6. Regular participation in St. James's services

7. CONCLUSION

This is the time when mission cannot be developed in isolation. It is time to work together sharing in common projects but also in projects that we are not totally involved in. The mission of the third millennium should be a mission of interdependence, respecting each other in love and supporting plans for mission unconditionally.

References

Kirk Andrew, *What is Mission?*, Theological Explorations, London, Darton, Longman 1999.