

# **Partnership in imbalance?**

An examination of structures in  
*mission in partnership*, with an emphasis on the  
historical and current cooperation of the  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania and her  
partners

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# 1 Introduction

Our world today, in spite of its beauty, its colours and music, is an unjust, shifting place. But at the same time it is also the place, in which the church believes herself to be a representation of the one who is also her Head, an ambassador of Christ to the world he died for, and the beginning of the Kingdom of God, which is breaking in upon us at this very moment.

Yet, the church is also a church *of* the world into which she is sent, which, with its sinful and unjust structures, provides the framework for the presence of the church within it. Within this framework, the church endeavours to apply her transforming work, and to function as one coherent body, jointly venturing into her call, participating together as one body in the mission of God to his creation.

The issue of churches from different parts of the world working together in mission – *partnership* in mission – is one of the most actual issues in the modern day global Christianity (cf. Funkschmidt 2002a:395). As churches, which 50 – 150 years ago came into being during the great Protestant missionary outreach from the West, have, during the last half century, been striving to become limbs in their own rights, a new challenge has emerged. This challenge involves belonging to the same worldwide church, in a sharing spirit, devoid of paternalism or opportunism, exploitation or charity without consideration. Old divides of North and South, poor and wealthy, still make their presence known as the church tries to knit itself tighter together across the evil structures of the world. The legacy of colonialism still lets its hampering shadow touch our time in the form of neo-imperialism through culture and commerce.

The theme of this thesis is the practical implementation of the concept of churches in partnership through the structures created to facilitate this. It is an issue which has had worldwide attention in mission circles at least since the meeting of the International Missionary Council in Whitby in 1947 declared its slogan “Partnership in obedience”. But even though it is over half a century since this cry was raised, it seems that ways of achieving this in practice, which is satisfying to all partners, still proves a great challenge. However, it would seem that the church has slowly come closer to the ideals stated in various mission documents and meeting resolutions since the Whitby 1947 meeting.

The purpose of this thesis is threefold. Firstly, it attempts to trace some of the historical developments that have resulted in the concept of partnership cooperation in

mission today. Secondly, it endeavours to discuss the theology pertaining to such cooperation, and thirdly, it seeks to apply these insights to a discussion of current partnership cooperation.

The treatment of partnership in mission in general, is to some degree interwoven with the special focus of this thesis, which is a case study of the partnership cooperation in mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) and her partners. The ELCT is actually a case of church partnership in itself, being the result of a union in 1963 of Lutheran churches instituted by various missions in that part of East-Africa which is now known as Tanzania. But the main focus is on the cooperation with the Northern partners, consisting of both the original mission agencies and some newcomers on the scene. The North-South partnership in the ELCT has once been hailed as a model of implementation of partnership cooperation for other churches to follow, and consequently it has received the attention and research due to it. However, the developments during the last ten years do not seem to have been independently examined to any great degree. In 1998 the structure of the partnership cooperation was substantially remodelled, as there had been relatively little developments for some years, and critique of outmoded cooperation models had emerged. A review of this remodelling was done in 2004, which gave serious consideration to the experiences after 1998, and consequently resulted in further structural changes.

The method of the discussion in this thesis is mainly inductive. It will be conducted by means of a short historical and deliberating survey of the developments of the “partnership in mission” concept, serving as an introduction to the concept itself. It is followed by a chapter of theological reflection, pertaining mainly to the general concept of partnership in mission, with an attempt at bringing forward practical and structural implications of the theological considerations.

Turning to the special emphasis of the thesis, the theological discussion is followed by a short account of the historical background of the ELCT, before tracing the developments of the partnership cooperation of the ELCT and her partners, especially with regard to the functioning of the later partnership instruments.

In the final chapter, I will do an examination of the partnership cooperation with regard to power, reciprocity, mutuality and self-support, with reference to the partnership cooperation of the ELCT as well as some theological issues. Also issues of bilateral relationships and attitudes are commented upon. Hopefully, these deliberations will indicate the direction in which both the Tanzanian partnership cooperation, and the partnership

cooperation in general, are headed, and provide some means to determine whether this direction is where our service to the mission of God points.

With regard to sources, I utilise statements, documents and other missiological studies in my presentation and discussion of partnership. With regard to material pertaining to the ELCT and her partners, I rely mostly on the work of Lindqvist (1982), and Helander and Niwagila (1996), which treats the partnership cooperation of the ELCT up until the first half of the 1990's. Also for these years, but mostly for the latter, I rely upon the yearly editions of minutes, exhibits, plans and reports, (which also includes accounts and budgets) from the two later cooperation instruments, which is the succeeding organs coordinating the partnership cooperation between the ELCT and her Northern partners<sup>1</sup>.

Some limitations of this thesis should be mentioned. Firstly, the confessional, or denominational, point of view of the thesis is Lutheran, and therefore the discussion is largely Lutheran, although sometimes extended to an ecumenical view.

Secondly, the thesis approaches the concept of partnership in mission from a structural viewpoint, and the discussion is kept on a somewhat abstract level, at least with regard to the actual contents of the partnership cooperation. Partnership in mission does however embrace many other aspects than the structural ones. This means that e.g. expatriate missionaries do not receive much attention as a separate issue, although they are a very vital expression of partnership in mission. Where applicable, however, the discussion also extends to other aspects, but the main line is still the structural approach.

Thirdly, the nature of the material on which I base the discussion of the more recent developments of the instruments of the ELCT partnership cooperation, provides only for a limited understanding. It is possible that e.g. people working with this cooperation might disagree with aspects of the dynamics or workings of the partnership as I have laid them out. However, hopefully the "outsider's" perspective, from which I have approached the material, might still have the benefit of providing a fresh view.

Some clarification with regard to terminology is in order. Firstly, I will use the terms "Third World" and "West", with "South" and "North" freely as idiomatic synonyms. This usage of terms is conscious in order to point out that even though more diplomatic descriptions are available, such as the term "Two-Thirds" world (Scherer 1987:6), the

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<sup>1</sup> In referencing this material, there are some difficulties with regard to separating the yearly editions, as the time of publication varies. They are, however, intended to be used by the partners in a given year, and the title usually reflect this. Therefore, this is also the year by which they are referenced in this thesis. Where there are problems in identifying the correct edition, it can easily be determined by the inclusion of the minutes of the Assembly (or later the Round Table) meetings of the *preceeding* year.

terminology used in this thesis does not only describe a geographical part of the world, but also implies a sociological aspect, pointing to the unjustness of our world order, as well as our apparent inability to cease maintaining it as such.

Secondly, the term “mission” in singular is mainly used to indicate the *missio Dei*, the redeeming mission of God towards his creation, of which the Church, which also has the privilege to participate in this mission, is a result. “Missions”, i.e. in plural, means the organized efforts of the churches in participating in mission. In the light of the *missio Dei*, this is understood to be broader than, though including, evangelisation, and also embrace such things as diakonia, health care, poverty alleviation, as well as inter-church support and empowerment. Such is the mission which is the goal of the “partnership in mission”.

Thirdly, the term ‘partnership’ when standing alone, usually denotes “partnership cooperation in mission”, although the context of the usage is finally determining for its specific meaning.

Fourthly, I have not discussed the structural problems of the historical fact that most of the mission in the great Protestant missionary era were done by missionary agencies and societies, and not so much by churches. Presently, there is more participation by churches in mission, and churches participate in partnerships, either through missionary agencies, societies or partnership instruments, or through direct relationships with other churches. However, this constitutes a separate issue with regard to mission in partnership, and I have not clearly separated between mission agencies/societies and churches when discussing partnerships in this thesis. For the most part, with regard to the North, the usage of the terms ‘mission societies/agencies’ and ‘churches’ might be understood to be embraced under the same umbrella of ‘partners’, with the implication that what is said of mission agencies might also be valid for churches as far as partnership cooperation is concerned. When this is not so, it is apparent from the context of the usage of the terms. Finally, with regard to the ELCT, it is made up of dioceses and earlier synods. These might also be referred to as ‘units’ in this thesis.

I would also like to mention that this thesis is written from a Western, or Nordic, perspective, and no attempt is made to try to conceal this by being over-zealous in objectivity, since I recognize that this would be an impossible task. Nevertheless, objectivity is still strived for in discussions and assessments. When studying partnership in mission, it becomes apparent that the cultural perspective is permeating every conscious and unconscious thought. Therefore, my discussion here ought to be balanced by a similar discussion of the partnership cooperation, but from a Tanzanian perspective. To my

knowledge, one of my fellow students in Stavanger, a Tanzanian, is planning to write his master's thesis on the topic, and I hereby also invite my fellow theology students in Tanzania to do the same. The only way we can have a healthy partnership cooperation in spite of cultural and economical differences, is by continuous critical examination voicing our concerns and listening to our partners. This is a vital prerequisite for any relationship.

## **2 The partnership debate in historical context: - Normative and practical issues**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I will try to trace the development and understanding of the concept of *partnership* in connection with Christian mission during the last century. The objective of this brief historic survey is to establish an understanding of the concept through the historical interplay which has been the context of its forming, as well as to provide a historical background for understanding of the present issues concerning partnership in mission.

I will begin the survey in the great missionary era of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and follow the lead of the International Missionary Council and the resulting conciliar tradition. I will trace the evangelical movement's views on partnership from Lausanne 1974 through the Manila Manifesto of 1989. Also the Lutheran World Federation and its two official statements on mission (1988 and 2004)<sup>2</sup> will be treated. This is especially relevant, as the context both for this thesis and the churches and traditions which it studies, are Lutheran. Finally, some more recent developments will also be mentioned.

### **2.2 Historical background: Edinburgh to Whitby**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the great missionary era, mission was perceived in ecclesiocentric terms and as an endeavour of the Christianized West. The commission given in Matthew 28 was understood as directed at the countries outside the West (cf. Wind 1995:244), and during the century an enormous zeal for carrying the message to the unevangelized resulted in "a unique explosion of Christian faith and community into the entire world" (Scherer 1987:12).

The historian Latourette notes (1941:102ff) that one of the distinctive features of (Western) Protestant mission in the 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>3</sup> was the marked increase in creation of, and cooperation between, missionary organizations, which, through several organizations and conferences by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, culminated in the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910.<sup>4</sup> This conference Scherer characterises as "a watershed event which

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<sup>2</sup> *Together in God's Mission*, LWF 1988 and *Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment*, LWF 2004

<sup>3</sup> Regrettably, Christian mission developments other than the early Protestant and later the whole Ecumenical movement is out of the scope of this thesis.

<sup>4</sup> According to Latourette (ibid:195f) a Union Missionary Convention in New York in 1854, a Conference on Missions in Liverpool in 1860, two London conferences on Protestant mission in 1817 and 1888 and the

climaxed decades of regional missionary cooperation” (1987:14), and Bosch, as representing “the all-time highwater mark in Western missionary enthusiasm, the zenith of the optimistic and pragmatist approach to mission” (1991:338). As the conference eventually resulted in the creation of the International Missionary Council (IMC) and started the ecumenical developments, it is a suitable place in time to start this brief survey.

The developments of mission into today’s understanding of partnership, cannot be fully appreciated unless the outset of this development is considered. The report from Edinburgh 1910 stated that the goal of mission was “the Christianization of the entire non-Christian world, with Western culture and the Western church as the model” (Wind 1995:245). In that regard, Yates notes:

In the period up to and after Edinburgh 1910, mission as expansion was a dominant understanding, not least in the Anglo-Saxon world. Before too easily condemning a vision, which, in its less acceptable forms, became identified with world conquest and cultural and spiritual imperialism, it is important to notice that this understanding of mission has been present from the beginning. (Yates 1994:7)

Yates elaborates what he means by “beginning” by presenting examples from mission history beginning with the Portuguese expansion in the 14<sup>th</sup> century up the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where it seems as though there always have been a cultural and political side to Christian mission. Thus it is not very strange if the 19<sup>th</sup> Century missionary did not necessarily reflect deeply upon the cultural expansive elements of his/her mission. Beaver notes (1970:247) that in the early decades of the great missionary era, the discussion was not whether “civilizing” had any legitimacy in mission, but rather whether it should come before the process of Christianizing, or after it, as a natural consequence.

With mission perceived as a movement from the Christian North to the South (Scherer 1987:21), the churches established in the mission field were thought of as a tool of mission (Wind 1995:245), the means by which the Western mission agencies could penetrate deeper into the un-evangelized parts of the world.

With regard to the new churches themselves, the principle of the “three-self” formula<sup>5</sup> was more or less accepted throughout the protestant mission movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

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Ecumenical Missionary Conference in New York 1900 were the line of conferences that led up to the Edinburgh Conference in 1910.

5 Beaver 1970:248: “The goal of mission is to plant and foster the development of churches which will be self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating.”

Its origins are credited to Henry Venn, general secretary of the Church Missionary Society in London, and Rufus Anderson, foreign secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (Beaver 1970:248f). Though having different approaches to the practice, they both were of the opinion that, after having established a church which seemed to function, the missionaries should move on to other fields, because their work then was accomplished where they had been.

But towards the turn of the century, imperialist ideologies took over for the original intentions in the “three-self” formula (Beaver 1970:249), and ideas such as “the white man’s burden” and the inferiority of indigenous people made paternalism stop the development. This was, however, dealt with by the Edinburgh Conference, which “revealed that the native church was really a fact and was restive under paternal domination.” (Beaver 1970:249)

The three-self formula has been criticized because of the context of paternalism in which it was first employed, and which it still evokes associations to. Scherer points to the fact that Edinburgh 1910 actually anticipated the concept of partnership, by holding up as a goal the establishment of churches “deeply rooted to the culture of its own people” in the mission field (Scherer 1987:19). If later developments painted another image of imperialism, where missionaries were reluctant to leave the churches in the hands of its members, it still should be remembered that the three-self formula may be seen as the first step towards the partnership concept. Edinburgh was the culmination of the great missionary era, with mission perceived in terms of North and South, but it was also the beginning of the development towards the modern era.

After the 1910 Conference, the IMC came into being in 1921, as a continuation of the engagement and zeal at the Edinburgh meeting. The period which was now initiated, in accordance with the Edinburgh affirmation on the indigenous church, Latourette (1945:48-65) describes as a time where Protestant mission’s effort to transfer leadership of churches to indigenous people, started to accelerate. Partly because of the need for Christianity to survive in the face of indigenous nationalism and resentment against Western domination, which began to rise after the first World War and even more after the Second,<sup>6</sup> but also because indigenous expressions of faith became recognized. Other reasons for the acceleration of indigenization (cf. Sahlberg 1999:139ff) was that the wars deprived the new churches of the Western missionaries, who became imprisoned due to their representing the wrong Western

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<sup>6</sup> “If Christianity was to prevail among non-white peoples, it must, so far as possible, divest itself of its Occidental (‘Western’, my add.) dress.” (Latourette 1945:49-50)

nations, or had to leave for other duties. Also the economical depression in the 1930's hastened this development.

Also at the Jerusalem meeting of the IMC in 1928, the relationship of the old and new churches came under scrutiny (Yates 1994:67f, Bosch 1991:369).<sup>7</sup> The recognition of indigenous leadership did, however, not necessarily mean that the Western missionaries had to leave, or were not needed any longer. In a remarkable anticipation of modern partnership with regard to the developments in China, Leung, a leader in the Church of Christ in China, wrote: "Missionaries ought to have a permanent place in China, just as we hope Chinese missionaries must in future have a permanent place in America, if I am permitted to say so." (IMC/J, vol. III, pp 12-13, cited in Yates 1994:67).

The Tambaram/Madras meeting of the IMC in 1938 was a concrete display of the ongoing indigenization process, as for the first time, there were more representatives from the Third World Churches than from the West. Tambaram affirmed the the local church as the primary agent in evangelization, (Yates 1994:121) but still, Bosch notes that Kraemer found it necessary to remind the Western missionary representatives "that the 'younger' churches are the *fruit* and not the *possession* of mission societies." (1991:465) It may be that the indigenization process, with respect to national leadership, went as it was planned, but that the trouble was in the transition (within the reference frame of the "three-selves") from self-governing to self-sufficient. According to Bosch (ibid:295) the problem was largely that the new churches were structured in the same way as the Western churches, without the same socio-economic system undergirding them. Bosch cites a study group in India in the 1920: "We have created conditions and methods of work which can only be maintained by European wealth." (ibid.) Even though this last statement was issued nearly a century ago, one cannot help wondering at the familiar ring of it.

### **2.3 "Partnership in obedience" – Ecumenical thinking from Whitby and onwards**

After the Second World War, the fact that many Third World churches which had been "orphaned" from their mission agencies during the war, had assumed a functioning and leadership, and had even been "growing", together with the collapse of the colonial framework, pointed to the need for new relationships (Bosch 1991:451).

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<sup>7</sup> Related was also the discussion of what was the Kingdom of God, the "comprehensive approach" to mission (Yates 1994:65:ff, Bosch 1991:356), and relationship to other religions (Gnanakan 1989 :18f)

At the IMC meeting in Whitby in 1947, the slogan became “Partnership in obedience”. This was to replace the terminology of “younger” and “older” churches with its inherent paternal notions. Scherer notes (1987:94) that this meant cooperation between Western and Third World churches, with the goal of establishing new pioneer missions, as well as the progress towards self-reliance of these “younger” churches themselves. However, Bosch mentions that the phrase also was meant to underline that “it was theologically preposterous to distinguish between ‘autonomous’ and ‘dependent’ churches” (Bosch 1991:379).

Then, after the Willingen IMC meeting in 1952, after which the *missio Dei* concept was developed, “partnership in obedience” was replaced by “partnership in mission” (cf. Marsh 2003:370). Thinking about mission now changed, so it was no longer perceived as a movement of the European Church towards the rest of the world, “but as the action of all churches participating in God’s one mission as equal partners” (Marsh 2003:371). *Missio Dei* may be seen as necessary in order to have a true partnership. In his article, studying the developments of the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (a mission society of the Church of England) between 1965 and 1996, Marsh concludes that “reciprocal relationships emerged when they were centred on *missio Dei*, rather than on church-centred mission” (ibid:379).

Even though the IMC integration into the World Council of Churches (WCC) had been an issue since before the formation of the WCC (Yates 1996:155), the *missio Dei* provided a theological basis. The IMC’s statement at Willingen 1952 on “the missionary obligation of the Church” shows that integration into the WCC would be a natural step.<sup>8</sup> The document *One Body, One Gospel, One World* issued after the last IMC meeting at Ghana 1957/58, which, according to Scherer, was an “eloquent rationale for integration” (1987:103) makes clear statements about the missionary nature of the Church. It also spells out how the consequence of this theology makes it necessary to abandon concepts such as sending and receiving. Importantly, it also states that mission should be done in partnership. Nevertheless, responsibility for mission is with the local church, although they cannot set themselves apart from help from other churches. But, “such help can only be rightly given if it is so given as to respect the integrity of the church in the area as truly the Body of Christ in that place.” (*One*

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<sup>8</sup> ”There is no participation in Christ without participation in His mission to the world, ... God sends forth the Church to carry out his mission to the ends of the earth, to all nations, and to the end of time.” (*The Missionary Obligation of the Church: Willingen, Germany 1952* Edinburgh House, London 1952, cited in Scherer 1986:98)

*Body, One Gospel, One World: The Christian Mission today*, IMC, London and New York 1958)<sup>9</sup>

After the intergration of the IMC into the WCC in 1961, as the Commission on World Mission and Evangelization (CWME), its focus soon shifted. At the CWME meeting in New Mexico in 1963, it was again emphasized that the sending/receiving model of mission was obsolete (Yates 1994:165). However, after this, the debacle as a result of the tension between mission as social responsibility and dialogue on the one hand, and evangelisation on the other, dominated the debate, with the climax of the Uppsala meeting of 1968.

The next Assembly of the CWME, in Bangkok 1973, set the relationship between the North and South on the agenda. To quote Scherer; “Bangkok was a two-thirds world meeting at which church leaders from Asia and Africa freely spoke their mind.” (Scherer 1987:121). Among the issues discussed, was a focus on how power and economic inequalities prevented the development of partnership in equality. It also treated the question of a missionary moratorium, which was proposed by Third World leaders. While Bangkok decided against such a moratorium, this nevertheless set the relationship of North-South in focus again.

I would like to leave the conciliar tradition at this point, as it does not seem to have succeed in setting any policies with any great influence upon the structure of North-South partnership relations. However, a number of interesting developments have taken place outside the CWME/WCC. I will now turn to discuss these.

## **2.4 Lausanne – the evangelical partnership**

The evangelical mission coordination parallel to the WCC culminated in 1974 in the Lausanne Congress, which gained a special momentum due to the evangelical dissatisfaction with regard to the developments within the WCC, and spurred the Lausanne movement as a body to be reckoned with on the international arena of mission. At the basis of the movement, is the Lausanne Covenant (LC), a strong document which sets the tone for evangelical attitudes and mission strategy. It is divided into 15 paragraphs, of which LC6-8 are of particular interest. They deal with the church and Evangelism (LC6), Cooperation in faith (LC7), and Churches in Evangelistic partnership (LC8).

It is clear that the Lausanne covenant sees it self in the tradition of the IMC, as it echoes the sentence: “The whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world.” (LC6, cf. Scherer 1987:175). From this outset, LC7 goes on to promote visible unity, since disunity “undermines our Gospel of reconciliation”. The theme of unity is also placed in connection

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<sup>9</sup> Cited in Scherer 1987:103.

with partnership in LC8, where “growing partnership of churches will develop and the universal character of Christ’s Church will be clearly exhibited.” The paragraph is particularly interesting because it captures the context in which partnership in mission has been seen as a corrective: It begins with an affirmation that “the dominant role of Western mission is fast disappearing.” It then asserts that the task of evangelization belongs the whole Church and that all churches should send missionaries, both to their immediate area and “other parts of the world”. Thus, partnership is actualized in the context of the abandonment of the Western sending/receiving model. LC8 may have perceived the difficulties of implementing partnership in a satisfactory manner, as the short paragraph twice underlines a responsibility to constantly evaluate missionary responsibilities and the different missionary labour effort’s “effectiveness as part of the Church”.

Van Engen notes with regard to Lausanne that, because of its emphasis on strategy, the relationship to the Third World churches was important:

So while the ecumenical movement was thinking in terms of moratorium, the evangelicals were seeking new cooperative strategies in education, literacy programs, interdenominational and intermissional evangelistic campaign, leadership training, health programs, and even dialogue. (Van Engen 1996:139)

In the wake of the Lausanne meeting, there were several other evangelical missionary consultations, contemplating different aspects actualized by Lausanne. In 1989, the Second International Congress of Evangelization was held in Manila, and it issued a manifest, called the “Manila manifest”. This document manifest is seen as an extension of the LC, of which it nevertheless affirmed a continuing validity (Scherer and Bevans 1992:292).

In its introduction, the manifest defines itself as “a public declaration of convictions, intentions and motives”, and the slogan “Calling the Whole Church to take the Whole Gospel to the Whole World” is mentioned,<sup>10</sup> as one of two themes of the Congress.<sup>11</sup> The manifest states in the first part, containing 21 short “affirmations”, that “God has committed to the whole church and every member of it the task of making Christ known throughout the world” (affirmation 12), and churches mission agencies and Christian organizations are urged to cooperate (affirmation 17). This is further elaborated in the second part of the manifest. In section 4B the slogan mentioned above is repeated, and section 8 – “The Local Church” –

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<sup>10</sup> And also repeated in affirmation 21

<sup>11</sup> The other being “Proclaim Christ until he comes”.

underlines the responsibility of the local church to participate in local mission, as well as to act as a sending and receiving church.

Section 9 “Cooperating in Evangelism” is particularly important. Cooperation is indispensable, it states, because 1) “it is the will of God”, 2) the gospel of reconciliation is discredited by our disunity, 3) it is needed in order to eventually be able to accomplish the task of world evangelization. It seems as though the manifest launches the term “Cooperation” as a widened and replacing alternative to “partnership”, stating it as “working together” and “finding unity in diversity.” It is further defined by being set in contrast with “the simplistic distinction between First world sending and Two-Third World receiving countries”, which is seen as a “hangover from the colonial past.”

It may seem as though the problem of the colonial past is still sticking to the evangelical movement. However, the evangelical missionary movements seems to some extent to be successful in its endeavour to cooperate, perhaps because many mission cooperations are newly formed on a *basis* of cooperation, in stead of having to transform existent more unilateral mission relationships. The good results is evident by the fact that already in 1975, Third World members were in majority in the World Evangelical Fellowship, and, with their theologians “having their say”, they also have the greatest influence on evangelical theology (Van Engen 1996:141).

## **2.5 The Lutheran World Federation**

The formation of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in 1947 was in itself an expression of church cooperation and in a way of partnership as well (Scherer 1987:81ff). Many Lutheran missions had been “orphaned” during the Second World War, and the European churches were heavily engaged in seeing to their own post-war conditions, as well as trying to establish continuity with the missions in the south. Responding to the need for a coordinated Lutheran effort, the LWF came into being. In 1949 its Commission on World Mission (CWM) was created, which provided a way for Lutheran churches for a denominational “unified approach” (ibid.). At this stage, however, the relationship between the churches and agencies of the North and South was one of “young” and “old”. Aid was given in order to develop single national churches according to the “three-selves”. It should be noted, though, that this was done with the explicit aim of quickly establishing “sovereignty and equality of voice and responsibility of all churches” (ibid:81).

### **2.5.1 “Together in God’s mission” – 1988**

Prior to 1988 there was no common Lutheran document on mission. Regret was reportedly expressed over this, and the LWF Assembly meeting (LWF 1988:3) in Budapest 1984 called for a statement of mission. The task was assigned to the Commission of Church Cooperation, and when the statement was completed, it became adopted by the LWF Executive Committee in 1988. The title of the statement was “*Together in God’s Mission: An LWF Contribution to the Understanding of Mission*”. Although the complete document is important with respect to mission theology in general, I will in the following only touch upon the parts of the document that are related to the present theme of partnership.

The theological framework of the statement is the participation of the Church in the mission of the triune God. Thus the first section of the document is dedicated to the assertion of the mission of God as Triune, as Creator, as Redeemer and as Sanctifier. Derived from this, mission as sending “belongs to the very being of the church” (ibid:8), and the apostolic character of the church refers to this. All local congregations are called to participate in this, as it is the “common responsibility of the whole church in all its manifestations” (ibid:9).

The statement further elaborates on how the gravity of the Christian World has shifted to the South, and that southern churches have “assumed major responsibility for mission” (ibid:10), both in their own local context and cross-culturally. After two sections describing the context of mission and its frontiers, respectively, section four deals with the “Renewal of the Church in Mission”. Here, it is again emphasized that mission is the responsibility of the whole Church, and that mission is the “central theme for all theological work of the church” (ibid:22).

In the subsection on Specific Missionary Vocations (4.2.2), the statement asserts that frontier-crossing missionaries are necessary, as “it is not possible for churches to reach out to people ... simply through the work of local congregations”. But it also asserts that such times are past “when missionary vocations were considered the monopoly of churches in ‘Christian countries’ of Europe and North America” (ibid:25). Nevertheless, almost in the same breath it asserts that

The time is also over when the justification of specific missionary vocation was questioned on the grounds of past ties between mission and colonialism, and of the need to integrate mission into the whole life of the church. Only through its members can a church cross frontiers in mission, and for this there must be missionary vocations. (ibid.)

This may refer both to discussions about the validity of Western missionaries serving “abroad” in the WCC, which climaxed with a suggested missionary moratorium, as well as to the liberal interpretation of the *missio Dei* concept, where, if every aspect of the church was considered mission, there was no need for the sending of missionaries.<sup>12</sup> The statement ends the subsection by criticising the trend of short-term missionaries, asserting the need for sending missionaries with a lifetime vocation, and pointing to the challenge that at the time (that is, for Lutheran churches), structures for providing missionary training and missionary support only exists for Northern and Western churches. It encourages that churches in other regions should be “recognized as a potential source of missionary renewal and also of personnel” (ibid:26).

The subsection 4.2.4 (“Sharing Resources in Mission”), point to, among other things, the “uneven appearance in different parts of the world”, of mission resources, which is “primarily distorted by donor – recipient attitudes” (ibid:27). Strong wording such as “dependence mentality” and “exercise [of] control” are deployed. In stead it calls for “a joint strategy of sharing” (ibid.), which it is of urgency to establish. The statement points to self-reliance as a goal, but in the sense of enabling a “church to develop to the maximum local resources ... and assume responsibility for its participation in mission” (ibid:28). Thus, it is understood as an essential condition for sharing.

Following this subsection, there is a strong focus on unity in mission, expressed through joint planning, funding and execution of mission strategies between churches. It is also pointed to a *Guideline for Joint Action in Mission*, which the LWF Assembly of 1984 adopted, to provide a pattern for the implementation of joint planning in mission strategy.

### **2.5.2 “Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment” – 2004**

The LWF Council at its meeting in Bratislava, Slovakia, in June 1999, approved a suggestion to revise the 1988 document. The finished result was, after a long process, adopted in 2004.

The new document is named “Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment. An LWF Contribution to the Understanding and Practice of Mission.” It is based on the 1988 statement, but is significantly more elaborate and is also brought up to date on relevant contextual and missiological themes, such as contextual theology, dialogue, globalization, consumerism, environment, Internet and IT etc. Especially the approach to

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<sup>12</sup> “When everything is mission, nothing is mission” (Neill, S., *Creative Tension*, Edinburgh, London 1959:81 cited in Van Engen 1996:145)

mission as ‘accompaniment’ has been adopted<sup>13</sup>, and the NT story which is regarded as the prime text for this concept, the Emmaus road encounter (Luke 24:13-35), is used as a model for the whole document (LWF 2004:7).

It is divided into three main parts; namely “Contexts of Mission”, “Theology of Mission”, and “Practice of Mission”. For the theme of mission in partnership, I shall focus now on the third of these, the “Practice of Mission”, and mainly comment on important differences from the 1988 statement.

In the first subsection (3.1), the matter of the whole church as participating in mission is explored. Cross-cultural mission is noted to be important, but it is underlined that this is necessary to do in a way which avoids the sending/receiving mentality. Partnership in mission is here a developed concept, which carries within it different models, such as mission in “accompaniment” (LWF 2004:45), which denotes “sharing”.

Paragraph 3.3.3 (under the subsection 3.3 “New Challenges and Opportunities for Mission”) focus on the sharing of resources in mission. Here, a “strong stewardship” of churches is emphasized, with the goal of reversing the dependency problem of some churches, levelling indirect criticism at “top heavy structures” which are dependent on economical support to stand. Therefore, churches are encouraged to take a “hard look” at their structures in order to determine the grade of flexibility (ibid:57).

Instead of dependency on monetary resources or personnel, the statement speaks of “interdependency”, and that there are several types of resources, which should be shared to facilitate, not the churches’ well-being, but their capacity for participating in mission. Turning, however, to the issue of wealth, Northern churches are urged to consider wise stewardship of mission resources as a mission in itself, and “reflect seriously and prayerfully on the question of ‘bilateralism’ and ‘multilateralism’ upholding interdependency in a multilateral way as an urgent mission challenge” (ibid:58).

## **2.6 Some recent developments**

The realisations of the missiological insights from the post-war period and later, have resulted in some attempts at radical restructuring exercises on the part of some mission agencies. Three agencies are often mentioned in this connection: The *Communauté Évangélique d’Action Apostolique* (CEVAA), the *Council for World Mission* (CWM), and the *United Evangelical Mission* (UEM). Even though they all have different histories and functional structures, they are now similar in the manner that they provide structures that give

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. my discussion on ‘accompaniment’ and ‘walking together’ in section 3.5.

partner churches in the South a majority of votes in councils and committees that includes control over the material assets and resources of the missionary agencies, where still 90% of the contributions originate in the North. There is a structurally realised *koinonia*, or “communion of goods” (Funkschmidt 2002a:396f).

Regarding missionary personnel in these organisations, it seems to be difficult to overcome the old pattern of Northern sending and Southern receiving churches. But South-South exchange of missionaries as well as South-North, has increased. Also so-called “twinning”, or congregation partnership on the grassroot level, with mutual intercession, mutual visits, etc., has increased, as a means to realise a stronger sense of togetherness and being one family. The principle might be seen as connected to the later more relational partnership concepts of “walking together” and “accompaniment”.

There has, however, been some anxiety concerning these “twinnings”, because of the danger for the congregations to fall into paternalism or dependency. Nevertheless, the experience seems to indicate that a better approach to this problem is to provide good guidelines for such relationships, rather than to end them (ibid. 402ff and 410f).

An issue which also seems to have had some attention, is the question of whether it is possible at all to have a partnership, or fellowship, between churches that are economically unequal. Money is thought to be the very divisive force, because the power that goes with it, and the dependency it creates, makes it impossible for a truly equal partnership to emerge. E.g. Konrad Raiser wrote:

At length, there can be no real partnership in the presence of a continuing structural imbalance of power, e.g. between rich and poor, givers and recipients. Material dependency generally destroys human relationships, however much we strive for partnership.<sup>14</sup>

The implication of this is that because of the imbalanced financial resource distribution in the world, it would be impossible to realise a true partnership between churches of the North and South.

But is it possible that the perception of the viability of “true” partnership in mission depends very much on how, and to which degree “equality” is conceived as a part of the concept? The word ‘partnership’ does not in itself imply equality. It rather refers to the joining of resources and partaking in the pursuit of a common goal, but does not necessarily

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<sup>14</sup> Raiser, Konrad, “Wie gehören Partnerschaft und Einheit zum Zeugnis der Kirche?” in *Jahrbuch Evangelische Mission 1984*, Hamburg 1984, pp.39-53 at p. 43, cited in Funkschmidt 2002b:570f, his translation.

mean that this is done on an equal basis. Funkschmidt contends that this is actually rarely the case (Funkschmidt 2002b:558).

The emphasis on equality when participating in *mission* in partnership, seems to me to be connected to the context in which this concept was brought into the missionary discussion. This was a discussion which was to some degree concerned with the rectifying of the relationship between the mission agencies/churches and the churches which had been formed where the former had been working. The rhetoric was directed against a dependency relationship between these parties and, in direct opposition to concepts of “mother” and “daughter” churches, which was abolished, came the idea of all churches being partners in obedience to the calling and command of Christ. Thus ‘partnership’ acquired a very strong connotation to concepts of mutuality and equality.

But these connections should not be seen as wrong only because of the context they were formed in. In the context of a worldwide church, an emphasis on equality and mutuality seems to be a consequence of being one body in Christ, and thus, it is natural to understand partnership in mission to include these connotations.

But an awareness of the fact that partnership does not *necessarily* imply equality, points to two issues. Firstly, there is not a necessary connection between the imbalanced distribution of the financial resources in the world, and partnership in mission. Marsh notes that it is not so “that the success of partnership in mission depends on partners possessing equal portions of the world’s wealth” (Marsh 2003:380). There still *can* be relationships of interdependence, equality and reciprocity, when the focus is on power sharing, centred on the *missio Dei*.

Secondly, such an understanding of the concept underlines the fact that there may be relations of dependency, paternalism, dominance and inequality, which are termed partnerships (cf. Funkschmidt 2002b:558). In a strict sense, this is not necessarily a faulty application of the concept, but, in the light of what ‘partnership’ implies in the context of the universal church’s participation in mission, these relationships are not ideal.

While equal and mutual partnerships between “unequals” in terms of wealth seems to be possible to attain, it is nevertheless a difficult enterprise, and is not a matter of course only because a relationship in mission applies the term. Therefore, a continuous critical examination of the current functioning of power and dependency in mission relations and partnerships is called for.

## 2.7 Summary

The brief historical survey I have attempted to provide here, has conveyed some of the historical dynamics between the normative and practical issues that have formed the need for, and understanding of, the concept of partnership in mission, throughout the last century.

Almost from the outset in the great Protestant missionary era, Western mission to the Third World has been more or less loosely modelled on the concept of the three-selves, which in a church-centric manner had as one goal the establishment of new churches that were to be autonomous. After the two world wars, many churches proved themselves to be self-governing, but not yet self-sustaining. Therefore, Western missions continued to render personnel and economic support. A shift in theology with the *missio Dei* concept became a missiological basis for equal partnership between churches, and the sharing of resources. Unfortunately, this may have been more a goal than a reality, something which led to the proposed moratorium of missionaries at the Bangkok WCC assembly.

In the recent developments, the evangelical mission movement and the LWF are two bodies that seem to handle the present day issues raised by partnership cooperation. Evangelicals have had some success in implementing partnership, because it was a necessary endeavour in order to enable the missionary project at all. The Lutheran statement of mission in 2004 show that it is necessary today to move further in the exploration of possible ways to do partnership cooperation, in order to address central issues of power and dependency, especially in the historical North-South relationship, and to enable the churches to establish new bonds of multilateral relationships with a more relational emphasis.

The CEVAA/CWM/VEM represent later attempts of realising the implications of the new missiological insights through a structural approach. But the question has still been raised whether it is at all possible to attain an equal and mutual partnership in an unequal and unjust setting. It is acknowledged that though different relationships might apply the term to their cooperation, it does not necessarily mean that they are relations in mutuality and equality. This remains a challenge for the global church to avoid in church/mission relationships.

## 3 Theology of Mission in Partnership

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will deliberate on a few theological issues in connection with mission in partnership. The ultimate reason for mission, and thus also mission in partnership, is of a theological nature. Following this, the purpose here is to establish the necessary theological background for a better understanding of the theme.

It would be tempting to start laying out a partnership theology from the perspective of ecclesiology right away. However, in order that the theme might be seen in its proper perspective, it is necessary to take a further step backwards and first explore the real Trinitarian basis through the concept of the *missio Dei*. Therefore, in this chapter I will start with the *missio Dei*. Following this, I will proceed to discuss the necessity of a specific theology for mission in partnership, and then attempt to sketch some relevant ecclesiological, as well as some Christological and relational issues. It should be noted, though, that this is merely a theological *reflection* on a very broad topic, and that I try to keep the discussion from becoming too isolated from the matters of the real world.

However, before all this, I would like to give some introductory comments on the necessity of theological reflection at all, for the seemingly practical and structural aspects of partnership. Quoting Lindqvist:

The responsibility to mission which leads to partnership is thus not to be interpreted as a statement with legal implications. It is a theological statement derived from our understanding of the local church as the instrument of God. From this follows that the question of how the partnership relation is to be given practical expression is theologically irrelevant as long as the structures of cooperation further the contextual communication of the Gospel in word and deed (1982:167).

This statement is taken from Lindqvist's conclusion of his chapter on the theological presuppositions for the Lutheran missionary practice in Tanzania. It should be noted that the context of this quote is rightly understood when it is understood as an argument against a theology which legalises a responsibility of the universal Church so strongly that the right to refuse gifts and contributions from other churches is denied. That would be a theology which

would make it impossible for churches to attain real autonomy (Lindqvist 1982:166). Autonomy is vital for authentic participation as a partner church in God's mission.

Nevertheless, for mission in partnership it would be dangerous to dissolve the practical expression of it from its theology, as this would be an arrangement where theological considerations of the partnership structures would be considered irrelevant as long as the goal of the "contextual communication of the Gospel in word and deed" is met. However, a theological reflection on contextual communication of the gospel also "in deed" would include structural and practical issues in partnerships.

I will postulate, that in order for a partnership relation between churches to be the healthy fellowship between Christians that is needed to meet the aim of rightly participating in mission, a theological foundation also for the practical aspects of the endeavour is paramount. If this is not in place, the possibility is there for such a partnership relationship to degenerate into paternalism and dependency, nurturing mutual ill feeling on the part of all partners.

However, it is also necessary to point out that the aim of partnership, and the reason for laying theological foundations for this relationship, is ultimately the mission itself. Without this aim, a partnership relation between churches would become nothing more than interchurch resource exchange. Although also this is beneficial and indeed necessary for the unity of the church, the task of the theology presented here is rather to point to ways the churches can participate together in the mission of God, *missio Dei*. In the light of the servanthood of the church to God's mission, this should ultimately also be the aim of all church partnership.

### **3.2 *Missio Dei***

Barth, with his thoughts of mission as an activity of God, started a new direction of thought that eventually resulted in what Bosch terms a new theological paradigm, which finally broke through in mission circles at the Willingen IMC meeting in 1952 (Bosch 1991:389f). Later the ideas was clearly articulated in the concept of *missio Dei*.<sup>15</sup> The anchor point, which mission theology revolves around but hopefully never will let go of, is the fact that the mission is owned and prompted by God. Bringing order to a confusion of responsibilities in, and ownership of, the mission endeavours of the churches, the tenet of the

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<sup>15</sup> Especially so in *The Mission of God; An Introduction to a Theology of Mission* (1965) by Georg Vicedom (Van Engen 1996:151).

*missio Dei* asserts that the author, the messenger, and the message itself is the Trinitarian God.

The Trinitarian concept of mission has its outset from God's ultimate purpose with his creation, a purpose of blessing and companionship. This world is a fallen world, but God moves towards it with the purpose of redemption and restoration, "to bring history to its true end" (Newbigin 1978:36). In order that this might be accomplished, he sent his Son to herald the Kingdom of God. But not only to herald it, but to manifest it through his words and deeds and verify it as a real presence in history. By him has the reign of God come near. Ultimately this was manifest and proclaimed in what Newbigin calls "the supreme parable", the cross:

The reign of God hidden and manifest in the dying of a condemned and excommunicated man; the fullness of God's blessing bestowed in the accursed death of the cross. (...) That the cross is indeed victory and not defeat, is manifest in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (1978:39).

Thus Jesus is not only a messenger with a proclamation, he is the message itself, and the message – the Kingdom – is present in Him (Lk 4:18-21). This he demonstrates by his ministry, with forgiveness of sins, healing, exorcisms, and table fellowships (cf. Green 1995:530). Acknowledgment or denial of him is acknowledgment or denial of the Kingdom (cf. Mt 10:32). He becomes the very means by which we can enter into the Kingdom.

But his death and resurrection is the start of another continuing sending, a sending for which the last supper, prior to this, is the beginning premise. According to Newbigin, the account in John 13-16, which is put in the place of the Last Supper in the Synoptics, is a good pointer to this understanding of the Last Supper. These chapters are to be seen as an exposition of the Last Supper, as the evangelists' interpretation of the intention of Jesus regarding the "future of the cause which he entrusted to his disciples and for which he prepared and consecrated them" (Newbigin 1978:52). The concrete sending of the disciples, however, takes place *after* the resurrection (Jn 20:21-23, Mt. 28 16-20, Mk 16,15-19). The message, namely Jesus, his Lordship, the Kingdom of God, follows the church in the sense that the Kingdom is present within the church. This is why, as God sent Jesus, Jesus sent his church, bestowing upon it the authority which he had from his Father, the authority to forgive sins (Jn 20:23, Newbigin 1987:54).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Newbigin, in *The Open Secret* (1978), apparently sees the Kingdom as the running theme through the three sendings in *missio Dei*: "[Mission is] the proclamation of the kingdom, the presence of the kingdom, and the prevenience of the kingdom" (p. 72).

Following this, it is important to note that the church was not merely instituted by Jesus and then sent to the world. Rather, it is *the sending itself* which constitutes the church. To begin with, it was only a little group of friends, which was propelled into the world with a mission from God, not to create an institutional church, but to proclaim, live and witness to the news that the Kingdom of God is at hand. As such they were instruments of God, to be guided and empowered through his Spirit given on Pentecost, and the mission was not to be claimed for themselves. Rather, the church exists *because* of the mission (Bosch 1991:390).

Neither is the witness of the church really its own. The Spirit, which is given to the church, is the true missionary agent, who goes before the church (which Newbigin calls the *prevenience* of the Spirit, 1978:72). The Spirit guides the church, in order that the church might witness, or rather, let the Spirit witness through it. It was the Spirit that converted Cornelius as well as Peter (Acts 10). Throughout Acts, it is the Spirit which is the acting agent. Newbigin asserts:

In sober truth the Spirit is himself the witness who goes before the church in its missionary journey. The church's witness is secondary and derivative. The church is witness insofar as it follows obediently where the Spirit leads. (1978:68)

From the statements above, it is possible to extract two premises which together were developed further in the WCC with special influence by Hoekedijk, and which eventually lead to the conclusion which Neill warned about; that if everything becomes mission, nothing is mission.<sup>17</sup> First; mission belongs to God, and it is God's redemptive movement towards the world in which the church is called to participate. But the mission itself is larger than the church, and although the church is called to participate, God's mission is not dependent on the church. Secondly; the church is itself a result of mission, and participation in God's mission to the world is its *raison d'être*. In this sense it is possible to virtually identify the church with mission – the church *is* mission. (Van Engen 1996:150ff, Bosch 1991:391f)

Without going into a debate that is not directly relevant to this thesis, it should still be mentioned that these premises, on the basis of Hoekedijk inspired WCC<sup>18</sup> theology, enabled a strong secularization influence on the *missio Dei* theology, which in the end bypassed the church and instead came to mean God's movement towards the world to establish *Shalom*, a

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<sup>17</sup> Neill, S., *Creative Tension*, Edinburgh, London 1959:81 (cited in Van Engen 1996:145).

<sup>18</sup> A WCC which recently had integrated the IMC as a consequence of the *missio Dei*. Van Engen points to this as a third premise to these developments (1996:150).

movement in which the church could not presume itself to play any other role but that of assisting according to its ability (Van Engen 1996:154f, Bosch 1991:392).<sup>19</sup>

It is sometimes asserted, however, that perhaps the most important contribution of the *missio Dei* concept is that it has reoriented the authority of mission (Bosch 1991:392). Mission is no longer perceived in ecclesiocentric terms, as church expansion, or in terms of the saving of souls. Its success is no longer measured in number of converts, and its challenges not in numbers of unreached peoples. The two premises mentioned above are, when holding church and mission together, crucial to a theology of partnership. If the owner of mission were not God, but still the churches and mission societies, and if mission were not to a very great degree fundamental to the very being of the church, then mission in partnership would not even be an issue.

Although there still are disagreements between the evangelical and the ecumenical understandings regarding the proper prioritisation of evangelisations vis-à-vis other aspects of mission, such as social responsibility, it is generally accepted that mission includes the totality of God's movement towards man. Bosch warned that in spite of the danger of everything becoming mission, one should still be careful about limiting it through definitions. But he nevertheless did give a tentative definition of mission as "a multifaceted ministry, in respect of witness, service, justice, healing, reconciliation, liberation, peace, evangelism, fellowship, church planting, contextualization, and much more" (Bosch 1991:512). It is in the participation of this mission churches join together in partnership.

### **3.3 Why a partnership theology?**

How then will the church relate its participation in the *missio Dei* to the *missiones ecclesiae*, the various mission endeavours of the church? According to Bosch, their primary purpose should be to be the church's service to the *missio Dei* (1991:391). This is the test that all the church's missions must undergo (Van Engen 1996:151). Do the missions of the churches serve the mission of God, or do they merely serve ecclesiocentric church expansion?

When "Partnership in obedience" was in focus at the Whitby IMC meeting in 1947, the primary focus was on the concerted effort of global Christianity to preserve the missionary work after the trials of war, and to do this in a common obedience to Christ. Thus

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<sup>19</sup> The sequence of God-Church-World became instead God-World-Church: The world sets the agenda for mission.

it served a practical and theological purpose. However, since this kind of cooperation was a step in the right direction for mission, and seemed to be the course of action in the long run, it becomes necessary to more solidly anchor this cooperation across churches and mission societies boundaries, in theology.

However, the result of the same impulses that united Christians from all over the world in mission, became one of the pulses that initiated concrete work towards church unity and the eventual establishment of the WCC.<sup>20</sup> Considering this, might it not be possible to see the developments of the *missio Dei* theology and the integration of the IMC into the WCC as a concrete manifestation of a church cooperation that effectively and inevitably involves cooperation in mission? So, if a theology of church unity in any case logically extends to mission work, what, then, is the need of a specific theology of mission in partnership?

I believe the answer to this question lies in the historical development of Western mission to the Third World. When many of the churches that came about as a result of such mission, became autonomous in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the need arose to define further cooperation between them and the churches/mission agencies that had initiated and sustained the work until that time.

However, this further cooperation was quite different in practical character than a mission cooperation between any two or more Western churches. Some of the reasons for this might be found in the continual dependency upon both personnel and monetary resources that still existed, and, as noted above, that churches were founded on a Western structure that presupposed these resources (cf. 2.2 and also Bosch 1991:295). According to the three-selves principle of mission, the idea was that once these three selves were realised, the mission agency should leave it to the church to be church (starting missions of their own), and move on to new fields (Beaver 1970:248). However, since the third self, the self-supporting element, seemed to be difficult to realise, this was not possible at that time. In addition, both the Western missions as well as the churches that were becoming autonomous, had to forge this new cooperation between parties where the latter had recently been subject to the former. Autonomy or not, mentalities may sometimes take some time to change.

Yet another reason for the difference in character in the North-South cooperation might also be found in the mentality of the missionary organisations on a home basis. I believe that if we are to be honest, it is necessary to at least ask the question about whether

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<sup>20</sup> The World Conference of Faith and Order, which together with the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work formed the WCC in 1948, has its origins in missionary fervour and the Edinburgh 1910 Conference (cf. Sherer 1987:18, FitzGerald2004:83).

the Western missionary societies at home found it hard to “let go” of their mission fields. And on the other hand, to what degree did the recently autonomous Third World churches see certain Western churches or mission societies as “theirs”, even if they themselves were ever so autonomous?

The third element that made these relations special, was the fact that even though the churches became autonomous, the same mission work continued, and Western missionaries continued their work, albeit now as employees of the new church.

These issues at the time gave rise to many questions with theological implications. What exactly did cooperation in mission mean, when churches cooperated? Did the right to decide how money were to be used follow the ownership of the money, or did it come from the autonomy of them they were given to? Who decided, and how, the calling and placement of missionaries from abroad within the church?

Various answers were given to these questions. It seemed only fair and logical that as autonomous churches, they qualified to be part of the partnership in obedience to Christ, as was the slogan from Whitby, yet, the relationships to their former Western agencies laid hindlers in the way. What these questions show, beyond their immediate concerns, is the need to base a partner cooperation in mission in a relevant theology.

It is sometimes held that the structural and organisational arrangements in mission has little to do with theology. For example, Olsen maintains that “when there is pain in cooperation, it is rarely because of theological disagreements” (Olsen, 2003:30, my translation), while the statement of Lindqvist mentioned above (cf. 1982:167) might be interpreted to mean that what matters is the goal of contextual proclamation in word and deed, and not the practical arrangements made to achieve this.

Lindqvist’s approach might be perfectly well understood on the background of a Lutheran ecclesiology where the practical arrangements of the church structures are evaluated by whether they facilitate that “the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered” (Confessio Augustana (CA) VII). He further distinguished between the church as a sociological institution, from the legal point of view, and as a theological entity, conformant to the marks of the church expressed in the CA. The reasonable conclusion can thus only be that the structures of partnership are theologically irrelevant as long as the mentioned goal is furthered in the churches.

Olsen’s statement, that theological disagreements are not a direct cause of the “pain in cooperation”, may be true as far as it goes. But it would be wrong to infer from this that these disagreements are only related to practical issues and have nothing to do with the theology

that underlies the partnership cooperation. Since the goal of right Gospel teaching and Sacrament administering is a benchmark for the church, with proclamation in word and deed filling the same function for mission in partnership, and since these issues are theological issues, it follows that theological reflection is necessary in order to establish ways of achieving these goals in practice, without deceiving ourselves or being so preoccupied with what we are doing that we forget to pause and realign the compass with the map.

Tjørhom notes that in regard to the discussion of the theological marks of the church, the *notae ecclesiae*,<sup>21</sup> there is a connection between the *esse* of the church and its *bene esse*, or in other words; that the issues which belong to the essence of the church (its *esse*) cannot be isolated from the things that are part of the church but not vital to its definition (its *bene esse*). The *bene esse* issues are thus a kind of “supporting construct” in order to maintain the fundamental marks of the church (Tjørhom 1999:110).

Therefore, if considered within the context of a worldwide church, mission in partnership is a structural function within this church, which it would be wise to subject to such a realigning theological reflection. In a similar manner to the way in which the marks of proclamation and sacrament administering are determining for the church, and thus its structure, within a Lutheran understanding, I propose that it would be possible, as far as partnership cooperation goes, to let service to the *missio Dei* be the mark against which the structure of partnership is measured, or to refer to the beginning of this section, to let God’s mission be the test that all mission needs to be subjected to.

These, then, are the two reasons that special theological reflection is necessary for mission in partnership: Firstly, that the historical context in which many of the North-South partnerships finds themselves in, makes it necessary to firmly ground the partnerships in a solid theology in order to avoid continuing in the beaten tracks, or have a reactive derailing. Secondly, that the structures of partnerships, as belonging to the *bene esse* of the worldwide church, are to be measured against and attuned to the *missio Dei* – and the way to do this is by theological reflection on what the *missio Dei* means to these partnership structures.

From this outset, I will proceed to sketch some of the relevant issues for a partnership theology.

### **3.4 An ecclesiological perspective**

Following up on the thread by which this discourse has been running, the outset for the partnership theology is the *missio Dei*. As the unity in Christ is the basis for partnership

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<sup>21</sup> One, holy, catholic (universal) and apostolic church – From the Nicene creed, third article.

(Van Engen 2003:10), it would be natural to draw some ecclesiological implications. I will do this here, from the perspective of the four marks of the church which are mentioned in the Nicene creed, namely that the church is *one, holy, catholic and apostolic*.

Starting with the first, the *unity*, or *one-ness*, of the church, it is essentially spiritual. All Christians in the world are principally bound together by and in the work of Christ. But this does not necessarily demand visible unity, although it is to be strived for. (Ef 4,3-4, John 17:21, Rom 12:5. cf. also Valen-Senstad 1979:313). Even Paul mentioned that divisions are a fact and sometimes necessary, even if it they are not desirable (1<sup>st</sup> Cor 11:19, 1<sup>st</sup> Cor 1:10f, Gal 3,26-29 and Van Engen 2003:12).

However, when visible unity is sought, as well as spiritual, as it is done in mission in partnership “in obedience” to Christ, then the unity in Christ is made a reality, and becomes tangible. This makes it possible to apply one of the most striking biblical and traditional images that lends itself both to an explanation of the one-ness of the church and it’s different functions, namely, that the church is one body with many limbs. (Rom 12:5, 1<sup>st</sup> Cor 10:17;12:13). Utilising the other familiar image of the unity of the church, Christ as the vine of which we are the branches (John 15:1ff), one might say that the part of the stem connecting the branches which work in partnership, has become visible whilst doing mission in partnership.

While it carries the risk of becoming too immersed in similes, I still would like to put forth the idea of partnership in mission as a joint connecting the limb to the body, and the body to the limb. In order for the body to perform its function according to its calling, it is necessary that the joints are working as they should, i.e. in order that the church may take action according to the *missio Dei*. However, when a limb – or in this case, a joint – aches, as many will know, the functioning of the whole body is reduced, and not only that of the single limb which is connected by that joint. Paul saw this (1<sup>st</sup> Cor 12:26). Therefore, it is necessary for the health of the whole church, and consequently its participation in God’s mission, that the partnership structures work as effortlessly and purpose-fulfilling as possible.

Perhaps one of the most elaborate NT descriptions of the connection between the unity of being one body in Christ, and the consequences of this unity for the life of the church, can be found in Eph. 4. Van Engen holds that the attitudes of the partners to each other are fundamental to the partnership, as Paul’s concern here is to underline this by the attitudes of Christians to one another. The mentality of servant-hood should be remembered and sought after also in mission in partnership (cf. Matt 20,25-28, Van Engen 2003:12ff).

A function of the unity described in Eph. 4, is the fact that God gives different gifts to different people, and that these different gifts are to be utilized together “so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity” (Eph. 4,12b-13a). This underlines the sharing quality of the unity, as well as the mutual dependency each of the “limbs” in the body has on each other (Van Engen 2003:15f).

Second, the unity of the church *in Christ* means that it is also a *holy* church (Valen-Senstad 1979:314). This holiness is attributed to it because of its relation to God, as it was to Israel (Lev. 19:2), but the church is in this relation because of the work of Christ (cf. Kol 1:13), and because of it being the body of Christ, not by it’s own virtues. The same is true for the people of the church, the communion of saints. (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 2:9).

This points to two aspects that are important for partnership relations: Firstly, that the church is holy means that it is, in one sense, cut of from this world. It is expected to be holy in its conduct (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 1:15ff, Rom. 6:12ff, 1<sup>st</sup> Joh 2:28) and act as light and salt in the world (Mt 5:12f). For partners cooperating in mission, this presents a great challenge, because it may often be the partner that spots problematic issues present in the other partner church/mission, issues which they believe should be corrected. Be it subtle paternalism, embezzlement of resources, donor mentality or heavy authoritarian top leader structures, it is challenging both to receive and give this kind of critique. Sometimes cultural identity prevails over the Christian identity, so that the effect is a stalemate where no one listens. This is where the unity of the church in Christ should have the prerogative, where the true meaning of “In Christ there is no East or West”<sup>22</sup> should penetrate the attitudes. But even underlining the insignificance of cultural differences (as in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor 12:13; Gal. 3:28) or reminding that we have put on a “new self” (e.g. Col. 3:8-11), is meaningless unless the humility and humbleness of being united in Christ (Eph. 4:2-3) shine through.

Secondly, the fact that the church is holy only by the virtue of Christ, but that it still is a church of sinners, is important for the church to recognize, because it enables it to accept that it may fail. It is a great challenge to admit that embezzlement may be taking place in the holy church, or that the tolerant, loving people of God may be acting like a cultural elephant in a porcelain store even after years of training and experience. “Thus the church is *sinful* in the sense that it consists of humans with a sinful nature and will” (Valen-Senstad 1979:315, my transl.).

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<sup>22</sup> The title and first line of a well known hymn by William A. Dunkerley, 1908.

When this is admitted, it becomes natural, in the spirit of unity, to attempt to provide openness and transparency. With regard to in whose hands financial assistance fall, Niwagila writes that “on one hand we feel it is not right to ask how the money we give is used, but on the other hand we have to ask because of the corrupt nature of humanity” (Helander & Niwagila 1995:127). For Niwagila, it still seems to become a question of distrust. But he admits that because the work to which the money goes is not ours but God’s, it is “necessary and important” to ask these questions (ibid.). To insist on transparency, when it comes to handling of money, is however not an expression of suspicion or distrust, but a simple recognition of the fact that all humans have the *capacity* to fail and sin. Transparency is therefore a precaution against temptation among the human servants of the church.

The insistence on transparency is rather than suspicion and distrust, an expression of the understanding of the church as holy through Christ *alone*, and not through the efforts of the church itself. If the money question were to be made a question of trusting or not, we would be in danger of trying to let the holiness of the church depend on our own efforts. But when we come to see that the holiness of the church has nothing to do with our own efforts, and admit our capacity to fail and sin, financial transparency becomes the way in which we try to live in a holy church as sinful humans.

Thirdly, the *catholicity* of the church, when it comes to partnership in mission, has to do with the dynamics between the universal and the local church. The catholicity, or universality, underlines the totality of what and whom the church embrace, and is closely related to the unity of the church. While unity stresses the one-ness of the church, the universality of the church emphasize the unity in its different manifestations of local congregations. The church is not simply different churches united in Christ, but rather, the whole church is present in each congregation (cf. McGrath 2007:415).

This means that the main responsibility for mission rests with the local church, as a representation of the universal church’s missionary effort in that particular place. But it should still be emphasized that it is God who owns and operates the mission. As a consequence, expatriate missionaries should be fully integrated into the structure of the local churches in the geographical locations in which they work, i.e. be part of that church as any other church member. But since the mission is God’s, and the whole church participates in it, it is not so that the missionaries cease to be members of the local church and culture from which they come. Rather, he or she comes with a different experience of life, something which is enriching to the church.

The universality of the church means embracing the difference of its adherents, the totality of the various Christian experiences of life, through the same faith which unites the church. The first case in point here is that enforcing any kind of culturally determined “type” of Christianity would be a denial of the universal nature of the Church. Hence, Bevens sees the catholicity of the church as an argument for contextual theology. It is necessary to accept humans in every cultural setting, for the church to truly be church. Since Christ was incarnated into reality, a catholic church would welcome the Church incarnated in any of the world’s cultural realities:

Catholicity is certainly that “mark” or “dimension” of the church that insures that the church perseveres in the whole gospel and strives to live and flourish in every part of the world and in every cultural context. At the same time, however, catholicity is the dimension of the church that champions to preserve the local, the particular. (Bevens 2002:14).

The second point is that when sharing personnel and resources in partnerships, all partners need to take both the universality of the church and the universality of the members’ life experiences into account. Interpreting the story of Peter, John and the beggar in Acts 3:1-10, Niwagila points out that what Peter and John did when they were asked for money, was to share *who* they were: “Peter said: ‘Look at us! (...) Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk’” (v. 4b-6). In the context of establishing a relationship, they were able to share what they had. For Niwagila, the presence of an established relationship makes up the whole difference between sharing and paternalism (Niwagila 1996:115f).

Hence, in order then to work past a donor-recipient mentality which leads to passivity and dependence when it comes to the sharing of resources, it is necessary to establish relationships. One might perhaps talk about the universality of sharing. This means that when sharing personnel as missionaries, either in the North or the South, these Christians should be seen as more than professional resources or ethnicity “on show” (cf. Niwagila 1996:122). Also, they should not be required to be integrated in the local congregation to such an extent that they cannot share their experiences from their home churches.<sup>23</sup> When it comes to

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<sup>23</sup> If seen as professional resources only, Northern expatriate missionaries in Tanzania may feel alienated, and prefer to go to services in the “international” communities on Sundays. Similarly, visiting Africans in e.g. Norway, very often asked to sing and play drums in Sunday services, may feel that they are not taken serious as Christians.

monetary resources, universal sharing presupposes a relationship between churches, dioceses or congregations that includes more than money. It includes the totality of who they are.

But the sharing of who we are also includes a fundamental respect for the autonomy of the ones we share with. Lindqvist discusses the relationship between the “legal autonomy” and the theological responsibility for mission, which is actualised through the question of whether or not an autonomous church has a right to refuse assistance. For Lindqvist, the apparent threat to the autonomy of a church by those who maintain that the missionary responsibility of the whole church makes it impossible for a local church to refuse assistance, is resolved through maintaining both a theological responsibility to do mission, in partnership where applicable<sup>24</sup>, and at the same time, the “legal autonomy” of the local church, which enables it to refuse financial and personnel assistance. (Lindqvist 1982:166f).

What is problematical in this regard is whether the participation in the mission of God towards his creation, as a determining factor for the mere being of a church, also necessitates partnership cooperation to such a degree that it becomes theologically impossible for a church to say no. The consequence of this would be that while it is possible for a church to legally say no to partnership, it thereby compromises its very identity as a church by not taking the appropriate measures for the right preaching of the Word, and is thus not truly participating in God’s mission.

However, maintaining a distinction between a theological obligation and a legal autonomy becomes troublesome in my view, firstly because of the problems of separating theology from “real-life” church structures and organizations, as discussed above. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, such a distinction fails to recognize the importance of the theological dynamic tension between the autonomous local and the universal church. Instead it presupposes an absolute theology which tries to explain the fact that churches actually sometimes *do* say no, by turning to a concept independent of theology which is called “legal autonomy”.

Niwagila, in his quest for a partnership theology, explores some indigenous East-African cultural concepts that he hopes will help him to understand the nature of partnership cooperation. Especially one such concept is interesting for the present discussion, namely the idea of *umoja*,<sup>25</sup> which Niwagila articulates as “I am because we are”. He says: “From an African point of view, the ‘I’ cannot achieve anything without the ‘we’” (Niwagila 1996:91).

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<sup>24</sup> “but if we resort to theological deduction the inevitable result will be to restate the necessity for partnership in the mission of the Triune God” (Lindqvist 1982:167).

<sup>25</sup> The word itself means “unity,” or “oneness”.

Similarly, he points out that the 'I' has its importance within the 'we', and thus, that 'I' does not lose its autonomy, or uniqueness, but rather that this uniqueness is what the 'I' contributes to the whole of the 'we'<sup>26</sup>. The uniqueness also seems to be something that is expressed through the unity, and the 'I' thus loses its meaning and uniqueness if it is not any longer a part of a 'we'.

I find that this concept adequately expresses the dynamics of the catholicity of the church, between the church as one unity and as a many local churches. Considering this, it becomes illogical to speak of a theological obligation to partnership while maintaining a legal autonomy. Instead, it becomes clear that a church must be seen as one theologically (and "legally", where it is necessary to underline this as well) autonomous church which at the same time is a theologically inextricable part of the church universal, also with "legal" consequences. Only within the context of truly autonomous churches can partnership cooperation take place; this seems to be evident from the very word itself. This autonomy has to exist on a theological level as well as on a "legal" level, because for a partnership to be a cooperative participation in a joint mission, all parties must join voluntarily. The theological obligation may be underlined, the call to the churches to participate in the *missio Dei*, but in order that the response be truly authentic, it is necessary that the churches freely choose to enter the partnership.

Fourthly, the final mark of the church is its *apostolicity*. This mark makes it clear how inextricably linked all the four marks of the church are, as the apostolicity of the church penetrates its history with a diachronic perspective, and underlines the historical continuity of the apostolic commission and heritage, on which the church which is one, holy and catholic, is grounded. In the centre of this apostolic heritage is the gospel of Jesus Christ (c.f. e.g. Tjørhom 1999:113f, McGrath 2007:416ff). Valen-Senstad notes that the church is apostolic "by the Word which is preached in the church and by the faith and creed which live in it" (1979:318, my transl.).

The consequence of the fact that the church's apostolicity is determined by the Gospel (Word) it preaches, and the faith and creeds which live within it, is important for partnership cooperation. Obviously, the church, with its partnership structures, would not be apostolic if the Word, the faith and creeds in the church were not equally apostolic. Thus it is important to ensure the continuity, and the apostolicity, in the pursuit of a partnership cooperation which is faithful to the One who sent the apostles. It is crucial that the church appreciates the

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<sup>26</sup> Niwagila utilises an image by Herman Mushala, of the stones which together make up a house (1996:92), cf. also 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 2:4-6.

sending of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit of the church, and remembers this. If this fades away into history, then the church is in danger of seeing itself as an actor independent and cut off from its founder, where the mission of the church to participate in God's mission is seen as merely an invitation to help to do what God really does best without our help, and where mission no longer becomes part of the foundational nature of the church.

George Brunk III mentions that it could be worthwhile to maintain an apostolic self-understanding:

The sense of being sent, - i.e., the apostolic consciousness - is the only legitimate condition under which a mission in the name of a unique Savior can be carried forward. ( ... ) The messenger is not a profiteer and the style is not exploitative when all sense of creditorship is absent (Brunk III, 1994:51).

This says something important about the effect of maintaining and emphasising the apostolicity of the church – namely that of a humble approach to the task which is set before the church also in cooperation in mission. Partnership cooperation in mission often receives criticism because of the power associated with one side of the partnership, on the assumption that having money and resources puts one side in a position of power over the other in such a relationship. It is surely a possibility, or danger, that this may happen, and it is a historical fact that it also has happened. An “apostolic consciousness” reminds the church of where the real power is vested, that is, in the Triune God. In the light of its apostolicity the church is being sent as an instrument of God to the world; hence issues of power become meaningless, because the church acts on God's authority and depends on his power alone. Any reflections on power structures in partnership cooperation must take this into account. Rather than focusing on power sharing structures, the partnership structures should focus on power *yielding* structures – yielding power to God, the one who came up with the whole mission arrangement in the first place, and for which the church has an apostolic – or, sent – function. When power is allocated in its appropriate place in this setting, it becomes clear that no single Christian, church or missionary organisation has the authority to place themselves between God and the church and assume power. Rather, the natural step is to deliberate the question of how to utilize the resources which are at the partnership's disposal, and develop mechanisms and structures in this regard, in order to best serve the *missio Dei*.

The apostolicity of the church also has a special validating effect upon partnership cooperation: Partnerships are structures that have been developed in order to facilitate mission. As the apostolicity stresses the continuity between the church of today and “Christ

through the apostles he appointed”, it places a special emphasis upon the continued relevance of the apostolic assignment; “the continuing evangelistic and missionary tasks of the church” (McGrath 2007:416). Thus, the apostolic mark is perhaps *the* mark that ensures the missionary nature of the church.

### **3.5 A Christological and relational perspective**

As Lindqvist mentions, in the light of the new understanding of mission in the latter half of the last century, both ecclesiology and Christology might be seen as derived from missiology (1982:142). And I believe that a discussion of the theological considerations with regard to mission in partnership would equally benefit from a relational approach, based on Christology, as much as from a discussion of the greater lines in the understanding of the church.

Therefore I would like to take up the thread that was began above in the discussion of the catholicity of the church; namely where I mention Niwagila’s concept of sharing the “who” we are. His approach to a theological understanding of partnership is fundamentally Christological. For Niwagila, the incarnation of Christ, where God became man, is a demonstration of the love God has for us, as is the humility with which he came to us in order to establish a relationship – or fellowship – with us. (1996:97f). He takes his point of departure in John 17:21: “that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me.” This, Niwagila sees as the purpose of the incarnation, that Christ won back our fellowship (ibid. 99).

The relation within this fellowship is expounded through an understanding of light and word – which for Niwagila carries special meanings in an African context, that is, a sense of “clanship”. Light is understood as life and love, and ultimately God’s love, which is present in Jesus and embrace all people. Similarly, the Word (logos) is understood also to include the meaning of relationship, which is similar to the meaning of the word “*nen*” in Swahili, where “this sense of clan relationship (...) is the true language of creation” (ibid. 100). This relationship is understood as constitutive for the *koinonia* in Christ.

Further elaborating on a theology of the cross, Niwagila shows the character of this relationship in the *koinonia*, based on an understanding of Christ becoming our servant, setting us free through reconciling our sins by dying on the cross. Through this we are bound to him, and are to follow his example and become servants to each other in a community of reconciliation – as basis for a fellowship – and service, even though this some times may

make us suffer and even face martyrdom (ibid. 100-107). For Niwagila, the theology of the cross is paramount for a right understanding of partnership: “It is this Calvary event, and nothing else, that gives the meaning of our partnership in participation” (ibid. 106).

It is this relational aspect that lately seems to have come to the forefront in the discussion around partnership. Realizing that a successful partnership cooperation relies more on acquiring a right relationship than creating fair structures and methods down to the last penny, terms which replace the business-originating term “partnership” have therefore surfaced, such as accompaniment, companionship, fellowship, walking together, etc.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) has taken the step to implement such a relational approach to partnership, called *accompaniment*, into its policy document “Global Mission in the Twenty-first Century” in 1999. This concept is mainly based on the story of the disciples walking together with the Lord on the road to Emmaus, reported in Luke 24:13-35. Importantly, this document stresses relationship *before* resources, and notes: “Developments of programs and allocation of resources flow from how companions relate, rather than vice versa” (ELCA 1999:6).

Nielsen also mentions another text as a theological background for accompaniment; John 20:19ff. In this text, the focus is on the presence of Jesus – he appeared, although the doors were closed. Nielsen’s focus is on the fact that Jesus is present with his church when they are weak and afraid, and accompanies us – and in the process he sends us to our neighbour (Nielsen 2003:40).

The concept of accompaniment has been warmly welcomed into the mission circles. E.g. the Danish mission society Danmission made a policy document named “Følgeskab i Vidnesbyrd og Tjeneste”.<sup>27</sup> Another important setting for accompaniment and companionship as concepts, is the LWF. The new mission document from 2004 is based on the story of the Emmaus road and accompaniment (cf. LWF 2004:61).

According to the LWF document, the concept of accompaniment relates to the word “companion”, which is interpreted as “sharing bread together”, and churches which are in companionship are to share their resources with each other in the same manner. The document states:

As in the Emmaus story, companions share the journey together with all the concerns, pains, hopes, and joys that each one brings. The resurrected Christ, who joins the journey, makes the companionship empowering and transforming for the

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<sup>27</sup> Transl. approx.: Accompaniment in Witness and Service

church and the world (LWF 2004:45).

For Aano, the new concept of accompaniment is together with the concept of partnership still only a contextual understanding of mission, and he does not find them to be theologically sustainable over time. He nevertheless seems to be excited about them, because they “keep us in the crucial tension between the contextual and the universal” (Aano 2003:51).<sup>28</sup> What he seems to mean, is that they express some universal truths about mission, but in a contextual way. As such, he finds them to be important expressions for the missionary challenges for today, but predicts them to be replaced by other concepts in a matter of decades (Aano 2003:52).

As I have in this thesis focused on a Trinitarian and ecclesiological approach to the theology surrounding the partnership concept, I am somewhat reluctant to uncritically embrace the concept of accompaniment and companionship. This is not because they may seem to be theologically difficult, but because they at present seem to be somewhat diffuse, full of good intention, but less of novelty in the concrete ways of putting it into practice. To what degree are they only reconceptualisations of earlier efforts? However, the LWF document indicates that it is possible to “do it” this way as well, which is good, and so do the preliminary experiences of the ELCA.<sup>29</sup> In my opinion, the most important contribution yet is to place focus upon the relational aspects of mission, or, to utilise the words of the ELCA, to put relations before materials in partnership relations. This realisation hopefully brings us a good step closer to a fuller participation through partnership in the mission of God.

### **3.6 Intermediate Conclusion**

This chapter has been focusing on the theology of partnership in mission. I have laid out the theology of *missio Dei* as the basis from which it is natural to proceed with a theological reflection on the partnership matter, given a tentative definition of the mission in which partnership cooperation is done, and attempted to justify the need for a solid theology of partnership in close connection with the ways it is practiced, on account of its service to the *missio Dei*. From this outset I proceeded to sketch some rudimentary issues for a partnership theology along two lines. First, from an ecclesiological framework, I have shown the relevance of the four marks of the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, for a theology of mission in partnership, before briefly considering a Christological approach and

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<sup>28</sup> Orig.: ”de holder oss fast i den livsnødvendige spenningen mellom det kontekstuelle og det universelle.”

<sup>29</sup> I am here referring especially to the short article by Bonnie Jensen: “Følgeskab i mission” (Transl.: “Accompaniment in mission”, 2003)

some of the thoughts that surround new concepts of partnerships along a relational line, such as accompaniment and companionship.

With this I hope to have made a discernible picture, which will be used as a theological framework for the deliberation of the concrete partnership cooperation between ELCT and her Northern partners. Thus actualised, new theologically relevant elements may also later emerge.

## **4 A short history of the origins of ELCT and the developments of her partnership cooperation structures**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The issue of partnership cooperation in mission in reality seems to be a concept that is historically linked to the movement for autonomy among the churches that came into being as a result of Western mission in the context of colonialism and imperialism. As that context changed, and terms such as “mother/daughter churches” or the “three selves” became signs of paternalism on the part of the Western Christians, the idea of partnership cooperation has helped the bonds between the European founder mission organisations and churches to be maintained, but encapsulated within a new conceptual framework which allowed the mission founded churches to become autonomous, that is; self-governing and self-propagating, but without necessarily being self-supporting.

The ELCT is a church which, at this time, is made up of 20 dioceses. The number of dioceses have grown to this number from the original seven autonomous Lutheran churches, who in 1963 merged to form the ELCT. The seven founder churches were the results of mission work done by various missionary organizations. These bilateral relations, some many decades old and with long historical connections, are important factors in the current mode of cooperation between the church and her Northern partners. Therefore, in order to better get a picture of this complexity of the ELCT’s partnership relations, it is necessary to take a look at the history of the church with regard to autonomy, but with an emphasis upon the developments of her partnership relations, and especially the structural expressions of these – the various instruments for cooperation which have been utilised. This emphasis means that the historical view on the ELCT might not be as comprehensive as the topic itself deserves. The approach in this chapter is mainly to give the historical developments, especially so for the first part. Emphasis is placed on the workings of the later cooperation instruments, to the effect that they are explained in some detail. This is done in order to place the current cooperation instrument at the end of a long historical development, and provide an understanding also of the developments of the working dynamics in the instruments, facilitating a discussion of the long lines in the partnership cooperation in the final chapter.

As noted in the thesis’ introduction, I will conduct the discussion on a structural, somewhat abstract, level, and therefore I do not give the contents of the partnership cooperation the attention which perhaps would be due to it in a more detailed discussion.

Following this comes the question: What, concretely, is this “mission” which the partners are cooperating for? And who is it that is really doing it? Is not this only inter-church aid? At this point it is possible to mention that although the structures of partnership, which I treat in this thesis, are changing over time, the *content* of these in Tanzania stay roughly the same in terms of categories of mission (e.g. training and education, health, evangelisation, building/vehicles, income generation, poverty eradication, congregational life and faith, etc.) although it is possible to detect a movement towards a more reciprocal exchange in some fields in the North-South relationship, especially with regard to congregational life and faith, because of the establishment of more small scale bilateral relationships and increased exchanges between congregations.

Mission in this context is very broadly understood, and a tentative definition of it was given at p. 26. Since mission is so widely understood, it is not merely inter-church aid, and the missionary agencies are not “doing mission by proxy”, but rather participating through the concrete partnership cooperation, this is e.g. understood as through both personnel and financial means participate in the facilitation of projects. These range from humanitarian projects, such as drilling of wells, building of necessary structures and health initiatives such as building or equipping of dispensaries, to more church-related projects such as the acquisition of vehicles, the training of pastors and of e.g. Maasai evangelists, and also of lay preachers. Also, there are projects facilitating the operation at various teaching institutions, awareness projects for Children’s Rights and HIV/AIDS, Women empowerment projects, youth work, and projects especially related to evangelism and other work in the mission areas. Scholarships are also given, either for education in Tanzania or abroad. Expatriate missionary personnel are largely used towards these ends, mostly as teachers, medical staff or technical expertise, but also as pastors and even missionary pastors – although most of the evangelism work is now done by Tanzanians.

With regard to sources for this chapter, it should also be noted that much of the information on the formation and functioning of the early partnership cooperation through the first joint boards and the early workings of the Lutheran Coordination Service (LCS), relies to a great degree on Ingmar Lindqvist’s doctoral thesis *Partners in Mission* (1982), where he did extensive research on the developments of the partnership cooperation with the ELCT. Also the book *The Partnership and Power* by Eila Helander and Wilson B. Niwagila (1996), and the booklet *Partnership and Power* (1997) by Ørnulf Steen, have been of great help. For developments that took place from the early and mid 1990’s until today, I have relied on

minutes and cooperation manuals/plans from the LCS and the later Lutheran Mission Coordination (LMC).

## **4.2 The origins of the ELCT**

The great missionary era was also in East Africa the starting point for the European Lutheran mission that eventually resulted in the formation of the ELCT. At the time of the beginnings of Christian mission in East Africa, in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the region was experiencing a great social disintegration as a result of being dominated by the Muslim Sultanate of Zanzibar. East Africa became, because of the international increasing demand for ivory and slaves, influenced by the international economy. Firstly through the Swahili Arabs, who traded slaves and other goods and exported them through Zanzibar, and secondly, also from the large amounts of firearms coming the other way. This extensive trade increased ethnic hostility between Africans; previously stable kingdoms and chiefdoms became unstable, and raider bands appeared,<sup>30</sup> causing havoc (Sundkler 2000:513).

Thus, the first European missionaries arriving on the scene did not come together with European colonialism, as was the case on the African West coast. One of the pioneer missionaries was Johann Ludvig Krapf, arriving in 1844 to Mombasa, being a German missionary sent out from the British Church Missionary Society. He traveled extensively<sup>31</sup> and did important translation work, and is also known for suggesting the missionary strategy of establishing a “chain” of mission stations across Africa, from East to West. This, together with the tales of Livingstone, were instrumental in fueling European Protestant visions for strategies on a continental scale (Sundkler 2000:510, Latourette 1943:403f).

The beginnings of the work that eventually became the ELCT<sup>32</sup>, however, came to Africa mainly through the coast of today’s Tanzania. This is of course so because East Africa was best reached by sea, a connection which was even more strengthened after the opening of the Suez Channel in 1869. Mission stations at the coast served as “base stations” for the missionaries going further inland (Sundkler 2000:521.524). The Berlin III Mission, later called the Bethel Mission,<sup>33</sup> started work in Dar es Salaam in 1887, the same year as

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30 E.g., Ngoni warrior bands (from Swaziland – Oliver 1952:57) and the so called *rugaruga*, mercenaries who also served slave traders.

31 To Kamba (in today's Kenya), to Usambara and even sailing in a dhow south to the Rovuma River (Forming much of the border of today's Tanzania with Mozambique).

32 Focusing exclusively on the missions that founded churches who later became synods in the ELCT.

33 “Berliner Evangelische Missiongesellschaft für Ostafrika, known as Berlin III to distinguish it from the Berlin Missionary Society founded in 1824 (Berlin I), and the Gossner Mission whose headquarters were in Berlin (Berlin II).” (Groves 1955:73, footnote 3.) However, by 1903 the work of Berlin III was called the Bethel Mission, which is the name it will be referred to henceforth. “Berlin Mission” will thus mean Berlin I.

Germany declared German East-Africa and occupied Dar es Salaam (ibid. p.527, Groves 1955:75 and Lindqvist 1982:21). In 1891, two missionaries<sup>34</sup> from the Bethel Mission went to Usambara to start work there (Lindqvist ibid., Latourette 1943:406).

In 1885 the British Church Mission Society was welcomed to Moshi near Kilimanjaro by the Chagga chief Rindi, but after the issue of the border between British and German East Africa had been settled in 1886, and the English missionaries were “felt to be injurious to German prestige”(Groves 1955:80), they were asked to leave. They did so in 1892, and the Leipzig Missionary Society continued their work there in 1893 (Sundkler 2000:547, Groves 1955:80f and Lindqvist 1982:22).

By 1891, however, the older Berlin Mission<sup>35</sup> decided that since the border issue with Great Britain was finally settled, it was time to move in to East Africa (Groves 1955:76f). They commenced the work of the Bethel Mission in Dar es Salaam and its vicinity in 1891<sup>36</sup>, and approached the Southern Highlands, Kondeland, to the north of Lake Nyasa, where they, within two years, set up four stations among the Nyakusa people<sup>37</sup>.

At Bukoba, in the north western corner of German East Africa, Bethel missionary Ernst Johanssen arrived in 1907. At that time it was already a Catholic mission there. However, Protestantism had spread to Bukoba through trade with Buganda, and Johanssen had to convince a German administrator, who was unwilling to have two missions in the same district, that there already was an active African Protestant community who wanted to have their own pastor. Eventually, a German missionary was stationed in Bukoba in 1910 (Sundkler 2000:596)<sup>38</sup>.

At this point, five of the seven missions that eventually became the seven founder churches of the ELCT were established. An interesting fact, which Lindqvist points out (1982:22), is that only the Leipzig Missionary Society was “decidedly Lutheran”, of the mission societies that had founded these missions. The other two societies were constituted as unions of Lutherans as well as Reformed. The mission work in German East Africa was, however, “based on the Bible and Luther’s Catechism “ (ibid.).

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34 Ernst Johanssen and Karl Wohlrab (Sundkler 2000:545).

35 That is; Berlin I (cf. footnote 33 above).

36 Work at Usaramo in the south of Dar es Salaam (Groves 1955:75 and Sundkler 2000:547).

37 Nyakusa are also known as Konde. The four stations were: Wangemannshöh, Manow, Mwakaleli and Ikombe. (Groves 1955:77)

38 Sundkler here points to the doctoral thesis by W. B. Niwagila, *From Catacomb to a Self-Governing Church* (Hamburg, 1988), as especially stressing the local African initiative regarding the spread of Protestantism in Bukoba.

### **4.3 The effect of the world wars**

The world wars were important occasions for a movement toward autonomy for African churches, and especially the First World War (WWI) played an important role in changing the European sentiment towards indigenous leadership in African and Asian churches. As the war shattered the Western belief in the superiority of its civilization and moral values, it was felt that unless Christianity could be established with a local basis and with indigenous leadership in Africa, it would eventually disappear along with colonialism (Oliver 1952:231ff).

As for German East-Africa, becoming the British mandate Tanganyika as a result of the war, there was a period of some years when the German missionaries were expelled.<sup>39</sup> The mission stations which lost their missionaries, were either cared for by another non-German mission<sup>40</sup> or not at all, in which case they had to manage themselves. But the general shortage of missionary resources still had an effect, so that when the German missionaries were allowed back in 1924, Lindqvist notes “African leadership as an established fact in most mission areas after the war” (1982:24).

A couple of new mission societies also entered Tanganyika after the war. The American Lutheran Augustana Synod had administered the Northern Area, the site where the Leipzig Mission had been, during the war, and when the Germans came back the Americans wanted to start their own work in the territory, which they did, going to the Iramba and the Turu people in central Tanganyika (Lindqvist 1982:25, Sundkler 2000:881). The Swedish Evangelical Mission Society (SEMS) also took up work, in Ilida in the southern highlands, and Dongobesh, south-west of the Leipzig Mission (Lindqvist, *ibid.*).

The war also inspired cooperation between different mission societies in Tanganyika, and there was talk of a united Protestant church. These plans were never realized, but instead, on a Lutheran basis, the Mission Church Federation came into existence, founded by the Berlin, Bethel, Leipzig, Augustana Missions, and – although they withdrew in 1944 – the German Moravians (Lindqvist, *ibid.*). This Federation was the beginning of the cooperation that would eventually result in the ELCT, although its main function seemed to have been merely as a discussion forum at that time (*ibid.* pp. 25.28).

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39 “The still remaining German missionaries were repatriated in 1920, the first ones having been ousted as early as 1916” (Lindqvist 1982:23).

40 As e.g. the Bukoba Bethel mission, which was cared for first by the Angelicans of Uganda, from 1917-1924, and then (though they were not readily accepted by the local Haya Church) by Wesleyan Methodists from South Africa, until the Germans were allowed to return (Sundkler 2000:880).

When the Second World War (WWII) broke out, several missions in Tanganyika were again “orphaned”. However, a massive organizational effort was launched in order to be able to “care for” these missions. On the Lutheran side, there was an international worldwide effort, and the Lutheran World Convention appointed its American branch, the National Lutheran Council (NLC), to care for the Lutheran orphaned missions. In Tanganyika, the Augustana Mission was, by the NLC, given the main supervision responsibility for the “orphaned” German missions during the war. They had help by SEMS, who administered the Souther Highlands Area, which was the earlier Berlin Mission, while the Church of Sweden Mission (CSM) administered the Bukoba area, which was the earlier Bethel Mission (Lindqvist 1982:26f) .

After the war, there was a massive Lutheran cooperation encompassing several nationalities and mission societies in order that the mission fields might have the personnel which was needed. In the early fifties, the situation was that the Danish Lutheran Mission (DLM) had come to assist SEMS in the South (1948),<sup>41</sup> The Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM) had taken over Dongobesh (1950), and the Finnish Missionary Society (FMS) was asked to take over some stations from SEMS in the western part of the southern field (1954). The Danish Missionary Society (DMS) sent missionaries to Bukoba from 1948, while Germans from the Bethel society came in 1954 (Lindqvist 1982:27). This international cooperation in the former German mission fields necessitated cooperation between the missionary agencies in these places, and sowed the seed which through the “joint boards” would grow into the LCS.

Between 1957 and 1961, the mission areas had all adopted constitutions which made them autonomous, self-governing churches (ibid. p. 30). The Mission Church Federation, had been reorganised in 1952 into a body called the Federation of Lutheran Churches in Tanzania, with the goal of a united church, and this was realised in 1963 when the ELCT was formed. This took place in an atmosphere of optimistic nationalism, as Tanganyika had become independent in 1961. In 1964, when it united with Zanzibar, the country was renamed Tanzania.

Around this time, church/mission cooperation was becoming an issue which required reorganization on the part of the mission agencies, partly because of the international cooperation in the former German mission fields. In the south, where the SEMS and FMS had been sharing work, but at separate stations, it was e.g. now deemed best that the

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41 At Ulanga.

missionary assistance to the Southern Synod (SS) was to be channelled through a Joint Board Committee (JBC). In this cooperation, SEMS was no longer in charge, but instead rendered assistance together with the FMS, to the SS, who was in charge. The JBC was formed in 1966 (ibid. p. 34-35).

Along similar lines, in the Bukoba area, the Bethel Mission, the CSM and the DMS in 1963 formed the Tanzania Committee (TC). For missionary assistance to the synods/doceses that had been administered by the Americans during and after WWII; the Central Synod (CS – central Tanganyika, where the Augustana mission started work after WWI, see above), the Northern Diocese (ND – Kilimanjaro/Arusha area), the North Eastern Diocese (NED – Usambara) and the Eastern and Coastal Synod (ECS – Around Dar-es-Salaam), a similar structure was established in 1965, named the Tanzania Assistance Committee (TAC – ibid. p.38). This restructuring of mission/church relation represents a milestone in the development of mission in partnership in Tanzania. To clarify the picture of the founding diocese of the ELCT and their cooperation structures, in the mid-60's, the following table is given:

Diocese		Partnership structure	
North Western Diocese	NWD	Tanzania Committee	TC
Central Synod	CS	Tanzania Assistance Committee	TAC
Northern Diocese	ND		
North Eastern Diocese	NED		
Eastern and Coastal Synod	ECS		
Mbulu Synod	MS	(Bilateral relationship with NLM only)	
Southern Synod	SS	Joint Board Committee	JBC

**Table 1: ELCT founder synods/dioceses and their mission/church cooperation organs**

These “joint committees” for the mission agencies rendering assistance to the various parts of the new ELCT, shows that all in all, the mission agencies welcomed and recognized the church autonomy, and adjusted themselves and their functions accordingly (ibid. p.38 ), not being blind to historical realities of development in the national church.

#### **4.4 Lutheran Coordination Service**

In the process that resulted in the creation of the TAC for the synods/dioceses that were administered by the Americans, there had been plans to create a one-channel system in

which all assistance to the ELCT would go through a committee on which all the concerned missionary agencies was to have representation, and in the first draft of the structure, each of the cooperation African churches was to have three representatives on the committee. (Lindqvist 1982:37). The plans did not become reality, however.<sup>42</sup> In its place, a discussion forum was created, which evolved into the “Lutheran Coordination Service – Tanzania” (LCS-T), that had the function of coordinating assistance to the part of ELCT work that is called the Common Work.<sup>43</sup> However, it soon got more to do, as the TAC members utilized the LCS-T for the coordinating of their assistance, and also the JBC transferred funds to the SS through them (ibid. p. 39).

There seem to have been some controversy surrounding the establishment of a one channel system for assistance to the ELCT, because there still existed tension within the ELCT with regard to the church unification. Those who wished a looser bond between the church units, saw the move towards this system as exerting external pressure on the ELCT to become more united. On the other hand, those who sought ELCT unity, saw the separate arrangements of joint boards rendering assistance to separate church units as a hindrance to church unity (ibid.). However, in the end, Lindqvist notes, the ELCT decided that “coordination at the supporting end did not necessarily put pressure on the ELCT units for a similar move” (ibid.).

Thus the LCS-T became reorganized into the Lutheran Coordination Service (LCS) in 1973, and the JBC and the TAC merged into it. The TC became merged into the LCS in 1977 (ibid. 40), and the NLM joined the LCS in 1989 (LCS 1990:151).

In an “inofficial note for internal use”, the LCS defined itself as:

a loose grouping of Finnish, Scandinavian, German and American churches and missions who want to assure coordination in some areas of their partnership relation to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania or “ELCT” (LCS 1978b:1).

The LCS was governed by a constitution, which stipulated its functions and the organizational layout. According to this constitution, the LCS saw itself as an instrument for “full and responsible sharing of gifts and resources” (LCS const. 2.2), and as the only channel through which the missions should “consider all aspects of their relationship to the

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<sup>42</sup> Lindqvist lists the reasons for this as “second thoughts on the part of many European agencies and vehement opposition from some Tanzanian church units” (ibid.).

<sup>43</sup> That is, common to all the dioceses/synods in ELCT, such as e.g. the ELCT head office and administration.

ELCT” (ibid. 2.1) even if it was with only some or one of the church units. Thus the one-channel system had become reality.

The specific function of LCS was to “coordinate assistance” (ibid. 3.1) to the ELCT. But it is also intended to be available as a means by which the members could “coordinate their requests for assistance” from the ELCT (ibid. 3.3). However, it seems that this was seen only as a possible use of the LCS, and then only for the Northern partners’ requests for assistance, and not as an entire framework for reciprocal sharing.

The constitution was elaborated and specified in a set of bylaws, as well as through established procedures and guidelines. The LCS was organised with the annual LCS Assembly as the highest decision-making body. In the Assembly, only full members, that is; those churches, boards, and agencies which were in a partnership relation with the ELCT, had voice and votes. Thus the ELCT itself was not included as a member, but was nevertheless invited to the Assembly “in order to render their advice, to give necessary information, and to facilitate consultation with the members” (LCS Const. 4.3.1)

The Assembly elected an Executive council to function between Assemblies, as well as the vital secretariat, which carried out the decisions of the Assembly and worked with the Executive council. The secretariat was first situated in Europe (first Germany and later Finland).

The cooperation with the ELCT was specified through a “Working Agreement”, which provided a mutual understanding between the ELCT and the LCS of how the expatriate personnel, and scholarships and financial assistance, were to be practically organised. The working agreement stated very clearly in its preamble that the partnership should only be carried out “as long as it is mutually agreed to do so” (Preamble to the LCS Working Agreement).

The cooperation, or – in the case of the LCS – the assistance, seems to have been divided into three key areas. They are: expatriate personnel, scholarship and training, and financial assistance. In all the areas, the LCS responded to requests from the ELCT. For expatriate personnel, according to the constitution with bylaws, the working agreement, and the guidelines, functioned as follows: The ELCT submitted positions they wanted to be filled by an expatriate worker to the LCS, which maintained a registry of vacant positions, agreed upon at each year’s Assembly. One of the LCS members was to recruit persons to these positions, and in direct negotiations with the ELCT unit in which the position was situated,

eventually agreed upon the person filling the position. If, however, the position was not filled within four years, it fell out of the registry<sup>44</sup>.

The ELCT was to be responsible for providing housing (with basic furniture), transportation and working budget for the position. Language study and in-service training were also to be provided by the ELCT, expenses paid by the sending body. A Three Party Agreement was to be signed between the sending body, the ELCT and the expatriate worker. The sending body was to be responsible for expenses such as “salaries, travel, housing allowances, vacation allowances, medical expenses, children’s education allowances, and furlough and special study expenses” (LCS Const. 5.1).

LCS also acted as a channel for scholarships and other training. On the basis of a recommendation from the ELCT Executive council, a prospective student could apply for a scholarship either in East Africa, in other part of Africa or outside Africa. According to the Working Agreement, highest priority was given to “programmes of academic or vocational study in East Africa” or in Africa (LCS Work. Agr. 2.2 and 2.6). Approval was dependent on the “availability of a sponsors, administrators as well as suitable places of study” (ibid. 2.10).

For financial assistance, it was clearly stated in the Working Agreement that “the ultimate aim” was to help the ELCT dioceses/synods to become self-sufficient (Work. Agr. 3.1.1). The LCS differentiated between three different types of grants; 1) block grants for general purposes, i.e. administration, but only on a provisional basis (ibid. 3.6.1), 2) “Programme subsidies” for expenses related to specific programmes, departments or institutions of the dioceses/synods (ibid. 3.4.1), and 3) “Capital subsidies”, which were given for “buildings, vehicles, and major equipment” (ibid. 3.5.1). Requests from the ELCT were to be worked out in consultation with the LCS Secretariat in order to ensure that the amounts were “within the limits of the LCS potential”(ibid. 3.4.1, cf. 3.5.2 and 3.6.3), before they were officially presented to the Assembly, in a prioritised list, for approval. A prerequisite seems to have been economical transparency, i.e. ELCT budgets and financial reports on programmes.

But it was not only in the area of financial support it was envisioned that the assistance from the LCS members were to decrease in favour of self-sufficiency. The entire LCS framework seems to have been constructed as a means to render assistance in a prolonged, but still transitional, period, in a church which was on her way to realise the goal of self-sufficiency. As Lindqvist notes, the underscoring in the Working Agreement on the

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<sup>44</sup> If the position was not filled by the recruiting LCS member, the position became open for recruiting for all LCS members for another two years, before falling from the positions registry.

provisional nature of the block grants, as well as the statement that the ELCT and LCS should agree on a schedule for the reduction in such aid, is an indication of increased self-sufficiency as a general policy (Work. Agr. 3.6.1 and 3.6.5, Lindqvist 1982:72). It has also been suggested that the tasks of the LCS would gradually be taken over by the ELCT, or that new requirements might emerge as a result of new developments in the character of mission cooperation, to such an extent that the LCS of that time would no longer be adequate, and that it might eventually become dissolved (LCS, 1978b:2:12, 7.1, and 7.2).

For the first decade or so of its operation, the partnership arrangement of the LCS structural setup seemed to function to a general satisfaction, both for ELCT and the LCS members, although with some modifications along the way. Apparently, in the first half of the 1980's, ELCT looked at several different partnership models, and concluded that theirs was among the better (Helander 1996:23).

But at the end of the 80's, sentiments changed. An ELCT/LCS joint consultation in Moshi 1989 expressed dissatisfaction with the current mode of cooperation, and this seems to have prompted a near decade long process of reflections that eventually resulted in the complete reorganisation of the partnership structure in 1998. The dissatisfaction seems to have been centred around themes such as lack of reciprocity and equality on the part of the ELCT. Helander mentions that the increase in bilateral relationship between congregations on a grassroot level, might have been a manifestation also of this dissatisfaction (ibid. 24f).

In the spring of 1993 an LCS meeting was, on account of the twentieth anniversary of the LCS, devoted to evaluation of the ELCT/LCS relationship. In the later report to the LCS Assembly the same year, the LCS Secretary, Otto Immonen, placed the discussion in continuity with similar deliberations on the same topic at the 1989 consultation. He reported that the meeting listed several issues with regard to "cooperation and coordination":

Opportunities for common discussion, setting of priorities, the importance of mutual accountability and openness, mission outreach programmes, LCS membership with special reference to ELCT, possible transfer of the LCS office to Tanzania, importance of regular information sharing, and the role of bilateral assistance viz-a-viz joint support within the coordinated ELCT-LCS cooperation (LCS 1994:179).

The concerns which were taken up at this meeting became, in the process which followed, known as the "areas of concern". Also the ELCT Acting Presiding Bishop, Samuel Mushenda, in his speech concerning "Future Challenges of ELCT" to the same Assembly,

asserted that in the context of the challenges of a changing world, there was a need for new models of partnership. He actualised concepts such as joint planning and implementations, Round Table discussions and the idea of a “common basket” of resources. With this, the need for a revision of the partnership cooperation was definitely on the order of the day (ibid. 173).

The 1993 Assembly decided to follow up on the “areas of concern”, and in 1994 a joint ELCT/LCS study group was established (LCS 1995:182). In May of 1995 a broader joint ELCT-LCS consultation was held in Neuendettelsau in Germany. Three issues became emphasised; the “common basket”, joint planning and flexibility of structure. The effective result of the consultation was that it was decided to appoint a “Restructuring Committee”, with the responsibilities of creating a constitution, working agreement, timetable and action plan for a new structure: “Partners together in Mission”. A work draft was presented to the ELCT and 1995 LCS Assembly (LCS 1996:165f and 125ff).

Finally, at a special ELCT-LCS consultation held during the 1996 LCS Assembly<sup>45</sup> it was resolved that the Constituting Assembly of the new joint partnership instrument should be held in September 1997, and that it would be operational from the beginning of 1998 (LCS 1997:168f) assuming the responsibilities and ownerships of the LCS. The LCS was then dissolved at the first Assembly of the new instrument, the *Lutheran Mission Cooperation – Tanzania* (LMC), in 1998.

#### **4.5 Lutheran Mission Cooperation**

The LMC represents a fundamentally different framework for cooperation than LCS. Where the LCS was essentially a unified organ of missionary organisations/churches working *with* the ELCT in mission partnership, where cooperation took place *between* the LCS and the ELCT, the new organization is actually embracing all partners as members in a unified organ, that is, the ELCT and her partners are cooperating together *in* the joint instrument. This means that the ELCT with her units are also members of the LMC.

Even though the LCS Constitution specified that the LCS might be a framework for its members to request assistance from the ELCT, the main function of the LCS was specified in terms of the partners providing assistance to the ELCT (LCS Const. 3.3 and 3.2). The LMC in principle abandoned the notion of such polarisation and one-way traffic. The purpose of the LMC was instead to provide a forum for the ELCT “and her partners to fulfil their visions, goals and priorities in accordance with their common mission” (LMC Const. 2.0).

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<sup>45</sup> The LCS Assembly was adjourned for the duration of the special consultation, in order that all partners might act on the proposals for restructuring (LCS 1997:120)

The LMC was to be a framework for the identification of the needs, and common concerns among the partners<sup>46</sup>, facilitation of the creation and implementation of joint plans, and encouraging exchange of skills and experiences (LMC Const. 3.1-3.6). The cooperation was apparently no longer to be realised only in Tanzania or the ELCT, but seemed to include the notion of a reciprocal relationship among all partners.

However, as mentioned above, since the LMC was perceived as a joint instrument for *the ELCT and her partners*, a certain dualism is still apparent. While the problematic polarisation from the LCS was eased through LMC, the partnership is still seen as evolving around a partnership between Western churches/agencies and the ELCT. The LMC was not meant for exchange in between the Western churches/agencies, and probably never aspired to be, but, as the constitution makes evident, for a reciprocal relationship between the ELCT and her Western partners. This became evident through the practical provision that the ELCT's total voting Assembly delegates should number the same as the total number of voting representatives of her partners (LMC Bylaws 4.1.1).

The LMC was structured with its annual Assembly as its highest decision-making body. There was a Secretariat, with a Secretary and a Finance Secretary appointed by the assembly, where one of the two was to be from the ELCT while the other from one of the other members of the ELCT (LMC Const. 7.1). Three committees were elected, namely an Executive Committee, a Planning Committee and a Finance Committee. The Constitution also made provisions for a "Conference of Church Leaders and Mission Directors", which was to be held every third year. The conference was to "give directions and inspirations on theological issues concerning mission and church life", and calling for renewed commitment to mission (ibid. 8.1-8.2).

Key to the working structure of the LMC were the two concepts "joint plans" and "Common Basket", representing planning and resource mobilisation respectively. The procedures of the joint planning was very elaborate, but was apparently constructed in such a way that the planning of the cooperation might be as jointly as possible, at the same time as it tried to keep in with the realistic needs on the "grassroot" level in the ELCT and the ever dwindling resources of the Western partners.

The procedure of joint planning was perceived in five stages. Firstly, on the grassroot level of the ELCT was the identification of both needs and available resources. Through studying the root causes of problems solutions were formulated, with an emphasis on

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<sup>46</sup> The ELCT seems to be considered a partner here on a par with the other members.

sustainability and possibilities of self-financing and with clear priorities and timeframes. Also the issues of missionary personnel, exchange programs and scholarships were included from this stage. This was to be synthesized on the diocesan level, and submitted to the ELCT for stage two, where the plans were screened and prioritised, and a First Consolidated Draft Plan was to be made. At this stage, LMC endorsed priorities were to be incorporated.

At stage three, an LMC Advisory Group, consisting of the LMC Secretary and Finance Secretary, ELCT Director of Finance and Director for Planning and Development as well as two European or American representatives from the LMC, scrutinised the plans, also with regard to the ability for the available resources to meet the plans. At stage four a Second Consolidated Draft Plan was made, which was to be sent to the LMC members for comments. Stage five involved the finalisation of the plans by the LMC Planning committee, and the Finance committee which made proposals for the resource allocations to meet the plans. Finally, the Assembly deliberated the plans and decided upon them. The plans were to include long term plans, which were to be implemented in the course of three years, and a more specific short term plan which was to be implemented in the course of the next year. During the implementations, the ELCT was to undertake monitoring, with reports given to the LMC. (LMC 1999:33-34, LMC Bylaws, “LMC Provisional Guidelines” in LMC-LCS 1998:164-165)

The approved plans were to be the basis for the pledges of resources, through “The Common basket”. This was the name of the “resource mobilisation and allocation system” (LMC Bylaws, 2.1.1), where members were to assure the availability of both financial and human resources. It was comprised of “assured personnel positions, exchange programs, scholarships and training” (ibid. 2.1.1), as well as financial resources, and contributions. An important part was that also ELCT contributions, as well as funds coming through bilateral channels, should be reckoned with in the Common basket, “in the spirit that they relate to overall LMC joint plans” (ibid. 2.3.2). Members were to pledge resources for the coming year, as well as giving estimates for the next two years. (ibid. 2.1, 2.1.1 and 2.3.5).

This new setup was then to be perceived as a partnership cooperation where the partners were to work closely together in order to find their common goals and how to work together in order to achieve them. This was indeed an admirable way to take partnership cooperation seriously. However, over the following years, it became clear that it was very difficult to achieve such a close cooperation in practice. Although there were things to

celebrate<sup>47</sup>, the new LMC had great challenges ahead. Already at the second LMC Assembly in 1999, the Chairperson, Mr. Lutabingwa, remarked in the opening address that the LMC was still “practicing the legacy of LCS in our relationships and plans” (LMC 2000:23).

Among other issues which seem to recur several years are a concern for lack of reporting of project implementation from ELCT units (LMC 2000:12 and 30, LMC 2004:26), the fact that the Western resources are steadily dwindling (LMC 2003:18, 2003: 42, 2004:28), and that the “amount of resources required to meet the needs presented in the joint plans are far beyond the resourcing capability of its members” (2002:i). Furthermore, bilateral project funding constitutes a problem, as far as they are not geared towards the joint plans. It is felt that they should be linked to joint plans, else, the whole setup is working against the notion of the “common basket” (e.g. LMC 2001:33, 2002:27). If, however, they had been geared towards the joint plans, they would actually have been helpful in reaching the cooperating goal.

The LMC was constitutionally bound to conduct an evaluation every sixth year. Even though there were challenges, the overall cooperation seemed to work well. In his report to the Assembly in 2004, the Secretary, Dr. Mbilinyi, reported that “The Joint Plans for 2004-2006 is a reflection of the highest achievement in joint planning” (LMC 2005:17), and furthermore, that an ELCT Evaluation Team had “rated the performance of our cooperation ‘very good’” (ibid.).

Still, the LMC’s own evaluation addressed several structural matters. Firstly, the constitution of the LMC was seen as too ambitious and complicated, and also the fact that there in practice existed a dualism with regard to cooperating between Northern members and the ELCT, while the constitutions was “prepared for an organization that is like a world wide mission organization or a church with members in seven countries” (LMC 2005:12). The constitution provided for coordination of human resource, scholarship and small projects that was not feasible to carry out on a high administrative level.

Secondly, it was felt that the Northern members in principle had too much influence in the planning of the ELCT. However, in practice the ELCT did handle its planning itself, and thus it was felt that the cooperation agreement should reflect this. In that regard it was also pointed out that the available resources were not enough for all the projects that were

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<sup>47</sup> E.g. the Chairperson in his report to the 5<sup>th</sup> Assembly in 2002, Mr. Mdegella stated: “We have other fascinating reason for celebrations, but the most fascinating is the success of the vehicle policy”. Also the developments towards the new humanities faculty on the ELCT’s Makumira University College is mentioned here. The Chairpersons report emits a general positive attitude (LMC 2003:29f).

listed in the joint plans, and that when the Northern partners selected projects, the projects had “mostly gone to traditional partners” (LMC 2006:57).

Thirdly, the planning process was seen as to complicated and detailed. Since in practice smaller projects turned out to be supported bilaterally, it was proposed that only core projects of a certain size should be handled by the LMC (“LMC Chairpersons’ address to 7<sup>th</sup> LMC Assembly”, in LMC 2005:11-14, and “LMC Secretary’s report to LMC 2<sup>nd</sup> Round Table” in LMC 2006:57-63).

Therefore, in 2004, the LMC became reorganized. Instead of a constitution, the LMC adapted a short “Memorandum of Understanding” (MoU)<sup>48</sup>. Compared to the earlier constitutions and setups of both the LCS and the LMC with their bylaws, this was a minor revolution in terms of simplification. The “purpose” clause of the MoU is much more focused than the constitution.<sup>49</sup> Instead of an Assembly, a Round Table (RT) is the highest decision making body. It is worth noting that there is no mentioning of an equal representation from the ELCT and the Northern members, something which means that in practice, the ELCT carries the most votes. A Planning Committee and a Financial Committee are elected by the RT. An LMC office is specified, but its number of staff is to be determined by the roles and responsibilities that the LMC have. These are mainly to distribute and monitor<sup>50</sup> funds for core programmes, individual projects totalling 20 million TSh over three years, and scholarships. For the latter, the ELCT chooses and approves of candidates and scholarships, which are also paid through the ELCT Common Work office. Missionary personnel are handled on bilateral basis, and the LMC only keeps lists, as well as lists of both designated and bilateral funds. LMC also administers a vehicle fund.

The LMC has also become integrated into the ELCT, in the sense that the LMC board is elected by the RT and appointed by the ELCT. It has four ELCT members and four members nominated by the Northern members. Since the board is appointed by the ELCT, it is also mandated by the ELCT in order that it might handle legal matters (cf. also LMC 2005:13).

The planning process is simplified to a great degree. The ELCT is to take care of its own planning process, and the Northern Members are then to “give their comments, feedback, show the interest for cooperation, [and] pledge funding” (MoU 8.5). This, then, is

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<sup>48</sup> The current MoU is available from the Internet at <http://www.lmc.or.tz/about/mou.doc> .

<sup>49</sup> Mainly: ”To provide the opportunity for all members to participate in joint programs/projects that benefit the entire ELCT and all its Dioceses. To promote awareness of the full scope of the work of the LMC members” (MoU 3).

<sup>50</sup> The physical monitoring is taken care of by the ELCT.

the present configuration of the instrument for cooperation in mission between the ELCT and her partners.

#### **4.6 Intermediate Conclusion**

I have in this chapter accounted for the history of the missionary developments that resulted in the seven churches that merged to form the ELCT in 1963. The developments which came about as a result of the situations for the missions in East Africa during the two World Wars, were important in promoting self-government in the national mission churches in what was to be Tanzania. It had an accelerating effect also upon the developments of cooperation, first among the missionary societies and agencies themselves, and secondly between the missionary agencies and societies, and the national churches.

From this outset, I proceeded to show how the first cooperating organs, the “joint boards” for coordination of missionary efforts in Tanzania gradually developed into a single instrument with the purpose of uniting the missionary agencies and societies that had traditional bonds to parts of the ELCT, rendering assistance through financial and personal resources through one framework, in order to accommodate and support the unity of the ELCT. I have laid out how, through this instrument, the LCS, the missionary agencies and societies and the ELCT were able to do mission in partnership.

Furthermore, I have accounted for the developments in this partnership that resulted in the acknowledged need on all parts to reform the structures, in order to enable a closer, more fruitful and more equal partnership, through concepts such as “joint planning” and “common basket”, in the new partnership instrument, the LMC. I have also mentioned some of the practical problems of realising this vision in practice, and how this laid the basis for yet another more simplified partnership structure, where the ELCT nevertheless retains a strong position, in relation to Northern missionary agencies, societies and churches which seem to have less and less resources to share. The move towards more emphasis on, and acceptance of, bilateral relationships, have also been noted.

This detailed explanation has shown that there has been a movement in the locus of power through the various instruments, from the outset where the ELCT was rather powerless, to a situation where the ELCT perhaps is the stronger partner, in spite of financial resources. In the final chapter I will endeavour to do a tentative and inductive analysis of these historical developments in the partnership structures, as well as of the current working relationship in light of the historical and present context. Some theological reflections and implications will also be drawn.

## 5 Issues in mission in partnership

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will endeavour to connect the previous three chapters, through a reflection on some relevant issues in partnership cooperation, and its structures, that exist between the ELCT and her Northern partners. This will be done with a reference also to the concept of mission in partnership in general, as well as to some theological themes that emerge.

### 5.2 Power, money and partnership relations

It seems that at first glance, the issues of North-South partnership are best understood and analysed in terms of money and the power which goes with it. Above, in chapter 3, I have argued that this is not the case, and contended that an approach from theology, or more specifically, from missiology and *missio Dei*, and an analysis of the issues which become relevant in the light of such an approach, would be the most comprehensive way to understand mission in partnership. I would hold that an approach focusing on power vested in money and resources, comes short of a such a comprehensive understanding.

That said, it is also important to appreciate the fact that power dynamics, closely connected to monetary resources, are an integral part of any partnership, especially if one of the partners has considerably more resources than the other. Since the partnership in mission between the ELCT and the Northern partners is a partnership where this economical imbalance exists, it is only right to look at how this has, and is, been handled. A seminal question is to what degree, and how, the control of money is linked to power in a partnership relation.

Two publications in the 1990's have focused on partnership and power with regard to the ELCT and her partners. These are the *The Partnership and Power* (1996), by Eila Helander and Wilson B. Niwagila and the booklet *Partnership and Power* (1997), by Ørnulf Steen (both mentioned in ch. 4.1). Without reiterating their findings, I would like to mention the definitions and understandings of power utilised there, as they are useful for this discussion as well.

Power is essentially defined as the ability of A to exert influence over the situation and behaviour of B. An analysis of power relations will include an examination of the intentions of A in exerting power over B, the circumstances and the structures which allow A

to exert this influence, and the means by which the influence is exerted. The possibility of influence from the side of B is also to be reckoned with.

But a prerequisite for power is the dependency of the other party; “power resides implicitly in the other’s dependency”.<sup>51</sup> Thus, for A to have power over B, he must have the means to enable a certain outcome, which is desired by B, or resources which are valued by B. B’s dependency is conditioned by the value he places on the resources of, or the possible outcome of the actions of A. This means that in a partnership relation, there are many kinds of powers that the partners can exert on each other, interdependent on each other in a complex network (Helander 1996:56f and Steen 1997:17f).

To apply this to a simplified example: A might have money. B might need money. A might have power over B because of this. The power is even stronger if B is severely in need of (i.e. places heavily value on) money, and if there is a scarcity of donors. But the scale might tip the other way, if there are plenty of donors for B to choose among, or if he has alternative ways of getting the resources he needs. And if A is a charity organisation, it is in fact “dependent” on having someone to donate money to, someone who values the resources it wishes to distribute or donate. In this scenario, B might have power over A by virtue of his need. The one finally in power in such a shifting relation of power and dependency of course relies on the circumstances, the partners’ self-perceptions of power or dependency, and the value placed on the resources or outcomes of the situation at that particular time.

This is of course an overly simplified example, and in the end it might sometimes be difficult to say something definite about who is in power in a given situation. But, accepting generalisations, it may be a possibility that we all have a tendency to see ourselves as “underdogs” in North-South relations to some degree; i.e. in the partnership relation where Southern members see themselves as powerless in the face of what they perceive as the economic power of the North, or the Northern members feeling that they, in the of the poverty and powerlessness of the South, their cry for equality and justice and accusations of abuse and domination, have a moral and Christian obligation to strain their resources to the limit, but without any chance of a full redemption unless they themselves give up all their resources.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Emerson, R.M., “Power-dependence relations” in *American Sociological Review* 27 (Febr. 1962):32, cited in Helander 1996:56

<sup>52</sup> It should be noted and emphasised that the obligation which the North feel, have nothing to do with colonialist concepts such as “the white man’s burden”. Rather, this obligation is as much conditioned by the remorse and a wish for redemption for such past sins, as it is by actual confrontation with poverty.

Before the mission churches in what was to become Tanzania, became autonomous, the missionaries and the mission agencies were in positions of power in the churches, sitting as leaders in boards and councils, and deciding on use of resources and policy. When the churches eventually became autonomous, the missionaries gradually retired from such positions,<sup>53</sup> and further cooperation between the missionary agencies and the newly autonomous churches came to be institutionalised in the “joint boards”. As has been shown above (p.47, cf. also Lindqvist 1982:38) the formation of these joint boards was an acknowledgement of the autonomy of the former mission churches, and implied relinquishing of power on the part of the mission agencies. E.g, when it came to missionaries, it was seen as the responsibility of the churches to call and place missionaries.

However, the missionary agencies did retain a great deal of power and authority. E.g. some of the dioceses/synods were required to place the missionaries in consultation with the sending agencies. Also, the financial assistance was rendered under strict demands of accountability on the part of the beneficiaries, withholding funds when there was insufficient reporting. The TAC actually terminated its relationship from 1970-72 with the NED, because of lack of financial reporting. Money were donated mostly as block grants to unit budgets, although it was expected from the side of the mission agencies that the budgets be kept. Still, serious financial troubles among many of the ELCT units led to the adoption of individual programme subsidies, a policy carried forward in the LCS, where, as noted above (p. 50), block grants were reserved for short-term needs and geared strongly towards self-reliance (Lindqvist 1982:80ff and 107ff).

However, the responsibility for use of the money towards the donors seemed, at least from the perspective of some Tanzanians in the 70's, to be “an encroachment on church autonomy” (ibid. 109). This highlights the paradoxical situation, namely that in order to have an open partnership, the Northern partners had to apply coercive force. The often quoted sentence uttered by an Indonesian pastor, “yes, *partnership* for you, but *obedience* for us”<sup>54</sup> may seem to apply.

In this connection, it is interesting to note that according to Lindqvist, the fact that money given from the LCS was not seen as gifts, but instead as resources given for a mutually agreed upon purposes, is one of the defining points for mission in partnership. Here, this was the active engagement which allowed the parties to work in the mission in Tanzania

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<sup>53</sup> “It was only during the course of the 1960's that most of the synods and dioceses elected Tanzanian presidents and bishops” (Lindqvist 1982:80).

<sup>54</sup> Jansen-Schoonhoven, *Wederkerige assistentie van kerken in missionair perspectief*, Leiden 1977:48, cited in Bosch 1991:466.

together, and which distinguished such a partnership cooperating from an alternate setup where the Northern missionary agencies would be filling a mere supporting function (Lindqvist 1982:134-135).

The practice of letting program subsidies depend on financial reports, was carried on by both LCS and LMC (Lindqvist 1982:110). The necessity of transparency in financial matters was recognised and seen as a prerequisite by all parties. But the above shows that though the arrangements of the joint boards and the LCS was mission in partnership, it still was to a very high degree based on the terms of the Northern missionary agencies when it came to monetary support.

The joint boards and the later LCS were instruments mainly for the mission agencies, seen as united channels for resources from the missionary agencies. This was underlined by the fact that the LCS secretariat was situated in Europe. The main point was to enable cooperation for many agencies, with one united church. Although provisions were made in the LCS constitution for resources going the other way, the role of the LCS was seen as to act as a channel whereby the missionary agencies could “coordinate their requests for assistance” from the ELCT (LCS Const. 3.3). When seen only as an arena for coordinating monetary and personnel assistance to the ELCT, in consultation with the same, it is, as the *What is the LCS* notes hopes, not so easy to see the LCS as a “power instrument” (LCS 1978b:2.11). But why, then, does it seem that in this setup, the LCS-members still was the ones “in power”?

Niwagila mentions that it is precisely the focus on money and resources that has distorted efforts to do mission in partnership from the outset. Because the sharing was primarily about resources, distinctions such as the rich North helping the poor South and a development towards a negative “charity”-approach were the results. He goes so far as to state that (in 1996,) partnership “has turned into a paternalistic relationship and unwitting forms of colonialism”, and that partnership in practice has been a “cover-up” for this (1996:114).

Ørnulf Steen has done an analysis of power dynamics in the LCS setup. In this analysis, power is examined through the identification of *power resources*, that is, resources, or means, through which the partners can exert power in the partnership relation (Steen 1997:33). One such power resource is of course the possessing and control of the financial resources that are to be put into the partnership. Another power resource is to have the final word in the process of making decisions about these resources. Steen contends that also the way in which the LCS members made decisions about financial allocations to programs, was ultimately strengthening the power of the LCS members and weakening the ELCT in the

relation. There was a lack of commitment in both parties to use the LCS as a common channel, and bilateral direct contact between the missionary agencies projects in the dioceses undermined the ELCT's overall possibilities to influence, and be seen as a partners by the LCS decision makers. E.g. the LCS's way of dealing with problems of transparency was through direct contact with the dioceses and following up of projects, and Steen notes that for the LCS members, the need to know how the given money was utilised, was apparently more important than making the partner responsible for the money they had received. (Steen 1997:31f).

Building on Steen's analysis, it should be possible to say that the degree to which power is linked with money, is directly related to how decisions about them are made. Money gives no power if the ones dealing with them can't decide about them. That is, financial resources are not a power resource per se, but making decisions about them are. As long as the Northern partners retained control of the money and their use far inside the ELCT, the money was ultimately not an empowerment of the receivers, but instead creating dependency. But similarly, a hypothetic solution where the Northern partners could not decide anything with regard to the money they gave, would similarly have devalued the North in the partnership. The challenge then, for a partnership in mission, is to create structures where the decisions made about money in the partnership are balanced, i.e. that both the giving partners and the receiving partners may equally decide about the money.

An objection to this might be that since the money would come from the Northern partners in any case, ultimately the power to decide about them rested there. But this argument does not hold water, because it assumes that the mere possession of money gives the owner ultimate control over them. When committing themselves in a partnership on equal terms when it comes to decisions about money in the partnership, the complex interplay of different power dynamics at play in the relations make it impossible for a Northern partner to assume that it can have sole control of the money which it contributes.

The reorganisation of the ELCT-LMC partnership into the LMC represents an understanding of partnerships that includes all partners in a mutual decision making process. In other words, the LMC represents the apex of a long line of development where the Northern missionary organisations have relinquished more and more power in the partnership, as it has been gradually realised that more and more *decision making power* has to be shared as a prerequisite for a partnership.

On the part of the Northern missionary agencies, they have monetary resources, as well as resources in the form of personnel with qualifications to offer to the South. The ELCT

places value on these resources. For her part, she is a church which can offer the North a possibility to do mission in partnership – this is a resource valued highly by the Northern missionary agencies, because, being missionary agencies, they are dependent on finding ways to do mission.

But it is to be understood that even though partnership involves exchange of resources, it should not be seen as some sort of trade. That would devalue partnership to a kind of bargaining table. For in addition comes the fact that the ELCT *wants* to do mission, and the Northern partners *want* to share resources as well – these two resources are not something given in exchange for each other, but a common cooperation to fulfil each partner's needs together.

When thus the power resource of making decisions in the partnership cooperation was equally shared between the ELCT and her partners, such a common cooperation in mission became possible. The arrangement where the ELCT is a member of the coordinating instrument, balances the decision making. The Northern members individually decide on which projects they want to subsidise, and by how much, but this is still their prerogative, since this is where the resources come from. However, it does not mean that they necessarily are in a position to use this as power resource, e.g. through withholding money, because they are also committed members of the cooperating instrument that has decided to solicit money for these projects and programmes. The sanctioning power, with regard to withholding resources, is instead vested in the LMC.

After the reorganising of the LMC in 2004, one might be surprised to see a structure that has some striking similarities to the former LMC. Viewed this way, the reorganization almost seems to be a relapse into the former donor-receiver structure. The concept of joint planning is altered; it is not any longer seen as proper that the Northern members partakes in the planning of the ELCT, and the concept of a “common basket” disappears. The ELCT prepares its plans, which are the basis for soliciting funds from Northern members.

How is this different from the old LCS setup, where a budget and prioritised subsidy requests were presented by the ELCT, and then decided upon by the Northern members? The fundamental difference, as far as power goes, I believe lies in the location of the power resource of decision-making. Whereas earlier, the LCS was mainly the instrument of the missionary organizations, one could now similarly propose that the LMC, in its post-2004 configuration, might be seen more as an instrument of the ELCT. The LMC office is located in the same building as, and works closely together with, the ELCT head office in Arusha, and the ELCT now carries the majority of votes in the Round Table. With LCS, the final

prioritisation of projects to solicit support from, was done by the LCS members (that is – excluding the ELCT), while now, the projects/plans are decided upon by the ELCT only, and then the Northern members pick projects to support. The “Purpose” clause of the MoU (cl. 2) states that the LMC is to provide *opportunities* for participation in projects/programs.

One of the reasons that LMC eventually simplified itself, might have been a realisation of the fact that the “locus” of the partnership cooperation actually was in the congregations, institutions and units of the ELCT, and not in a centralised agency. Trying to coordinate it all through one instrument was to “aim for goals and objectives that are out of reach for such a coordinating mechanism as LMC” (LMC Secretary’s report, LMC 2007:58).

Thus, a reorientation to the primary goals of the instrument resulted in a simplified structure, that nevertheless took care of one of the most important achievements from the LCS to LMC restructuring, that is, sharing of the *decision-making* power resource. Thus power is, at least not on the high level of coordination, any longer extricably linked to the financial resources. As it seems that this partnership, and many similar mission-in-partnership cooperations, exists in a world with imbalanced resource distribution, the dealing with issues of money and power are almost to be seen as a contextual necessity in order to achieve a better partnership, and such an “untying” of money and power is important to maintain.

With regard to the theological perspective, it would seem that the newer structure arrangements better conform with the notion of power in the light of *missio Dei*. Not only because facilitation of participation in God’s mission is explicitly specified in the “purpose” clause of the MoU, but because sharing also through the decision-making power resource is ultimately motivated by an understanding of the church as one body in service to God and his mission. Seen from this angle, sharing of power is a necessity, even if the different availability of financial resources in the various contexts of the churches would seem to make one of the churches more powerful. And in the end, sharing of power in the context of the church as one body in Christ, is an affirmation of its apostolicity, because in this same context, power sharing is ultimately power *yielding* to the one who has sent the church to participate in mission (cf. p 36). The authority of the Lord sets all churches on equal footing, and makes power struggles meaningless and sinful. Therefore, power sharing in submission to the Lord, enables churches of different financial capabilities who are doing mission in partnership, to share power in a special and unique way.

### **5.3 Reciprocity in partnership**

Until this point I have discussed power which is linked with money, and the structural attempt to balance this power through sharing decision making power. But the matter of power in partnership relations is complex and not isolated only as equal sharing of decision making. A concept linked with mission in partnership, which also has implications for power in these relations, is the concept of reciprocity.

A relation is reciprocal when the giving and receiving amounts to the same for all partners. As far as it goes for the discussion above, one might say that there is reciprocity in the fact that the Southern partners *give* the resource of letting the North participate in mission in the South, while *receiving* financial and personnel resources to this end. The North *receives* the resource of a possibility to participate in mission in the South, whilst *giving* financial and personnel resources to this end.

However, in mission in partnership, this is instead often applied in the sense that whilst the North is rich in material resources and competent personnel, the South is rich in spirituality. In order to make an earlier mainly unilateral relationship reciprocal, the idea is that the spiritual resources of the south should be brought to the North, and that this will somehow balance the exchanges in the relationships. While I endorse reciprocity, I believe this particular idea of spiritual resources to the North as a counterpart to monetary and personnel resources to the South to be severely flawed. But before engaging in the discussion on this matter, which I will do shortly, some issues should be mentioned.

Even though the above notion might be flawed, it nevertheless sets focus firstly on the fact that there is a concern that North/South partnership relations are not very reciprocal, and secondly, that these relationships are about more than money. However, one still might wonder: Was it the realisation that a unilateral relationship, with the sending of money and personnel from the North, was not a very reciprocal partnership, that led to the emphasis on other resources, such as spiritual and cultural resources, in an attempt to correct the imbalance? Or have these other resources always been regarded as equally important?

The issue of reciprocity with regard to the ELCT and her Northern partners, have been on the agenda for a long time, before the restructuring of the LCS into the LMC (cf. LCS 1979:310.305). The question was whether the partnership was a partnership of *sharing*, and a wish for a two-directional traffic in the partnership has been put forward. And to a certain degree, this has been realised by sending resources, e.g. missionaries from the ELCT, to the North. Helander points out that when disregarding the high administrative levels (ELCT/LCS), and looking the at grassroot level both in the South and the North, being the

“functional level” of the partnership, reciprocity and mutuality in such partnerships seem to be more realistic to attain. This seems to be because it centres primarily around information and communication between the partners, and thus functions within a more relational framework, and not through a distant, structural and administrative framework (Helander 1996:54).

Helander utilises two generalised understandings of reciprocity, which she defines from a cultural perspective (cf 1996:32-24). These are *balanced reciprocity* and *generalised reciprocity*. Balanced reciprocity is the main framework for the understanding of reciprocity dominant in Western cultures, where exchange is based on equal returns between individuals. For a relation to be reciprocal in this setting, what is received needs to be reciprocated on an equal basis. Thus a relationship, such as e.g. a friendship, might be valued as to whether what one receives is balanced with regard to what one has put into a relationship. I.e. in a relationship where one part invests much time and effort, the value of the relationship is determined by the degree of time and effort also invested by the other part. Here, the exchange is in focus

Generalised reciprocity has the relations, and not the exchange, in focus, and this is reported to be a general framework for reciprocity in an African cultural setting. Here, the main value of the relation seems to be the relation itself, because the individual exists inextricably as part of a group (cf. also the discussion on the *umoja* above at p.34). Therefore, relations become a consequence of who the person is, rather than of exchanges of resources. In a setting of general reciprocity, resources are shared *because* of relations, i.e. a loan is given on the basis of friendship or kinship and not after an evaluation of the capability for repayment. A financially strong person is expected to support the weaker ones in a group, e.g. an extended family, without demanding equal repayment. Rather, the repayment, or reward, is the well-being of the group, because one day, the one now supporting might himself need the support of the group.

These two types of reciprocity are to be taken as generalisations, with the lack of complexity and depth that goes with such an approach. Neither should they each be understood as only present in one cultural sphere. There are of course social structures of generalised reciprocity in Western cultures as well, e.g. in close family relations, as well as balanced reciprocity in African settings, e.g. when the people interacting have few or no relations to each other. But the general difference is important to appreciate also for an understanding of reciprocity in partnership in mission.

Returning to the notion of the spiritual resources of the South on exchange for the monetary and personnel resources from the North, it would be possible to say that such an approach is based on a balanced reciprocity. But it carries with it some dangerous misconceptions. Firstly, it implies that there is a need to equally balance the resources from the North with resources from the South in order that a balanced partnership cooperation might take place, an implication that also seems to suggest that it would be possible to value these resources against each other. Secondly, it implies an approach that evokes associations to trade, where one commodity is simply exchanged for another. This is ultimately destroying the sense of unity and cooperation. Thirdly, it implies that the spiritual resources in the South are needed to alleviate the situation in a spiritually poor North, and similarly that the resources from the North are needed to lessen an economical and personnel scarcity in the South. This latter implication is missing the mark twice, as it is a misconception that the North is spiritually poor, needing the support from the South (though it might be quite different in character), as well as the North being unable to give similar resources back to the South. Similarly, it is a misconception that resources are sent from North to South with the main purpose of donating or sending resources simply as support or assistance, and with it the further implication that the financial and personnel resources of the South are not adequate to exchange with the North, undermining the notion of partnership cooperation. Fourthly and finally, as mentioned above, a notion of such a balanced reciprocity with regard to resources subtly implies that the need for spiritual assistance in the North is put forward almost as an excuse for the resources which are sent to the South.

Rather, both the exchange of spiritual resources as well as that of financial and personnel resources need to be considered separately within a framework of a more generalised reciprocity. A view where any of the two kinds of resources are seen as exchanged *with* the other through balanced reciprocity, does not do justice to the reason that they are being exchanged in the first place. This reason is the relation we have to each other in Christ, and the ultimate reason is our own relation with Christ, which he has given us out of mercy and love.

Therefore, when the exchange of spiritual resources instead is seen as something which it is necessary and important because of the relation we have to each other and Christ, it becomes *sharing*, which enriches the spirituality and extends its horizons. This has nothing to do with balancing the exchange of other resources. On the grassroot level, exchange of spirituality strengthens relations, and makes us aware of how the different incarnations of the Gospel in different contexts still express the same message, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, as

well as how each context brings forth new nuances and implications of that message. Utilising the concept mentioned by Niwagila (1996:115)<sup>55</sup>, we are here sharing the *who* we are (one body in Christ), before, or even through, sharing the *what* we have (spiritual resources).

Also when considering money and personnel resources within a framework of a more generalised reciprocity, it is necessary to remember that the resources given, are not, in this light, given from a “donating” to a “receiving” church. In the LMC setup, it is seen as important to include the local financial contributions when listing projects, and also to list them together with LMC subsidies and other project income. This is both because it promotes financial transparency, and because it is important for planning purposes. But the most important reason for recognizing the local contributions and considering them together with the rest of the contributions to the projects, is that it is an acknowledgement that participants in the projects have all given according to their ability, and thus it underlines the mutual partnership character of the projects – even if the contributions are unequal in size. The reciprocity lies in the fact that all parties contribute towards, and thus participate in, a common project, which in turn benefits the joint participation of the whole church in mission. The relative sizes of the different contributions of resources pooled into it are not interesting, because the emphasis is on all partners mutually participating. E.g. Niwagila writes that when he learnt that his church contributed, although the contribution “was minimal”, to the funding when he was sent as a missionary to Germany in the 1970’s, it was one of his happiest moments there (Niwagila 1996:122). I think it is important at all times to keep the deliberations on these kinds of resources within a generalised understanding of reciprocity based on our relationship to each other – in Christ – and with the joint participation in mission as the goal for the use of these resources.

The point of my focusing on these two kinds of reciprocity here, is to underline the fact that it is not so that exchanged resources need to balance each other in order for the partnership to be reciprocal. Furthermore, if such a balance were to be kept in focus, we would be in danger of focusing more on who gives most out of what resources *to each other*, and define our degrees of participation in mission accordingly.

One caution should be sounded, however. When utilising an understanding of a more generalised reciprocity, there is a possibility that it might be interpreted in such a way as to actually back up a negative form of “charity”, if one part constantly becomes the receiver and

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<sup>55</sup> See also my discussion of the concept of sharing who we are, at p. 3

the other constantly the donor. In order to avoid this, one should be aware of the fact that for there to be any possibility at all for talking about reciprocity, all partners must be included in the giving of resources, according to what they can offer. I believe that the listing of all contributions, including local, in the projects subsidised through LMC, is furthering this sense of all partners mutually participating. Accordingly, if it is possible to avoid measuring them up against each other through an approach of balanced reciprocity, the focus might be kept on whether they facilitate the mission of God. Of course, none of us can ever give any resources that would be even comparable to what God gave when he sacrificed his Son. Furthermore, situations here in this world may change rapidly, and there is a great variety of resources that can be given to the mission, in partnership.

It might be appropriate to include a word on self-financing or self-support in this regard. This has been seen as a goal throughout the history of mission in partnership, and the partnership itself might be understood as a provisional and temporal arrangement until self-sustainability has been achieved. But in the context of a world where resources are unfairly distributed, it is relevant to ask the question whether this will ever be realised as long as an imbalanced resource distribution exists. Furthermore, since the church exists all over the world, whether in more or less resourceful parts of it, it is relevant to pose the question whether it is responsible to have as a goal not to support the less resourceful churches.

In this discussion, it is necessary to point out that the church, in itself, is self-sustaining. Even though the ELCT is to some degree financially reliant on foreign support for parts of its operation today, the existence of this church is not. If, hypothetically, suddenly all support ceased, the ELCT would be in for a hard period, but it would nevertheless survive, and perhaps come through strengthened.

I am putting forward this argument in order to underline that even though it some times might seem to be so, very few churches, if any, are actually dependant on financial support in order to exist, simply because the Gospel is not. But if this thesis, that the church *in principle* is self-supporting by its nature, is accepted, then I believe that it is relevant to ask if the worldwide church does not, in view of a generalised reciprocity, actually have a *responsibility* to support each other? Provided that the autonomy of churches, as well as the possibility to refuse assistance (cf. the discussion on p. 35) is kept intact, offerings of support would seem to be mandatory to a church united in Christ.

However, this should not be interpreted to mean that work towards self-support is to be abolished in favour of perpetual dependency. On the contrary, efforts in order to achieve self-support would seem to be an integral part of the responsibility to support each other, seen

as resource building extending the capacity of the whole church within its context. It is e.g. a case in point that the ELCT does not phase out the reception of missionaries, but that when positions that were filled by an expatriate worker become Africanised, new positions are requested instead (Helander 1996:42f). Neither should the above be interpreted as an argument for a one-way traffic of resources from the West or North. Rather, it is the whole worldwide church that is working together in partnership to realise self-support, with contributions from all partners in a setting of generalised reciprocity.

I would propose that because the resources in the world are unfairly distributed, it is relevant to work against this through structures such as partnerships, and that the work towards self-support should be seen in this larger context, and not be limited only to a relative short-term goal of a church being able to bear its own costs. For if partnership between churches is seen as stretching beyond this point, the efforts towards self-support becomes part of the worldwide church's work against the world's unjust financial systems. This is also part of the mission which this church participates in, and consequently part of mission in partnership.

The theological bearings on reciprocity in partnership are profound. It relates to the very core of the Gospel. In the same way as a strictly balanced system demands that we repay what we owe other people in order to have a reciprocal relationship, the rigorous Law demands that we do what we owe to it in order that we might be righteous. But almost in the same way as a strictly balanced reciprocity is very difficult to achieve, and makes no concessions because of relationships, so the Law is absolute and makes no concessions, whatsoever.

But because of the redemption in Christ, our being righteous is dependent on a relationship with him. Therefore, our good deeds are done on the basis of this relationship, without focusing on whether we are able to redeem ourselves through them. In fact, trying to redeem ourselves through our deeds is to disregard this relationship, and we will ultimately fail in the attempt.

I would say that the same is valid for a generalised reciprocal relation in partnership. The partnership is dependent on our relationships with each other, and ultimately on our relationship in and with Christ. Our resources are exchanged on the basis of this relationship. If we try to disregard the relationships, both between ourselves, and in Christ, and try to establish a partnership through balanced reciprocity, we will fail. Be it because of one resource or the other, it is a very real danger that we end up with an imbalanced, unrelational

exchange of resources that eventually will leave someone as donors and someone as receivers, ultimately failing to participate in God's mission in partnership.

However, when exchanging resource without measuring them, but instead having our common relationship with each other and Christ in focus, letting and urging all to participate regardless of the resources at their disposal, then a truly reciprocal partnership participation in the mission of God may come to be.

Interestingly enough, the same motivation for the sharing of resources is to be found with Paul, when he urges the Corinthians to continue gathering their collect to Jerusalem in 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 8-9. Paul here argues from an understanding of generalised reciprocity, with a basis in the ultimate relationship with each other in Christ.

First, he puts forward the churches in Macedonia as examples for the Corinthians to follow. And it is indeed interesting that Paul says that the Macedonians responded to the request by first giving *themselves* "to the Lord and then by the will of God to us" (8:1-5). When telling the tale this way, Paul makes certain that the collect to Jerusalem is set in a wider context than that of just donating money. By this he possibly implied to the Corinthians that the Macedonians understood that in reality the real significance of the gift became apparent when it were given in the context of a relationship, first with God, and then with 'us' – which we for the purpose of this discussion may interpret as the Christian community at large. The Macedonians were probably not very rich in terms of resources, but they were nevertheless rich in generosity, and gave much, *according to their abilities* (v.2-3).

This is important, and Paul picks the theme up again in v. 12, stating that if the will, or readiness, to give is present, then what is given "is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have". Paul makes a point, however, of the fact that the above does not mean that the Corinthians should give to others to the extent that they themselves came in to hardship, but instead, in order that the distribution of the resources might be equalised to some degree. The verses 14-15 are in fact a very clear spelling out of the principle of a generalised reciprocity: "this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, so that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality", the implication being that there may be other times when the Corinthians need support from others.

Such a Biblical precedent for this line of thought does however not automatically validate it. But nevertheless points to the fact that even in the first churches, the sharing of resources is seen as a function of the relations, first to the Lord, then amongst themselves, as a consequence of their common relation in Christ. It follows that if the exchange of resources

in partnership is separated from these fundamental relations, it is also separated from the one who sent the church to participate in mission, and becomes only a human effort. Therefore, for the true participation in the mission of God, these relations need to be kept in mind when talking about the exchange of resources, in order that the resources themselves also be put to service of the *missio Dei*.

#### **5.4 Bilateral relations**

Because of the historical context in which the origins of the ELCT was formed, a tension between bilateral relations with mission organisations and dioceses/synods or even regions, and the idea of a centralised instrument for mission, has been evident ever since the formation of the ELCT and the joint instruments.

With regard to e.g. missionaries, Lindqvist reports that in the Southern Synod in the 60's, the DLM mission was most comfortable sending their missionaries to "their domain", the Ulanga area, which posed problems for the receiving church when they wanted expatriate personnel resources elsewhere (p.82-85). The SS in turn accused the JBC instrument of failing to provide means for missionary assistance which were uniting for the Synod.

As the LCS constitution specified, it was seen as a point to respect old historic ties between the ELCT units and missionary agencies (LCS Const. Preamble). But one function of the LCS was to provide a united instrument for missionary assistance, to a united church, with the implications that this would ensure a more fair distribution of resources among the ELCT units. When, at the same time, historic ties were to be respected, the LCS had to exist with this tension from its very outset. This has however meant that the distributions of resources, both financially and with regard to personnel, can become imbalanced between the ELCT units. This has been a concern for the ELCT, especially with regard to new dioceses which have no traditional historic bonds with Northern missionary agencies (Cf. LCS 1992:132 and Helander 1996:39).

There has also been a growing amount of resources coming to the ELCT units through bilateral relationships only, not through the LCS. It has also been a growing trend that bilateral resources come through new relationships, e.g. with congregations and churches, and where the missionary agencies no longer have any mediating role (Helander 1996:37). When the LMC came to be, there was made a conscious effort to take into account the

amounts coming through bilateral means, and in the constitution “open and transparent reporting of bilateral support” was stressed among all partners (LMC Const. 3.7).<sup>56</sup>

It is, however, on the bilateral level that the locus of the partnership cooperation is found. Helander sees the partnership as a two-level system, with one top-level represented by the ELCT head office and the LCS, while the functional level exists between the ELCT units and the mission agencies (Helander 1996:23).

Trying to discern a longer line in LCS/LMC attitudes to bilateral relations, it would at first seem that such relations went against the very uniting principle for which the LCS was formed, and thus that the LCS cooperation might have felt somewhat undermined through an increase of bilateralism. It would furthermore seem that it was attempted to deal with this through embracing the bilateral relations in the common planning of the LMC, and channeling much of the smaller bilateral support going between traditional partners through the LMC. After the reorganisation of the LMC in 2004, however, it may seem as if the attitude to bilateral relationships have undergone a counter-reaction. E.g. in the LMC General Secretary’s report to the LMC Round Table in 2005, it was mentioned that it was difficult to see the value of using LMC for the channelling of smaller resources (LMC 2006:58) because of the added administrative work. Now missionaries, and project support below a certain amount, are handled bilaterally (cf. p. 56).

Perhaps, as mentioned above (p. 64), this counter-reaction came as a result of a re-realization of the locus of the partnership being in the functional level, and that the LMC had attempted to go beyond the administrative role it had on the level it existed on (cf. Helander’s two-level understanding of partnership above). But perhaps also the international emphasis on closer relationships in mission, and on the walking together in accompaniment, has had its bearing on the perception of partnership also for the ELCT and her partners. The fact of globalisation has undoubtedly had great significance in this regard, as communication also between congregations have become possible in a much greater degree through e.g. the Internet.

There is a movement against a more multilateral model of relationships between churches in the North and the South, on the lower grass-root level between congregations. This has been seen as somewhat dangerous with regard to development of paternalism and donor/receiver attitude, caused by the congregations’ lacking expertise in the matters of

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<sup>56</sup> A n LMC report of assistance through bilateral means, showed a total of 1.8 bill. TZs (LMC 1999:30). For comparison, the total contribution to the ELCT through the LCS the same year was 1.9 bill. (LCS-LMC 1998:62)

cross-cultural partnerships. Therefore it has been seen as better that such partnerships be arranged by a missionary agency.

But I am under the impression that these developments did not happen according to what was foretold. It might be, that because a direct relationship between congregations, without a mediating mission agency, provides for so close relations that this does not happen so easily. This is again a demonstration of the role of the *relations* in mission in partnership. When these relations are in place first, then exchanges of resources happen as a function of the relation. But a provision for this is that both congregations are tuned towards such a relation. It is a possibility, with regard to the diminishing of resources coming from the North, that opportunism from the South might assert itself through such channels, or that Northern desire for exercising charity shines through. This might prove a temptation to both parties.

### **5.5 Attitudes in partnership**

In this section I would like to do a more loose reflection of attitudes of mission in partnership. In the protestant “great missionary era”, the attitudes of the missionaries are generally well known. They were governed by a burning zeal for spreading the light of the Gospel to those who had not heard of it yet. Unfortunately, they did not always discern between the cultural context they came from, and thus some missionaries saw the spreading of Western culture as an inherent part of mission. Because of this, they acted with disregard against the cultures of the people to which they came and sometimes, working in tandem with colonialism, even forcing the Gospel on people.

But from the middle of the last century, the West has slowly realised the atrocity of some of their actions in connection with mission and colonialism, and rightly accusing voices from the Third World have been heard and listened to. The result on the part of the Western cultural sphere was a strong self-conscious reaction against themselves and their mission. As individualism asserted itself, it became unfathomable for some Westerners that their forefathers had possessed the arrogance to actually travel to other parts of the world and tell the people there what they should believe, how they should conduct themselves and dress themselves, presuming that they could tell these people the difference between right and wrong. In Western contemporary culture, ‘missionary’ is a word with a bad taste to it. If someone are to go away as a missionary, he prefers to use other words to describe what he is to be doing, and if he is confronted with whether he is a ‘missionary’ or not, he quickly has to say that it is “nothing like the old sort”.

But how have the missions themselves been able to react to this change in sentiment? I would like to use a parable to explain a mechanism that I believe adequately describes this. It is that of two brothers, two years between them, who are growing up together. The elder brother always presumed that he knew better than the younger brother, telling him how he should do and think about everything. But after some years, the younger brother starts to complain about this, accusing the elder brother of talking down to him and never really listening to him. The elder brother, believing himself to be wise, walks away, thinking hard about this. Then he makes up his mind as to how he should relate to his younger brother, and returns to him. From now on, the elder brother always remembers to ask the younger if he agrees with him, when suggesting how he could do and think about everything. The elder brother is satisfied with this scheme, thinking that he now shows the proper respect for his brother. But after a while, he notices that the young brother seems to be a bit disappointed. So he asks him what is wrong. The younger brother replies “Until now, you never asked me what *I* think about this”.

It should be fairly obvious by now that what I am alluding to here is the relationship between the churches of the North and the South in mission in partnership. When all the wrongs that were done to the South during the great missionary era was comprehended by the missionary agencies, they reacted in a similar manner to the elder brother above; they went home and devised a new strategy of mission in partnership, which they then presented to the South, hoping that they would feel that they were better respected.

But maybe the problem was not in the strategies or the structures, but in reality in the attitudes? Now, when they had understood what they did wrong the first time, they went back and did almost exactly the same again, in the effort to repair the first wronging. That is, they came back and once again told the South that they had discovered how they could relate to each other. Only when they realised, with the help of the South, that they could not alone set the terms for the relationship, but had to do it together with the South, were they on their way to a more mutual relationship. With regard to the ELCT and her partners, it might be possible to understand the restructuring of LCS into LMC as such a realisation of the fact that the partnership includes equal participation.

The parable is intended to show that the relationship in partnership is really about growing together as children in Christ. I believe that in this context, it is possible to speak of churches in terms of relative age, because here it does not imply anything but a difference in years of existence. Both the Northern and the Southern churches are still growing, together

and with God as their Father. Being the older does not in this context imply more wisdom or any claim whatsoever on the younger, because of the equality in Christ.

But when growing together, the parties has to work with different sets of attitudes. E.g. during a student exchange in Tanzania, I met the attitude from my Tanzanian fellow students, to the effect that they abhorred and denounced the Western mission in Africa, but yet, they were Lutherans with all their hearts. In the North, Western self-flagellation with regard to the past missionary endeavour is seriously impairing their ability to participate in mission on equal terms.

Also other attitudes seem to be continuous challenges to a joint participation in mission, such as those of donor and recipient. It is curious that even in the light of the past, the Western urge – on the congregational level – to be a charitable do-gooder is still strong. Another question is African attitudes on the grassroot level towards Northern ability to provide funds.

It would seem that the main challenge is to let the past be the past, and focus on the present relationships and trying to better them. The tendency towards more partnership relations on the grassroot level might here provide new opportunities for a renewed understanding of each other and possibly transform both how we see each other as well as our attitudes, ultimately providing us with an understanding of a brother- and sisterhood in Christ on a global basis. The era of centralised mission agencies is slowly passing, as the world gets smaller.

## **5.6 Intermediate Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have endeavoured to elaborate on some issues that I see as specially relevant for mission in partnership, in light of the historical and theological material presented in the preceding chapters. I have attempted to conduct the deliberations with regard to partnership in general as well as to the ELCT and her Northern partners.

Through the discussions on the relationship of money and power in partnership, I have found that this centres around the decision-making power, and that by sharing this power, a more equal participation in the partnership, with regard to the resources in it, is facilitated.

In the discussion of reciprocity in partnership, it has emerged that a Western understanding of reciprocity (balanced reciprocity) is insufficient for a proper understanding of reciprocity in partnership. On a structural and theological basis I have therefore argued for a more generalised understanding of reciprocity, based on our relationship to each other and

Christ. The opportunity was also taken to comment on the strive towards self-support in this context.

In the section concerning bilateral relationships, it became clear that there is a tendency to move towards multilateral relationships with a basis in the congregations themselves. The later developments within the LMC indicate that the partnership instrument has taken the consequence of this.

The final section was a more loose reflection on attitudes that are prevalent in partnership cooperation. Western self-flagellation with regard to past missionary endeavours were actualised, as were the possibility of a continuous donor/recipient attitude.

## 6 General Conclusion

The main concern of this thesis was perhaps best summed up by the captious formulation in the title; “Partnership in Imbalance?”. Is it possible to talk about a partnership in mission, in equality, mutuality and reciprocity, when considering the unjust distribution of resources and the power which comes with it, and the historical background of colonialism, domination and charity towards the poor? Is it not only an empty epithet, designed to cover over the real situation, and letting the Northern churches and mission agencies continue in the same tracks as they have the last century, asserting their power through structures that in reality uphold the status quo while giving peace of mind to their consciousness, by ever newly invented concepts such as accompaniment and walking together, in reality hollow shells?

Or is it really possible to attain a partnership, with all of its connotations of sharing and interdependence, in a world which nevertheless is in a serious imbalance? I believe so.

The church is a transforming body. This has several meanings, one of them is that she has always intended to transform the world it is sent to, into a better place, following the lead of its Lord. She is keenly aware of the fact that she has not always been able to see how this is best done. And here is where another one of the meanings of the church being a transforming body, shines through. Sometimes, time has been needed for all her different parts to realise it when things have gone wrong. But when she has seen what has happened, she has normally, if not always, acted on her desire to transform, in order that she might be able to rectify the errors and at the same time care for the things that, through the work of the Spirit, nevertheless was good.

Maybe it is possible to look at the developments in church/mission partnership in this way, when summing up the findings in the last four chapters. It is not possible to fully comprehend the situation of the North/South partnerships with churches, such as the ELCT, parts of which have had bonds in almost a century to mission organisations in the North, without taking its whole history into account. The historically conditioned situation makes such a partnership different from more recent partnerships, firstly, because it is this historical process that has resulted in the need for, as well as different understandings of, mission in partnership, and secondly, because such a relationship also has had to transform previous relationships in order to work towards a mutual and interdependent relation.

The learning process for the global church has shown that a gradual realisation, throughout the last century, of the inherent problems of the church-centric concept of the three-selves, has resulted in a more broad-based concept of mission, anchored in the triune God. Also when understood through an ecclesiological approach, the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, doing mission in partnership, needs to be firmly anchored in the *missio Dei*, from which also the Christological and relational aspects of its mission naturally emerges. However, realising this new understanding of mission in practical cooperation between churches and mission agencies/societies, has proven to be a difficult task, and although some organisations have endeavoured to express this in structural approaches, the economical imbalance on a global scale is still a challenge.

My examination of structures in partnerships in mission has shown that common organisations or instruments are of great importance for the developments of partnership relations. Not only as instruments for coordinating and working out the practical arrangements of the partnerships, but perhaps more importantly as arenas where the partners are able to reflect upon and discuss together the nature of their partnerships, and to act upon the changing perceptions of what it means to be one body in Christ.

Regarding the instruments for the ELCT and her partners, the developments in the long run show that both the ELCT and the other partners are willing to, and interested in, finding ways of participating together in mission and structuring their partnership in ways that accommodate voiced concerns. It appears to have been an issue in all the different configurations that the current setup is to be seen almost as a temporary arrangement, until a better solution is found, whether it is to abandon the notion of a common instrument altogether, or to transform it into something else – the defining emphasis is on the *purpose* of the instrument; to facilitate the joint participation in the mission of God. The fact that the concrete participation in mission e.g. through funding of projects, scholarships, and exchanges of missionaries, has been done throughout the time of the LCS as well as the two configurations of the LMC, can be seen as a witness of the ability of the cooperation instrument to look for new ways, and be ready to transform itself, in order to stay relevant to its task.

There has been a process of learning in this partnership cooperation as well, similar to that on a global scale. Also, during this process, power in the cooperation seems to have moved from the Northern partners, to be shared in a more mutual way, where the ELCT perhaps has most weight. This have happened mainly through the two last restructurings of the common instrument that have been undertaken during the last ten years, and it has

showed that power can be shared in spite of different capabilities of financial and personnel resources. It seems to be possible to have a partnership in equality, mutuality and reciprocity even though the outset of the partners might be different.

One of the developments in the global church's understanding of partnerships in mission seems to be a stronger emphasis on the relational aspects between churches and congregations on a grassroots level. This might have been actualised as a result of globalisation, through eased global communication. It would seem that also the LMC has taken the consequences of this through its last restructuring. The emphasis provides a challenge for traditionally centralised partnership structures to deal with, but should involve trying to guide these small scale bilateral partnerships in such a way that the temptation to fall into paternalism and dependency is avoided. As there is a tendency to establish more of these relationships, churches can grow more closely together and learn to share what they *are*, prior to other things.

Partnership in imbalance? Yes! The transforming work of the church as the body of Christ has shown that imbalances in partnership are possible to avoid. But as the church exists in a world which is in imbalance, her different members face the difficult task of taking part in the transforming work, *in* this world. As far as this is her earthly context, partnership in mission will be a partnership in an imbalanced world. But it is a partnership participation in the world-transforming mission of God.

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