

# **MORE THAN PARTNERSHIP**

***A CONTEXTUAL MODEL OF AN ORGANIC-COMPLEMENTARY COMMUNION IN  
WORLD MISSION UNDER CONSIDERATION OF KENOSIS***

by

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## Statement

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I declare that

**„MORE THAN PARTNERSHIP“ - A CONTEXTUAL MODEL OF AN ORGANIC-COMPLEMENTARY COMMUNION IN WORLD MISSION UNDER CONSIDERATION OF KENOSIS**

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Detlef Gwinner  
February 2013

## **ABSTRACT**

### **„MORE THAN PARTNERSHIP“**

#### **A CONTEXTUAL MODEL OF AN ORGANIC-COMPLEMENTARY COMMUNION IN WORLD MISSION UNDER CONSIDERATION OF KENOSIS**

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With globalization the subject of partnership has become one of the main issues in World Mission. Partnerships are formed in all parts of the world in order to promote collaboration between churches, denominations, and mission organizations. Although good partner relationships are a desired objective, historical prejudices and cultural differences and bias lead to barriers which hinder good partnership relations. How can these barriers be overcome? Christian partnerships are usually only based on a collaboration of the partners and the Christian aspect in a relationship in World Mission is neglected. This study presents a theological basis for a Christian relationship in World Mission, coming from the creation of the human being in the image of God, the communion within the Trinity, especially the concepts of “kenosis” and “koinonia,” and the image of the Body of Christ. A second part of this study researches the historical and sociological aspects of partnership in order to identify barriers for a good partner relationship. The findings of the theological research will then be compared with the outcomes of the historical and sociological study and conclusions for an improvement should be presented. The foundation for mission-church relationship in a global context needs to be a spiritual relationship, since the acting partners come together on a basis of their Christian faith and are part of the universal Body of Christ. The kenotic attitude of the partners plays a major role in their relationship and the proposed model for functioning relationships in World Mission needs to be an organic-complementary communion. The last part then presents a new model for the relationship in World Mission, in which several elements of organic-complementary communion are described. These elements are living together in the Body of Christ, learning together, serving together, suffering and celebrating together, sharing together, working together, and discovering theology together. The study concludes with a proposal of a concept of a “common space” in order to show how such a new model could be lived out in the everyday relationships in World Mission.

### **KEYWORDS**

Partnership, Models of Partnership, Partner, Mission, World Mission, Globalization, Glocal, Global South, Relationship, Church, Universal Church, Creation, Image of God, Trinity, Communion, Communio Sanctorum, Koinonia, Kenosis, Body of Christ, Inclusion, Interdependence, Unity in Diversity, Mutuality, Other-Centeredness, Spirituality, Sharing, Serving.

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## Abbreviations

ALCOE	Asian Leadership Conference on Evangelism
ASV	American Standard Version
CEVAA	Communauté Évangélique d'Action Apostolique (today Cevaa)
CWM	Council for World Mission (former London Missionary Society)
CWME	Commission on World Mission and Evangelism
ECT	Evangelicals and Catholics Together
EKD	Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands
em	Evangelikale Missiologie (Journal of the afem)
EMQ	Evangelical Missions Quarterly
EPK	Entwicklungspolitische Konferenz der Kirchen und Werke
IMC	International Missionary Council
IBMR	International Bulletin of Missionary Research
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (James Orr, 1915)
JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
KJV	King James Version
LC	Lausanne Covenant (Lausanne 1974)
LCWE	Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization
MM	The Manila Manifesto
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
TMSJ	The Master's Seminary Journal
UEM	United Evangelical Mission
WCC	World Council of Churches
WLC	Westminster Larger Catechism
WSC	Westminster Shorter Catechism

# More than Partnership

## **A Contextual Model of an Organic-Complementary Communion in World Mission under Consideration of Kenosis**

### Introduction

#### **1.1 Introduction and Problem Statement**

In 2004 at the global vision conference of the Western mission organization World Team, the vision for the next twenty years was laid out, in order to prepare the mission for the future in a globalized world. Following the trend of globalization the mission organization wanted to become a global mission.<sup>1</sup> Values and working methods were discussed and the importance to partner with the national churches was emphasized. “Mission Future” should lead into the new millennium. But one thing could not escape the attentive observer. Among the 150 participants there were less than ten attendees from partner churches and organizations. The question arises: “In order to establish a well-functioning partnership do not both partners need to be involved in discussing the vision, strategy and working methods of the partnership?”

In his own missionary career the author of this study has also experienced in Haiti and France that partnership is not as easily lived out as it is intended. From the viewpoint of the missionaries there was often a “We and They” (“we”, the missionaries and “they”, the nationals)<sup>2</sup> and on the other hand there were complaints from the national churches about little collaboration, lack of cultural awareness, cultural insensitivity and one-sided leadership. These misunderstandings led to distrust on both sides and finally to disagreements in

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<sup>1</sup> World Team (2004:11) wanted to “transition from a traditional, Western mission agency to position itself for ministry in a globalized World.” One of the primary objectives was “working together in partnership with churches and other organizations from multiple centers to plan, share resources, mobilize and train workers, develop leadership, and cooperate in ministry.”

<sup>2</sup> See also Mbiti’s (1969:12) comment about J.V. Taylor’s book, *The primal Vision*, written in 1963 in which he criticizes that “the book has a disturbingly sharp distinction between ‘we’ (Europeans) and the ‘they’ (Africans), seen against the background of what ‘we’ can learn from ‘them’.” Hiebert (1985:89) proposes for the missionary the help of anthropological studies and adjustment to the new culture in order to overcome the difference between “we” and “they”. Hiebert proposes that the missionary needs to view people “as human beings like ourselves” and recommends to draw a mental circle around the national and the missionary and use only the word “we”.

collaboration. The relationships were not seldom strained through cultural blindness and misinterpretation.

Voices from the Global South expressed that partnership in the past was often biased, one-sided and influenced by an imperial attitude of the Western partner. In 1971 John Gatu,<sup>3</sup> a Kenyan Presbyterian minister, called for a “moratorium” of not sending Western missionaries and finances to African churches and hoping for a well-balanced mission which is not build on “the alms by oversee churches.” He claimed: “Let mission be the mission of God in the World, not of the West to the Third world”.

Anderson (1974:43) confirmed that the feelings of Gatu were shared by a number of church leaders in Asia, Africa and Latin America, as well as in Europe and the United States, citing Bishop Nacpil from the Philippines saying in front of Asian church leaders and missionaries that

“under the present conditions a partnership between Asian and Western Churches can only be a partnership between the weak and the strong. And that means the continued dependence of the weak upon the strong and the continued dominance of the strong over the weak” (:43).

Nacpil believed “that the missionary is a symbol of the universality of Western imperialism among the rising generations of the Third World” (:43).<sup>4</sup> The discussion about the moratorium continued in the following decades. In the mid-eighties K.P. Yohannan (1986:183), the Indian founder of the mission “Gospel for Asia”, criticized the approach of sending Western missionaries because they were not very effective of evangelizing in other cultures, instead he asked the West to help finance national missionaries.<sup>5</sup> Yohannan’s demand about finances as the main participation from the Western partners is viewed by

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<sup>3</sup> See Adamo & Enuwosa (2004:1). Fuller (1980:100-109) describes the history of the Moratorium Call and affirms that “the call is understandable where missions continue a colonial pattern of foreign control” (102). But he distinguishes between the older established denominations which have a hierarchical system and the general pattern of evangelical missionary work which is rather motivated by a biblical view of equality. Fuller holds that evangelicals have largely rejected the moratorium concept because of the urgency of their biblical mandate to evangelism.

<sup>4</sup> Nacpil (1973:16-17) asked the question if the missionary serves God or man or if he serves the sending church or the receiving church. He explained that young nationals have associated the color green with the mighty dollar and white with Western imperialism and racism. Thus he reasoned that Western mission would not be identified with the credibility of the Gospel and the universality of the churches, but rather with Western imperialism.

<sup>5</sup> Poston (1992:58-59) summarizes Yohannan’s fourfold critique of Western missions in which Yohannan does not agree with:

- 1) The strategic element in which Westerners have abandoned evangelism in favor of social work;
- 2) The financial element because the Western missionaries are more expensive than national missionaries;
- 3) The human element in which missionaries often have their own agendas and misguided motives such as a desire to perpetuate pet doctrines and denominations, introduce political or economic systems, pursue personal power, adventure, career development or economic gain;
- 4) The spiritual element in which he sees Western missionaries as powerless, because of their rationalism and unbelief in the supernatural.

Although Poston is right in saying that Yohannan like many others are quick to judge and gives good responses to the accusations made, there is also some truth in the critique from which missionaries could learn.

others as leading into dependency of the Global South partners from the Western resources.<sup>6</sup> Adamo and Enuwosa (2004:5) cite in their work several authors such as Idowu, Mbiti and Adamo, who show that “missionaries were convinced of their superiority of their culture and strive to impose such idea on the world.”

The feelings of Western superiority, suspicion and distrust are not fully overcome in the present. Kham (2003:177) writes:

“The current condition of relationships between the Western agencies and non-Western nationals is characterized by a lack of trust and suspicion. Some mission agencies and missionaries see Asians as adolescents or young adults, and do not fully trust them to take leadership role yet.”

This reveals disagreement and a divergence in the relationship between Western churches or mission organizations and the Global South partners and needs to become a subject of further research.

However, in the last decades World Christianity has undergone radical changes. Philip Jenkins (2002:2) in his book “The New Christendom” describes “a shift of the center of gravity of World Christianity” from the West to the Global South.<sup>7</sup>

“Over the past century, however, the center of gravity in the Christian world has shifted inexorably southwards, to Africa, Asia and Latin America. Already today, the largest Christian communities on the planet are to be found in Africa and Latin America. ... Whatever Europeans or North Americans may believe, Christianity is doing very well indeed in the Global South – not just surviving but expanding” (:2).

Since the younger non-Western churches have become independent and confident and are now a serious collaborator in World Missions and in World Theology,<sup>8</sup> the role of the Western missionary has changed more and more into partner and colleague rather than parent or leader.<sup>9</sup> If it is true that partnership calls for at least two partners, who both

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<sup>6</sup> Schwartz defends just the opposite view of Yohannan and talks about a “dependency syndrome” and wants to overcome unhealthy dependency in the Christian movement (Schwartz 2000, 2007). See also: <http://www.wmausa.org>.

<sup>7</sup> See also Tiéno (2006:40).

<sup>8</sup> Escobar (2003: 110-111) explains that mission needs to be done in the authority of Christ. In Constantinian mission the authority was often perceived as coming from kings and queens of conquering nations and was based on military, economic or technological power. But if the authority comes from Christ himself “the young churches will make a significant contribution to global mission. In most cases these churches lack political, social or economic power”, but now the missionaries will act out of the power of the Spirit and of the resurrected Christ.

<sup>9</sup> Kim (2009:1-34) demonstrates the growth of Christianity in the Global South and the shift of Christianity away from the West concluding that because of the growth of the church and the maturity of the majority world church a new partnership strategy is imperative. The publication of many books and articles in recent years is also proof of the change of the status of the Global South church into an equal partner (see Kraakevik & Welliver 1992; Taylor 1994; Rickett 2000, 2002; George 2004; Addicott 2005; and Butler 2005).

Netland (in Ott & Netland 2006:30) speaks about globalizing theology as an “ongoing process in which Christian communities throughout the world participate. While theologians from the West can be expected to continue to exert considerable influence in this conversation, non-Western participants should be full partners in the process.”

contribute their part to the cause, then the question is, if the West is still seen as the most contributing and powerful partner and the Global South is only the receiver. If this is the case the recipient could find himself in a submissive and dependent position which may not be healthy for a mutual partnership and for the relationship between the two.

Also, equal partnerships have to deal with the distribution of resources. How can both partners deal with this question if partnership projects involve funding for which the donor demands accountability and seeks control over the use and distribution? Lederleitner (2009:1) in her article about neo-colonialism and Western funding in partnerships raises the question:

“Is it possible to adhere to Western ethical and cultural standards when funding is sent abroad without fostering neo-colonialism in this next era of global mission partnerships? Is it possible to partner as “equals” when one group has such vast sums of money and requires such in-depth accountability for those resources?” (:1).

As an answer she pleads for a biblical sharing of resources and to redeem the secular way of accountability into a biblical way of accountability and relationship within the Body of Christ, in which both partners have their equal voice (:10). Another issue about sharing of resources is the question about other resources than just money which could be exchanged. What about the sharing of theological concepts<sup>10</sup>, leadership concepts, methods for evangelization, or cultural practices. As partnerships become multiple in the next era of the global mission relationships sharing of resources is an area that demands further study.

Hiebert (1985:64) acknowledges that cultural differences create difficulties.<sup>11</sup> He talks about the incarnational missionary, who needs to identify himself with the other culture (:91), overcome cross-cultural misunderstandings (:93), and be open for a change of his attitudes (:110). The diversity of culture between two or more partners is therefore not to be underestimated. Thus, the differences of cultural concepts need to be explored in global partnerships. If partnerships are initiated and funded by the Western partners would not the Western partners want to define what partnership is, what it involves and what its outcomes are to be? But how would partners from the Global South considering their own cultural perspective define partnership? Is their concept of partnership the same as the Western concept? The question of culture plays a significant role, when the partners of two different

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<sup>10</sup> Tiénou (2006:45-47) in light of the changes in the Global South criticizes the Western self-perception as the center of scholarship and pleads that Christian Theology would become a world endeavor. See also Bediako (2008:108) who sees the changes in World Christianity and the emergence of a positive ‘polycentrism’ as an opportunity to learn from each other.

<sup>11</sup> Addicott (2005:119) also sees cultural differences as a reason for potential conflict. He identifies subjects such as the decision-making process, time-keeping, status, face-saving and shame and accountability as factors of disagreement between cross-cultural workers (:120).

backgrounds work together. How can partners from different cultural backgrounds find a common ground for their partner relationship? Lee (2011:294) asks for more attention about cultural differences and relationship building in cross-cultural ministry:

“To lack understanding of a different culture creates unnecessary conflict. Two practical steps that can help in overcoming such conflict are, first, to enhance both pre-field and in-field orientation programs (to a certain extent, failure of orientation programs can be attributed to a lack of cultural understanding) and, second, to place increased emphasis on relationship-building skills within ministries, bringing to the fore the importance of relationships. Building relationships has long been a problem in ministry, but it should become a core value in light of our newfound awareness of cultural difference.”

The goal of this study is to research the relationship between the partnerships of Western evangelical churches, denominations, and mission organizations with churches, unions and organizations from the Global South. The study is done within an evangelical context and is meant to improve partnership relations in evangelical churches and organizations. To include other protestant or catholic churches and organizations would go beyond the scope of this study, although protestant and catholic material will be consulted for a broader perspective on partnership. The objective is to find out what influences the relationship either in a positive or negative way and how the relationship can be improved. Although other associations and organizations will be studied, the focus is on the relationship between Western mission organizations and the national churches or church unions.

Because both partners are Christians and have the same belief system, a theological reflection on Christian relationship will be undertaken. It will be asked if a relationship based on biblical principles could not become the basis for the relationship of the partners and if it will improve it.

The result of this study should present a clear concept of how the discontent in relationships between Western mission organizations and national partners from the Global South can be overcome and alleviated.

The thesis will outline key issues concerning the concept of Christian partnership relations. The results of the study should reveal characteristics of biblical partner relationships and show if a new concept or model for such a relationship is required.

## 1.2 Rationale of the Study

On the mission field the question of partnership has been largely discussed and models of partnership have been introduced. But do these partnerships between the Western mission organizations and churches with the organizations and churches from the Global South always work as smoothly as intended. Sookhdeo (1994:49) acknowledges the intercultural conflict of the past and recognizes that new models of partnership have already led to a more positive climate. But he still asks to remove conflict elements and he sees a need to rediscover the biblical identity of the believer over cultural affinities and wants to consider a biblical *koinonia* partnership (:50). Addicott (2005:104) labels the differences and risen conflicts between cross-cultural workers a “dis-ease”. Butler (2005:51) explains that people and ministries cannot work together effectively without dealing with relational brokenness and suggests a whole section on relationships in wholeness, unity and diversity (:47-58).

Does misunderstanding and conflict arise out of historical, sociological, cultural or theological differences? It needs to be explored, if there are assumptions and unstated expectations held by either party which are counterproductive to the relationship of the partners. Are there underlying attitudes, beliefs and values which relate to each culture represented in the partnership that lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretation and conflict which will strain the relationship?

In order to find a solution for better Christian partner relationships in a global context the following subject matters should be studied and the resulting research questions need to be answered.

Several theologians indicate that mission activity was influenced by imperialism and colonialism from the past. Carino (1978:325) explains that paternalistic patterns of relationship have arisen as a result of the imbalanced economic and financial power of the partners and have led to the control of one over another. Dyrness (1990:37) states that colonialism caused a “permanent scar” on the soul of African people and that colonialism and neo-colonialism has left as a result the economic oppression of the people. Escobar (2003b:47-53) shows in a short overview how the missionary action was historically connected with empire and imperialism. He shows the shortcomings of the carriers of the Christian mission in the past and hopes for the rise of a new missionary force including the Global South which has now become “an immense global family of diverse people, cultures and languages” (:53). Kham (2003:176), reviewing modern mission history, describes that “in the eyes of many Asians,

missionary work became Christianized Western imperialism. Hanciles (2008:120) confirms that the link between colonialism and mission is undeniable. He even writes that European nations believed “that imperial acquisitions were providentially ordained (by God) for the expansion of the Gospel of salvation.”

If it is true that imperialism and colonialism have influenced and damaged partner relationships until today, the question is how the old scars from an attitude and practice of imperialism and colonialism can be healed and reconciled.

Are there still attitudes of neo-colonialism and feelings of superiority present in global partner relationships? If yes, how could they be overcome and what is needed for a reconciled relationship in partner relationships? What should the attitude of the partners be when they engage in cross-cultural relationship? Fung (2010:2) understands that reconciliation is the basis for a functioning partnership. He sees partnership in the context of God’s new society or community. This community is characterized by reconciliation to God and to one another. This question of reconciliation as a basis for partnership should be subject of further theological research.

Furthermore, the study of cultural differences in the context of global Christian partnerships can reveal potential for conflict. Are there cultural barriers between the Western and the Global South partners when they engage in a partnership? Hiebert (1985) recognized the challenge of cultural differences and the importance of cultural studies for the missionary work. In his book “Anthropological Insights for Missionaries” he combines the studies of anthropology with the missionary task. This work provides a good introduction for the missionaries to prepare themselves for the work in another culture. But the reality of cultural differences still leads to cross-cultural difficulties. Kure (1994:90) complains that the partners in the cross-cultural discussion are not willing or ready to face the question of cultural differences. Roembke (2000:17) talks about different cultural values and norms which could be the cause of a different understanding of trust, power, leadership styles, or the use of money. Kham (2003:177) expresses that “the current condition of relationships between Western mission agencies and non-Western nationals is characterized by a lack of trust and suspicion.” What is needed for a cross-cultural relationship to overcome these obstacles? A study of cultural differences and the reasons for suspicion and distrust should be undertaken to provide a mutual understanding of each other’s culture and find solutions for the cultural conflicts which would be useful for both partners. Another aspect of the cultural study in the global context needs consideration. Sookhdeo (1994:53) explains that cultural aspects of behavior in the Christian context need to be interpreted and determined by biblical values and norms:

“Culture affects behavior, and as a result, behavior is all too often interpreted purely on the basis of culture. But for the Christian this can never be so, for behavior must ultimately be interpreted and determined by biblical values and norms. Righteousness and unrighteousness, holiness and sin, are not relative values rooted in culture, but absolutes. The way we treat each other, the way we behave, can never be seen as merely cultural.”

Cultural differences and cultural behavior in Christian cross-cultural relationships should be evaluated in the light of scripture. The Lausanne Covenant (LC 1992:257) affirms:

“Culture must always be tested and judged by Scripture. ... The gospel does not presuppose the superiority of any culture to another, but evaluates all cultures according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness, and insists on moral absolutes in every culture.”

Therefore a biblical study of relationships and the behavior of believers who are engaged in cross-cultural ministry and fellowships is necessary.

Further, is there a difference in understanding of the term partnership in Western and Global South cultures? It seems that in the understanding of Western partners a mission-church partnership is frequently presented as strategic. Such strategic partnerships would be built around a common purpose, tasks and work projects which would be evaluated by their effectiveness.<sup>12</sup> Taylor (1994:244) for example defines partnership as “using mutual gifts to accomplish tasks.” Butler (1992:29) is looking at “strategic” partnerships and compares them with strategic alliances from the business and industry world. He uses examples from the business world in order to explain how Christian partnerships can be more strategic (:29-32). He concludes that the nature of mission has to change and will need new structures in order to be more effective (:40). Both Rickett (2000:1)<sup>13</sup> and Addicott (2005:22) see partnership as been driven by or working towards a common purpose. It needs to be studied, if the Global South partners do have the same cultural value on the subjects of strategy, common purpose and tasks as the Western partners?

In addition, the question of equality between Western and Global South partners needs to be researched. Than (1973:457) evaluates the relationship of the missionary

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<sup>12</sup> Two examples for strategic planning from the past come out of the AD 2000 movement. Barrett & Reapsome (1988) present seven hundred plans to evangelize the World. Dayton & Frazer (1990) are also considering planning strategies for World evangelism. They recognize the need for partnerships in mission, but also want to organize these partnerships with mission agencies in a strategic way: “Planning strategies for evangelism is a process. We cannot accurately predict the future. Our organizations will have to be responsive to unanticipated changes as well as pro-active in seeking to control it’s own activities in goal fulfillment. We never have as much information as we want. Yet, we can increase our effectiveness and efficiency as we become more aware of organizational possibilities and partnerships that will further world evangelization” (:168).

<sup>13</sup> The title of Ricketts (2000) book is “Building Strategic Relationships”. So the idea of combining strategy and partner relationship is somewhat implied.

sending churches and the receiving churches as unequal. Nacpil (1973:16) also views the sending church as the rich church and the receiving church as poor. He asks, if the two can become real partners, since the existing relationship is between the “weak and the mighty.” Carino (1978:325) complains about an imbalance especially in the area of economic and financial power. Kure (1994:89) highlights the “financial paternalism” and that everything was done by the missionaries from the Western world and that the nationals “were babies and were financially poor”. Bowers (1997:186-187) sees the wealthier European and North American churches as “the haves” and the receiving churches in the Global South as “the have-nots”. In terms of material wealth she does not consider them as equal partners and therefore she sees a need to reconsider the term “partnership”.

Today with the shift of the center of Christianity towards the Global South the question is if new forms of partner relationships need to be defined and if the parity of the partners needs to be reconsidered. Kham (2003:183) believes that “the time has come when all mission organizations and churches should consider one another as equal.” But what is necessary for believers who work and live together in a global Christian relationship to consider each other as equal partners? What would be the basis for such an equal relationship? Could the equal partnership be based on other foundations than just material resources? This study attempts to find answers for these questions.

Since “Christian” partner relationships in a global context are researched this study must be situated in a Christian framework. Christian partnerships between protestant and evangelical churches, organizations and individual believers who work and live together in the global context are of special interest, although lessons from Christianity in general will also be of great value. Therefore, a theological inquiry about partnership and biblical relationships between believers will be necessary. The apostle Paul writes in Philippians 1:5 about partnership or fellowship (*koinonia*) in the Gospel. What does “partnership in the Gospel” mean for Christian partners today? Does the aspect of the fellowship in the Gospel and of the Christian community influence or even improve Christian partner relationships? When the Bible talks about the believer being part of the universal Body of Christ does this have consequences for global partnership relations? If it is the case that relationships are always related to the attitudes of those involved in the partnership, the theological investigation about the behavior and conduct of believers will be of significance. The theological analysis of Christian interpersonal attitudes from scripture as well as biblical examples of partner relationships may reveal helpful insights for cross-cultural partnership cooperation today.

### 1.3 Research Methodology and Structure

Research will be carried out by means of a literature study of authors from the Western and non-Western world. Since this study will explore Christian partnerships the subject will first be treated theologically. Therefore, in Chapter 2 a theological investigation of the relationship among Christians will be undertaken in order to develop a basis for such a relationship. Since the relationship between believers is ultimately linked to God, the Trinitarian nature of God himself, the creation of the human being, and the relationship and fellowship of believers must be part of the inquiry. Because the Bible underlines that the believer is part of a spiritual community which is the Church or the universal Body of Christ,<sup>14</sup> it will be essential to research the appropriate attitudes and behavior of the individuals within this spiritual body. In this context, the kenotic attitude of Christ which the apostle Paul encourages the Philippians to imitate (Phil 2:1-8) will be given special focus. The expected outcome of the theological analysis should present a list of essential characteristics which will guide the further discussion of the relationship between believers in a cross-cultural ministry.

Chapter 3 researches the historical, sociological and missiological aspects of cross-cultural partnerships. With the purpose to discover why there is a perceived dissonance between the Western churches and mission agencies with the churches and organizations from the Global South, a historical and sociological study of recent partnership concepts will be carried out. An extended literature review will be necessary to find the relevant data for a missiological discussion. Barriers which hinder good cross-cultural relationships need to be identified and will become the basis for further debate.

In Chapter 4 the outcomes of the theological analysis will then be compared with the results of the historical and sociological study of Chapter 3 and missing elements of well-functioning partner relationships should be extracted. It is supposed that the comparative analysis will reveal new insights on how the relationship between the two or more parties in a cross-cultural relationship can be improved.

Chapter 5 then develops a new model of relationship on the basis of the indicators found in Chapter 4 and seeks to propose an inclusive and interdependent relationship in World Mission. Elements of such an organic-complementary communion will be identified and an example of how such a communion could function today in a glocal context will be elaborated.

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<sup>14</sup> See Rom 12:4-5; 1Cor 10:17; Eph 3:6.

## 1.4 Present State of Research and Literature Review

This section will be divided into two parts, with the first part regarding the theological research of the Christian partner relationships and the second the historical and sociological partnership literature.

### 1.4.1 Theological Research

Because of the Christian aspect of this study partner relationships must be looked at from the theological perspective. There is extensive literature about partnership in terms of finances<sup>15</sup>, power<sup>16</sup>, cultural differences and interpersonal relationships, but little research has been done to study partnership models with a base of the *Body of Christ* and the *universal Church of Christ*. This is also the case for the subjects of Christian spiritual relationships (*koinonia*) and the relationship attitude of *kenosis*.

Kellerhals (1937:3) wrote an article in 1937 about the “Body of Christ in Africa” criticizing that the missionaries often use the well-known church form from their own background as an image for the new church that they want to plant in the host country. Instead he pleads for the missionaries to listen to the Word of God. He well understood that the new Christian, as a member (“Mitglied”) of the body, is incorporated (“eingegliedert”) into this new body of the Church. He believes that the African Christian has a better understanding of communion because he is a “Kollektivist”<sup>17</sup> (:4-5). He described that these new mission churches are in the biblical sense an incarnate organism (“ein leibhaftiger Organismus”) (:15). Kellerhals was ahead of his time in understanding the connection of missionary work, the Body of Christ, and the universal Church, in which Christians are members of the one body, and that he even argues that the sending churches can learn much from the churches in Africa (:10 ff). However, Kellerhals only seeks to underline, that the new mission churches are real churches in biblical terms, but he does not necessarily draw the connection of partner relationships between Western organizations and churches and those from the Global South.

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<sup>15</sup> Bush (1990).

<sup>16</sup> Helander & Niwagila (1996). See also Funkschmidt (2002).

<sup>17</sup> A person who is living in a collective culture.

Butler, Addicott<sup>18</sup>, and Rickett also refer to the Body of Christ, but only to find a basis for Christian partnership relations and to show how Christians should live out their task-based partnerships. This is a well intended undertaking and definitely necessary for a working relationship in World Missions. But this study would like to investigate if the image of the universal Church and the Body of Christ can show that there are not just two partners involved in World Mission, but that the Church itself with its different members is one single Body of Christ which is involved in Missions and therefore should become the basis for the relationship.

In the context of the Body of Christ there is another aspect of the Church that needs to be studied. It is the catholicity of the Church. Evangelicals are known to center on the conversion of the individual which leads to a focus on the local church<sup>19</sup>, although they do not deny the universal form of the Church. Kärkkäinen (2002:84) describes that one of the aspects of unity that is highlighted in the free churches is “the local church as a focus”. La Barbe (2003:93) points to the individualism in pentecostal and charismatic evangelical churches and sees the *local church*, which is perceived as the Body of Christ, as one of the descriptives of the evangelical movement (:95). Bolt (2004:401) in his article about evangelical ecclesiology cites Hindmarch’s essay who reviews the history of evangelicals and notes that they do not consider external ecclesiastical forms as important as the inner “mystical Church” - the body of those who believed. Therefore, he concludes, evangelicalism in North America has no institutional weight. After studying other critical essays in Stackhouse’s book *Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion* he comes to the conclusion that:

“If there is a uniting feature in the various branches of contemporary North American evangelicalism, it might be the consistent indifference to or even antipathy toward the broader Christian tradition, both geographically and historically. In classic terms, evangelicalism fails to take seriously the catholicity of the Church” (:408).

The oblivion of the catholicity of the Church seems to be present in the evangelical mission, especially if the missionary’s activity is church planting which is often preoccupied with expanding one’s own denomination.

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<sup>18</sup> Although Addicott (2005) titles his book “Body Matters” and studies the Body of Christ as foundational for partner relationships, he does not necessarily propose a spiritual “koinonia” relationship between the partners. He still uses a rather strategic approach to explain the partner relationship.

<sup>19</sup> The Manila Manifesto (MM 1992:301) acknowledges the fact that in terms of evangelism the focus of the local church is inward centered: “We deeply regret that many of our congregations are inward-looking, organized for maintenance rather than mission, or preoccupied with church-based activities at the expense of witness. We determine to turn our churches inside out, so that they may engage in continuous outreach, until the Lord adds to them daily those who are being saved.” If this is the case for evangelism it will also be true for mission and mission relationship within the global Church. See also Hille (1998:560) as well as Kritzinger (2004:69) who describes four key characteristics of evangelicals as 1) the belief in the Bible as authority, 2) the Lordship of Christ, 3) the necessity of a personal conversion experience, and 4) the necessity of mission.

As early as in 1948 Niebuhr (1948:111) spoke about “The Gift of the Catholic Vision” and describes that “our companions in communication and in vision are members of other cultures, while all of them are citizens of the one *Civitas Dei*”. Later he describes in his essay “The Churches and the Body of Christ” that “an aspect of the modern search is the desire for *universal community*” (1953:119).

Van Engen (2003:157) discusses the locality and catholicity in a globalizing world and argues that “a healthy congregation of disciples of Jesus lives out its catholicity by intentionally and actively participating in Christ’s mission in a *glocal* fashion, that is, it is actively simultaneously in global and local mission that dynamically fosters the global interaction between the global and the local”. But van Engen fails to tell how this is to be done practically.

In the protestant evangelical realm, extensive studies exist about the local church, but although evangelical theology recognizes the universal Church, there are not many studies on how the Global Church should live out cross-cultural Christian relationships, especially when it comes to the mission-church affiliation. The subject of the universal Church and church-mission relationship calls for further research.

The Church as the Body of Christ is a communion of individual believers. Therefore the subject of *koinonia*, the creation of the human being (especially the creation in the “image of God”), and the Trinity need to be examined in order to find answers for the predicament of malfunctioning relationships within the Body of Christ. The above subjects have largely been treated in theological and missiological texts<sup>20</sup> and most authors stay within the context of the local or maybe the universal Church, but not many writers connect them to missions and mission relationships of churches, denominations or institutions in the global mission collaboration.

In this study *kenosis* will be considered as a core attitude of the relationship between the Western mission and the Church in the Global South. One of the outstanding works on *kenosis* was written by Alexander Balmain Bruce (1901) and was called “The Humiliation of Christ: In its Physical, Ethical and Official Aspects.” Although Bruce does an in-depth study of the concept of *kenosis*, he does not relate it to the attitude of Christ’s servants in World Mission. Latourette (1975: 583) mentions that Kenoticism was a trend in the early Russian monasticism and can be found in Orthodox and Catholic theology.

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<sup>20</sup> About the subject of creation in the image of God see Hoekema (1986), Clines (1968), Overstreet (2005), and about the subject of the Trinity see Volf (1998) who represents what he calls the evangelical free church, Moltmann (1981), a German reformed theologian, Rahner (1997) who represents a roman-catholic viewpoint and Zizioulas (1984 & 2006) who is an orthodox theologian. Others, who have studied the Trinity and communion within the Trinity are Kärkkäinen (2007), Torrance (1996), Gunton (2003), Köstenberger & Swain (2008), and the Jesuit Collins (1999).

In his article “Christ and Kenosis: A Model for Mission” Mathews (1991:2) states that “after training missionaries for more than two decades, it has become quite obvious that the *kenosis* of Christ – and the implications of that self-emptying – have been generally ignored in missions.” He argues that the missionaries need to fulfill their ministry in the understanding of the self-emptying Christ and asks for the conversion of the missionaries in their attitudes.

Power (2005:107) talks about the *kenosis* of the Church and its mission and mentions the missional Church being sent out in the light of *kenosis* through which it “undergoes another self-emptying, a renunciation of claims even to the point of dying to its own history in order to take on life as a servant.” This is an aspect that needs to be followed up in the development of the research.

Reimer (2003:201) wants to understand the *missio* Christi as a kenotic action and demands that the disciple of Christ needs to experience this kenotic way of thinking before being effective on the mission field. Reimer even calls for “Mission as a Kenotic Action” in itself, which has not been an essential part of protestant evangelical World Mission and unquestionably demands further study.

Mees (2007:5) comes to the conclusion that “if *kenosis* is constitutive of Jesus’ mission, it follows that missionary praxis always has to be carried out in the incarnational way of *kenosis*. Therefore the connection of *kenosis* in a Christian relationship in cross-cultural ministry should be a key element of the theological research.

#### **1.4.2 Historical and Sociological Research**

This leads to the second part of the literature review. Historically, the question of the relationship between the old and the young churches was first raised in 1947 in the discussion of the International Missionary Council in Whitby. Western mission and Missionaries have been seen as paternalistic and as those who lead and determine the relationships (Carino 1978:325). One of the outcomes of the conference was that the decision was made to live together in the future as “Partners in Obedience”<sup>21</sup>, which would include “Growth in Partnership”, “Partnership in Personnel”, “Partnership in Finance”, “Partnership in Policy” and “Partnership in Administration” (Freytag 1948:87-94). This led to a new sense of partnership (Carino 1978:324) which finally did not play out as well as anticipated. Funkschmidt (2000:32-

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<sup>21</sup> See Carino (1978).

33) explains that in the cooperation under the keyword of “Partners in Obedience” the Southern churches were co-opted to the task of world evangelism by the Western churches and that in reality the program was a Western initiative.

Unsatisfied relationships between the missionary force and the national churches lead to the “Moratorium Call” in 1973. The reasons for this call were described by Adamo and Enuwosa (2004:4-9) as colonialism, self-interest, cultural superiority of the missionaries, bringing a Western Christianity, and protection and defense of their status-quo. The relationship of the missionaries with the nationals was impersonal and hierarchical. Although Adamo and Enuwosa conclude that in the end the Moratorium Call was unnecessary because it is contrary to the universality of the Church, but, nevertheless, the missionaries need to respect the other person and “learn to give and receive” (:15). It must be taken into account that in 1973 the relationship between the national churches and mission organizations were often hurt relationships. Saayman (2000:6-7) sees the Moratorium Call as a call for decolonialization (of the mind) which should lead to a changed attitude and to repentance (metanoia).

It became clear that mission was one-sided with the initiative coming from the West. Erk and Gerhard (1973) wanted to end with the one-way road of missions and started a discussion between partners from the West and Global South in order to give a response to the Moratorium Call and to seek for solutions for the “Einbahnstraßen” (one-way roads).

Also Baba (1990:132), an African pastor and church leader, writes:

“Concerning the call for a moratorium in the 1970s, we also have to consider the strong wave of nationalism that affected the relationship between the churches and the foreign mission agencies. We should work together to overcome tensions that arise because of misunderstandings, or cultural problems.”

The aspect of the Western organizations and churches as dominating or as equal partners in World Mission needs more research. What could be done or needs to be changed to come to an understanding of an equal relationship? Another question that needs to be asked is the question of resource sharing and of mutual learning. Does the Western partner have something to learn from their brothers and sisters in the Global South? But the question should also be: “What must a Global South partner do or change in order to accept the Global North partner as an equal partner and what can they learn from each other?”

Bauerchse (2003:336) mentions one-way partnerships as well and identifies the specific weaknesses of these collaborations. He pleads for an attitude of both partners to learn from each other (2003:343), which would lead to interchurch partnerships which he

calls “ecumenical learning communities”. This is a subject that again needs to be brought to attention in the cross-cultural partnership discussion.

However, numerous church partnerships were initiated in the 1970s and 1980s from Western churches. Schäfer (2004:6) talks about “a partnership euphoria” within the Lutheran church of Germany. One Western church would partner directly with an African church, but it was soon realized that such partnerships would overcharge individual Western churches and this boom came to an end in the early 1990s (:7). Schäfer even asks if “partnership” is the right term to describe the worldwide ecumenical dimension of the Church (:9) and he proposed the term “Partnership as Koinonia.” This example comes close to a model which values the Christian spiritual relationship between the partners and should be developed further.

Kham (2003:176) recognizes the growing mission involvement of the Global South churches and asks for an attitude change, especially when it comes to the subject of leadership and the handling of money. He says that “we need to move beyond superficial partnership to biblical and genuine partnership”.

Tiénou (2006:38) states that Christianity has now become a “Polycentric Christianity” which is “Christian faith with many cultural homes”, but he affirms that theology is still dominated by Western theologians and therefore he asks for a theology in which Christians from everywhere participate fully (:51).

Western authors see partnership between the West and the Global South also as a challenge, but are, in general, more positive about the situation. Butler (2005) is one of the leading evangelical researchers in terms of partnership. In his latest book “Well Connected” he talks about “Kingdom Partnerships” in which he stressed the “God Design” and relationships in unity and diversity.<sup>22</sup> But the main goal of his partnership concept is still the fact that Western mission and the Global South church will “work” together and accomplish “projects”, instead of living together as one church body”.

Rickett (2000) also discusses partnerships and relationships, even “strategic relationships” and indeed takes cultural differences into account, but the relationship is again about two individual partners who want to realize projects together and there is still a “we and they” aspect. One can also ask, if the term “Strategic Relationship” is well understood in non-Western countries?

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<sup>22</sup> See also: Butler (1999) and Butler (2000).

George (2004:xiii) has realized “that our way of being and our missional attitudes towards other people, religions, and cultures are more important than anything we can build, teach, or give.” This is a view that stresses the relationship and attitude towards each other above the work or task which the partners undertake.

Addicott (2005) has titled his latest book “Body Matters” and uses the organic image of the Body of Christ in order to discuss the working partnership in mission, but he does not go as far as researching the Body of Christ as the basis for an organic *koinonia* (communion) among Christians from the West and the Global South and stays with the idea of two individual partners who work together on mission projects.

Concerning the cultural aspect of the research, wide-ranging literature can be found on the question of cultural differences in relationships between people and organizations from the West and the Global South. The secular literature on cross-cultural subjects is vast. Only a few specific works will be cited here that deal with cross-cultural relationship in the business world. Hall (1990) studies different communication styles in cross-cultural settings. Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (2003) want to understand the cultural diversity in business. Thomas & Inkson (2003:182) advise managers to obtain “cultural intelligence”, which is the capability to deal effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) explore cultural differences for working in cross-cultural organizations. And Lewis, R.D. (2006, 2012) writes about cultural differences mainly for business partners.

But most of these works deal only with the pure cultural characteristic in cross-cultural associations, without considering the “Christian” aspect of cross-cultural relationships. A few works that are written for a cross-cultural Christian ministry need to be mentioned such as Hiebert’s *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (1985), *Transforming Worldviews* (2008), or Hesselgrave’s *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally* (1978) and *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally* (2000). Other authors dealing with cross-cultural ministry are Lingenfelter and Mayers<sup>23</sup> who want to give answers about biblical transformation in the cross-cultural context. Roembke (2000) is concerned about the credibility of the missionaries relating to the other culture and about Christian relationships and unity in multicultural teams.

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<sup>23</sup> See Mayers (1974); Lingenfelter & Mayers (1986); Lingenfelter (1996); Lingenfelter & Lingenfelter (2003).

## **2. Theological Reflections about Communion in World Mission**

One of the most important elements of partnership in World Mission is the relationship between the acting partners.<sup>24</sup> Since this study discusses the partnership relations within World Mission, the Christian aspect of relationships needs to be considered. Partnership relations in the context of Christian churches and mission organizations are different than in partnerships within the business world. The Christian aspect of these partnership connections plays an important role for this study. Therefore these relationships need to be reflected upon theologically. People are coming together on the basis of the same faith, which is rooted in Scripture. God, in his Word, has given numerous instructions on how humans and especially Christians should relate to each other. Since every Christian is a part of the universal Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13), there is already an organic connection within this worldwide body. Therefore not only the working or business part of the partnership should be studied but also the close relationship within this body. Most of Western partnership literature deals with the structure of the partnership and relationship aspect is mentioned as a side subject. However, if large parts of the non-Western world are predominantly relational and give preference to the aspect of relationship<sup>25</sup> rather than to the tasks, then the relationship within the Body of Christ needs to be a major part of this work.

If the relationship between the partners is unsatisfactory, the partnership does not function as it should. Roembke (2000:26) writes:

“Trust is the basis of all relationships. It is associated with a firm belief and confidence in the honesty, integrity, reliability and justice of another. Trustworthiness is the basis of credibility. Without trust a relationship cannot continue to grow. Without trust a person is unable to form relationships. A breach of trust will cause a sudden break in the relationship, which if it is not resolved, will cause a deterioration of the relationship.”

Fear, reluctance, reticence, and distrust can easily be present in a multicultural relationship and will hinder a collaborative liaison and should therefore be overcome. This can as well be the case in a Christian relationship. Addicott (2005:59) talks about a “TOS factor”: Trust, Openness and Security. In order to achieve trust, openness, and a secured

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<sup>24</sup> Butler (2005:47) explains that “God has designed men and women to live in harmony, in open, healthy relationships – whether in families or in Communities.” He sees healthy and restored “God designed” relationships as critical to lasting, effective partnerships (:49).

<sup>25</sup> Hiebert (1985:122-123) explains that Western societies are marked by individualism and the search for personal identity which is closely tied to personal achievement and competition. In non-Western societies the search for identity is mainly based on the group as point of reference and a healthy relationship within the group is of highest importance.

relationship, the attitude of the partners towards each other is the key. Butler (2005:49) sees sin as a hindrance for good partnership relations and rightly describes how the relationship with God and between humans was destroyed after the Fall and he pleads for a restored relationship following God's design. In the following it will be examined how God has intended relationships among those who are part of his body. First, the creation of humans in the image of God will be studied and the significance of their relationship towards God and others. Second, if a human being is created in the image of the triune God, the Trinity will be the base and example for relationships among them and especially among believers. Third, when humans become Christians they also become members of the Body of Christ, which is the Christian Church. Therefore, the study of relationships within the Church will give more insights, on how to live these relationships within this universal body. Finally, essential characteristics should be identified which ought to guide Christian partnerships and are necessary for human and Christian relationships. These characteristics are fundamental for a valuable interaction within World Mission.

## **2.1 The Creation**

“God created man in his image” (Gen1:27). Why did God create them? What has God intended for the relationship between God and the human being and for the relationship between human beings among each other? The following analysis will be limited to the relational aspect<sup>26</sup> of creation to define how human beings should relate to each other. Because God has created them in his image and as relational beings, the results of this study should guide the relationships in cross-cultural Christian ministry.

### **2.1.1 Created in the Image of the Triune God**

Several biblical accounts in the Old and New Testament refer to the creation of humans in God's image, the “Imago Dei”. The concept of the “Imago Dei” has been the subject of many discussions. One of the main questions is if the Old Testament accounts of the image of God can be understood from the Old Testament context alone, or if they need

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<sup>26</sup> For other aspects of the image of God such as the bodily aspect, personality, spirituality, rationality, morality, authority and creativity it should be referred to Clines (1968); Overstreet (2005); Hughes (1989), Hoekema (1986), Sherlock (1996) and others.

to be interpreted in light of the New Testament. This position is supported by the German protestant theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg (2004b:208).

Fact is that there is just not one single position on the topic of the image of God and many theologians have argued over centuries about what “being created in the image of God” stands for.

Overstreet (2005:44-58) in his historical survey<sup>27</sup> gives a good overview about the differing positions of early Church fathers and contemporary theologians. Philo of Alexandria (20 BC-AD 50) understood the image as not being in relationship with the body and just touching the soul and mind, interpreting the image as the rational part of a human. The same would be true for Clement of Alexandria (150-215) and Augustine (354-430) who also explain that the image of God was a person’s ability to use reason to understand God. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) as well relates the image of God to a human’s intellect and reason. For Iranaeus (ca. 130-200) the image included rationality, freedom, decision making and responsibility. For Tertullian (ca. 150-220) the image of God was lost through sin and could only be restored in conversion.

Calvin (1509-1564) stated that the seat of the image is the soul and would include knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Karl Barth (1886-1968) and Emil Brunner (1889-1966) link the image to relationship. Barth and Brunner talk about a confrontational relationship that exists between God and a human. This relationship can also be used for the relationship of man and woman and man and fellow-man (Culver 2005:252). The same view is supported by Roland Allen (Overstreet 2005:47), but rejected by Wolfhart Pannenberg (2004b:206) who does not hold “that the sexual relation corresponds to the Trinitarian relation.” He rather interprets the image in an eschatological way in which human beings are destined for fellowship with God, for “life with God” (:224).

Other contemporary theologians such as Floyd Barackman and Harry Boer identify the image as personhood (Overstreet 2005:48). J.A. Clines (1968:51) comes to the conclusion that a human “does not have the image of God, nor are they made *in* the image of God, but that they are themselves the image of God” and that “man’s position on earth is to be representative there of the absent God who is nevertheless present by His image” (52). The reformed theologian Antony Hoekema refers to the image which includes dominion, being male and female, stressing a social relationship, being responsible persons, and that a fallen human being still bears the image of God which will be completely restored

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<sup>27</sup> See also the historical survey in Hoekema (1986:33-65).

in the life to come (Overstreet 2005:53-54). He identifies Christ as the true image of God who is in threefold relationship with God, humans and nature. He uses the same image for a person, who also is in a threefold relationship with God, his fellow humans and their rule over nature (Hoekema (1986:73-79).

Clines (1968:54-55) also gives account of how some of the Church Fathers have understood the image of God. "For Ambrose, the soul was the image; for Athanasius, rationality in the light of the Logos doctrine and for Augustine under the influence of Trinitarian dogma the image was seen as the triune faculties of the soul, *memoria, intellectus, amor*.

Clines (:55-56) citing J.J. Stamm draws a dividing line in the interpretation of the image in 1940. Before 1940 he sees that the image was interpreted as (i) a spiritual quality of humans, (ii) their rule over his fellow-creatures, (iii) the immediate relationship between God and humans, and (iv) the image consists in the form of a human being, which is similar to God's. Since 1940 the image as an external form dominated Old Testament scholarship.

He identifies from the whole historical interpretation two distinct approaches:

"The first, which has been dominant throughout the history of biblical interpretation, locates the image in some spiritual quality or faculty of the human person. If the image refers primarily to similarity between God and human beings, it is only to be expected that the image will be identified with that part of humans which they share with God, his spirit" (:56).

The second approach would be a physical interpretation of the image. A person is created as a human being, different from animals which would indicate their superiority over animals and the capacity to commune with God (:58).

Clines also admits that some writers have tried to combine both the spiritual and the physical reference in the word "image" (:59) and finally concludes:

"It appears that scholarship has reached something of an impasse over the problem of the image, in that different starting points, all of which seem to be legitimate, lead to different conclusions. If one begins from the philological evidence, the image is defined in physical terms. If we begin from the incorporeality of God, the image cannot include the body of man. If we begin with the Hebrew conception of man's nature as a unity, we cannot separate, in such a fundamental sentence about man, the spiritual part of man from the physical. If we begin with 'male and female' as a definitive explanation of the image, the image can only be understood in terms of personal relationships, and the image must be located in mankind (or married couples!) rather than the individual man" (:61).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Although the author is aware of the different theological approaches and interpretations and that this study of the creation in the image of God is but only one interpretation, he still is convinced that lessons for the relationship in Christian partnerships could be learned from this theological reflection.

The first references of the “Imago Dei” are found in Genesis 1 and 5:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (Gen 1:26+27 NIV).

When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them "man"<sup>29</sup> (Gen 5:1b+2 NIV).

The plural word (let us) in the first passage is an indication of the plurality of the three persons of God, the Trinity.<sup>30</sup> The importance of the Trinity for relationships in the World Christian community will be studied in a later chapter. Here the rapport of the creation of humans in the image of God and their relationship with God and other human beings is of interest. A person is created in the image of God. That suggests that God wanted to make a creature that is like him. He wanted to be seen or mirrored in human beings.

The above passage uses two different words for God’s resemblance with humans: *image* and *likeness*.<sup>31</sup> The word which is translated as image is the Hebrew word *tselem* and the word for likeness is *demûth*. Although many early theologians saw a difference of meaning in these two terms, various modern interpreters maintain they can be used interchangeably.<sup>32</sup> The German reformed theologian Jürgen Moltmann (1987:226) holds that the likeness of God is first a theological expression, before it becomes an anthropological concept. Creation in the image of God reveals first something about God’s relationship with humans followed by their relationship with God. God created them to glorify him. Isaiah 43:7 talks about bringing sons and daughters from the ends of the earth that God has created to glorify him.<sup>33</sup> God has created them for his pleasure and glory. In order to please God and to glorify him, humans must enter into a relationship with God. A pure relationship between God and them can be seen before they fell into sin. God, present in the

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<sup>29</sup> The ASV and King James version use the word „Adam“ ( אָדָם *ādām*).

<sup>30</sup> Many interpreters would follow this explanation. See Grudem (1994:227) for a detailed discussion on this topic. Other Old Testament passages which also mention the plurality of God are Gen 3:22; Gen 11:7; Isa. 6:8.

<sup>31</sup> Overstreet (2005:44-58) explains that the terms “image” and “likeness” used in Genesis 1 are used differently between several writers. The terms “image” (*tselem*) and “likeness” (*demuth*) have different meanings (Irenaeus, Origin, G.C. Berkouwer) whereas others do not see a difference between them such as Thomas Aquinas, David Cairns, Hoekema. Pannenberg (2004b:203) also does not see a difference between them. Others like Clement of Alexandria are not consistent in the use of both terms (Overstreet 2005:45).

<sup>32</sup> For a detailed study on image and likeness see Grudem (1994:443), Hoekema (1986:11-66), Moltmann (1987:225), Overstreet (2005:58ff) and Towmer (2005:345ff).

<sup>33</sup> See also Eph. 1:11-12.

garden, talked freely to Adam and Eve. And Adam and Eve had a free and open relationship with God. Hoekema (1986:76) specifies that

“man has been created as a self, as a person, capable of self-consciousness and self-determination, capable therefore of responding to God, of answering God, of fellowshiping with God and of loving God.”

Persons only occur and develop in relationship within a community. Because God is relational, he created humans to live in relationship to nature, other human beings and to God himself. Horrell (1996:5) even argues that the personhood of a human is situated in God himself.

“The implication is that it is not in “finding ourselves” that we discover what it means to be human. Rather scripture repeatedly points us to our creator, the living God. When we focus upon him – looking upward not inward, only then do we begin to recover our own humanity. That is, *person* means primarily what it signifies in relation to God; our definition of *person* must be finally situated in God himself. Although significant differences exist between the infinite and the finite, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit provide the ontological framework for our own personhood as human beings.”

The need for relationship originates from God’s own nature and ought to be reflected in a person’s behavior towards God and others. This is especially the case for Christians who live in a restored relationship with God and with other Christians.

The Bible reveals that there was love, fellowship and a mutual trust relationship in the different persons of the Godhead before the creation of the world (Jn 17:5+24). Horrell (1996:6) explains that the indwelling of each person of the Trinity by the divine other (*perichoresis*) reflects the creation in the *Imago Dei* and is a basis for the relationship of a person with God and other human beings.

“Similar to how the Father indwells the Son and the Son indwells the Father, and how the Holy Spirit is also literally “the Spirit of Christ” and “the Spirit of the Father,” so God has structured the human being so that he or she can be indwelled by God himself. While indwelled by the divine Other, human beings are both conformed to the divine character and simultaneously strengthened in their unique individuality in relationship to others” (:6).

Berkhof (1997:30) confirms the threefold relationship of a person towards God, other human beings and nature<sup>34</sup> and sees the personhood of a human not so much in structures, abilities and attributes, which he calls the substance or matter (Substanz) of personhood, but rather in a human’s ability to be called to live in relationships. Personhood therefore is

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<sup>34</sup> For the threefold relationship of man see also Hoekema (1986:75-82).

directed toward God himself, towards other human beings and towards their dominion over nature. Berkhof concludes that a human as an “individual” can never be the image of God. They can only be that in his “togetherness” with other human beings, in communion (38).

Thus it can be concluded that one major aspect of the creation in the *Imago Dei* is the fact that humans are created as relational beings. They need others to be what God has intended them to be – human beings in relationship.

### 2.1.2 Created as a Social Being

When God had created Adam in his likeness, he knew that humans needed to live in a network of relationships and therefore he gave him a companion to live with him so that he was able to found a family. The scriptures give the following accounts:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:27+28).

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Gen 2:18).

Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh (Gen 2:22-24).

This is the written account of Adam's line. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them "man" (Gen 5:1+2).

The word “man” (NIV) or “humankind” (NRSV) is translated from the Hebrew word *ādām*. Towner (2005:345) understands Adam as a collective concept.

“Although with the definite article *hā’ādām* can refer to a single male individual (e.g., Gen 3:8), the definite form can also be constructed as collective (even in our key texts, Gen 1:27 and 9:6). The collective sense in Gen 1:26-28 is conveyed, as noted above, by the plural verb “and let them have dominion,” and also by the added remark of v.27c, namely, “male and female he created them.”

Adam and Eve were the prototype of all human beings who would follow after them and all humans are created in the image of God. Also God did not create Adam as an isolated person but gave him a helper, Eve, who could enter into a harmonious relationship with Adam. The fact, that God exists as the Trinity, as the three persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, is reflected in the creation of Adam and Eve and all human beings

after. God exists in a fellowship and communion of the Trinity and he wanted humans to experience the same relationship with him and with each other. Horrell (1996:6) confirms that the human personality is rooted directly in the three-personed God and that in God himself is cause for the foundation for human reason, language, capacity to choose, diversity of emotions, for the appreciation of beauty, propensity for creativity, sense of morality and eternity, but also a human's characteristic for the "social nature desiring relationship with others." Human beings cannot live alone when they are to fulfill the design that God has foreseen for them. They need to live in community with others. Berkhof (1967:38) admits that a human being as an individual is incomplete and needs a counterpart. The necessity of communion is most important for *āḏām* and to be a real human he needs other men and women. A person only becomes a human being in a relationship with other human beings as well as in the relationship with God. The "other" forms me and vice versa (:41). Humans can only develop in a collective group environment or social network. Moltmann (1987:228) in his discussion about Adam and Eve sees the difference in gender and the "Gemeinschaft"<sup>35</sup> between the two as belonging to the image of God. He affirms that

"God-likeness cannot be lived on your own but only in community with other humans. Therefore man is a social being from the beginning. Man is set towards human community and significantly needy (Gen2:18). He is a sociable being and develops his personality first and foremost in community with others."

In creating humans as man and woman, as Adam and Eve, God wanted a close relationship for these two human beings. They even will become one flesh (Gen 2:24). Grudem (1994:455) holds that "this union is not only a physical unity but also a spiritual and emotional unity of profound dimensions." He also perceives a link towards the human family and the spiritual family, the Church, all rooted in the three persons of the Trinity.

Humans need "the other" to become and be what they are. They need others to develop into genuine human beings and social beings. Already Aristotle saw a relationship between the individual human being, the family and the state as needing each other and he even states, that a social instinct is implanted in all people by nature:

"Further, the state is by nature clearly prior to the family and to the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part; for example, if the whole body be destroyed, there will be no foot or hand, except in an equivocal sense, as we might speak of a stone hand; for when destroyed the hand will be no better than that. But things are defined by their working and power; and we ought not to say

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<sup>35</sup> Moltmann uses the German term „Gemeinschaft“ which could be translated as „community, fellowship or communion.

that they are the same when they no longer have their proper quality, but only that they have the same name. The proof that the state is a creation of nature and prior to the individual is that the individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing; and therefore he is like a part in relation to the whole. But he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god: he is no part of a state. A social instinct is implanted in all men by nature, and yet he who first founded the state was the greatest of benefactors.”<sup>36</sup>

Modern sociologists affirm that a human being can only develop in relationship with others. The “symbolic interactionism” is a sociological theory which treats the interaction between different persons. George H. Meads (1863-1931) and his student and interpreter Herbert Blumer (1900-1987) believe that the human individual must be viewed in the context of the human acts of other individuals or the social group.

“The self, like the mind, is a social emergent. This social conception of the self, Mead argues, entails that individual selves are the products of social interaction and not the (logical or biological) preconditions of that interaction.”<sup>37</sup>

Blumer (1937:168)<sup>38</sup> talks about primary groups such as families, play groups, rural neighborhoods and fraternities, which as a natural environment will form a child who lives in relationship to them. He sees these primary groups as universal and

“since they exist in all peoples, and since everywhere they have the same psychological make-up, it follows that all normal human infants will develop a *common* human nature as a result of life in such groups.”

Blumer (:176) recognizes that the development of the human personality is influenced by the social interaction with others:

“Personality can be regarded as the personal or social organization which is formed by the individual as he develops social conduct. One writer refers to personality as the “social man”; this expresses the same idea. Personality represents the organization of tendencies to act that are developed by an individual in the course of his interaction with others.”

This is not only a sociological concept, but God intended for humans to live in a context of relationship. Hoekema (1986:78) rightly states that

“it is only in fellowship with others that we can grow and mature. It is only in partnership with others that we can fully develop our potentialities.”

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<sup>36</sup> Aristotle, Politics, Book 1: Part 2 translated by Benjamin Jowett. Available at: <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.mb.txt> (accessed on 26/01/2013).

<sup>37</sup> Available at: The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/m/mead.htm> (accessed on 28/01/2010).

<sup>38</sup> The article is available at: [http://www.brocku.ca/MeadProject/Blumer/Blumer\\_1937.html](http://www.brocku.ca/MeadProject/Blumer/Blumer_1937.html) (accessed on 23/12/2012).

That humans are social beings has implications on the relationship with their family, their neighbors, the church, and also on the relationships that Christians will experience in the context of World Mission. Christians have to understand, that God has also created their brothers and sisters on other continents. In living the relationships with Christians of different cultures, Western Christians can learn and understand better, what it means to be a human created in God's image. In this case the non-Western Christian can become a "helper" to his Western brothers and sisters and vice versa.

### 2.1.3 Created out of the Love of God

When reflecting about the creation of human beings in the image of God, the aspect of love cannot be left out. God is a God of love, states the Bible. John 17 talks about the unity between the Father and the Son and about their mutual love. This godly love is also reflected in human beings. Naturally they should mirror the loving image of God. Jesus revealed the Father's love for him to his disciples in order to inflame the same love in his disciples.

"I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them" (Jn 17:26).

Actually God had no need to create humanity.<sup>39</sup> He was perfectly satisfied with the love-relationship within the Trinity.<sup>40</sup> But nevertheless, God chose to create the world and humans for his pleasure and glory and love is one of God's attributes that is reflected in his creation. The Bible tells that God is Love (*ἀγάπη*, *agapē*) (1Jn 4:8+16) and that he loves the people he has created. The apostle Paul testifies, that God

"chose us in him *before the creation* of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. *In love* he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves" (Eph 1:4-6).

God loves the world (Jn 3:16) which he has created because he himself is love. If humans are created in his image, they are also able to love others and after God's desire are required to do so. Jesus gave this new command to his disciples to love one another in

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<sup>39</sup> The Puritan theologian John Owen (2007:196) talked about the "all-sufficiency" of God saying that: "God's all-sufficiency in himself is his absolute and universal perfection, whereby nothing is wanting *in* him, nothing *to* him: No accession can be made to his fullness, no decrease or wasting can happen thereunto. There is also in him an all-sufficiency for others; which in his power to impart and communicate his goodness and himself so to them and as to satisfy and fill them, in their utmost capacity, with whatever is good and desirably to them."

<sup>40</sup> Grundem (1994:160-161) talks about the independence of God and that he does not need anything from his creation (Acts 17:24-25) and about a sharing of love, interpersonal fellowship, communion and glory within the persons of the Trinity.

the same way that he would love them (Jn 13:34). He was the best example and has proven his sacrificial love for all people, when he gave his own life for them.

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 15:12 +13).

Because Jesus obeyed out of love for his Father, he could demonstrate his love for his disciples in laying down his life on the cross. Love among Christians should spring out of the love for God and for his Son Jesus. When one of the teachers of the law came to Jesus to ask him what the greatest law was Jesus replied:

““The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” (Mar 12:29-31).

Jesus was the true image of God in his love for God and in his love for others. Therefore he could give this command to his followers. Love can only exist in relationship. We only can love God or others if we stand in a relationship with them. Love is directed towards the other. Pannenberg (1976:60) explains that living in relationship with others needs to be based on mutual love towards each other and that love is the root of common living and the source for fulfillment of one’s own life. He says that

“the I and You are connected with each other through love, which moves the individual away from himself towards the communion with the other one” (63).

Hoekema (1986:22) emphasizes that:

“We must learn to know what the image of God is by looking at Jesus Christ. What must therefore be at the center of the image of God is not characteristics like the ability to reason or the ability to make decisions ..., but rather that which was central to the life of Christ: love for God and love for man. If it is true that Christ perfectly images God, then the heart of the image of God must be love. For no man ever loved as Christ loved.”

Horrell (2008:9) clarifies that *agape* in 1 Corinthians 13 “is not directed inwardly but outwardly in the sharing and giving oneself to others.” God has directed his love towards his Son and towards the world and Christians need to direct their love towards God and towards others. This love towards God and others is a sacrificial and self-giving love. Christ gave himself for all human beings. Out of love he gave his own life for others. Paul exhorts the Christians in Ephesus to “... be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 5:1+2).

Love should therefore determine the relationship among Christians when they come and work together. This love relationship should be obvious in the Church, but also when engaging in partnerships. Of course many partnership projects are founded out of love for needy and suffering people, others maybe out of guilt or the feeling that one has to help others in humanitarian ways. Butler (2005:21) sees the motivation for partnership in the *God Design*, which demands us to live together in unity and in working together. He recognizes that “ministry partnerships are only effective and durable as they build trust, work actively at restoring relationships, and celebrate diversity in unity” (:47). Addicott (2005:43) also realizes that good relationships in the Body are a prerequisite for working together in partnerships. God calls his people to love each other especially if they are involved in relationships in the Christian context. Sacrificial love is foundational for healthy relationships and should be guiding the life and the work in cross-cultural mission context. God has ordained his children to love him and their neighbors with whom they are in relationship and subsequently their actions on a daily basis should emerge out of this love.

#### **2.1.4 Sin and Destroyed Relationships**

Not long after the creation of humans the Bible tells the story of their fall. Humans as created beings after the likeness of God had the ability to choose between good and evil. Adam and Eve through their disobedience brought sin into the world. The biggest effect of this was the separation from God and the spiritual death (1Cor 15:22) that Adam brought over all human beings (Rom 5:12+19). Sin had destroyed the intimate relationship between God and humans. Grudem (1994:444) sees God’s image in humans distorted, but not totally lost. He uses the verse in Gen 6:6 as an example where a person should not shed the blood of another human being, because he is made in the image of God. Grudem concludes:

“Since man has sinned, he is certainly not as fully like God as he was before. His moral purity has been lost and his sinful character certainly does not reflect God’s holiness. His intellect is corrupted by falsehood and misunderstanding; his speech no longer continually glorifies God; his relationships are often governed by selfishness rather than love, and so forth. Though man is still in the image of God, in every aspect of life *some* parts of that image have been distorted or lost.”

Because of sin, the relationship with God and with other human beings was greatly affected after the fall. When humans rebelled against God, God could not allow them in his presence because there cannot be any sin in God’s presence. Their relationship was completely broken.

The fall also affected human relationships. Moltmann (1987:232) argues that according to Rom 1:23 the sin of humans is that they have exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal humans and birds and animals and reptiles. Because the image of the glorious, holy, righteous, moral, and loving God in humans has been lost, they make their own selfish images. That of course results in a distorted relationship between them and God and in broken relationships between humans among each other. Towner (2005:351) agrees, when he writes that

“sin and rage, human frailty and perverseness can obscure or distort the capacity – indeed, the inborn need – for relationships with God, people, and the world around us.”

Relationship with God and others is disturbed because of the sinfulness of humans. But it is exactly the life in relationship with others that is seen by Pannenberg (1976:66) as of great importance for being human. He states that because of the sin of humans there is no complete communion. The sin of self-centeredness brings the individual into an antagonistic relationship with the society and the society against the individual (:67). This can also be the case for Christians who work together in World Mission. In the history of missions there are uncountable cases of broken relationships because of sinful behavior of the people involved. Addicott (2005:104) rightly calls it “Dis-ease in the Body” and “conflict escalation”, but the expression is probably too weak because sin is a serious issue in relationships and in many cases the very problem which needs to be dealt with. Very often the relationship within a partnership stays only at a surface level. If conflict occurs or sinfulness is obvious the problem is too easily covered up and not dealt with.<sup>41</sup> This does not demonstrate a trust relationship. It is by grace that a person can become righteous through accepting forgiveness and the new life which is given by Jesus Christ. Christians have the possibility to change and to ask for forgiveness, when they have sinned against God and against others (Col 3:13-15). The broken relationship with God can be restored and healed through the sacrifice on the cross that Jesus Christ accepted out of love for humanity and his Father (Eph 2:13-16).

If a broken relationship is the result of sin, it can only be restored through repentance and renewal. In accepting Jesus Christ as his savior, people can reenter into a renewed

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<sup>41</sup> Kim (2002:57-58) believes that the most severe problems in cross-cultural relationships derive from intercultural conflicts and that it is most often not the content of the conflict that creates tension and friction, but it often is the cultural style in which the conflict is handled. So he raises the question if culturally conflict needs to be confronted or avoided. These are two different ways of culturally dealing with conflict. Kim summarizes that much literature on conflict management style has a Western authorship and are not necessarily valid for all cross-cultural situations. The use of an avoiding style can be seen as mutually beneficial in a collective culture (:67). But nevertheless how conflict resolution may be handled in specific cultures, if there are sin issues which affect the relationship it is a situation that needs to be dealt with.

relationship with God. They can become children and heirs of God (Jn 1:12; Rom 8:16). Christians are also co-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17) and he calls them his brothers and sisters (Mt 12:49). This testifies of a very close relationship among them. As Christ has demonstrated his sacrificial love for humans, Christians are also asked to live a sacrificial life with their brothers and sisters:

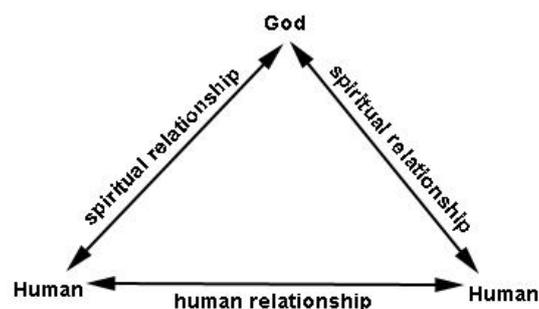
This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers” (1Jn 3:16).

Relationships in the Body of Christ are lived out of forgiveness and repentance and have this sacrificial love as their base. Therefore, Christian partner relationships should be guided as well by the principle of the sacrificial love which Christ has demonstrated.

### 2.1.5 Conclusion

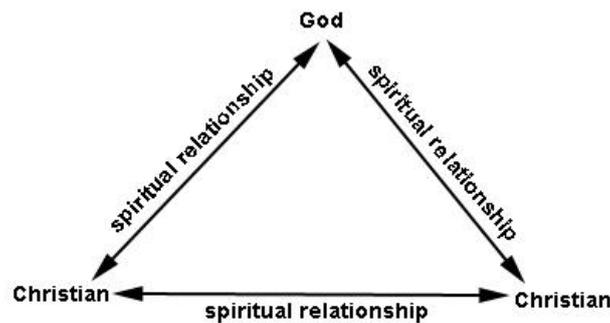
Humans are created in the image of God and after the fall the image has been distorted and they became sinful. Their relationship with God and other human beings is also affected by sin. But they can reestablish the broken relationship with God and other human beings, if they walk the way of repentance, forgiveness and renewal. Through Jesus Christ they can become what God has created them for. The Bible shows the restored human being as a new creation, a new human (*kainos anthropos*), fellow citizen with God’s people and members of God’s household (Eph 2:1-20). Therefore, relationships in World Mission are not just working relationships with others, but Christians need to realize that they are working and living together in the family or household of God and that they need to treat each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. Therefore, humans as created beings have to understand, that their being in the image of God causes them to live in two different relationships, with God and with other human beings.

**Figure 1. Spiritual and Human Relationship**



First, humans have a relationship to the eternal God, which is a spiritual relationship. And second, they have a relationship to other human beings, which is not necessarily a spiritual relationship. But if both partners are Christians, the human and the spiritual relationship cross each other and the relationship among Christians turns into a spiritual dimension. This could be defined as a creational spirituality.

**Figure 2. Spiritual Relationship between God and Believers**



In this case, both, humans or partners in a cross-cultural ministry, live as Christians in a spiritual relationship first with God, but also with each other. This spiritual relationship could be called a personal spiritual relationship because the individual Christian has a personal relationship with God and with fellow Christians. The relationship takes place within a “personal spirituality”. Therefore, the spiritual dimension of the relationship in the partnership discussion cannot be neglected when the basis for the partnership is Christian.

## 2.2 The Trinity

In the partnership discussion the Trinity is often used as an example for the relationship of partners in multinational churches or organizations. The relationship between God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is used to elucidate the relationship between the different partners.<sup>42</sup> Since humans are created in the image of God, the relationship within the Trinity can help Christians from different cultural backgrounds understand how they should deal and live with each other. In this study the focus is on Christian multicultural partnerships, which means that Christians from one cultural background deal with Christians from another cultural background, and both are following the Christian faith and belong to

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<sup>42</sup> See Addicott (2005:6-8), George (2004:1), Rickett (2002:60-61), and Butler (1992:34).

the universal Church of Christ. Both confess that they believe in the same Trinitarian God and that they have the same foundations of their faith. Therefore it needs to be investigated how the Trinity could be understood as the basis for Christian partner relationships.

Volf (1998:239) understands the Church as an image of the Trinity:<sup>43</sup>

“Trinitarian relations can serve as a model for the institutions of the church because the triune God is present in the church through the Holy Spirit, shaping the church in the image of the Trinity.”

This is not only true for the institutions of the Church, but also for Christian partnerships, which are based on the confession of the Christian faith. Looking at the relationship within the Trinity can help Christians to live their relationships in their different cultural contexts.

The discussion about the social organization of Trinitarian relationships is long and there are different arguments about the legitimation of a hierarchical or egalitarian standpoint of church organization<sup>44</sup>. Koeshall (2008:1) argues from an anthropological perspective and challenges the social organization of Trinitarian relationships. She states that social organization is a basic human necessity described by a cultural dimension, the two extremes being hierarchy and egalitarianism (:6) and that they are both fallen institutions that need to be redeemed. Theologically they cannot be ascribed to the Trinity, because in the Trinity no social control is necessary (:9). She proposed a model of the Trinity that is beyond hierarchy and egalitarianism.

“Although hierarchy and egalitarianism are sociological realities in earthly organizations, the Trinity models a relationship that critiques at once both a high Grid and a low Grid<sup>45</sup> social organization as Father, Son, and Spirit associate together in mutual, reciprocal and harmonious relationship” (:11).

She encourages redeemed individuals to incorporate the attributes, as seen in the Trinity, in any and every form of earthly social organization, following Christ in self-giving,

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<sup>43</sup> Different theological currents have also differing views of the interpretation of the Trinity, especially in terms of the subordination question. This has consequences for the understanding of the relationship within the church structure. Volf (1998:217) draws out the differences between the orthodox, catholic and protestant traditions and comes to the conclusion: “The structure of Trinitarian relations is characterized neither by a pyramidal dominance of the one (so Ratzinger) nor by a hierarchical bipolarity between the one and the many (so Zizioulas), but rather by a polycentric and symmetrical reciprocity of the many.”

<sup>44</sup> Recent scholars such as Gilbert Bilezikian, Kevin Giles, Jürgen Moltmann and Miroslav Volf argue that the eternal relationship is one of equality, mutuality and reciprocity. ... On the other hand, scholars such as J. Scott Horrell, and Wayne Grudem argue that “the revelation of the economic Trinity historically perceived as hierarchical in fact reflects ultimate ordered relationship in the immanent Trinity” (Horrell 2004:409); therefore, the biblical evidence points to an eternal hierarchical social order (Koeshall 2008:4).

<sup>45</sup> Koeshall (2008:6) explains that Mary Douglas uses the terms “High Grid” and “Low Grid” for explaining the sociological organization of hierarchy and equality. High Grid is a social context where strict roles and rules exist that inform the individual how to act and in a Low Grid the rules and control are more and more decreasing. See: Douglas, Mary. 1978. *Cultural Bias*: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. Occasional Paper no. 35.

self-sacrifice, committed to the mission of the Father and investing power for the love of the community (:12).

Therefore the Trinity can be studied as an example for the relationships within cross-cultural partnerships, even if some societies are more hierarchical or equal organized or if they are more communitarian or individual oriented than others. These are social organizations of the society which can be judged right or wrong, but they can be redeemed by the loving relationship that springs out of the love of God.

To study relationship within the Trinity the Greek term “Hypostasis” (ὑπόστασις) is of importance because it stands for “something with a concrete existence.” In Trinitarian theology it is used for a person (Latin *persona*) in contrast with “Ousia” which means the nature of God. The Trinitarian God is seen a three “hypostases” (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in one “Ousia” (one Divine substance or nature). “The three persons<sup>46</sup> (of the Trinity) are certainly different from each other, but they are one in their common divine substance” (Moltmann 1981:16).

Reimer (2009:132) advises caution to only look at the Western interpretation of the three persons as relational (the Augustinian *persons est relatio*), because of the problem of subordination, the elimination of the proper substance of the person, and because of the dissolution of the person in relational categories. Thus is the Father only identified with fatherhood, the Son only with sonship and the Spirit with procession. He argues to rather consider the persons of the Trinity as subjects who define themselves out of their own being as well as out of the relationship to others. Reimer, citing the Church father John of Damascus (675-749), offers an orthodox view to explain the *perichoresis*<sup>47</sup> of the Trinity.

“Perichoresis<sup>48</sup> is seen as a reciprocal interiority, which accepts that every person of the Trinity is in essence present in the other person, without ceasing to be a distinct person. Perichoresis is explained out of a cyclic thinking (which is used by the New Testament writer John (17:21) – *the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father* – which makes a simultaneous reality at different points of a rotating movement possible (:133).<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> See Rahner (1997:103-115) about the problem of the concept of “person”. He reflected on Karl Barth’s definition of person as the “manner of being” and uses finally the expression “distinct manners of subsisting” (:113).

<sup>47</sup> Perichoresis is a term used for the mutual inter-penetration and indwelling of the three persons of the Trinity, God the *Father*, the *Son* and the *Holy Spirit*. “Perichoresis refers to the reciprocal interiority of the Trinitarian persons. In every divine person as a subject, the other persons also indwell; all mutually permeate one another, though in so doing they do not cease to be distinct persons (Volf 1998:209).

<sup>48</sup> Reimer explains the Greek term as “Rundtanz” (German) – walk around somebody or dance around somebody.

<sup>49</sup> Author’s translation.

The Catholic theologian Rahner (1997:22) examined the relationship between the “economic” and “immanent” Trinity<sup>50</sup> and came to the conclusion that “The *economic* Trinity is the *immanent* Trinity and the *immanent* Trinity is the *economic* Trinity. That means that God’s inter-Trinitarian being cannot be separated from how he is revealed and acts in salvation history. God is a God who is self-communicating and reveals himself to his creation. Conclusions about the relationship between the three persons of the Godhead can be drawn, when the economic Trinity is studied. Lessons about the Christian life in relationship can be learned as well by looking at the essence, attitude, and relationship of the triune God.

In John 17:21 Jesus talked about this mutual indwelling with the Father (perichoresis) and wished that his followers are also becoming one with the Father and the Son. Perichoresis is extended here to the children of God through their relationship with Jesus Christ. Volf (1998:204) holds that the perichoresis of the divine persons possesses interecclesial relevance and he examines the correspondence between the character of the Trinitarian persons – their relationality and their mutual interpenetration – and that of ecclesial persons and local churches. This comparison could also be helpful for Christians working in cross-cultural partnerships because they are working with the same spiritual foundations. This study of the relationship within the Trinity can provide models for relationships among workers in cross-cultural Christian partnerships.

## **2.2.1 The Trinity as Basis for Communion in World Mission**

First, the term communion needs to be defined. The term “communion” originates from the Latin term “communio” which means sharing in common. The Greek translation is “koinonia” (κοινωνία) which means literally participation or social intercourse and is often translated as fellowship. In classical Greek, it could relate to a business partnership or to the life in marriage. Speaking about Christian communion it means a close spiritual relationship of the believer with God or as Christians with other individuals or within the Church, local or universal.

When discussing communion among Christians, it is not only in the local church where Christians can have spiritual communion. Working together in Christian partnership projects, individual Christians are still part of the universal Body of Christ, or the universal

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<sup>50</sup> “Economic Trinity” (what God does) describes God’s relationship with creation and how the three persons of the Trinity reveal themselves and act in salvation history. “Immanent Trinity” (who God is) speaks of the interior life of the Trinity and of the reciprocal relationship of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Church. The study of communion within the Trinity can therefore be helpful for Christians who participate in Christian partnerships around the World.

### ***2.2.1.1 Communion within the Trinity***

The Catholic theologian Fabio Ciardi sees the Trinity as an archetype of communion. He believes that

“every form of community in the Church in fact derives the depth of his own being from the Trinitarian community, through the Trinity’s communication of itself and the mystery of its unity. Christian unity is founded on the Trinitarian life, shared with the faithful through their incorporation into Christ. An understanding of the relationship between the religious community and the Trinity can therefore only come through an understanding of the relationship between the Church and the Trinity, because the religious community shares in the larger ecclesial community and expresses it in a particular way” (Ciardi 2001:218).<sup>51</sup>

In order to understand the communion among Christians in the universal Church, the communion that exists within the Trinity should be the model. Of course, no one can fully understand the relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but the Bible gives some indicators about the communion that exists between the three.

#### *Relationship between the Trinitarian Persons*

Scripture reveals the relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father testifies at Jesus’ baptism and at the transfiguration, that Jesus is his beloved son. Jesus demonstrates that there is a Father-Son relationship, when he calls one of the persons of the Trinity his Father who is in heaven (Mt 7:21). Jesus knows the Father and the Father knows him (Mt 11:27). The Bible confirms that Jesus and the Father are one. Knowing Jesus means also knowing the Father (Jn 14:7). Hating Jesus means hating also the Father (Jn 15:23). Jesus affirms several times that he is sent by his Father and that he will return to his Father, who is his God and who is the God of his disciples (Jn 20:17). The oneness of Jesus with his Father is expressed in John 10:30 when Jesus said: “I and the Father are one.” There is a very close intimate relationship of the Father with his Son. This state of being one describes a certain unity, union, and harmony. It also means that the Father and the Son have the same characteristics, such as omnipresence, omnipotence, eternity, goodness truth and love.

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<sup>51</sup> Although the author agrees with Ciardi’s above statement it must be said that his understanding of the universal church and its hierarchy, which is a Roman Catholic view, differs from the understanding of the author.

Jesus also confirms that as the Father is in him and he is in the Father, he is also in his disciples and his disciples are in him (Jn 14:20). The indwelling of the Son and the Father also exists between the Son and his followers. It could be said that if Jesus and his Father are one and Jesus and his followers are one, then his followers are also one with the Father.

The scriptures also testify that Jesus received the Holy Spirit (Luc 3:22) and that he was with Jesus (Mt 21:18; Luc 4:18), that he led him (Mark 1:12), and that Jesus performed his ministry through the same Spirit (Mt 12:28). When Jesus sent out his disciples in Matthew 28:19, he sent them out in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So he spoke and acted for the other two persons of the Trinity as well. At the end of his ministry Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to his disciples after he would leave this earth (Jn 14:26). This Spirit would come from the Father and would testify about Jesus, by whom he would be sent (Jn 15:26). God will give the Holy Spirit to his children and will pour out his love through him (Rom 5:5). They can receive the Holy Spirit and be filled with him. These and many other verses demonstrate the interrelatedness between the three persons of the godhead.

At Jesus' baptism the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit act at the same time. The Spirit descended on the Son, and the Father gave testimony that Jesus is his Son, whom he loves and with whom he is well pleased (Mt 3:16-17). We find the same turn of phrase concerning the Father later in Matthew 17 after the transfiguration of Jesus. Peter acknowledged that the Father bestows honor and glory to the Son using this expression (2 Pet 2:17)<sup>52</sup>. The same is true for the Son who glorifies the Father (Jn 14:13).<sup>53</sup> The apostle Paul also testifies that Christians will be transformed into God's likeness and reflect his glory which comes through the Holy Spirit (2Cor 3:18). In 1 Peter 4:14 the same Spirit is called the "Spirit of Glory." All of this shows that the relationship in the Trinity is one of mutual honor and glory.

Moltmann (1981:152) believes that a starting point to distinguish between the economic and the immanent Trinity is to be found in doxology.

"The assertion of the immanent Trinity about eternal life and the eternal relationships of the triune God in himself have their *Sitz im Leben*, their situation in life, in the praise and worship of the church: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost!

Real theology, which means the knowledge of God, finds expression in thanks, praise and adoration" (:152).

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<sup>52</sup> See also Jn 8:54 and Jn 17:5.

<sup>53</sup> See also Jn 12:28; Jn 17:1.

Moltmann does not see the reason for worship merely for salvation's sake, but locates it mainly in the nature of God that is in the goodness of God. God is worshipped and loved for who he is. Salvation and salvation history follow out of God's good and loving nature. But nevertheless, the immanent Trinity (Divine persons with respect to each other) can be understood through the economic Trinity (Divine persons as they are revealed in salvation history) and vice versa.

Moltmann accepts Rahner's thesis that "the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and vice versa," and asserts that the economic Trinity not only reveals the immanent Trinity, but that it also has a retroactive effect on it (:160). The cross does not just mean salvation for the world (outwardly), it also means that at the same time God suffered inwardly because the Son suffered and died on the cross.

"Just as the cross of the Son puts its impress on the inner life of the triune God, so the history of the Spirit moulds the inner life of the triune God through the joy of liberated creation when it is united with God" (:161).

Therefore the relationship within the Trinity and the relationship between God and his creation cannot be separated. The relationship within the Trinity is one of reciprocal goodness, love, and a self-giving attitude.

Salvation history gives evidence about the goodness and love of God for his creation, but also about a spirit of a selfless and self-giving life.

If God is a God of "koinonia", his creation must also reflect the inner communion of God. The apostle Paul wishes for the Corinthians that "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion (koinonia) of the Holy Spirit be with them all (2Cor 13:14). God wants communion with his creation and especially with his children who believe in him. God himself calls his people into the fellowship with the Son, Jesus Christ (1Cor 1:9). This communion as shown is with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and it is the base for communion among Christians themselves (1Jn 1:1-4).

The apostle John proclaims the eternal life that comes from the Father through the Son and which is the reason for communion among the believers. But he also adds that this divine communion can easily be destroyed by sin and walking in darkness, because God is light and there can be no darkness and sin in his presence. It was also demonstrated in the previous section that it is sin which destroys communion with God and among each other. The confession and the forgiveness of sins by the Son can restore communion with God himself and with other believers (1Jn 1:5-10). John continues his letter talking about the right

behavior of the believer towards God and towards each other that springs out of the love of God.<sup>54</sup>

### *Love Relationship*

The Bible explains that God is love (agape; ἀγάπη) and that love comes from God.<sup>55</sup> Love can only exist if there is more than one person. Love needs to express itself in community. It needs to have a vis-à-vis, otherwise it would only be self-love. “A solitary monad cannot love and, since it cannot love, neither can it be a person” (Letham 2004:446). But the Trinity exists in three persons and God gives testimony of himself, that he can love, that he is love.

C.S. Lewis (1980:174) wrote about love and the Trinity:

“All sorts of people are fond of repeating the Christian statement that ‘God is love.’ But they seem not to notice that the words ‘God is love’ have no real meaning unless God contains at least two persons. Love is something that one person has for another person. If God was a single person, then before the world was made, He was not love.”

God’s attributes cannot change before or after the creation, therefore God needed to have another person to love before the world was created. The Bible also says that love comes from God. Because God is love he can give his love to others. He is the origin, source, and giver of love.

At Jesus’ baptism the Father confessed that he loves the Son and the Son in return confirms his love for the Father (Jn 14:32) and obeys him and does what he is asked to do by the Father. Love is mutual and reciprocal between the Father and the Son. Since within the Trinity there are three equal persons who are one, we can assume that this godly love also embraces the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the transmitter of the love of God. God pours his love out into the world through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). God is the one who brings his eternal love into the world. Moltmann states that love is the self-communication of the good. Love wants to live and wants to give to others. The loving person enters entirely into the other whom he loves.

“God loves the world with the very same love which he himself is in eternity. God affirms the world with the energy of his self-affirmation. Because he not only loves but is himself love, he has to be understood as the triune God. Love cannot be consummated by a solitary subject. An individuality cannot communicate itself: individuality is ineffable, unutterable. If God is love he is at once the lover, the

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<sup>54</sup> 1Jn 2-4.

<sup>55</sup> 1Jn 4:7,8+16.

beloved and the love itself. Love is the goodness that communicates itself from all eternity.” (Moltmann 1981:57).

If God, as the Trinity, is love, he is love with his whole being and his whole expression is love. God is good and his love endures forever (Ps 100:5). His love is unending love as one reads in the Psalms (Ps 107). When God acts in the world, he acts out of love which involves all three persons of the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Bible shows clearly that the love of God is a self-sacrificing love. The Father loves the Son, but out of love for the world the Father has sent his Son into the world and he voluntarily comes to humankind in order to save them. The Son, out of love for the Father and for the world, obeyed and became a human being in order to die for the salvation of the world.<sup>56</sup> To understand what love is, John points to the Son and to his sacrifice that he accomplished out of love for the world (1 Jn 3:16).

“Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us” (1Jn 4:8-12).

God’s love is active and directed towards others. It is other-centered and self-giving love ready to sacrifice for others. This love flows out of God’s eternal being into his creation. He loves and has taken initiative first in the creation of human beings and secondly in sending his Son for their salvation. This self-giving love that exists in the communion of the Trinity should be the source that is reflected in the relationships among human beings. Created in the image of God, human beings partake in the love of God. If God lives in them, his love is also present in their lives and relationships. God, in the lives of believers, is the reason for their love for others. Jesus summarizes this in the simple commandments:

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (Jn 13:34-35).<sup>57</sup>

And this love is a self-sacrificing love in which a person gives his life to his friends (Jn 15:13). God loves his creation and because they are made in his image, they can love each other mutually. This is a command that is repeated several times in scripture.<sup>58</sup> The apostle

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<sup>56</sup> Jn 3:16.

<sup>57</sup> See also Jn 15:12+17.

<sup>58</sup> Jn 15:12; 1Th 3:12; 1Th 4:9; 2Th 1:3.

John bases the reciprocal love in the Christian community on the foundational love of God which was there in the first place (1Jn 4:11).

This has great implications for Christian partnership. Coming together in World Mission does not just mean to join with each other and to work jointly on some projects. It means that the believers should meet each other in the love of God and that they should be willing to sacrifice themselves for each other. In their Christian relationship they build a communion in the Lord which is based on God's love.

### *Relationship of Freedom*

This love relationship within the Trinity is a relationship of freedom. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (2Cor 3:17). The Son was not forced by the Father to come into the world and lay down his life for others. It was his personal choice.

“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father“ (Jn 10:17-18).

Moltmann (1981:55) explains that the choice between good and evil is less than the freedom of desiring the good and performing it. In God's eyes it actually means the freedom for the good. The person who is truly free no longer has a choice other than choosing the good.

“True freedom is not the “torment of choice”, with its doubts and threats; it is simple undivided joy for the good. ... Freedom arrives at its divine truth through love. Love is a self-evident, unquestionable “overflowing of goodness” which is therefore never open to choice at any time. We have to understand true freedom as being the self-communication of the good (:55).”

God had to choose to send Jesus because of his inner quality of goodness and love. Freedom does not only express the goodness of God, it is also an expression of community and fellowship. Moltmann sees the root of the word freedom in the term of friendship. Freedom does not mean lordship and consists of the mutual and common participation in life.

“The triune God reveals himself as love in the fellowship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. His freedom therefore lies in the friendship which he offers men and woman, and through which he makes them friends. His freedom is his vulnerable love, his openness, the encouraging kindness through which he suffers with the human beings he loves and becomes their advocate, thereby throwing open their future to them. God demonstrates his eternal freedom through his suffering and sacrifice, through his self-giving and his patience” (:56).

God had no need to create the world and human beings. He is self-sufficient in himself. But he wanted to create the world out of his own free will to have a counterpart, a

“vis-à-vis”, for himself. God wanted to create humans to have fellowship with them. God did not need to send the Son into the world that he should die for the salvation of humans, but out of his own will he did it anyway because he desired to have communion with all people. Here Moltmann draws a line between the ultimate goodness and love of God, freedom and suffering:

“Creative love is ultimately suffering love, because it is only through suffering that it acts creatively and redemptively for the freedom of the beloved. Freedom can only be made possible by suffering love. The suffering of God with the world, the suffering of God from the world, and the suffering of God for the world are the highest forms of creative love, which desires free fellowship with the world and free response in the World” (:60).

This godly freedom is also given to the believer because where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (2Cor 3:17). When the Spirit of the Lord rules within the Christian community, the freedom of God is present. Jesus said that the truth will set his disciples free (Jn 8:32) and again, “if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (:36). Of course Jesus is talking here about the freedom from sin<sup>59</sup>, but the freedom from sin and the freedom in a community relationship cannot be separated. Freedom in Christ means also freedom to serve others. The apostle Paul gives testimony of his freedom that he uses to serve others and even more to become a servant (doulos; δοῦλος) for others: “Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible” (1Cor 9:19). Again Paul encourages the Galatians not to misuse the god-given freedom for sinful deeds, but rather to serve one another in love (Gal 5:13). Peter also encourages the brethren not to use their freedom as an excuse for doing evil, but rather to serve God (1Pt 2:16). Paul summarizes the freedom for mutual love and service for others, when he talked to the Galatians who wanted to return to the old Mosaic Law:

“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Gal 5:13-14).

Partner relationships in World Mission should be guided by a mutual mind-set of service. Christ has freed Christians from a self-serving attitude towards an attitude of free, self-giving and a willingness to suffer for others as a loving service for them. This is the spirit that should direct the working and living relationships of the different partners, but it is only possible, if the sinful nature of individuals is overcome by the spirit of love in Christ.

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<sup>59</sup> The apostle Paul argues that we can be free of sin because “through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2).

### **2.2.1.2 Reciprocity and Mutuality within the Trinity**

The noun “reciprocal” (Latin *reciprocus*) stands verbally for “returning the same way” and means as well “inversely related”. The pronoun “reciprocal” (as *each other*) is used when its referents are predicated to bear the same relationship to one another. Mutuality is directed by each toward the other or the others, can have something shared in common and can be characterized by a certain intimacy. There can be mutual affection, mutual love or mutual respect. Both, reciprocal and mutual characteristics can be found in the relationship of the Trinity.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one but in three persons. The three persons of the Trinity have an intimate reciprocal relationship with each other. Augustine already showed that the use of the term Father and Son needs to be understood in this reciprocal relationship.

“But because the Father is not called the Father except in that He has a Son, and the Son is not called Son except in that He has a Father, these things are not said according to substance; because each of them is not so called in relation to Himself, but the terms are used reciprocally and in relation each to the other” (Schaff 1890:139).

Further, the acting of the three persons of the Trinity with each other is a proof for their mutual and reciprocal relationship. As shown before, the Father wants to give glory to the Son and the Son wants to glorify the Father.<sup>60</sup> In like manner the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of glory (1Pe 4:14). There is a mutual glorification within the three persons of the Trinity. The same is true for the attribute of love. The Father and the Son are connected with a reciprocal love for each other. The Spirit also is a Spirit of love because God pours out his love by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5), the Spirit produces the fruit of love in the believer (Gal 5:22), and God wants to give a spirit of love to the people of faith (2Tim 1:7).

Gunton (2003:196) characterizes this mutual giving and taking within the Trinity as pure communion.

“The life of the Trinity is nothing but what the persons give to and receive from each other: it is pure (concentrated) community or communion.”

Volf supports the idea that mutual giving and receiving within the Trinity flows out of the communion of God. But he develops it and applies it not only for the Trinity, but also for believers who live in community. He affirms that “love spills over the rim of the Trinitarian circle of reciprocity because of the needs of human beings and that gifts flow over to

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<sup>60</sup> Jn 12:28; Jn 13:32; Jn 8:54; Jn 17:5; 2Pe 1:17;

creatures” (Volf & Welker 2006:10). He argues that there should be no rivalries and hierarchies between givers and receivers and confirms the equality of the giver and receiver because one who gives is not greater than the one who receives, for all give and all receive. He draws a line from the giving godly communion to the relationships in the world.

“The one God is a communion of three persons in that each dwells in the others and is indwelt by them. Because the Godhead is a perfect communion of love, divine persons exchange gifts – the gifts of themselves and the gifts of the others’ glorification. ... When God turns towards the world, the circle of exchanges within the divine communion begins its outbound flow. God gives to creatures because God delights in them and because they are needy. That delighting is part of God’s more encompassing relation with human beings, and the name of that relation is communion. ... We were created for communion with one another, not just with God. Christ came not just to live in us, or even through us. He came to make us into one body – his body, the church. ... The reciprocal exchange of gifts expresses and nourishes a community of love” (:11).

The love community that exists in the Trinity and that has a reciprocal relationship is an example for the believers who are the Body of Christ. As God exchanges gifts among the three persons of the Godhead the believers also should exchange gifts out of love for one another. There should be no jealousy, rivalry, or hierarchy within the Body of Christ. The gifts that God has given should be used mutually to build up this godly body of the Christian community. Too often in World Mission the exchange of gifts is not a mutual action. There are often the “haves” and the “have-nots” and one is the giver and the other is the receiver (Bowers 1997:186).

Christians who work in cross-cultural missions need to be aware that giving does not mean just material things, but also spiritual gifts. They also have to ask what they can give and what they can receive. This question is important when it comes to the motives of giving. Do believers go to help in a Majority World project because that makes them feel good or because they like to see how people receive their help? Do they go on a mission trip because they want to have a nice experience for their lives – because it is somewhat adventurous? Do they go because all the others of their church go and it is well received in the church? If they do not expect to receive a blessing from the partners whom they serve, they miss out on the Christian community. If they do not expect that the person they are serving can teach them something in return, then they come with a neo-colonial attitude and would do better not to go on a mission trip. If they go and criticize the habits or people of the other culture they do not look for the loving community that God has intended for them to live in. If they go and cannot love the people they are supposed to serve on the mission field, they have not understood the reciprocal communion of God.

Mission needs to express itself in a reciprocal relationship with the giving and taking from each other, with a mutual offering and receiving. God is the giver of gifts and has blessed believers with many gifts which they should use for the service of others (1Pe 4:10).

### **2.2.1.3 Unity within the Trinity**

Unity comes from the Latin term *unitas* (from *unus* one) which means oneness (greek ἐνότης), sameness or agreement. Unity is defined as the state of being undivided, unbroken completeness or as totality with nothing wanting. It also implies the quality or state of not being multiple which could be characterized as oneness. It talks about a condition of agreement and harmony.

God himself in the Old Testament proclaims that he is one God and there are no other gods beside him (Dt 6:4; Isa 45:5-6). He is the only true God and there is no one like him. Scripture testifies often that there is only one God.<sup>61</sup> And this one God exists in three persons. Grudem (1994:238) confirms the oneness of God:

“The three different persons of the Trinity are one not only in purpose and in agreement on what they think, but they are one in essence, one in their essential nature. In other words, God is only one being. There are not three Gods.”

God reveals himself as one God in three persons. Three persons (hypostasis) in one being (ousia). And because they are one, there is an inseparable relation between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as it was shown before in the study of the Trinity. What does it mean when Jesus said: “I and the Father are one” (Jn 10:30)? Because of their “oneness” the three persons of the Trinity think and act in the same way. The Son knows the Father and does what the Father wants him to do. The Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son and acts out the will of the Father and the Son. They understand each other and act in perfect unity. The three-personal God is one and therefore he acts in unity.

Moltmann (1981:177-178) explains the unity of the Trinity in three respects as follows:

“In respect of the constitution of the Trinity the Father is the “origin-without-origin” of the Godhead. According to the doctrine of the two processions, the Son and the spirit take their divine hypostases from him. So in the constitution of the Godhead, *the Father* forms the “monarchical” unity of the Trinity.

But in respect of the Trinity’s inner life, the three persons themselves form their unity, by virtue of their relation to one another and in the eternal perichoresis of their love. They are concentrated around *the eternal Son*. This is the perichoretic unity of the Trinity.

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<sup>61</sup> Rom 3:30; 1Cor 8:6; Eph 4:6; 1Tim 2:5; Jas 2:19.

Finally, the mutual transfiguration and illumination of the Trinity into the eternal glory of the divine life is bound up with this. This uniting mutuality and community proceeds from *the Holy Spirit*.

The unity of the Trinity is constituted by the Father, concentrated round the Son, and illuminated through the Holy Spirit.”

This perichoric unity of the Trinity has its imprint on salvation history because God wants to be in touch with his creation. Therefore the unity of the Trinity can be perceived in God’s will and God’s action towards humans. It is not only the incarnate Son who wants to have a relationship with them. It is the triune God who longs to enter into a deep love-relationship with his creation.

Köstenberger and Swain (2008:176) believe as well that the divine Unity is grounded in the perichoresis of the Trinity. They cite John of Damascus<sup>62</sup> who finds other descriptions of the Father and the Son’s unity which is the sharing of the divine identity/name and the divine action. The authors explain that Christians who come to believe will participate in the one communion that corresponds to the unity of the Father and the Son. They explain further that

“The revelation of the Father’s name (Jn 17:11), word (17:20-21) and glory (17:22) in the Son is the means to accomplishing this end of unity. The model for this unity is found in the Father and the Son, specifically, their mutual indwelling or perichoresis (17:21,23,26). Just as the unity of the Father and the Son is manifest in their mutual indwelling (14:10-11), so Jesus asks that the unity of the apostolic community will be manifest as they come to experience the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son (cf. 14:17,23). The effect of this new perichoretic communion will be that the world will ‘know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me’ (17:23)” (:176).

Trinitarian unity has an effect on Christian unity within the Body of Christ. If there is no unity within the Christian community, Christians are not really listening to God and his Word. Christian unity needs to flow out of the Unity that is a reality in the Trinity.

### *Trinitarian and Human Unity*

If humans are created in the image of the triune God, as it was shown before, they are created for social interaction, community and unity. Some of these attributes have been hidden through sinful behavior, but they still can be observed to some degree in society. People are looking for a partner or a family, they are moving together in villages or cities and they organize themselves in associations, organizations, political parties, workers “unions”

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<sup>62</sup> John of Damascus, *Fid orth.* 1.8,14.

and churches. Even on a higher level they are organized in counties, countries, or states. In their relationships they look for mutual agreement, harmony, and unity. This demonstrates that the human social life reflects some of the traits of God's Holy Trinity.

Because of human sin, the unity within Trinity cannot be compared with the union in human social life. Nevertheless, God longs for human beings to live in unity, especially for those who believe in him and who want to follow him. There is a close relationship between the Trinity and the disciples of Christ. Grudem (1994:841) defines the union with Christ as follows:

“Union with Christ is a phrase used to summarize several different relationships between believers and Christ, through which Christians receive every benefit of salvation. These relationships include the fact that we are in Christ, Christ is in us, we are like Christ, and we are with Christ.”

This unity comes out of the unity of the Trinitarian God as a testimony for those who do not believe in God. Jesus prayed for unity of the believers:

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (Jn 17:20-23).

Being in Christ means also being in the Trinitarian God. Christ prayed that “they may also be in us.” The apostle Paul encourages the Ephesians, that through Christ they are built up into a dwelling place in which God lives by the Spirit (Eph 2:22). This mutual indwelling of God with his children is the basis for mutual love and unity with each other.

“No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit” (1Jn 4:12-13).

God is longing for the oneness of Christian believers. Just as Jesus is in the Father and the Father in Jesus he wishes for them this perichoretic communion. This is not just the union and communion with God, but also a unity and fellowship among each other which springs out of the love of God.<sup>63</sup> They should experience the Trinitarian unity as a testimony towards the world.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> See Westminster Catechism Q65: “The members of the invisible church by Christ enjoy union and communion with him in grace and glory.”

<sup>64</sup> See Köstenberger & Swain (2008:155) as they see the Trinity as the three persons of the Godhead united in one mission which is extended through Jesus' followers (Jn 17; 20:21-22).

There is a strong emphasis on the unity of the believers and on the Church in the New Testament. As the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one, this unity should also be reflected in the Church. Paul encourages the Corinthians not to have divisions among each other and to be perfectly united in mind and thought (1Cor 1:10). In Philippians 2:2-3 he uses the fact of their oneness with Christ to encourage the Christians to be “like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.”

He also uses the image of the body for the unity of the Church. There is one Spirit, one Lord, and one God and by that one God we are baptized into that one Body of Christ. “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ” (1Cor 12:12).

This passage talks about the universal or invisible Church, but from the passages above it could be said that unity should also be a characteristic of the visible church. The unity of the Trinity needs to be reflected when Christians come together to worship, to work on projects together, or to live together. This unity in the universal and in the visible Church will be a testimony to the world and will glorify and honor the triune God.

### *Unity in Diversity*

The French theologian Blocher addresses the subject of unity in diversity and he looks at the example of the Body of Christ, explaining that the concept of Unity in Diversity is not easily understood by human natural thinking and needs to be addressed biblically:

“But natural human thinking remains deaf to this message. Man’s thinking introduces an opposition between unity on the one hand and diversity on the other – and thus makes them incompatible. ... The natural thinking of man – or fallen man – does not listen to the Word of the living God, of God the creator of the world. Man’s thinking begins with the world; and, in order to make its gods, it absolutizes elements or aspects of the world. However, *in the world*, even if unity and diversity increase together on the ladder of beings, they can never be found to the absolute degree – thus absolutely linked. Unity and diversity are often disassociated in the world. The kind of unity that meets the eye (poor unity) excludes diversity. Natural thinking, which absolutizes these aspects of the world, fatally turns unity and diversity into two opposite principles. Biblical thinking alone – liberated by the living God from bondage of “world elements” – invites us to conceive of a unity which comprises in itself the richest diversity (Blocher 1974:394-395).”

Horrell (2009:6) notes that the tension between unity and diversity in the universe is one of the great philosophic problems in history. He asks the question if reality is constituted by one single cosmic principle (Fate or God) that unites and determines all existence or if

the ultimate reality is centered in diversity in which the particulars are self-determinative, whether by choice or by chance? For the answer he turns to biblical Christianity and the Trinitarian God and affirms that the “three persons in one God, the Trinity incorporates both unity and diversity within itself” and “that we surely can understand that the unity and the plurality of this world has [in] back of it a God in whom unity and plurality are equally ultimate.” He sees the personal God as the infinite, absolute point of reference in the creation of the universe. Without him all the particulars would be meaningless and therefore the concept of the Holy Trinity presents a meaningful relationship between the one and the many in the universe.

The relationship of the Trinity clearly talks about the unity that exists within the Trinity, but the study of the Trinity also reveals a certain diversity that exists between the three persons of the Godhead. The words “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” clearly talk about three different persons and indicate an existent distinction, but not a division. Torrance (1996:281-282) confirms that “the doctrine of the Trinity demands a conception of the triune persons which integrates their distinctness and particularity, on the one hand, and their radical union and communion, on the other.” Letham (2004:381) adds that God’s

“distinctness and particularity, union and communion – both are equally ultimate and equally necessary. Therefore, both should equally be the focus of our attention. These parameters should be equally balanced in the way we view the Holy Trinity: unity and diversity, identity and difference, equality and order, union and particularity.”

In adopting a biblical view of the Trinity it could be said that there is no opposition between the unity and the diversity within the Trinity. God is one, but in three different persons. Each person of the Trinity has been unique from eternity, but lives and acts in absolute unity. When God created humans, he also created them as different persons, in the beginning as man and woman and in history he has created men and women as unique persons with their individual traits, each person different from the other. The diversity in God’s creation is desired by him and reflects God’s own nature. When a human being is created in the image of God, who is a unity in diversity, then it could be argued, that this characteristic is mirrored as well in his creation. Of course it is clear that a human cannot fully resemble the Trinitarian Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but the likeness of this can be seen in God’s creation. When God created humans, he did not just create a single man, but a man and a woman with the goal that the two should unite and become one (Gen 2:24). Grudem (1994:455) explains:

“The fact that God is three in one while Adam and Eve were only two in one may be a reminder that God’s own excellence is far greater than ours, that he possesses far greater plurality and far greater unity than we ourselves, as creatures, can possess. Though the unity is not exactly the same, the unity in a family among husband, wife, and children, does also reflect to some degree the interpersonal unity yet diversity of persons among the members of the Trinity.”

Since the lifelong relationship between man and woman is instituted by God and reflects the loving relationship within the Trinity, it is also an image of the relationship between Christ and his Church. Christ also calls his disciples and the Church to live out the unity that is present in the Trinity (Jn 17:21-22). When the apostle Paul compares the Church with a human body he states that there are many different members in the body, but that the body is one. There are many different people in the local and universal Church who are called by Christ to live in brotherly unity. A wide spectrum of this diversity can be seen within the universal Church. There are Christians from all kinds of national, racial, ethnic, linguistic backgrounds as well as people with different cultural competences such as knowledge, attitude and skills. God asks his universal Church to be one as he himself is one in the Trinity. This is a specific challenge for cross-cultural workers who encounter the diversity of God’s creation in their daily missionary activity. Working in a setting with people of diverse backgrounds means that one has to overcome personal and cultural prejudices and that one needs to learn to value the otherness and difference of people from a different cultural and social origin. There is richness in diversity which if well understood, can deepen the relationship of the partners from diverse backgrounds.

#### ***2.2.1.4 Communion of the Trinity as Example for Communion within the Universal Church***

In the preceding exposition the Trinity was studied in order to find a basis for relationships in cross-cultural partnerships. Since Christian partnerships often take place in the context of the universal Church, the relationship of Christ and his Church and church members needs to be taken into account. The oneness within the Trinity should be reflected in the life of God’s children, in the life of the Christian Church, but also in the living out of Christian partner relationships. The rapport within the Trinity is a relationship of love and reciprocity. These attributes also should guide the relationships in the universal Church and Christian partnerships. Therefore Christian partnerships cannot only turn around projects that will be accomplished through the task aspect of the partnership, but a part of the collaboration is the communion that exists between the Christian partners from different

contexts. The task cannot be separated from the persons who are involved in the project. The life of the Trinity models the relationship that should guide the relationship in Christian partnerships. As the relationship within the Trinity is celebrated by a unity in diversity the relationship in Christian partnerships also needs to be guided by this fact. Here the missionaries need to set aside their own backgrounds and need to learn from the diversity that exists also in other cultures.<sup>65</sup> They need to set aside their own interests and discover how they can best serve the interests of others. It is most often in this area where egoism and self-realization find a lot of ground for sinful behavior. Therefore the Christian worker in a cross-cultural setting should live a life in humility, vulnerability, repentance and service.

### **2.2.2 The Incarnation of the Logos**

The incarnation of the “Logos” (word) and the concept of kenosis cannot be separated from each other. The apostle Paul gives testimony of the second person of the Trinity stating how he “made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, and being made in human likeness” (Phil 2:7). Escobar (2003a:107) explains that the Christological paradigm of mission found in the Gospel is incarnational and should guide today’s missionaries:

“If Jesus’ incarnational pattern is taken seriously by missionaries today within social and structural realities of our time and space, mission will not be done from a platform of power and privilege, nor will the gospel be watered down to make it palatable to the rich and powerful (:107).”

Moltmann (1981:119) also declares, that “the outward incarnation presupposed the inward self-humiliation.” Therefore, the incarnation of the Logos should be studied first and then more detailed the concept of kenosis.

When referring to the incarnation of Christ two biblical sources are generally mentioned. The first one is in the prologue of the Gospel of John (Jn 1:1-14) and the other one is in the above mentioned second chapter of Philippians. John testified that the “Logos” was with God in the beginning, that the Word actually was God and that everything was created through the Word. Then he continues that the word “came into his own” (V.11) and that it “became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (V.14). The incarnation of the Word was necessary for the salvation of the believers. If Christ would not have come into this

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<sup>65</sup> Here the focus is on the cross-cultural worker who comes into a new host culture. But on the other hand it can also be expected from the partner in the host culture to learn from the diversity of missionary’s culture.

world, if he would not have died on the cross and risen after three days, the salvation of the world would not have been possible.<sup>66</sup>

However in this context the relation of the incarnation with salvation will not be the focal point as much as the meaning of the incarnation of Christ in relationship with other human beings. The aspect of the human side of the Logos in relationship with other human beings will be of importance here.

Aquino (2000:43) after studying Athanasius comes to the conclusion that the incarnation is a means by which God wanted to restore the image of God in humanity and to help humans see the purpose for which God has created humanity which would bring them to a proper understanding of "human personhood". He continues and explains that:

"The incarnation also reveals the extent to which God created us to find our identity in communion with other human beings in the world. The imprint of the image of God stamped on humanity in creation has a social bearing. God did not create us to live in isolation, but rather he made us to live in communion with other human beings in the world. Participation in community enables us to grow and to render suitable acts of love, befitting of beings created in the image of God. As the true embodiment of the image of God, Jesus Christ is the "primary norm" for the new humanity and its communal acts of love. That is, Jesus Christ unfolds the true meaning of human communion with God and with other human beings in the world (Col 1:15; Rom 5:12-21; 1Cor 15:45)" (:44).

The eternal, Trinitarian God has revealed himself through his "Logos", through his word. Hebrews 1:1-3 declares that God is speaking through the Son:

"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."

Moltmann (1981:116) explains that the love and grace of God needed to express itself in the self-communication of God himself to his created world. Through Christ and his incarnation and the act of salvation a human being can become what God has created him for: "the image of the invisible God." Moltmann explains:

"It is therefore in fellowship with him (Christ) that believers discover the truth of human existence. And this means that the incarnation of the son has a significance of its own." (:117).

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<sup>66</sup> Moltmann (1981:114-116) explains that the dogmatic tradition is familiar with two answers to the incarnation. a) The incarnation of the Logos was necessary because of the sin of man and reconciliation with God and that b) God intended the incarnation of the Son from eternity understanding that creation is the framework for the incarnation of the Son. Moltmann continues to explain that it has "to go beyond the measure of human need" and that the incarnation must also be seen as God's self-communication with his creation.

Moltmann continues and talks about God's love which is a self-communicating love:

“If God is love, then – as we have already said – it is part of his loving self-communication and a matter of course for him to communicate himself, not only to his “like” but also to his “other”. It is only in and through its Other that love becomes *creative love*. Self-communicating love, however, only becomes fulfilled, blissful love when its love is returned” (:117).

Christ came into this world to move towards the “other”. God not only wanted to communicate within the Trinity, but also with his created beings. Therefore Christ came into his own and although his own did not receive him (Jn 1:11), he decided to live among his creation in order to show them the glory of the Father. This coming into his own was costly for the Trinity because Christ did not come as a King or ruler, but he was made in human likeness and took upon himself the form of a servant. Christ came to serve his creation and as a “doulos” he gave himself for others on the cross. Incarnation means coming into the world of the other, leaving one's own known world and entering the unfamiliar world of others in order to serve them.

This is also true for the missionaries or the cross-cultural workers. They leave their home country, their culture, their family, their friends and everything that is well-known to them in order to serve in this new world of “the other.” Entering somebody's world means sacrificing one's own rights for the service of others. Reimer connects the mission of Jesus with his incarnation to human beings when he asks:

“With what began the mission of Jesus? It began with the incarnation, with his embodiment<sup>67</sup> into the living environment of man (Jn 1:1-12). ... The incarnation is therefore an embodiment into a concrete social and cultural milieu. God proves his intention of salvation in the incarnation of his son and this is literally happening in a local place. The self-giving of Jesus is a concrete giving to concrete people” (Reimer 2009:150).

Reimer puts the incarnation into a very concrete context of a cultural environment. The moving of Christian cross-cultural workers into a different culture can be considered in this sense as an incarnation into somebody else's world. Out of the agape love they cross the border into a different cultural context in order to become a “doulos” to the people they serve. They do not enter as rulers or as someone who needs to totally change the other's culture. They come and identify themselves with others. If they want to identify themselves with the people from the other culture, they need to learn the other culture and be willing to

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<sup>67</sup> Reimer uses the German term “Fleischwerdung”.

adapt their own identity to the culture of the other.<sup>68</sup> In his book “Communion and Otherness” the Orthodox theologian Zizioulas (2006:37) explains

“That the incarnation took place in freedom on both the divine and human side and that Christ’s unity with us was a unity in otherness.”

So the unity that the Spirit brings into the Body of Christ is a unity that respects both freedom and otherness. Cross-cultural workers need to come into the partnership relationship valuing the other as brothers or sisters in Christ, laying aside their own cultural rights and accept others with their personal and cultural differences. In this sense the incarnation of Christ becomes an example for cross-cultural workers who move into the partner culture. In order to do this cross-cultural workers need to take on an attitude of kenosis.

### **2.2.3 Kenosis within the Trinity**

Setting aside one’s own cultural and personal background when dealing with people from other backgrounds is one of the hardest things for cross-cultural workers to do<sup>69</sup>, but unwillingness to sacrifice some of their “privileges” makes it hard to work and live in a close relationship and fellowship with the people one is “serving.” The attitude of cross-cultural workers and how they encounter their partners is of uttermost importance. A study of the relationship of the Trinity and especially the kenosis aspect could help cross-cultural workers to recognize what attitude they should adopt when serving in a cross-cultural context.

The apostle Paul urged the Philippians to adopt a serving and other-centered life style and he used the example of the second person of the Trinity: Jesus Christ.

“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:1-8).

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<sup>68</sup> In this context Reimer talks about the incarnational character of the church which needs to identify itself with the society in which it lives (Reimer 2009:155).

<sup>69</sup> Roembke (2000:97) explains that adapting to a new culture has something to do with evaluating one’s own values with those values from the host culture. This can create an inner conflict because a person’s values are closely attached to his personal identity.

The concept of kenosis is mentioned in verse 7 (here: “made himself nothing”)<sup>70</sup> and comes from the Greek word κενός (*kenos*) which means “empty or without content” or from the Greek verb κενώω (*kenoō*) which means “to make empty, to abase oneself, to render void or to be in vain.” The precise connotation of ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν (*heauton ekenosen*) which is used in verse 7 means literally that Christ “emptied himself”.

It is not the intent here to enter into the general dogmatic discussion about kenosis<sup>71</sup>, but what is of interest is the encouragement of the apostle Paul to the Philippians to adopt an attitude of kenosis. Paul uses the example of Jesus Christ who was in the form or nature (μορφή, *morphē*) of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing (or emptied himself) and took on himself the form or nature of a human being or even more the nature of a servant. Jesus Christ left the form of God in order to take up the form of a servant.

Kenosis does not mean that Christ gave up all his divine attributes in order to become human. Even after his incarnation Jesus was completely God and at the same time he was also entirely human. The Word which became flesh was still God and his glory could still be adored (Jn 1:14), but he also was completely human. Reimer (2003:2) talks about a “Hypostatic Union” in which Christ can only be understood with his two natures. The two natures are neither totally interwoven with each other, nor can they be separated from each other. Letham (2004:403) argues that Christ’s self-emptying was not a subtraction of his deity, but it was an addition of the human nature.

The self-emptying of the Son of God refers rather to the privileges that Jesus had to leave when he became human and to the humiliation that he freely accepted when he became a servant of others. The eternal Son of God, living in the presence of the Trinity, gave up the presence in the Trinity and became human. Could it be done otherwise? Bruce (1901:21) maintains that “the human nature was simply the condition under which it was possible to bear the form of a servant, even as the divine nature is the presupposition of existence in the form of God.”

“Christ was *made* man, but he *took* servile form. His end in becoming man was that he might be able to wear that form of existence which is at greatest possible distance from, and presents the greatest possible distance to, the form of God. He desired to live a human life, of which servitude should be the characteristic feature – servitude in every conceivable sense, and in the extreme degree” (:21).

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<sup>70</sup> The translation in the ASV is „he emptied himself“ and the King James Version reads “he made himself of no reputation.”

<sup>71</sup> For this discussion see Best (1985:87-98); Bruce (1901); Grudem (1994:549); Polkinghorne (2001) Power (2005:38); Reimer (2003:198).

Bruce sees the incarnation of the Son of God only as the first act of the story and presents the humiliation of Christ as the second act. Christ being found in appearance as a human being, humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross (Philippians 2:8). To humble comes from the Latin word *humilis* which means low. The Greek verb that is used here is *ταπεινῶω* (*tapeinoō*) and means to bring low or to abase, or figuratively to humiliate. The German Lutheran translation uses the term “er erniedrigte sich selbst” (he made himself lower) which means literally that he himself came down from a higher position to a lower position. Jesus in the form of God did not hold on to being equal with God, but he lowered himself and came down to the level of a human being.

Christ came into this world not as an inapproachable God, not as a great ruler or king, but he came in a human form and as a servant to humankind. God so loved the world that he sent his Son Jesus who died on the cross, so that the believer can have eternal life (Jn 3:16). The incarnation and the freely giving of the Son had its motivation in the love of God. God loved all people and therefore he voluntarily gave his life to them. This is a free act of self-limitation, self-humiliation, and self-giving which comes out of God’s own character.

Bruce further explains:

“Kenosis did not mean self-extinction or metamorphosis of a Divine Being into mere man. He who emptied himself was the same with him who humbled himself; the *kenosis* and the *tapeinosis* were two acts of the same mind dwelling in the same subject. The humiliation (*tapeinosis*) being a perseverance in the mind which led to the *kenosis*, implies not only identity of the subject, but continuity of self-consciousness in that subject. The man Jesus Christ knew that, being in the form of God, He had to become man, was acquainted with the mind that animated Him before His incarnation, and made it His business in the incarnate state to carry out that mind” (:22).

Even though many theologians see *kenosis* only as an Christological act which has merely to do with the incarnation and redemption<sup>72</sup>, the other persons of the Trinity, even before the incarnation, cannot be excluded in the *kenosis* discussion. If there is a unity within the three persons of the Godhead, the Trinity is greatly affected in the incarnation and

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<sup>72</sup> Bruce (1901) titled his work “The Humiliation of Christ” and explained that the act of *kenosis* in Philippians 2 as a Christological act without giving much space to the Father and the Holy Spirit (:15:24). Grudem (1994:549) does not agree with the “*kenosis theory*” in which theologians from Germany (1860-1880) and England (1890-1910) held that Christ was stripped of his divine attributes, when he became man. This discussion turns primarily around the incarnation of Christ without considering the Trinity. Culver (2005:511) explains that the term *kenosis* was understood in Christian theology, from the first century on, as a synonym with the incarnation of Christ itself and that it was concerned with an emphasis on Christ’s humiliation and condescension. However, Culver holds against the *kenosis theory* that *kenosis* “must refer to the preexistent Logos”, but he does not connect it with the other persons of the Trinity.

death of the second person of the Trinity. Also, if Christ existed before his incarnation as one person of the eternal Trinity, the whole Trinity is involved in all of the Trinitarian acts.

Moltmann (1981:83) describes the Trinitarian self-giving of God as the Father, who lets the Son sacrifice himself through the Spirit which means in Trinitarian terms that “the Father is crucifying love, the Son is crucified love and the Holy Spirit is the unvanquishable power of the cross.”

“The giving up of the Son reveals a pain in God which can only be understood in Trinitarian terms or not at all. The form of the Trinity which is revealed in the giving up of the Son appears as follows:

The Father gives up his own Son to death in its most absolute sense for us.

The Son gives himself up, for us.

The common sacrifice of the Father and the Son comes about through the Holy Spirit who joins and unites the Son in his forsakenness with the Father” (83).

Moltmann (2001:140) does not only see redemption as an act of Christ’s incarnation towards humans, but he states that a kenotic attitude is a vital part of the whole Trinity:

“For it is not just that he “empties” himself “to” the human being, and in the human being to the being of a servant, and in human mortality to the cruel death on the cross; in these things he “empties” himself in obedience to the will of his divine Father in heaven. So kenosis is not a self-limitation and not a self-renunciation on God’s part; it is self-realization of the self-surrender of the Son to the Father in the Trinitarian life of God. By virtue of limitless love, the inner life of the Trinity takes its impress from the reciprocal kenosis of the divine persons in relation to one another. The Son by virtue of his self-surrender exists wholly in the Father, the Father wholly in the Son, the Spirit wholly in the Father and the Son. Kenotic self-surrender is God’s Trinitarian nature, and is therefore the mark of all his works “outwards” (the creation, reconciliation, and redemption of all things)” (140-141).

If the kenotic attitude is part of God’s Trinitarian character, it would also be present in his creation which is made in his image. Even if it is often not present in human beings who deny believing in the living God (although kenotic examples can be seen all over in God’s creation), it should be present at least in those human beings who confess to have a relationship with the living God. The apostle Paul encourages the Philippians to adopt the attitude of Jesus Christ and to live an other-centered life. Not to pursue one’s own interests and live out selfish ambitions, but to humbly consider the other higher than oneself. Paul calls the Philippians to a life of self-emptying, self-sacrifice and self-giving and encourages them to become servants for others.

Cathy Ross (2010) in her theology of partnership addresses two other aspects in relation with the self-giving kenosis. The first one comes out of the suffering of Christ which is connected to the suffering in the Body of Christ. The second one is the issue of power in mutual relationships. First, Christ is often presented as the suffering servant, especially in the Old Testament (Is 53)<sup>73</sup>. He is the one who voluntarily suffered and gave his life for others. Ross reminds the reader that the Christian lives in relationship with a crucified God (:147) and the apostle Paul summarizes that believers are part of this Body of Christ and that if one member suffers all the other members suffer with it (1Cor 12:26). Paul himself gives testimony that he has suffered for the Ephesians (Eph 3:13) and the Colossians (Col 1:24) and he encourages Timothy to suffer with him as a good soldier of Christ (2Tim 2:3). Ross challenges Christians who are involved in partnerships to have a “crucified mind” rather than a “crusading mind”.

“What attitudes do we exhibit when we enter into partnership? Do we adopt a crusading mind and teacher mentality, or are we disciples and partners with crucified minds, giving up our rights, manifesting the courage to be weak – living the paradox of a crucified, almighty God? Victim-missionaries are not powerful and successful, nor are victim-partners. In this asymmetrical and uneven world, victim-partners will not create what has been described as “a relationship of controlling benefactors to irritated recipients of charity,” in which the recipients end up experiencing a complex mix of gratitude and resentment at the same time” (:147).

Ross asks the right question: Are missionaries or partners willing and ready to share the sufferings of one another. Just to say that “I am a servant for others” and actually suffering with others and being treated as a servant are two different things.

The second aspect that is closely related to the servant mentality is the aspect of power and control. Jesus in his Godhead is omnipotent. The Son of God had all the power over all things which was given to him from his Father (Jn 13:3), and he also testified that Pilate did not have any power over him unless it was given to him from above (Jn 19:11). Jesus could have used his power to escape the cross, but he chose differently. He limited himself not to use the power that he could have used for the sake of others and he did this out of love for others. Moltmann (1981:31) writes that

“the sole omnipotence which God possesses is the almighty power of suffering love. It is this that he reveals in Christ. What was Christ’s essential power? It was love, which was perfected through voluntarily suffering; it was love, which died in meekness and humility on the cross and so redeemed the world. This is the essence of divine sovereignty.”

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<sup>73</sup> See Ware (2005:224).

Christ did not use his power for himself, but out of love he used it for the other. Freely he laid aside his right to use his power for himself. The suffering servant limited himself for the people he wanted to serve and to save. Ross (2010:148) argues that in the practice of human partnership there is giving and receiving, but that “it is difficult to have a truly mutual relationship when the two parties possess unequal power.” This is normally the case today, where resources such as money, education, information, access to technology, land and ownership are unequally distributed in the world. So she proposes to use the model of the incarnation as an example to let go pride and power and follow Christ’s example.

“We seek to empty ourselves of our pride and ethnocentrism, our feelings of cultural, religious, and technological superiority, which blind and grip us all. We seek to empty ourselves of the need to initiate, control, dominate, impose, manipulate, and run ahead in partner relationships. We seek to empty ourselves of autonomy and independence” (:148).

Such a life style demands that the partners be aware of their power (and maybe the misuse of the power) and are willing to freely lay this power aside. This requires a great measure of vulnerability on both parts. Vulnerability is the susceptibility to physical or emotional injury or attack. The question is, if the Christian partners are willing to accept living under such conditions with the others? Are they ready to expose themselves to the pain of their partners, to suffer with the suffering partners, and to live with them and participate in their lives?

Reimer (2003:197) looks at orthodox theology and describes mission as a kenotic action. He gives the examples of kenotic attitudes<sup>74</sup> by describing orthodox theologians, the orthodox Eucharist and Liturgy and by the examples of poor orthodox missionaries who lived without money and power among the people to whom they wanted to bring the gospel. He argues that a kenotic motivated mission can show that it really wants to put an end to a colonialist and imperialistic affectation and that it finally could lose its negative taste in the world (:209).

If the practice of a kenotic ministry is the basis for the Church or individual members of the Body of Christ it must be considered even more necessary for Christian leaders, missionaries or cross-cultural workers. But the idea of kenosis is often ignored in the protestant mission and partnership discussion. Ed Mathews (1991:2) who presents “Christ and Kenosis” as “A Model for Mission” regrets the neglect of kenosis in mission:

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<sup>74</sup> German: „kenotische Gesinnung“.

“After training missionaries for more than two decades, it has become quite obvious that the kenosis of Christ – and the implications of that self-emptying – have been generally ignored in missions. This left both the discipline of missiology and the aspiring missionary proportionately impoverished for the task of world evangelism” (:3).

Mathews proposes two consequences of a proper use of kenosis in the mission enterprise. First, that the missionary could accurately communicate an understanding of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, with his divine self-emptying, which is an inevitable part of any Christology.<sup>75</sup> Secondly,

“... the idea of kenosis is important to the way a missionary conducts his ministry. It has the potential for transforming the aims, the structures, and the means for doing mission work. Such a transformation could occur if mission was less a mirror of a Western culture and more a reflection of Christ’s self-emptying, namely, if mission was more “subordinate, inconspicuous, and available” (:3).

The partners, missionaries or cross-cultural workers would be more conscious of the needs of “the other”. They rather need to practice a serving instead of a controlling ministry. This would be other-centered instead of self-centered service which flows out of the theology of kenosis. Mathews is right when he asks for a model of mission which is based on kenosis. The practice of mission and partnership today needs to be done in the spirit of God’s powerful love and self-giving to his creation.

#### **2.2.4 Universality of the Trinity**

God is a “universal” God. He created the whole universe and everything that lives for his own glory.<sup>76</sup> He created time and space and he is very concerned about his creation.

The adjective universal<sup>77</sup> derives from the Latin word “universalis” which signifies “of or belonging to all” and from the word “universus” meaning “all together, whole, entire.” It also implies to be “present or occurring everywhere in all things.” But it can also mean vast, unlimited, and infinite. The opposite of universal which includes “all” would be particular or individual.

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<sup>75</sup> Here it needs to be added that kenosis is not just an inevitable part of Christology, but of Trinitarian theology in general.

<sup>76</sup> Gen 1:1; 2:4; Ps 148:5; Isa 43:7.

<sup>77</sup> Available at: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/universal> (accessed on 22/02/2013).

Also the word “catholic”<sup>78</sup> originates from the Latin word “catholicus” or from the Greek term “katholikos” (kata holou = according to the whole) and means as well “universal in extent” or “involving all” and could be understood as pertaining to the whole Christian body or Church, but is today mainly understood in the context of the Roman Catholic Church. Miggelbrink (2003:115) explains that the term “catholic” was not seen in the early Church as differentiation of attributes between different currents within the Church such as it is today in “Evangelical or Catholic Church”, but rather that catholic meant “general, global, all-embracing”, and that catholicity belonged to the inner being of the early Church.

What does the statement “God is universal” mean and how can the universality of God be verified? First of all, the inner organization of the Trinity should be mentioned. There is a distinction of the two theological terms of “immanent Trinity” in which God is self-sufficient apart from the world and “economic Trinity” which means that God is present in his creation.<sup>79</sup> Grenz (1994:81) states that both characteristics of God are important and need to be kept in a good balance, since

“God is that reality who is present and active in the world process. Yet he is not simply to be equated with it, for he is at the same time self-sufficient and “beyond” the universe. In conceiving of God, therefore, we dare neither place him so far beyond the world that he cannot enter into relationship with his creatures nor collapse him so thoroughly into the world process that he cannot stand over his creation he made”.

God in his inner being is greater than creation which he made for his glory and in which he planned to have a relationship with created human beings, but on the other hand he also needs to stay involved with his creation, if he wants to communicate with the human beings whom he has formed. First, it should be looked at the transcendent aspect of God’s universality and then at the universal scope of God’s creation.

Even before the creation of the universe God existed eternally as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each of the three persons of the Trinity is part of the other person and exists in perfect relationship and communion. Volf (1998:208) uses the term of “perichoretic personhood” and holds that from the reciprocal interiority of the Trinitarian persons their “catholicity” emerges.

“Each divine person *is* in the other persons, though *is* such in its own way, which is why rather than ceasing to be a unique person, in its very uniqueness it is a completely *catholic* divine person. Of course, the catholicity of the divine persons is also open for creation and its history, and consists not only in this

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<sup>78</sup> Available at: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/catholic> (accessed on 22/02/2013).

<sup>79</sup> See also Moltmann 1981:158.

mutual interiority, but also in all creation “being in God.” Only thus can God – and each of the divine persons – “be all in all” (1Cor 15:28)” (:209).

The perichoresis of the divine persons is relevant for the Church because it is built on the catholicity of the divine persons. As individual believers are built into the universal Body of Christ they can have the same intimate communion with each other and should have the same characteristics that exist in the Trinity and can therefore enrich each other mutually.

Moltmann (1981:160) explains that the relationship of the triune God to himself and the relationship of the triune God to his world is not understood as a one-way relationship, but as a mutual one and as the reason that God created all people in order to express his love outside of the Trinity to his creation. For that reason it can be said that God is the basis for the existence of all human beings. The eternal God created time and space, heaven and earth, and man and woman in his own image (Gen 1:1-27)<sup>80</sup>. Since God is the creator, he also stands above his creation. He is the Lord and the Most High over all the earth (Ps 83:18; 97:9). Since the creation of the heaven and earth God is very much concerned about his relationship with humans and with the whole world. The Bible gives testimony of the universal scope of God’s concern with the whole creation. The psalmist calls all the people to fear God (Ps 33:8; 67:7), calls the ends of the earth and all the families of nations to turn towards him (Ps 22:27), and gives evidence about God’s judgments in all the earth. The New Testament gives evidence of God’s concern for the whole world. Kärkkäinen (2007:41) analyzes the fatherhood of God in the New Testament and comes to the conclusion that it “relates primarily to Jesus the Son and by derivation to the relationship between the Father and Jesus’ own people,” but he also admits that “the concept also widens to encompass the rest of humanity.” This is seen in Jesus’ teaching about God’s fatherly love to all people, but talking about the Kingdom of God, it is particularly true that God’s fatherly love is reserved for those who have submitted their lives to the rule of God, the king and the Father. Kärkkäinen also uses the verses in Acts 10:34-35 where the apostle Peter stated, that he now realizes “how true it is that God does not show favoritism, but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.” Kärkkäinen comments:

“What can safely be said is that biblical material concerning the early church’s view of other religions and gods is, at best, scarce. The early church adopted Jewish monotheism and held to the universality of God’s person and nature” (:48).

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<sup>80</sup> See also Ps 121:2 and 1Cor 10:26.

In the Gospels Jesus gave the order to his disciples to go into the whole world and make disciples of all nations (Mark 16:15; Mt 28:19). With the apostle Peter (Acts 10) and also later with the apostle Paul<sup>81</sup> a ministry started among the Gentiles which opened the door for the mission among the non-Jewish nations.

Paul and Barnabas bear witness that God has chosen them to be a light for the Gentiles and that they should bring salvation to the ends of the earth (Acts 13:47). God's salvation is meant for the whole world (Isa 45:22; 49:6) because God so loved the world, that he sent his Son Jesus into the world to save all people (Jn 3:16).<sup>82</sup> Jesus is the light of the world (Jn 1:4; 8:12) and he is the one who carries the sins of the whole world (Jn 1:29). Köstenberger & Swain (2008:156-157) give evidence that the mission theology in the Gospel of John is Trinitarian and universal in scope and that the universal witness descends from the Father to the Son and then to the Christian believer (Jn 20:21). Thus the eschatological acts of God's salvation are universal in scope and are open for all nations and every person to receive. God wants to have a relationship with people from every nation, tribe, people and language<sup>83</sup> and therefore mission needs to be universal, just as God is universal.

If God's mission is universal, people from all nations, tribes, people and languages also have the possibility to accept the gospel message, to believe and to become children of God. The Bible gives evidence that these believers also become part of the universal Body of Christ or the universal Church. The believer becomes part of this universal body through the salvic and redemptive work of Jesus Christ who is the head of this body (Col 1:18-22). Because God is universal and is involved with all human beings, the Church must also be universal. The beginning of the universal Church springs out of God's concern for the individual believer. God wants to bring all believers together into this one spiritual body (1Cor 12:13; Eph 3:6). If people from all nations, tribes and languages can become a part of this catholic body, then the Church must be a universal Church.

What does the question of the universal God and the universal Church have to do with the discussion on mission partnership? Mission partnership today is presently discussed and practiced in a global context and also in the framework of the Christian Church. What is true and important for the Church is also valid for Christian mission

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<sup>81</sup> Acts 9:15; Rom 11:13.

<sup>82</sup> See also: Stott, John 1975. „The Universality of Christ: He is the Savior of the World”, in Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 3 (LOP3).

<sup>83</sup> Rev 7:9.

partnerships. Therefore, practices that are anticipated by God for the relationship within the Christian Church should also be the guideline for global mission partnerships. Volf (1996:51) even proposes that Christians who deal with another culture need to distance themselves from their own culture and that they should become catholic personalities. The same could be said for the local church which definitely has a connection with the universal Church, thus with other churches in the world.

“A catholic personality requires a *catholic community*. As the Gospel has been preached to many nations, the church has taken root in many cultures, changing them as well as being profoundly shaped by them. Yet the many churches in diverse cultures are one, just as the triune God is one. No church in a given culture may isolate itself from the other churches in other cultures declaring itself sufficient to itself and to its own culture. Every church must be open to all other churches. We often think of a local church as a part of the universal church. We would do well to invert the claim. Every local church is a catholic community because, in a profound sense, all other churches are part of that church, all of them shape its identity. As all churches together form a world-wide ecumenical community, so each church in a given culture is a catholic community. Each church must therefore say, “I am not only I; all other churches, rooted in diverse cultures, belong to me too.” Each needs all to be properly itself. Both catholic personality and the catholic community in which it is embedded suggest *catholic cultural identity*” (:51).

Christian mission partnership is done in a global context and needs to look at the partners as brothers and sisters in Christ who in the brotherly relationship are part of the same Body of Christ. Christian spiritual relationships are universal as the Godly Trinity is universal. Therefore mission partnership should not only be seen in the context of a project, which both partners want to see established. Christian partnership is much more than this. It is also concerned with a universal spiritual dimension which is to be lived out in the relationship of the Christian partners. Therefore a thorough study of the universal Body of Christ and the spiritual relationship of believers is important for Christian mission partnerships.

### **2.2.5 Conclusion**

The preceding study of the Trinity showed the relationship and communion of the three persons of the Trinity and the effects that such a relationship should have for God’s creation. The relationship within the Trinity is a godly and spiritual relationship that leads to a perfect communion among the three persons of the Godhead. It is a relational spiritual

communion.<sup>84</sup> Because God's people are created in the image of God, the relationships among Christians can also be considered to be spiritual relationships. These spiritual relationships should be relationships of love, freedom and unity. Christians live with each other in a "relational spirituality" which springs out of the relationship with the Trinity. The Trinitarian unity is a unity in diversity and the incarnation and the attitude of kenosis in the life of Christ are a perfect example of how spiritual relationships should be lived out among Christians in the universal Church. Christian partner relationships in today's global world cannot bypass the spiritual examples that exist in the Trinitarian God. Christian partner relationships need therefore not only to be working relationships, but also spiritual relationships, because the partners are spiritually related. This relational Spirituality needs to be taken into account in Christian cross-cultural interaction. These relationships need to realize that they are part of a larger entity of God's global plan: They are part of the universal Body of Christ, which is God's own Church.

## 2.3 The Church in the New Testament

Christian partnership in World Mission involves Christian believers, who confess faith in Jesus Christ. People, who have heard the message of Jesus Christ and who repent and believe in him, are baptized into the larger body of followers of Jesus Christ, which is called the Church.<sup>85</sup> Grudem (1994:853) defines the Church as the community of all true believers for all times. Pannenberg (2004:98) sees the Church as a "messianic community" which

"is by nature a fellowship of individuals who are regenerated by faith and baptism. Fellowship with Christ in faith in the gospel binds believers together into the fellowship of the church, in which the future fellowship of the kingdom of God finds its representation already in an anticipatory sign."

If the Church is a fellowship of individuals who are bound together in Jesus Christ and who are parts of his Church, then Christians who deal with each other in Christian mission partnerships cannot neglect the Christian Church as the basis for their relationship with each other. Even if Christian partners are working with each other in Christian organizations which do not necessarily have a connection with a local church, as Christians, who are part of Christ's fellowship, they are also part of the universal Church of Christ.

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<sup>84</sup> See Jn 4:24: "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

<sup>85</sup> Acts 2:37-41; 1Cor 12:13.

Therefore, Christian partnerships can only take place within the framework of the Church which is founded in the image of the Trinity.<sup>86</sup>

What in particular is the Church, how is it structured and how does the Church function? The following inquiries need to be part of a biblical ecclesiology. In order to know what the Church is, who the members are, and what the relationship of the members is, one needs to explore the biblical ecclesiology which is grounded in the New Testament.<sup>87</sup> The difference between the universal and the local church will be explored. Through the various images of the Church the relationship of the believer with God himself and with other fellow believers will be explained. Out of these images the image of the Body of Christ will be emphasized as an example because it is one of the “Master Images” in the New Testament for the Church (Reimer 2009:36) and is one of the central images in ecclesiology. Although this study is only one small part of a New Testament ecclesiology,<sup>88</sup> it still can help to discern how believers in the New Testament lived relationally with each other and what this would mean for the discussion of community among believers today.

### 2.3.1 The Universal and the Local Church or the Glocal Church

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said: “I will build my Church.” It is the Lord Jesus himself who will build what he calls *his Church*. It is the Church of Jesus Christ. Moltmann (1977:6) sees Christ as the “subject” of the Church and Christology is the dominant theme of ecclesiology. When Jesus talked about building his Church, what did he actually mean? A temple, where people can meet, or a local assembly of his followers, or else the universal Church to which all believers of all times belong?

The Greek word *ekklesia* (ἐκκλησία)<sup>89</sup> that is used in Matthew 16:18 means literally “called out” and was generally used for a popular or secular meeting or an assembly. In the New Testament it became an equivalent for people who gathered for religious meetings and

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<sup>86</sup> For a Trinitarian basis of the Christian church see Moltmann (1977: 50-65); Volf (2006); Kärkkäinen (2002: 17; 128; 134).

<sup>87</sup> See Reimer’s comments about what happens when the foundation of a biblical ecclesiology is missing. The explanation of what Church is and what Church does cannot be found in historical models and pictures of Christendom, but only in the writings of the New Testament (Reimer 2009:30).

<sup>88</sup> Clowney (1968:31) summarizes: “The Bible does not begin with man but with God. According to the Bible, the church is the people of God, the kingdom and Body of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. It has been said with some reason that each of these approaches is favored in one ecclesiastical heritage. The Reformed family of churches is said to conceive of the church as the people of God, the sacramental churches to think of it as the Body of Christ, and the pentecostal churches to regard it as the fellowship of the Spirit. No doubt we are all in danger of ignoring the rich balance of the biblical revelation, and, in particular, of focusing on one figure exclusively. There is no one figure, not even that of the human body which summarizes the whole of ecclesiology.”

<sup>89</sup> For a more detailed study on the word *ekklesia* in the New Testament see Culver (2005:816-819).

especially for the entirety of Christians who believed in the salvation brought by Jesus Christ. When Jesus talked about building his Church, he did not talk in the first place about a local assembly that he wanted to build, but here he talked about the universal, invisible Church of all times.

Grenz (1994:467) prefers the distinction between the mystical, universal and the local church.

“The broadest manifestation is the “mystical church” the one body composed of all believers of all ages (Heb 12:22-23), the one cosmic fellowship that transcends time. The “universal church” is composed of all believers on earth at a given time, the one worldwide fellowship that transcends special boundaries. ... As the visible fellowship of believers gathered in a specific location, the local church is the most concrete expression of the covenanting people. At the same time, the gathered congregation derives its significance from its participation in, and as the representation of, the common whole.”

This study is concerned with the local church that meets in a specific place for a worship service and that professes faith in Jesus Christ and the universal Church, to which all believers in all places belong.<sup>90</sup> Grudem (1994:857) reasons that the word “church” applies to a group of believers at any level, ranging from a small group meeting to all true believers in the universal Church. There are churches that meet in houses (Rom 16:5; 1Cor 16:19), others are referred to as a church in a city (Acts 8:1; 1Cor 1:2; 2Cor 1:1; 1Thess 1:1) or in an entire region (Acts 9:31).

Yet there is also mention in the New Testament about a larger Church which is not necessarily identified with a specific location. “*Ekklesia* also designates the universal Church. In this usage the concept of a physical assembly gives way to the spiritual unity of all believers in Christ” (Saucy 1972:16). When Jesus declared that he would build his Church (Mt 16:18), he did not only think about a local church, but also the invisible Church which is formed of all believers in Christ.<sup>91</sup> As the apostle Paul talks about despising the Church of God (1Cor 11:22)<sup>92</sup>, he does not necessarily mean the church that meets in Corinth, but he is talking about a Church in a generic sense that belongs to God himself. The same is obvious, when he writes about God appointing in the church apostles, prophets, and teachers (1Cor 12:28). They are not only appointed in a local church, but here

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<sup>90</sup> For a better understanding about the Protestant and Roman Catholic understanding of the universal church refer to Culver (2005:826-833).

<sup>91</sup> Saucy (1972:17) explains that the New Testament never uses the term invisible church and that the local church as well as the invisible church is made up of concrete people. Because in the universal church the official membership cannot be confirmed, it could also be called the invisible Church. The universal or in this case invisible Church is the universal fellowship of believers who meet visibly in local assemblies.

<sup>92</sup> See also 1Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13.

the text talks more generally about the universal Church. In Ephesians 1:22-23 Christ is called the head of the Church, which is his body<sup>93</sup>. He loved the Church and gave himself up for her (Eph 5:25). Here the Church is more than just a local assembly. It is the multitude of believers, who make up the Body of Christ. Zizioulas (1985:158) agrees that Christ is the subject of the universal Church when he states that

“The church is catholic, not because she is obedient to Christ, i.e. because she does certain things or behaves in a certain way. She is catholic first of all because she is the Body of Christ. Her catholicity depends not on herself but on him. She is catholic because she is where Christ is.”

However, there is a connection between the universal or Catholic Church and the local church as described in Volf (1998:145):

“The universal church is not a subject that is actualized and acts within the local church, nor indeed is it identical with the local church. Christ, however, who is present in the local church through his Spirit and in this way makes it into the church in a proleptic experience of the eschatological gathering of the entire people of God, connects every local church with all other churches of God, indeed with the entire communion of those who through the same Spirit are “in Christ.”

The person of Christ is the connecting constituent between the local churches and the universal Church. The person of Christ is also the reason that the believer can become a member of the local and universal Church. Through faith in Christ as the Son of God and in his salvic work on the cross, the believer becomes first part of the local community of Christians, but at the same time part of the universal fellowship of all believers. In 1Corinthians 1:2 the apostle Paul writes first to the church in Corinth which he called holy and sanctified in Jesus Christ, but at the same time he addresses his letter “together with all those people everywhere, who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Here is an example of the usage of the believers in the local church as well as believers scattered in the world bound together in communion with Jesus Christ. The important factor is that both call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and whose subject is Christ himself.

The fact that the universal Church exists is very important in the discussion of the relationship in partnerships. Christian partners may be members of a local church, where they live, but they are also connected through the universal Church of Christ. Even if the partnership is not directly dealing with local churches and is a partnership between Christian

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<sup>93</sup> See also Eph 5:23.

organizations or missions, it is obvious, that the partners, if they are Christians, are part of this larger Body of Christ.

The reality that in recent years globalization is on the rise has not bypassed the Christian Church.<sup>94</sup> The world has become smaller and smaller and many local churches now realize, that they are part of the global Church. Local churches are more aware that they are connected with the global Church. In the late 1990s the new term “glocal” started to appear.<sup>95</sup> Although the word “glocal” or “glocalization” has not found an entrance in many dictionaries the search engine Google already gives over three million entrances with these terms. “Glocal” means when individual local people or local groups start to think globally and act locally. For the local church this indicates that they have to live their spirituality within the context of the local as well as the global Church. Van Engen compares the glocal relationship with his personal computer and the internet. His PC is located in his home, but has a global connection to a worldwide network. So it is with the glocal Church:

“It is a glocally integrated part of the interaction between the local and the global. This is the level at which we need to think of the church of Jesus Christ today as glocal. Analogous to my PC’s relationship with the Internet, when I gather with other Christians in the name of Jesus, I am in that instant gathering with the family of God that includes over 1.5 billion followers of Jesus, the very large family of which Paul speaks in Ephesians 3:14-21. Like my PC, my local congregation is now hooked in spiritually, organically, temporally, and spatially to all those who everywhere always have believed in Jesus Christ. As we gather to worship our Lord Jesus Christ, we are instantly interconnected with all other Christians around the globe who are in Christ. This is the glocal Church that exists “in the power of the Spirit.” This glocal reality recognizes that the small c church is in fact an integral part of the large C Church” (Van Engen in Ott & Netland ed. (2006:163).

The new technologies such as transport, telecommunication, internet, new media and social networks make these connections possible in today’s world. People now live in the era of a glocal Church, which has an impact on the local church, as well as on the global Church.

When Christian partners from different backgrounds and nationalities work together, the invisible, spiritual membership in the universal Church becomes visible. They are connected through their faith in Jesus Christ who builds his local and global, his “glocal

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<sup>94</sup> See Jenkins (2002).

<sup>95</sup> Van Engen in his article about “The Glocal Church” points out that the term glocal is not just owned for religious purposes. The term started to appear in the late 1990s and is widely used for matters of education; organizational management; advertising and economics; communication, cinema, and computers; globalization studies; human rights and social networks; religion and mission (Van Engen in Ott & Netland ed. (2006:157-158).

Church". Because of global relationships among Christian cross-cultural workers the teaching about *spiritual relationships* is necessary for the Church and is also much needed for partnerships in missions. For this reason the study of the images that are given for the Church in the New Testament are of importance for the relationship within these global Christian partnerships.

### **2.3.2 The Church as the Body of Christ**

The New Testament gives numerous metaphors about the relationship between Christ and his Church and about the church members among themselves.<sup>96</sup> First, some other metaphors which clarify the relationship of Christ and Christian believers will be introduced before the image of the Body of Christ will be investigated in detail.

One of these metaphors is the flock and the shepherd (Mt 26:31; Lk 12:32; Jn 10:16). Jesus is represented as the shepherd (see also Psalm 23) and the group of believers as the flock. In Acts 20:28 and 1Peter 5:2+3 the leaders of the church are encouraged to watch over the flock. There is a close relationship between the sheep and the shepherd. The shepherd is willing to lay down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:11). The sheep listen to the voice of the shepherd and follow him (V.27). There is also a hidden indicator about the relationship within the flock. A flock is a group of sheep that is gathered together and that follows together, that looks for a pasture together and that can be considered a unity. The flock as a group seems to become a unity with the leader of the flock and this is maybe an indicator that Jesus closes the metaphor with the words: "I and the Father are one" (V.30). This unity is reflected in the image of the flock following together their shepherd and listening to his words of instruction.

Another image is the temple. In John 2:19-21 Jesus talked about the image of his own body as the temple which will be broken down and be built up in three days. In 1Corinthians 3:9 the apostle Paul used the architectural image of the temple for the Christians in Corinth. He affirmed that Christ is the foundation which is being built on (V.11+12) and in V.16 he declared that his listeners themselves are God's temple. In Ephesians 2:20 he again uses the same image in which Christ is the cornerstone and the Christians being joined together are becoming God's holy temple.<sup>97</sup> The apostle Peter

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<sup>96</sup> Minear (2004:28) found about eighty images that could be used for describing the church, when considering Greek terms he even talks about one hundred metaphors.

<sup>97</sup> See also 2Cor 6:16.

addressed the scattered Christians as living stones, which are chosen by God and being built into a spiritual house (1Pe 2:4-5). Here, the connection to Christ as the cornerstone, which was rejected, is also being made (V.7). Hebrews 3:4-6 as well portrays God as a builder who builds his own house and the writer gives testimony to his readers that “we are his own house” (V.6). In this metaphor a close relationship between the builder and the edifice is developed. The builder is the owner of the building (God’s temple; God’s house) and he wants to live or dwell in his building. Christ as the cornerstone is one of the most important elements of the building. Individual stones alone would not be the temple or the house. Only if every stone finds its right place and is placed together with all the other stones in the perfect place of the building, is the temple or house finished according to the master plan of the designer. Every stone is important for the structure of the house and is linked together with all the other stones to complete the building. All the stones jointly put together fill out their place and have a specific role to play. Interpreting this image for the Church it can be said that all members have a specific place and also have to fulfill their specific role. As individual people, they all together have a very close relationship with each other in the whole composition of the Church.

Another image for the Church is the family of God. In Galatians 6:10 the apostle Paul calls the Church the “family of believers” (NIV).<sup>98</sup> The image of God the Father and the believers as children is mentioned in Ephesians 3:15. The apostle bows down before God the Father “from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.” God promised to live with those who believe in him and that he would be their Father and they should be called his sons and daughters (2Cor 6:16+18). Those who are made holy by Christ are at the same time called brothers by him (Heb 2:11). This image of the family talks about a very close relationship of God and his believers as a family of God. God is very close to his children, caring for them and living with them. In the same metaphor the liaison between believers is revealed as a very tight relationship as well. To be of the same family and to be brothers and sisters demonstrates that the connection between believers is a very close bond. This intimate relationship is again reinforced by the family image of the bride of Christ. The Church is called the bride of Christ for which the Son of God gave his life to present her without folds or wrinkles (Eph 5:25-27). The apostle Paul uses the image of husband and wife who become one flesh for the relationship of Christ and the Church (V 31-32)<sup>99</sup>. In Revelation the Church is

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<sup>98</sup> The KJV uses the term „household of faith.”

<sup>99</sup> See also 2Cor 11:2.

presented as the bride ready for the wedding of the Lamb (Rev 19:7). Here again a very intimate and loving relationship of Christ with his Church is demonstrated.

There are other metaphors like the vine and the branches (Jn 15:5), the holy priesthood (1Pe 2:5), the holy nation (1Pe 2:9), the people of God (1Pe 2:10), or brotherhood of believers (1Pe 2:17) which describe the relationship between Christ and his Church. Nevertheless, the metaphor of the Church as the image of the Body of Christ is one of the “dominating metaphors” (Cole 1964:14) illustrating the relationship of Christ with the body of believers.

### **2.3.2.1 Definition and Use of the Image of the Body of Christ<sup>100</sup>**

A body is a physical structure of a human being or an animal which is one single organism, but the word can also be used for a group of people having a common purpose and opinion or doing the same things together, like a body of people singing in the same choir or joining the same association. The image of the Body of Christ in the New Testament is used both ways. Sometimes it is used for Christ’s own physical body (Col 1:22) and on other occasions the Body of Christ refers to a group of believers (Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:24).

Several of the metaphors for the Church in the New Testament like the temple, flock and the bride seem to have an equivalent in the Old Testament. But the body metaphor is not found directly in the Old Testament. Cole (1964:18) explains that Hebrew writers did not use the word directly, but had a cluster of words for this term which referred more or less to the concept of “corporate personality.” He gives the example of the Suffering Servant (Isaiah) and the Son of Man (in Daniel) which are equally capable of individual or collective use.<sup>101</sup>

The Greek term for body is *σῶμα* (*soma*) which stands for the body of humans and animals and is used widely in the New Testament. Jesus talked about his body as the temple which would be destroyed and rebuilt in three days (Jn 2:21). Even the apostle Paul uses the image of the body in different ways. He spoke about the body of the individual believer, which is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1Cor 6:19) as well as the whole community of

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<sup>100</sup> Shults (2002:183-184) believes that the metaphor of the Body of Christ has not played a major role among Evangelicals in the past. He suggests three salient factors that have contributed to the fact that Evangelicals have neglected this metaphor in the past and explains it in pairs of concepts: 1) Individual and community – evangelicals have focused more on the salvation of individuals than on the social aspects of redemption. 2) Local and catholic – which he explains with the congregational forms of church government and autonomy of each local fellowship of believers. 3) Soul and body – the Puritan influence may have led to a denigration of the body and often presupposes a hard dualism between the soul (or spirit) and the body. Shults recognizes that in recent years more evangelical theologians try to understand the image of the Body of Christ more as an ecclesiological relationship.

<sup>101</sup> See also Banks (1988:69).

believers which is God's temple (1Cor 3:16-17). Grudem (1994:858-859) notes another difference in the use of the body image:

“Another familiar metaphor views the church as *the Body of Christ* (1Cor 12:12-27). We should recognize that Paul in fact uses two different metaphors of the human body when he speaks of the church. In 1 Corinthians 12 *the whole body* is taken as a metaphor for the church, because Paul speaks of the “ear” and the “eye” and the “sense of smell” (1 Cor 12:16-17). In this metaphor, Christ is not viewed as the head joined to the body, because the individual members are themselves the individual parts of the head. Christ is in this metaphor the Lord who is “outside” of that body that represents the church and is the one whom the church serves and worships.

But in Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15-16, and in Colossians 2:19, Paul uses a different body metaphor to refer to the church. In these passages Paul says that Christ is the head and the church is like *the rest of the body, as distinguished from the head*: “We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love” (Eph 4:15-16). We should not confuse these two metaphors in 1 Corinthians and Ephesians 4 and keep them distinct.”

Although there are different deployments of the body image, this study will concentrate on the relationship between Christ, who is the head of the body, with his members and at the different parts of the body among each other as members of the whole body. For the relationship as Christians in partnership it is important to understand how the individual Christian is part of the whole and what this means for oneself and “the other.” When they are part of the body, how do they live and act together?

### **2.3.2.2 One Body – Different Members**

The center of the body image lies in the person of Jesus Christ himself. He said that he will build his Church which is the Body of Christ. When he was together with his disciples at the last supper, he took some bread, broke it and gave it to his disciples and said: “Take and eat, this is my body given for you” (Mt 26:26; Lk 22:19). Then he gave them the cup and offered his disciples to drink because the wine represents the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (V. 27-28). The apostle Paul connects the bread and the wine which represents Christ's body, with the body of the Church.

“Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the Body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf” (1Cor 10:16-17).

Through believing and accepting Christ as Savior and through the participation in the Eucharist, the believer becomes part of the Body of Christ. Pannenberg (2004:102) sees the presence of Christ through his word and sacrament in the believers as the reason for being united in the fellowship of his body. He considers the image of the Body of Christ as more than just a metaphor:<sup>102</sup>

“Calling the church the Body of Christ is no mere metaphor nor is it just one of the biblical ways of depicting the nature of the church. Instead, the realism of the inseparable union of believers with Christ that finds expression in the idea of the church as the Body of Christ is basic to an understanding of the church as a fellowship of believers and hence also the people of God. The church is a fellowship of believers only on the basis of the participation of each individual in the one Lord” (:102).

Because believers are united first with Christ, who died for them and saved them, they also can be united with the other members of the body who have experienced the same entrance into the fellowship of the Lord. This reflects the oneness that has been addressed in the study of the Trinity. As the Father and the Son are one (Jn 10:30), Jesus and those who believe in him are also one (Jn 17:11+23). Christ as the head of the body (Eph 1:21-23) is organically connected to his body. There is an inseparable union between the head and the body. The body cannot live without the head and naturally there is a mutual exchange between the head and the body (Col 2:19).

There are as well the individual members who form the whole body of the Lord. It does not matter where they live, what nationality they have, and what language they speak, if they believe in Christ, they are part of this universal relationship. Through Christ they are connected within that spiritual corpus; they are members of the same body. The apostle Paul writes to the Romans: “Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (Rom 12:4-5). He uses the image of the human body and employs it to describe the fellowship of the believers. Within the body there are many different members who each have their respective functions. Together they form one single body and it needs to be noted that Paul points out that *they belong to each other*. This verse talks about the unity and communion within the body, the different functions of the members and the mutual belongingness of each other.

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<sup>102</sup> See also Volf's (1998:142) discussion of the metaphor of the Body of Christ. He holds that the Body of Christ must be understood in a non-physical manner and must therefore be viewed as a metaphor. The image of the Body of Christ “is expressing certain soteriological and strictly ecclesiological relations that shape the very being of Christians; it stands for an inward and personal communion in the Holy Spirit between Christ and Christians (see 1Cor 6:17) or between Christ and the church (see Rom 12:4-8), and thereby also between Christians and themselves (see Rom 12:4-8; 1Cor 12:14-26).”

Because the head of the body and the members of the body are so closely connected with each other they are all united. There can be no division within the same body. “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ” (1Cor 12:12).<sup>103</sup> The risen Lord, who is the head, is the reason for the unity of the body. Through him the unity among the members of the body is made possible. Through Jesus Christ there is no difference being “neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). National, cultural, and social boundaries are taken away if a believer is brought into the living relationship with the head of the body.

“From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (4:16). The relationship between the head and all the members through which the whole body is built in love, talks about a deep fellowship or communion that the members have with the head and among each other. This is significant because it was shown before that God created a person as a social being who needs “the other.” The Body of Christ is therefore a reflection of the communion that exists within the Trinity. Tillard confirms this point of importance that the individual member discovers his individual being only in communion with others.

“... the first letter to the Corinthians (1Cor 12:21-27) uses the theme of the body to underline the strict union and especially solidarity of the members (1Cor 12:26). Paul indicates in these texts that each person discovers his or her own singularity in communion with the whole membership (1Cor 12:13) and that this really comes from the Spirit” (Tillard 1992:23).

Without the other members of the body, one single member cut off from the body cannot exist by himself. He needs the others to live and to be sustained within the whole body. This image is excellent for explaining the need of community among Christian believers, a community first with the head of the body, Christ, but then also with the other members of the same body.

Even as there is this unity that intimately connects all the believers, looking at the many members of the same body also suggests that there is an apparent diversity in their function. All the members of the body are very important for the body to live, grow, and function well. In his address to the Corinthians about the spiritual gifts, the apostle Paul

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<sup>103</sup> See Murre van den Berg's (2002) study on 1 Corinthians 12 where she draws a connection from the Body of Christ to the Church and then to partner relationships in the mission context.

shows that all members of the body are a unity and even though they have different functions, all of them are of importance and have equal value:

“For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the Body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (1Cor 12:13-27).

This passage shows first, that the whole body is a unit despite the diverse functions of the different members. Secondly, it is God who wants the members of the body to be what they are and he has arranged the body as he wants. Thirdly, it shows that all members are of equal importance and are necessary for the well-being of the body. And lastly, that there should be an “equal concern” for each other within the body. This final point is expressed even more strongly in Romans 12:5 where it says that the members of the body belong to each other.

Since they belong to each other and because they are intimately and organically connected with each other, they will automatically care for the other members. This point is vital for mission partnerships, in which the partners should not only “do the job” together, but they must also remember that they are members of the same body who should be concerned for each other and care for each other.

The body metaphor clearly develops the idea that there is unity among the members of the body because they all belong to Christ, and on the other hand it also reveals the diversity of the members which is necessary for the well-being and growth of the body. The apostle Paul encourages his listeners not to be jealous or envious because other persons

are different or have different gifts that they bring to the community. God values everybody because every person is needed in order to build the whole Body of Christ.

Paul urges the Ephesians to be “completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph 4:2-3). Then he goes on to say that here is one body and one Spirit ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (V. 4-6) and that God has given different offices and gifts within the Church. They are arranged “to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:12-13). This talks about the mutual use of individual gifts, but also about the interdependence of the body with Christ and among each other. Cole (1964:26) recapitulates well that

“the body metaphor is for Paul an image of the church which refers primarily to our common dependence on Christ, jointly partaking of his Spirit, interdependence on one another, unity in Christ, and responsibility for mutual service.”

The members of the body are dependent on Christ, but they are also interdependent on each other. Because they are connected so deeply with each other, they live in unity and communion with each other. They need to serve in love with their different gifts and capacities in order to build each other mutually as God's holy temple. This is an expression of the God-desired unity and diversity within the Body of Christ. God has made believers so different with their gifting and talents, nationalities, and personal background in order to glorify himself through his body, which is the Church of Christ.

### **2.3.2.3 The Body as Organism**

The words organism and organization are closely related since they both derive from the Greek word ὄργανον (*organon*) which stands for an organ, instrument or tool. While an organization is a social group which pursues collective goals, an organism is a contiguous living system such as a human body, an animal or a plant.

In the metaphor of the Body of Christ the body is presented as a living organism.<sup>104</sup> It is portrayed as a single entity, as a unity in which all the members function organically

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<sup>104</sup> It is also evident that there is an organizational structure of the different members in the body, but in this case the study wants to emphasize the organic aspect of the body.

together.<sup>105</sup> Best (1986:25) presents the universal Church as a living organism and defines it as follows:

”Organism” is a term which indicates that the thing specified is permeated throughout all its parts with one common life. The life is the same in its roots and all its structure. Hence, the universal church is one in the sense that it is an organism indwelt by one life principle. This could never be true, in the absolute sense, of the local aspect of the church.”

He further explains that the Body of Christ is a “living, vitalized organism” which is “operated from within” and not from without, as in the case of a human organization, but that it is a centralized organism whose authority comes directly from Jesus Christ. It is a “functionized organism” which is to manifest the living Christ as the living head and sustainer (:25).

The Church of Christ, locally or universally, is often seen as a structured organization, with a pastor, bishop or pope in a leading position. The same is very true for partnerships in World Mission which normally have a certain structure, purpose and plan. The organic and organizational attributes of the church or partnership should not be played off against each other, but most often the organizational relationship in partnerships is central and visible. However, the organic, living relationship also needs to be taken into account and should not be forgotten.

Addicott (2005) thinks in the right direction when he calls his *Guide to Partnership in Christian Missions* “Body Matters” and when he tries to include the brotherly relationship into partnership agreements, but he probably needs to consider the *organic aspect of living together as the Body of Christ* even further. He calls partnership “bodyworks”, but defines partnership as follows:

“It is two or more individuals or organizations, having different assets to bring to the table agreeing to share resources, plan, pray and work together to fulfill a common purpose” (2005:22).

The only part about the Christian community in his definition is praying together. Then he talks about different levels of commitment such as awareness, consultation, cooperation, collaboration and constitution partnership which is the highest level of commitment that should bind the partners together (:98) and which needs to have a written contract (102). This expresses first of all an organizational connection rather than living together in the organic Body of Christ. It should not be seen negatively that such organizational partnerships exist, because they are certainly needed, but it should always be remembered,

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<sup>105</sup> Some theologians even draw a connection between the unity within the Trinity and the analogy of an organism (see Kärkkäinen 2007:223).

that in a Christian partnership the relationship is with brothers and sisters in Christ, who are part of the same body. The Church aspect of the members in Christian partnerships should never be neglected, because as it was shown, they are part of the one body.

In his Introduction to Ecclesiology Kärkkäinen (2002:160) studied several theologians with different ecclesiological backgrounds who all agree to “the importance of the *essence* of the Church before one talks about the ministry and functions of the Church. The Church *is* first the Church before it *does* the work of the Church.” Volf (1998:179) rightly understands the difference between the two when he writes:

“A person is born into an organic social structure, or grows into it; by contrast, a person freely joins an associative social structure. The former is a “living organism” whose parts depend on the whole organism and are determined by it; the latter is a “mechanical aggregate and artifact” composed of individual parts. The former is thus enduring, the latter transient. In short, organic social structures are communities of being, while associative social structures are alliances for a specific purpose.”

“Organic” and “organizational”, are both adjectives describing the working and living together in Christian partnerships. However, the focus is often on the organizational part of the partnership rather than the brotherly relationship between the partners which is ignored or disregarded. Christians are part of the universal Church of Christ, which brings them together into a relationship of the body. The essence of these relationships is well defined in the New Testament. The study of relational behavior among brothers and sisters in Christ is indispensable when “Christian” partnerships are discussed.

### **2.3.3 The Church as a Glocal “Communio Sanctorum”**

The above study of the local and universal Church has shown that there is a spiritual interrelatedness of believers in the local and in the universal Church. Particularly the image of the Church as the Body of Christ reveals, that this spiritual relationship is a very close organic relationship between believers. It is the communion within the glocal Body of Christ. Christians do have what was called in the history of the Church the “Communion of the Saints”, or the “Communio Sanctorum.”<sup>106</sup> The expression of the “Communio Sanctorum” is widely used today in the Roman-Catholic context especially after Vatican II for the communion of the believers within the Church.<sup>107</sup> There was a shift of the Roman-Catholic Church’s

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<sup>106</sup> For a short historical overview of the Roman-Catholic understanding of the “Communio Sanctorum” see Paul Althaus (1929:5-22).

<sup>107</sup> See Reimer (2009:101-102).

understanding of the Church as hierarchical institution or ecclesiology towards a Church which stresses the communion with God and other fellow believers or even an ecclesiology of *communio* (Ratzinger 1992:442). But the concept of “communion of the Saints” is historically not only Roman-Catholic. The reformer Calvin pointed to the importance of the “*Communio Sanctorum*” and also connects it with the gifts of the Spirit and the image of the Body of Christ:

“And hence the additional expression, the “communion of saints;” for this clause, though usually omitted by ancient writers, must not be overlooked, as it admirably expresses the quality of the Church; just as if it had been said, that saints are united in the fellowship of Christ on this condition, that all the blessings which God bestows upon them are mutually communicated to each other. This, however, is not incompatible with a diversity of graces, for we know that the gifts of the Spirit are variously distributed; nor is it incompatible with civil order, by which each is permitted privately to possess his own means, it being necessary for the preservation of peace among men that distinct rights of property should exist among them. Still a community is asserted, such as Luke describes when he says, “The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul” (Acts 4:32); and Paul, when he reminds the Ephesians, “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Eph. 4:4). For if they are truly persuaded that God is the common Father of them all, and Christ their common head, they cannot but be united together in brotherly love, and mutually impart their blessings to each other.”<sup>108</sup>

The reformer Martin Luther also discussed the concept of the communion of Saints<sup>109</sup>, since it is part of the apostle’s creed. He was searching for a good German translation<sup>110</sup> and finally concluded that:

“I believe that there is upon earth a little holy group and congregation of pure saints, under one head, even Christ, called together by the Holy Ghost in one faith, one mind, and understanding, with manifold gifts, yet agreeing in love, without sects or schisms.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Calvin: Institutions IV,1,3.

<sup>109</sup> For the full analysis of Martin Luther’s understanding of the *communio sanctorum* see Althaus (1929).

<sup>110</sup> The original text of Luther’s Catechism (Part second: Of the Creed, Article III): “Thus the word Kirche (church) means really nothing else than a common assembly and is not German by idiom, but Greek (as is also the word ecclesia); for in their own language they call it kyria, as in Latin it is called curia. Therefore in genuine German, in our mother-tongue, it ought to be called a Christian congregation or assembly (eine christliche Gemeinde oder Sammlung), or, best of all and most clearly, holy Christendom (eine heilige Christenheit).

So also the word *communio*, which is added, ought not to be rendered communion (Gemeinschaft), but congregation (Gemeinde). And it is nothing else than an interpretation or explanation by which some one meant to explain what the Christian Church is. This our people, who understood neither Latin nor German, have rendered *Gemeinschaft der Heiligen* (communion of saints), although no German language speaks thus, nor understands it thus. But to speak correct German, it ought to be *eine Gemeinde der Heiligen* (a congregation of saints), that is, a congregation made up purely of saints, or, to speak yet more plainly, *eine heilige Gemeinde*, a holy congregation. I say this in order that the words *Gemeinschaft der Heiligen* (communion of saints) may be understood, because the expression has become so established by custom that it cannot well be eradicated, and it is treated almost as heresy if one should attempt to change a word.” (The Large Catechism of Martin Luther). Available at: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/luther/largecat.htm> (accessed on 28/01/2013).

<sup>111</sup> The Large Catechism of Martin Luther, Part second: Of the Creed, Article III. Available at: [www.sacred-texts.com/chr/luther/largecat.htm](http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/luther/largecat.htm) (accessed on 23/01/2013).

For Luther the *communio sanctorum* is mainly understood within the theology of the cross and means for him that the believer becomes a part of the body and also participates in the community of goods of the believers, the mutual participation of the members of the body, the becoming a unity with the other and the mutual acting of believers towards each other (Althaus 1929:40).

Bonhoeffer (1960) picks up on Luther's thoughts and explains that the New Testament distinguishes two concepts of Church. The Jewish-Christian church of Jerusalem, which is the basis for the Roman-Catholic view, with a proper hierarchy, divinely established order, church law, and the church as an institution. The second concept is that of Paul, a Gentile-Christian church which is the basis for the Lutheran view and described with the word "ecclesia", the gathering, and the congregation of people. This Church is universal and "the local church is the concrete form of the whole Church of God (1Cor 1:2)" (:98). Bonhoeffer holds that the Church exists by the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. Christ is the head of the Body which is ruled throughout by the Holy Spirit (:99) as it is that Christ as head rules in the whole Church and the Holy Spirit

"impels the individual to Christ, he brings Christ to them (Rom 8:14, Eph 2:22), he gives them community (2Cor 13:3, Phil 2:1) that is, his power extends to man's social life, and makes use of man's social bonds and social will, whereas the Spirit of Christ is directed towards the historical nature of human life together" (:99).

So the Holy Spirit is personally at work in the creation of the Church and brings about community and unity within the Church. Paul describes the Church as an organic community, a body, as a collective person in which all members belong together in unity (:102). This community is based on the work of Christ and on the unity of the Holy Spirit, it is a spiritual communion, which the Holy Spirit united and holds together. The Church is a spiritual bound community. Therefore it also could be spoken of as an ecclesiological spirituality that binds the members of this body together. If one is a member of this spiritual body, one is part of the "*communio sanctorum*." This is true as well for Christian workers in the World Mission context. Whether they work locally or globally, in Christ they are bound together through the Spirit into this global communion of the Saints. This should be regarded as the primary relationship which may be followed by the secondary working relationship.

## **2.4 Essential Characteristics for Organic-Complementary Communion**

The precedent study about the creation, the Trinity and the Church revealed numerous characteristics which are in general essential for relationships among Christians, but also in the World Mission context. Christians come together on the basis of a Christian fellowship. God has given his children certain guiding principles for their lives and for their relationship with each other. He himself is the example of these guiding principles and he wants to see them also applied in the Church and Christian relationships among his children. In the following eight essential characteristics<sup>112</sup> will be identified which should guide the relationships in the global Church but also within Christian partnerships that exist around the globe. These characteristics are mutual love, kenosis, koinonia, unity in diversity, mutuality and interdependence, other-centeredness, sharing and service.

The study of the Body of Christ revealed the relationship among Christians as an “organic-complementary community”. No matter if it is the universal Church or a Christian partnership in which Christians are involved, in each case they are part of the organic Body of Christ, whose members are closely connected with each other. The following characteristics are drawn from the theological study of creation, Trinity and the Body of Christ and they are to the same degree valid for individual Christians, the Christian Church and Christian partnerships and need to be applied and practiced by all of them.

### **2.4.1 Mutual Love**

Christian love is one of the most important characteristics that God is looking for in a Christian relationship. Love is one of God’s most defining attributes and is present in a perfect manner in the relationship of the Trinity. Therefore, most of the following characteristics flow out of this overflowing love of God. As shown, this love that exists in the Trinity is a mutual love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God is love (1Jn 4:16) and if Christians live a life that is pleasing to God, they must love God and their brothers and sisters. If the loving God indwells believers, they in turn must love other believers. Brotherly love (agape) originates from the very love of God. The apostle John argues that since God has loved his children, they also need to love one another (1Jn 4:11). Jesus even asked his

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<sup>112</sup> This study only presents certain essential characteristics that should guide Christian partnerships. This list does not want to claim to be complete and there are probably other aspects which are not identified here. But the author believes that he has at least identified some of the most important characteristics in this study.

disciples to love their enemy (Lk 6:27) and their neighbor (Mk 12:31), thus how much more should Christians love their Christian brothers and sisters. This love is a giving and a sacrificial love because in order to prove his love God gave his Son Jesus as a sacrifice for others. It is also a reciprocal, mutual love because the Bible frequently<sup>113</sup> reminds the reader to love “each other”, which Jesus has commanded his disciples to do (Jn15:17). Jesus said that “you *must* love each other” and this command to love each other will be a persuading testimony for those who do not know God (Jn 13:34). The apostle Paul explains in his letter to the Romans what this brotherly love demands: to be devoted to one another, to honor one another, to share with God’s people who are in need, to practice hospitality, to rejoice and mourn with each other, to live in harmony with one another, to associate with people of low position and to overcome evil with good (Rom 12:9-21). It means for the disciples to serve one another in love (Gal 5:13), to be completely humble and gentle and patiently bear with one another (Eph 4:2) and to be kind and compassionate to one another and to forgive each other just as Christ has forgiven them (Eph 4:32). The apostle Paul dedicates a whole Psalm to the Corinthians that talks about love<sup>114</sup> saying that without love he would be nothing (1Cor 13) concluding that love is greater than hope and faith.

It can be argued that understanding, sympathy, kindness, affection, care, or friendship could be aspects of a partnership in World Mission, but to ask for love in such a relationship could be seen as overstated.<sup>115</sup> Yet, mutual love is a commandment given by God himself. Even if there are cultural or social differences, this agape love should be present in a relationship.<sup>116</sup> This is not easy to do, because often the brother or sister from a different cultural background is seen only as a partner to work with and therefore one may think that friendship or affinity should be enough in such a relationship. But God reminds his children that they are part of the same Body of Christ and therefore should love each other.

This is a great challenge for partners in World Mission who come together from different cultural backgrounds, but without mutual love in their relationship the partners would only be a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. Of course good things could be done and great projects could be finished, but too often many of these projects have left a

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<sup>113</sup> See Jn 15:12+17; 1Th 4:9; 1Pe 4:8; Heb 13:1.

<sup>114</sup> The apostle Paul cites the following attributes of love in 1Cor 13: Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails (1Cor 13:4-8).

<sup>115</sup> See Addicott (2005:16): He would reject the image of marriage for a partnership relation, because it represents a too close, exclusive and permanent relationship that most organizations would not embrace.

<sup>116</sup> Roembke (2000:29) argues that one aspect of a trust relationship in cross-cultural ministry is unconditional love.

bitter aftertaste and broken relationships at the end of the project because the relationship also comes to an end. This is very unsatisfactory for people in some cultures, because they are looking for more in a relationship than just working on projects. If projects are carried out in the context of mutual love, the relationship of the partners will be deeper and may last longer than foreseen in the first place. It also provokes a change of attitude of the partners towards each other. It would create a better understanding of the different partners wanting to serve each other in love and to give up their own ideas and agendas. The other-centeredness would result in an ambience of mutual sharing and service. Without mutual love all this would not be possible. Christian relationship in World Mission cannot be possible without mutual love. "Whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1Jn 4:21).

### **2.4.2 Kenosis**

The second characteristic that should be found in a World Mission relationship is the attitude of kenosis. This attitude is born out of the love of God. It means that the believers are not regarding their own interests, but that they, out of love, put others first. As Jesus left the glorious presence of the Father and came to this earth "he made himself nothing" (Phil 2:7) and took up the very nature of a servant. He humbled himself and even accepted to die for human beings in order to save them. This self-giving attitude emerged directly from the loving character of God and should be adopted by the missionary working in other cultures. It is true, that missionaries have already left many things that are very dear to them. When working cross-culturally they often have left members of their family and their friends in their home country. They have left their job, known food and customs that they love, and their well-known language in order to minister in an unfamiliar language and context. Yes, they already have sacrificed a lot when they come to minister in a foreign country.

Miroslav Volf in his book "Exclusion & Embrace" (1996:70) talks about the "de-centering of the self" which means that humans need to crucify their own ego and be "re-centered" into the new life and attitude with Christ. He states that "by being *crucified with Christ* the self has received a new center – The Christ who lives in it and with whom it lives." He also describes, that for the Christian this "de-centering" of the self is an act of self-giving love which will be the doorkeeper deciding about the fate of otherness (71). Real Christian relationship can only take place, if dying to self is practiced on both sides.

Missionaries or partners have been accused of coming with a colonialist, patronizing or superior attitude or to look for their own interests or having their own agendas. If this is

true, they must humble themselves and meet the partners on the basis of a self-giving attitude. With such an attitude they make themselves vulnerable to the other partners. This vulnerability means that Christians have to confess their sins when they have failed each other (Col 3:13; Jas 5:16) and to forgive each other in order to restore the relationship (Eph 4:32). Fung (2010:2) holds that reconciliation is the foundation of all Christian partnership.

“Reconciliation is a position that Christ has achieved for us through the cross. We are reconciled to God. But we also know that in our human failures and weaknesses, reconciliation to one another sometimes is not evident; thus partnership becomes impossible. However, the foundation of all Christian partnership is reconciliation, and the foundation of reconciliation is the cross. The cross symbolizes death to self - death to our own rights - just as Christ did” (3).

With this attitude, communion in the universal Church is possible without failing each other. But even if two Christians sin against each other, confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation can be possible when such an attitude reigns in the relationship. Christians who want to work and live together in the context of World Missions must learn to “do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than themselves. Each one should look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil 2:3-4).

### **2.4.3 Koinonia**

True communion is one of the characteristics of the Trinity.<sup>117</sup> Communion is also one of the characteristics of the universal Church of Christ and a distinguishing mark among individual Christians. As God calls us to have communion with his Son Jesus Christ (1Cor 1:9), this spiritual union is the source for the *koinonia* that Christians should have among each other (1Jn 1:3). The first Christians in Acts knew, that this communion was not just working together on a new church plant, or on a specific project, but it included the community in the word, in teaching, in the breaking of bread, in prayer, in praising God together, in being together and in sharing their material goods with each other (Acts 2:42-47).

The metaphors of the Body of Christ, the temple, the flock or the household of God reveal how Christians are intimately connected with each other and need each other. Humans are social beings and need the fellowship with other human beings and a Christian is not only an individual, but he or she is born into a fellowship with other Christians, which is the Church. If God is the Father, his children are brothers and sisters of the same family.

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<sup>117</sup> See Ciardi (2001:217) who sees in the Trinity the archetype of community.

The image of the Body of Christ especially demonstrates how Christians are bound together in the same organic life and that they need each other in order to function, to grow and to live. Volf (1998:278) talks about the “Catholicity of person” explaining, that the Christian individual must live in community.

“The issue here is not that the individual must be a member of the overall community so that the latter can express itself in that member, but rather that if a person is to be catholic, her inner constitution must be determined by an ecclesial community” (280).

Volf explains that if the individual does not live in such an ecclesial community, the person misses being enriched by others and that

“the individualist lacks the *subjective* dimension of the catholicity of person, namely, one’s self-understanding as a relational being and the conscious attempt to live one’s own relationality within a community of mutual giving and receiving” (281).

Christians need each other to grow and to learn from each other. This is also true for Christian relationships in World Mission. However, this is not an easy task. Having community with somebody who has a culturally different understanding of community, of togetherness, of worship, of prayer, of sharing, and of belonging makes the *koinonia*, that is asked for in the Bible, very complicated. To live community in one’s own culture is already very difficult, but having fellowship with somebody who is totally different, seems almost impossible. Here the biblical attitudes of love and kenosis will play an important role to make it a reality.

Christians can have close community with somebody who is culturally different, if they do not insist on their cultural and personal rights. The apostle Paul has given a good example when he said that there is “no Greek or Jew, no circumcised or uncircumcised, no free or slave” (Col 3:11) and that he has “become all things to all men” (1Cor 9:22) for the sake of Christ. The unity that exists in the Trinity can also be part of the unity among Christians<sup>118</sup>, so that they can have perfect community although very different. Yet this is only possible, if Christians will let the Spirit of Christ rule in their lives, if they give up their individualism and their rights and if they become servants to their fellow Christians.

Clearly *koinonia* is not just giving something up for the brother or sister. *Koinonia* is also a mutual relationship. The Bible talks about giving and receiving. As someone who is part of the body gives something, he also on the other hand receives something.

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<sup>118</sup> Kärkkäinen (2002:87) sees unity as one of the characteristics of “*koinonia*”. He states: “in its basic meaning, the term *koinonia/communion* denotes “a sharing in one reality held in common.” Synonyms for *koinonia* are *sharing*, *participation*, *community*, and *communion*. The church is a communion in the Spirit since it is the Spirit of Christ that unites all Christians together into one church.”

Communion is a reciprocal relationship. It is a give and take. Time and again in World Missions the relationship is not reciprocal. There are the “haves” and “the have-nots”. There are the givers that always give and there are the receivers that always receive. If the relationship is only established on the basis of material goods and maybe knowledge, reciprocity is not taking place. Therefore the relationship also needs to include a spiritual dimension. As brothers and sisters in Christ they can share and help each other mutually. Everybody has to offer something to the community with their spiritual gifts. Therefore the relationship of different partners in World Mission must take place in the communion that has been given to the Church by the triune God himself.

#### **2.4.4 Unity in Diversity**

In the preceding study of the Trinity and the metaphor of the Body of Christ unity is one of the great characteristics. Jesus and also the apostle Paul exhorted the disciples and churches to live in unity with each other. Unity is one of the results of mutual love (Col 3:11-15). There is perfect love and unity within the Trinity, as there is also unity in diversity, because there is one God in the form of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The same unity in diversity can be seen in the image of the Body of Christ.

The New Testament Church understood this concept from the beginning. Banks (1988:113) gives an excellent account of how the racial, social, and sexual distinctions of the New Testament social order were overcome in Christ. As these people were members of the Body of Christ the differences did not disappear, but they were overcome, because these members of the new community were brothers and sisters in Christ and could live under this new unity in Christ. There was no Greek or Jew, no slave or free, nor man or woman which would make them different from each other, they were all one in Christ.

In addition, when Paul talked about the image of the Body of Christ, the unity in diversity was stressed (1Cor 12:12-27). There is one body, but many different parts, which are all important to the body and not one part is worth less than the other. They are all important and function together in the living organism of the body.

In the context of World Mission the example of the Trinity and the Body of Christ implies that there should be a unity in diversity in the universal Church, which must be accepted and lived out by its members. God himself asked for this unity among the members of his Church and it is valid universally. This means that Christians with different social, cultural and gender background should accept each other with their specific

differences. They need to view each other as equal partners in their relationship who value and respect each other. The apostle Paul explains in his letter to the Romans that there is only one body, but that the members of the body all have different functions (Rom 12:4). In the universal communion of Christ believers need to ask what the other person brings to the fellowship. What is his or her function? What can one learn from him or her? Only if each one accepts his brother or sister in their differences and their different functions will the unity in the body become a reality. Too often, especially if one lives in a cross-cultural relationship, there is a lot of misunderstanding and people with a different cultural or social make-up are not valued. There can be bias about people who are different and they are easily judged by what someone knows from his own background. In Christian communion there first needs to be trust in the other, because he also is “in Christ.” Because Christ is the basis of their relationship, there can be a perfect unity, even if there is great diversity. For believers, who are engaged in World Mission relationships, to live out this unity in diversity is still one of the greatest challenges.

#### **2.4.5 Mutuality and Interdependence**

As shown, there is the complaint in Christian partnerships between Western and non-Western partners, that the partnerships tend not to be equal partnerships. The Western partner is the one who thinks that he has to bring something to the partner from the Global South because he is the one who possesses most of the resources. Sometimes the Western partner feels obligated to help in order to have a good conscience. There is an inner need that forces the Western partner to help, sometimes called a “Helfersyndrom<sup>119</sup>”. But what happens, when you take this “Helfersyndrom” away? Can there be a mutual “give and take” in the relationship? What can the Western partner receive from the apparently poor partner?

Equal relationships are characterized by mutuality and interdependence. As the relationship within the Trinity and the relationship of the individual parts of the Christian body are relationships which are reciprocal in their nature, accordingly a cross-cultural relationship must also be expressed by the same traits.

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<sup>119</sup> The German word “Helfersyndrom” describes someone who has a low self esteem and who feels obligated to help somebody in need. He or she has focused so much on their role as a helper without even asking, if their help is wanted. If they do not help others, they would not feel good about themselves and would feel guilty.

Volf (1998:208) describes on the basis of the Trinity the connectedness of the person and the relationship saying that “person and relation emerge simultaneously and mutually presuppose one another.”

“The divine persons are constituted through *generatio* and *spiratio* as subjects who, though different, are mutually related from the outset and are inconceivable without these relations; furthermore, they manifest their own personhood and affirm that of other persons through their mutual relations of giving and receiving” (:208).

Volf continues to explain that at the ecclesial level

“ in this mutual giving and receiving, we give to others not only something, but also a piece of ourselves, something of that which we have made ourselves in communion with others; and from others we take not only something, but also a piece of them. Each person gives of himself or herself to others, and each person in a unique way takes up to others into himself or herself. This is the process of the mutual internalization of personal characteristics occurring in the church through the Holy Spirit indwelling Christians” (:211).

Mutuality and interdependence is not only concerned with material matters, but in the Body of Christ it becomes a very personal issue. The person himself becomes involved in the relationship. He gives himself and he receives the other person when he is in relationship with his brother or sister. This implies also a mutual subordination of the persons involved in the relationship.<sup>120</sup> The question will be: “Where can I help you and what can I do for you?” And this is not a one-sided question. Both partners are involved. If the giving and receiving is not strictly reduced to material or knowledge matters, then even a poorer partner can give to the one who is rich. If the persons themselves are involved, they can mutually give to each other. Someone will say to his brother or sister: “I need you as a brother or sister because you have the gifts that I do not have.” “I need you because I want to have spiritual communion with you.” “I need you because God will use you in my life to help me grow in areas where I am weak.”

Christians in World Mission need each other spiritually because they need to learn from each other. Interdependence is a key characteristic not only when it comes to partnership projects, but also when relationships are built and lived out in the universal Church.

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<sup>120</sup> See Volf (1998:230).

## 2.4.6 Other-Centeredness

Partnership and communion always have to do with someone else. On their own people can neither enter into a partnership nor can they have communion. They need the other person. Partnership and communion also need to be other-centered. C. Ross (2010:146) in her theology of partnership explains that the Trinitarian understanding of God can only be understood in relationship with the other:

“Engagement in the life of God means an experience of otherness – the otherness of God from humanity, the otherness of the Creator from the created” (:146).

In the relationship with the triune God, humans can understand what otherness means and they can accept the otherness of the person with whom they live in a relationship. Jesus always pointed not to himself, but to the Father. The Father glorified the Son and the Holy Spirit is given to the believer after the departure of Christ to be present in his life.

The incredible icon of the painter Rublev shows the three persons of the Trinity each one looking towards the other. In the center of the table is the cup of the Eucharist. The unity and other-centeredness of the three persons of the Godhead could not be expressed better. After explaining the image of the body to the Christians in Rome the apostle Paul encouraged them to “be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves” (Rom 12:10). The expressions of “one another” and “each other” are found repeatedly in the New Testament. Christians should have equal concern for each other (1Cor 12:25), carry each other’s burden (Gal 6:2), be kind and compassionate to one another and forgive each other (Eph 4:32), bear with each other (Col 3:13), encourage each other (1Th 4:18), build each other up (1Th 5:11), live in peace with each other (1Th 5:13), and love each other as brothers (Heb 13:1). Many other verses could be cited that encourages a Christian to be other-centered.

Other-centeredness needs to be one of the essential criteria for a cross-cultural relationship. Christian community is marked by love for the other. The self-giving love of Christ is the best example for other-centeredness. Christian community can only function when the self-giving love of Christ is present. Only then can a person renounce his ego and concentrate on others. Volf (1996) in his book *Exclusion and Embrace* talks about “the Cross, the Self, and the Other” explaining that “reflection on social issues must be rooted in the self-giving love of the divine Trinity” and that self-donation is vital for the construction of one’s own identity and for the relationship with the other (:25).

Other-centeredness leads also to a trust relationship. If there is openness with each other in the relationship trust can be built up. In Christ this trust relationship should be present because everybody is a member of the same body. The other can be trusted because he is a brother or sister in Christ. Both partners in a World Mission relationship need to learn to trust each other, die to self, and look out for the interests of the other person. The concern for others springs out of the love of God for his children and therefore they will be able to love others as the apostle John sums it up: “Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1Jn 4:11).

### **2.4.7 Sharing**

Sharing with each other is another characteristic of Christian community life. If Christians live in community they have many things in common or share many things together. They may share the building they live in, they may share food they eat or they may share the same style of worship with each other. The Bible talks a lot about sharing and exhorts the reader to be free to give of the things they have received. God has given freely to his children out of grace (1Cor 2:12; Eph 1:6) and he expects his children to give freely as well (Mt 10:8). Giving to the poor was widely accepted and practiced in the times of the New Testament. God has blessed his people with many material goods and he asks those who have received and who live well to share their material goods with those who do not have as much (Mt 5:42; 6:3). The practice of the first Church also is an example of the sharing of goods within the Christian community. They had everything in common and sold their possessions and goods and shared the money with those who had needs (Acts 2:44-45). They remembered the words of Jesus who said that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). The apostle Paul also testifies that the new churches have adopted the habit of giving to him and others and he encouraged the churches about the giving of material goods to others with the words:

“Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2Cor 9:6-7).

However, the sharing of resources does not only refer to material goods. The different members of a body are physically connected with each other and there is a mutual necessity of being attached with each other. They share biologically the life that belongs to

all the members. They share the same functions of body life with each other. The apostle Paul exhorts the Christians in Corinth to use their spiritual gifts for the well-being of the others and for the whole body. These gifts have been given by the Spirit and should be exercised in a balanced way (1Cor 12), so that the body will be built up in Christ (Eph 4:16). If Christians do not share their spiritual gifts well in their community, the Body of Christ will be missing some elements that it needs to be built up.

Furthermore God does not only ask his children to share material or spiritual gifts with each other. As the three persons of the Trinity share their life together so God asks his followers to share their life with each other. The apostle Paul gives testimony in his relationship with the Christians in Thessaloniki about such a sharing of life which comes out of love for each other. "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well because you had become so dear to us" (1Th 2:8). If Christians are organically a union in the Body of Christ, they also share life together with Christ and all the other brothers and sisters who belong to the same body. Sharing in Christian relationship in World Mission signifies for the Christian not only the sharing of material resources, but also the sharing of spiritual resources and the sharing of his personal life.

#### **2.4.8 Service**

Out of the connectedness of the different members of the Body of Christ and the mutual love for each other flows the quality of mutual service. The apostle Paul encourages the Christians in the Galatian church to use their new freedom in Christ to serve each other in love (Gal 5:13). Paul exhorts the slaves in the Ephesian church to see their wholehearted service for men as a service for God himself (Eph 6:7). In the Greek text the term for the verb to serve is *διακονέω* (*diakoneo*) which could mean practical service at the table (Lk 10:40; Acts 6:2) or to minister to somebody (Mt 20:28). But it also could mean to serve as a slave in which case the term *δουλεύω* (*douleuo*) is used (Mt 6:24; Rom 7:6). It literally means to be a slave to somebody or to something, which implies a certain obligation to somebody or something.

Service is a characteristic of the kenosis of Christ. Christ himself made it clear to his disciples that he did not come to rule over others, but to serve, which meant that he would give his life for others (Mt 20:28). Jesus is the perfect example for mutual giving and service.

He was concerned with the spiritual and physical needs of people and served them with the capacities he had. Bruce (1901:21) summed the servitude of Christ in the following:

“Christ was *made* man, but He *took* servile form. His end in becoming man was that He might be able to wear that form of existence which is at the greatest possible distance from, and presents the greatest possible contrast to, the form of God. He desired to live a human life, of which servitude should be the characteristic feature, - servitude in every conceivable sense, and in the extreme degree; so that the whole of his history might be summed up in his own words to His disciples: “I am among you as one who serveth” (21).”

Service is also a gift of the Spirit. The apostle Paul talks in the context of the Body of Christ about the different functions of the members of the body. Serving others is one of these functions (Rom 12:7). In Ephesians 4:11+12 he explains the work of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers and comes to the conclusion that their ministry should prepare God’s people for the work of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up. Volf (1998:246) talks about the priesthood of all believers who have received charismata specific to each of them:

“On the basis of common baptism, all have become priests, and all realize their priesthood in their own way on the basis of their respective charismata.”

The believer is part of the Body of Christ, or being built as a stone into the spiritual house of God to be a holy priesthood offering sacrifices to God (1Pe 2:5). Therefore in their role as priests they are to serve God and the body of which they are a part. The individual Christian has a responsibility to serve the whole community and not only them, but also those in need who are not yet part of this community.

As part of the missionary community believers are sent into the world as Christ was sent by the Father (Jn 20:21). If Christ came into the world to serve, his followers also are commanded to serve each other. Therefore Christian mutual service is a characteristic that needs to be practiced by the partners in World Mission. “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms” (1Pt 4:1).

### **3. Contemporary Missiological Reflections on Partnership in World Mission**

This chapter will examine the historical and contemporary state of Christian partnership relations. Starting with a definition and the historical data of partner relationships and looking at the contemporary state of these relationships, some sociological and cultural elements will be identified and barriers for a good partnership relation will be pointed out. The characteristics that were identified in the previous chapter will then be used to bring to light some missing elements for a well functioning partner relationship.

#### **3.1 Definition of Partnership**

In order to discuss partnerships in the context of World Mission, there is first the need to define how the term and concept of partnership is understood by the different participants of the debate.

Helander and Niwagila (1996:82) explain that the word partnership comes from Latin – *pars, partiri* meaning sharing something with somebody or in the Middle Ages as *partionarius*, meaning participant or someone who participates in a game.

Today the term partnership is primarily used in the area of law and business collaboration<sup>121</sup>, but also in the sociological field of domestic partnerships such as (marriage-) relationships which do not necessarily need a contract. In partnerships two or more individuals or organizations are involved in collaborating together towards a common goal. In the business world it is often marked by a contract, an agreement or a declaration of partnership between two or more persons who agree to pool talent and money and share profits or losses. Other partnerships define themselves more through personal relationships. Marriage relations, music bands or neighborhood groups are rather identified by individual people joining together for a specific purpose.

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<sup>121</sup> The American Heritage Dictionary (2011) gives the following definition of partnership:

1. The state of being a partner.
2. A business entity in which two or more co-owners contribute resources, share in profits and losses, and are individually liable for the entity's actions. b. The persons participating in such a business entity.
3. A relationship between individuals or groups that is characterized by mutual cooperation and responsibility, as for the achievement of a specified goal: *Neighborhood groups formed a partnership to fight crime.*

Keywords for partnership are: communion, coexistence, company, association, companionship, participation, concurrence, cooperation, union, agreement, consent, alliance, common objectives, and synergy.

In the context of church-mission relations there is also a need to investigate the understanding of the term partnership theologically and missiologically. A historical analysis of the understanding of partnership in the mission context will be undertaken later in this chapter, but first definitions from the theological and missiological background need exploration.

The Bible does not mention partnership per se, but in the New Testament the word partner is found in some English translations. Paul calls Titus his partner and fellow-worker (2 Cor. 8:23 ASV). Also in his relationship to Philemon Paul used the term partner according to the English translation (Phlm 1:17 ASV). However, in other languages the word partner is not used. The French version of Louis Second uses the term “associé” and the German Lutheran version translates it “Geselle” or as the Elberfelder version writes “Genosse”. Here it is of importance how the English term translated as “partner” is written in the Greek text. It is the word “koinonos” which derives from the word “koinos” which means common. Therefore one can conclude that the Greek word has something to do with the word family of “koinos” (common), “Koinoneo” (to share with others), and “koinonia” (communion, fellowship, partnership).

George (2004:1) defines partnership as relational, coming from the image of the triune God.

*“Partnership is not merely a means, method, or approach to mission. Partnership is a fundamental dynamic of the triune missionary God of love who is, acts, and relates in mutual partnership in sending the Son, the Spirit and the church into the world as instruments of God’s saving mission. Just as partnership and mission are part of the essence of the Church: partnership is not so much what the Church does as what the Church is.”* (Italics in the original).

The concept of the Trinity for the relationship between mission organizations and churches in the North and the Global South has already been developed in detail in Chapter 2.

First some definitions should be studied that are used today in church mission partnerships. Bush (1990:46) sees partnership as “an association of two or more autonomous bodies who have formed a trusting relationship, and fulfill agreed-upon expectations by sharing complementary strengths and resources, to reach their mutual goal.”

Butler, formerly the head of Interchristo and Interdev, which have partnered with numerous organizations around the world, defines partnership as follows:

“Any group of individuals or organizations, sharing a common interest, who regularly communicate, plan and work together *to achieve a common vision beyond the capacity of any one of the individual partners*” (Butler 2005:34).

Butler makes it clear that in his view partnerships do not just exist to share information or encourage fellowship, but that they have a common vision and should work towards a common goal. The idea of synergism that together the partners can accomplish more than the individual partners alone is present in Butler’s definition.

Rickett (2000:1) in his book about the building of strategic relationships offers the following definition:

“A partnership is a complementary relationship driven by a common purpose and sustained by a willingness to learn and grow together in obedience to God.”

Later in further development of the subject he defines a complementary partnership as

*“A complementary partnership is the association of two or more autonomous bodies who have formed a trusting relationship and fulfill agreed-upon expectations. They do this by sharing complementary gifts and abilities in order to achieve a common goal. A complementary partnership, then is a relationship of shared commitment and interdependency”* (:4) (italics in the original text).

It seems that in his definition Rickett expresses an emphasis on a trust relationship and the sharing of complementary gifts to reach the common goal or goals. Addicott, in his book “Body Matters” uses the image of the “Body of Christ” to describe partnership and has a similar definition as Butler and Rickett:

“Partnership is when two or more individuals or organizations, having different assets to bring to the table agree to share resources, plan, pray and work together to fulfill a common purpose” (Addicott 2007:20).

Addicott states that partnership does not mean marriage, merger or comity. It is interesting that he excludes the comparison with marriage which is common for the term partnership for example in Germany. Addicott argues that the partnership relationship is of limited duration because the partners work on projects for only a limited time. This point needs further examination as to whether a limited duration of a partnership is understood and valued by the non-Western partner in the same way. The title of Addicott's book “Body Matters” reveals that he puts great emphasis on the “Body of Christ” relationship between the partners which then raises the question of the deepness of relationship between the individual partners. Taking the concept of the Body of Christ as example<sup>122</sup>, one should note

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<sup>122</sup> See the study of the Body of Christ in Chapter 2.

that the body is “one” and cannot be divided. In the partnership model that Addicott presents there are two or more partners working in cooperation for a limited duration of time. This presents a contradiction to the body image.

Most definitions on partnership agree that there are two or more different parties involved that need to work in a trust relationship. There should be a common vision towards a common goal with all parties offering and sharing resources for the common benefit.

However, these definitions are taken from Western writers and perhaps have been adopted by some partners in the Global South. But there are also some writers who think that the term partnership is not really appropriate for the relationship between the Western churches and organizations and their counterparts in the Global South.

Bauerchse in his studies about interchurch partnerships mentions several times that the term partnership is not sufficient. He writes:

“Amazingly, I have found no indications of serious attempts to find a different term. This is surprising because there were many complaints that the term “partnership” did not have sufficient theological, biblical quality” (2001:98).

He himself continues to use this term and concludes:

“The term partnership is frequently criticized because of its lack of biblical or theological qualification. However, attempts either to give more theological meaning to the term, or to replace it with terms of stronger theological content (for instance, *koinonia*, brother- and sisterhood) have not been successful” (:162).

It is surprising that Bauerchse continues to use the term partnership although he develops Sundermeier's ecclesiological term of *Konvivenz* (English, “living together”) (:163) and gives the example of a German-African partnership in which the African partner made clear that for him the partnership meant “brotherhood” and that both partners have become a “family” in a very close sense. This raises the question: Is the understanding of partnership of Christians in the Global South the same as the understanding of the term in the Western World? Therefore there is a need to identify how the term was introduced into the mission-church discussions between the West and the Global South.

### **3.2 Historical Inquiry into Partnership in World Mission**

As already shown in Chapter 2 some authors see the origin of the partnership concept in the structure of the Trinity, as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit being one. George (2004:3) explains that they are mutually related, and their unity is in their

communion. Niwagila sees partnership as God's initiative and points to God's creative act of Adam and Eve. They are created in the image of God, the *Imago Dei*. In the communion with Adam and Eve does God "not present himself as a paternalistic God but as a partner, a companion friend who shares with His created humankind His image" (Helander & Niwagila 1996:95). In this view God is the partner of humans with whom he wants to have a relationship. Butler (2006:59) talks about the "God Design" and notes that this relationship and communication between humans and God is broken since Adam and Eve brought sin into the world, but that through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ this communication can be reestablished. He sees this renewed relationship of God with mankind as foundational for effective partnerships.

During the New Testament period not much can be read about partnership, but it can be seen that the "missionaries" were working together in (team) relationships and also that early missionary church relationships existed, when one looks at the ministry of Peter and Paul. Kuhl (2003:149) understands Paul's team relationships as partnership and the churches he founded and worked with as partner churches. Fuller (1980:6) recognizes the tensions in the apostolic period between the missionary and the local church and he identifies *ethnic-sectarian* divisions, tensions in *Christian practice, finances and doctrine*.

In the Roman and Medieval period not much has been written about mission-church partnership because Christians were to a great extent occupied with persecution, the struggle with Islam and the crusades. Also during the colonial period the idea of partnership was not familiar in missionary activity because of the paternalistic attitude of many missionaries. Fuller (1980:23) argues that the missionary had an attitude of a *servant* in the apostolic period, an attitude of the *militant victor* in the medieval period, an attitude of *living in a superior society* in the colonial period and again in the current period an attitude of a *servant*.

### **3.2.1 The Ecumenical Movement**

This servant view was questioned in the beginning of the 20th century. With the rise of the younger churches and because of past colonialism the discussion about partnership started first among mission agencies and later among the Western churches and the churches of the Global South.

The churches that were established by missionaries in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries became more and more independent and requested to become a real partner in the

mission-church relationship. Apparently this was not the case up to that point. This led to a long debate within the World Mission conferences of the IMC and later also in the World Council of Churches (WCC). The integration of the IMC into the WCC in 1961 already shows a shift from mission-church relationship to church-church or interchurch relationship.

Bauerochse (2001) in his study of partnership about the mission conferences shows that there was a shift in the understanding of the term partnership.<sup>123</sup> First, the term partnership in the discussion at the mission conferences originated out of the British colonial policy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the change from the empire to the commonwealth occurred. Bauerochse (2001:89) states:

“My provisional hypothesis is therefore that the term partnership, which was introduced into the mission theological debate in Whitby, had its origins to an important degree in the discussion about British colonial policy.”

He describes the change from “Dominions of the whites” through “Trusteeship” and “Indirect rule” towards partnership and he notes that “parallel in both lines of discussion, concerning the colonial policy and mission theology, are external events and global aims. Both of them are concerned with gradually granting greater independence and autonomy” (:92). But he also describes the conflict in both cases when releasing the Asian and African “partner” into independence and self-administration because that meant a loss of power and influence on the side of the former leaders.

The second subject that needs to be looked at is how the term partnership was understood at the different mission conferences. Already at the mission conference in Edinburgh in 1910 the question of “young churches” and “old churches”, the “sending and receiving” churches, as well as the relationship between the white missionaries and the national workers arose. V.S. Azariah gave a speech about this subject under discussion and he did not ask for an equal partnership at that time, but for “friendship” when the relationship between the Western missionary and the national Christian worker was described. He said “that once the children are grown up, fathers must become friends” (:8). Bauerochse points out that the term friendship played absolutely no part in later discussions.

The idea of “equal” partners arose at the conference in Jerusalem (IMC) in 1928. John Mott talked about a 50-50 basis for encounter of the young and the older churches and the younger churches now got the status of “full parity” or rather of “equal partners”. Duncan writes:

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<sup>123</sup> For a more detailed reading it needs to be referred to the extensive work of Bauerochse, but here it is helpful to look at some specific areas that will be interesting for this study.

“The conference produced a document on the relation between older and younger churches which focused on partnership and noted that the call to mission was the responsibility of all Christians, yet that each church needed to form expressions of its faith within its own particular context in terms of proclamation, liturgy, rituals, art and building design, and maintain the living heritage of the Church universal while engaging in mission. This will be done in concert with the “older” churches. Mission became the task of indigenous churches rather than mission societies” (Duncan 2007b: 1037).

Bauerochse explains that after signing the declaration of the relations between the old and the young churches the understanding of partnership was not only a working relationship, but that the term partnership should lead “to a striving for a new spiritual-fraternal relationship” (Bauerochse 2001:18).

Another change of understanding took place at the conference in Tambaram (IMC) in 1938. Instead of partnership as friendship or as a spiritual-fraternal relationship as it was seen in Jerusalem, it developed into the term of “effective cooperation”. Although the theme of the conference was the worldwide unity in the Body of Christ, the task of evangelizing the world became the focus for the older and the younger churches together.

“The work to be done is so vast, so urgent, and so important that it calls for all the resources of all Christians in all parts of the world. The task in this new day must be undertaken by a partnership between the older and younger churches, by a pooling of all resources and by co-operation of all Christians” (IMC 1939:37).

Bauerochse comments this change:

“The Jerusalem understanding of partnership stressed more the new quality of the relationship as relationship of confidence and fellowship. In Tambaram everything centered on the aim of the partnership: the missionary task – partnership here becomes a synonym for effective cooperation” (Bauerochse 2001:26).

The conference in Whitby (IMC) in 1947 furthered the idea of effective cooperation for world evangelization. Freytag, Hartenstein, and Ihmels title the report of this conference “Der große Auftrag” (The great commission) and Freytag sees the core of the conference in the fulfilling of this commission (Freytag 1948:10). However, in the missiological discussion Whitby is more known by one of the declarations of the conference which was named “Partners in Obedience”. Freytag’s report makes it clear that the partners who should obey to fulfill the task of world evangelization are the old and the young churches now working together. The view of the development towards a church-centered mission becomes obvious at Whitby. The mission organizations of the old countries would serve as “connecting links”

(Bindeglieder) between the new partners (:88). The mission organizations now became mediators and the missionary task itself had been transferred to the churches.

In the view of partnership Bauerochse questions the Whitby slogan of “evangelization of the world in one generation” as a thoroughly Western project whose roots go back to the time of Western expansionism. He concludes:

“What becomes quite clear is how expedient the Whitby concept of partnership was. It is a pragmatic concept with the aim of bringing as many forces together in order to carry out the task awaiting them in the shortest time possible” (Bauerochse 2001:34).

At this point the partnership concept was seen by some participants of the younger churches as hollow and meaningless. “An Indonesian pastor once trenchantly remarked to a Dutch professor “Yes, partnership for you, but obedience for us” (Jansen Schoonhoven 1977:48, in Bosch 1991:466).

The shift towards a more church-centered mission can be seen at the Whitby conference. Partnership becomes the tool for fulfilling the great commission. Whether the Global South partners would agree with this understanding of partnership is questionable. Is the meaning of partnership here again a Western expression directed towards fulfilling a task?

After the foundation of the World Church Council (WCC) in 1948 the emphasis at mission conferences was towards the “*Missio Dei*”; the mission of God and the missionary obligation of the church (Willingen 1952). “From this point mission is regarded as participation in the *mission Dei*; this is the work of the partnership in the Trinity in partnership in mission with churches” (Duncan 2007:1042). Mission activity had now been transferred from the missionary societies to the churches.

Bauerochse (2001:43) notes that “it was no longer permissible to understand mission as a geographical crossing of borders from North to South.” The terms of “young and old churches” and “sending and receiving churches” should be abandoned. However, if the churches in the Global South would now be responsible for the mission in their own areas, then, the Western churches and mission organizations would lose influence. These tensions arose at the conference in Achimota in Ghana<sup>124</sup> and lead to the fact that mission should be

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<sup>124</sup> “In 1958, the IMC met in **Achimota** near Accra, Ghana, and debated the proposal to unite with the World Council of Churches, with which the IMC shared several programs and had had intensive relations. The proposal was accepted by a great majority, while certain theologically more conservative mission councils refused the idea of an integration of mission and church. They wanted to preserve the missionary freedom and not become dependant on ecclesiastical authorities and agendas.” Available at: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/who-are-we/organization-structure/consultative-bodies/world-mission-and-evangelism/history.html> (accessed on 17/01/ 2013).

done by the Western churches as well as the churches from the Global South. “Witness in Six Continents” was then the theme of the conference in 1963 in Mexico City. The paternalistic view of mission from the West towards the pagan Global South should be removed. But the “missionary societies had still not stepped down, and the *mission field thinking* had still not been overcome” (:53) which led to the Moratorium Call at the conference in Bangkok in 1973.

“The concern of the Third World churches with their own identity also found expression in the consideration of the question of temporarily eliminating the sending of Western colleagues and financial aid to areas where the churches had not yet worked out their own priorities (moratorium)” (Günter & Cook 1997:506).

The general secretary of the national church council of Kenya John Gatu saw the attitude of Western missionaries as one of the reasons for the Moratorium Call. He asked for “the liberation from the West” and was against “the mind-set of the imperialistic mentality of the West that they have something they need to share with their fellow-men” (Beyerhaus 1973:106). This expresses a great difference in the cultural understanding and the perception of collaboration between organizations and churches from the West and the Global South.

Since the Global South churches became more and more independent and responsible for the mission in their own countries, partnership meant more and more a partnership between the churches of the North and the South and not so much between churches and mission agencies.

At the conferences in Melbourne (1980), El Escorial (1987) and San Antonio (1989) partnership was further discussed in terms of “*koinonia*” and “Eucharistic fellowship”. Bauerochse notes the change of the term:

“The term partnership had developed into a generally used shorthand for any form of interchurch activity, aid or relationship by the end of the 1970s at the latest. This reflected the very broad use of the term within all fields when referring to North-South contacts and cooperation in development work on the part of both governmental and non-governmental agencies. In the ecumenical movement new visions and concepts crystallized around the question of unity of the church and the forms of relationships between churches. The term *koinonia* was used increasingly – especially in the documents and at the meetings of Faith and Order. The image of the “Eucharistic Fellowship” was used to describe the ecumenical unity of the churches, or rather, the Eucharist was used to justify the fellowship of churches. These expressions came into common use in the mission and ecumenical movements, as they had already done in Melbourne (Bauerochse 2001:75-76).

The title of the conference in El Escorial (1987) was “**Koinonia**: sharing life in a world community” and it underlines the relationship within the churches and the sharing of resources becoming the focal point. Duncan (2007:1057) points out that this conference strengthened the ecumenical vision of the church as a sharing community.

The participants committed themselves to a “fundamentally new value system based on justice, peace and integrity of creation.” The main message from El Escorial was a document called ‘Guidelines for Sharing’ providing a common ecumenical framework for a discipline of sharing among God’s people (WCC 2002:16).<sup>125</sup>

The CWME conference in San Antonio (1989) was titled “Your will be done – Mission in Christ’s way”. Bosch (1991:460) sees as one of the outcomes of the conference the emphasis on relationships, Christian unity and missionary calling, and the unity in the Body of Christ in liberating and suffering love. Bauerochse (2001:86) summarizes that conflicts were covered up by using the term partnership and that “the term *partnership* in mission now suggested a relationship between the churches based on equality and mutual sharing, which however did not actually exist,” because “the term and concept of *partnership in mission* had not led to the intended new orientation of mission practice in the churches of the North.”

The Canberra Assembly in 1991 produced the “Canberra Statement” with the title “The Unity of the church: Gift and calling,” in which the church is called to proclaim reconciliation and to provide healing, to overcome divisions based on race, gender, age, culture and to bring all people into communion with God (WCC:1991). The visible unity of the church as a koinonia is the challenge for the ecumenical movement and is only possible through reconciling and renewing.

The reality that the partnership between mission organizations and churches has slowly been replaced by partnership within the churches and unity within the churches, has become a reality at this point. The 9<sup>th</sup> assembly in Porto Alegre 2006 continues to search for

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<sup>125</sup> Some of the commitments were:

- To the marginalized taking the centre of all decisions and actions as equal partners...
- To identifying with the poor and the oppressed and their organized movements...
- To mutual accountability and correction...
- To present to one another our needs and problems in mutual relationships...
- To promote the holistic mission of the church instead of disrupting and dividing by responding to one part...
- To overcome all barriers between faiths and ideologies which divide the human family...
- To resist international mechanisms which deprive the people of the South of their resources...
- To shifting the power to set priorities to those who are wrongly denied both resources and power...
- To facilitate and promote dialogue and participation among the people of the South...
- To promote and strengthen ecumenical sharing at all levels: national, regional and international (:17).

the unity in the church and published the text on ecclesiology: "Called to be the one church". The term partnership does not appear in this document.

In a preparatory paper No 1 for the CWME meetings in Athens the committee stated:

"In recent decades the churches have become ever more aware of the necessity to engage in mission *together*, in cooperation and mutual accountability: hence mission partnerships have been established, some international mission structures transformed, and common projects undertaken. The same period, however, has seen an escalation of confessional rivalries and competition in mission in many parts of the world. These realities compel the ecumenical family to re-examine issues of mission in unity, cooperation among the churches, common witness and proselytism, and to work towards more responsible relationships in mission" (CWME:2004).

In conclusion it could be said that during all these assemblies and meetings it has become apparent that there were and still are many obstacles and barriers towards a real and open partnership and unity between the partners from the West and the Global South. Differences and prejudices still exist on both sides and need to be overcome. The emphasis has shifted from a mission where a mission organization would evangelize and establish a new church in a foreign country to a church-church partnership between the West and the Global South countries.

### 3.2.2 The Evangelical Movement

The development of the concept of partnership within the evangelical movement also needs to be investigated. The International Congress of World Evangelization in Lausanne 1974 was mainly concerned with the proclamation of the Gospel. Nevertheless, the Lausanne Covenant talks in Chapter 8 about "Churches in Evangelistic Partnership."<sup>126</sup> The disappearance of the dominant role of the Western missionary is recognized and partnership and the unity within the Body of Christ should be pursued. Escobar (2003a:164) talks about a global partnership of churches:

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<sup>126</sup> The original text:

#### **8. Churches in Evangelistic Partnership**

We rejoice that a new missionary era has dawned. The dominant role of Western missions is fast disappearing. God is raising up from the younger churches a great new resource for world evangelization, and is thus demonstrating that the responsibility to evangelize belongs to the whole body of Christ. All churches should therefore be asking God and themselves what they should be doing both to reach their own area and to send missionaries to other parts of the world. A re-evaluation of our missionary responsibility and role should be continuous. Thus a growing partnership of churches will develop and the universal character of Christ's church will be more clearly exhibited. We also thank God for agencies which labor in Bible translation, theological education, the mass media, Christian literature, evangelism, missions, church renewal and other specialist fields. They too should engage in constant self-examination to evaluate their effectiveness as part of the church's mission (LCWE: 1974c).

“Global partnership of churches will be indispensable for mission in this new century. Among evangelicals this conviction grew in the last quarter of the twentieth century. During the Lausanne Congress of Evangelism in 1974 evangelicals reached a consensus that global Christian mission had become a responsibility of a global church, and not only the privilege of Western missionary enterprise.”

Lausanne 1974 does not only talk about partnership between Western mission agencies with national churches, but the focus also is changing towards global partnership between the churches on the different continents.

Allan Thompson (1974:508) stated that partnership between the Christians of the West and Christians in Africa and Asia is one of the vital needs of the Christian mission. He, as leader of a Western mission organization, described two current patterns of the mission-church relationship first as “integration” where the missionaries become part of the structure of the emerging church overseas and then “separation” where mission societies see themselves not as churches and should retain their own identity. He did not agree with this dichotomy because he thought that form must remain fluid and he proposed a solution, not as a structure, but rather as a relational approach, built on biblical principles, dynamic strategy and a sacrificial mentality (:509).

Several papers of the Congress addressed the unity of the local and the universal church. Chao (1974:1109) disapproved the idea that foreign missions can bypass the national church which some missiologists have recommended doing in some cases. He criticized such a view:

“Both Wagner and Mc Quilkin (and probably many others) seem to have failed to recognize the clear biblical teaching that the emerging national churches in the mission field are integral parts of the Body of Christ to which they belong... Both failed to see that both the sending church and the receiving church are members of the Body of Christ, the true church universal; both are essentially local churches. As such they are on *a parity* with each other, equal in status and glory. Does a missionary sent by one local church to a place where another local church is also seeking to serve her Lord have the right to ignore the latter or simply bypass it?” (:1109).

Chao did not just agree with the concept of “spiritual unity” as he thought that it also should express itself in a “visible unity” (:1111).

In general it could be said that the Lausanne Congress in 1974 barely touched the problems of partnership in World Missions and the unity of the Church. It seems as if Lausanne was aware of some of the struggles that existed, but not yet able to resolve them on a larger scale.

Lausanne II (LCWE 1989) was held in Manila in 1989 and produced the “Manila Manifesto” in which affirmation No. 14 talks again about “Partnership in Evangelization”.<sup>127</sup> However, other affirmations encourage overcoming barriers of race, gender and class within the Body of Christ<sup>128</sup> and invite mission agencies and churches to cooperate in evangelism and social action.<sup>129</sup> Churches and denominations are called to cooperation in evangelism:

"Cooperation" means finding unity in diversity. It involves people of different temperaments, gifts, calling and cultures, national churches and mission agencies, all ages and both sexes working together. We are determined to put behind us once and for all, as a hangover from the colonial past, the simplistic distinction between First World sending and Two-Third World receiving countries. For the great new fact of our era is the internationalization of missions. Not only are a large majority of all evangelical Christians now non-Western, but the number of Global South missionaries will soon exceed those from the West. We believe that mission teams which are diverse in composition, but united in heart and mind, constitute a dramatic witness to the grace of God (LCWE:1989 Section 9).

Claydon (1989:213) talked about this cooperation in evangelism and stated that cooperation means non-competitive, genuine “Partnership between men and women, clergy and laity, young and old, First World and Third World, North and South, church and para-church.” Although Claydon used the word partnership in Manila, the overall term was still cooperation which mainly meant cooperation in evangelizing the world.

However, at the regional third Asia Lausanne Conference on Evangelism (ALCOE III) in Bogor, Indonesia, Fernando (1992:39) changed in his address the term “Cooperation in Evangelism” into “Partnership in Evangelism.”

About ten years later at the “Forum 2004 for World Evangelization” in Pattaya, Thailand, the “Issue Group 9: Partnership and Collaboration” was established in order to overcome the roadblock for evangelism which was seen as the division of the Body of Christ (LCWE 2004:6). They wanted to find ways to “to initiate and strengthen partnerships, networks and other forms of cooperation.” In the report it was mentioned that after the opening session, tension was obvious between North/South and East/West in today’s church and the group decided to focus on these conflicts, as well as new structures in

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<sup>127</sup> Manila Manifesto affirmation No. 14: We affirm that the gifts of the Spirit are distributed to all God's people, women and men, and that their partnership in evangelization must be welcomed for the common good.

<sup>128</sup> Manila Manifesto affirmation No. 13: We affirm that we who claim to be members of the Body of Christ must transcend within our fellowship the barriers of race, gender and class.

<sup>129</sup> Manila Manifesto affirmation No. 17: We affirm the urgent need for churches, mission agencies and other Christian organizations to cooperate in evangelism and social action, repudiating competition and avoiding duplication.

Partnership and the role of the local church in Partnerships (:6). A new website was launched “to serve the Body of Christ in the area of collaboration.”<sup>130</sup> More than 200 individuals agreed to participate in the work of this issue group and they were called the “Company of the Committed” (:7).

### 3.2.3 Conclusion

Since the mission conference in Edinburgh in 1910 when Azariah asked for friendship between the Western mission agencies and churches with the younger churches in the Global South, there has been an ongoing discussion about their relationship with each other. The term “partnership” has been developed to describe this relationship and different meanings have been associated with this term. In the 1970s the Lausanne movement joined this discussion, though in the beginning it was mainly concerned about collaboration in World evangelization. It was agreed on that partnership has to do with relationships of the different participants within the Body of Christ. It was further acknowledged that these relationships could often not be lived out as wanted. It seems that the “friendship relationship” or the “brotherhood and sisterhood relationship” that Azariah had asked for, was replaced with a working relationship that is centered on common goals and objectives or getting common projects completed. This left many Global South partners unsatisfied because they were looking for more than just a working relationship. They wanted to be an equal counterpart with their partners from the West. Bauerochse was not pleased with the term partnership, but could not give a different term for the missing relationship. Others talked about the unity within the Body of Christ, but it seems that the concept of partnership discussed in the past does not really satisfy the brothers and sisters from non-Western cultures. The relationship within the universal Body of Christ is not just a working relationship that turns around projects, but it is an organic and mutual union within a diversity of cultures. This relationship needs to be lived out as the universal church, as brothers and sisters in Christ coming together in a global setting.

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<sup>130</sup> See: [www.powerofconnecting.net](http://www.powerofconnecting.net).

### **3.3 Partnership in the World Mission Context**

There are partnerships in business and organizations, but also in the Christian setting a variety of different partnerships exist. Although there are many different types and models of partnership, here specific partnerships in the mission-church context between the West and the Global South will be explored. There are numerous Christian partners within the Western World who share resources and partner together for their mission projects. However this study focuses especially on the partnerships between the West and the Global South. One needs to understand the different elements of these partnerships in order to evaluate if they function well in the mission-church environment. Some characteristics which are components of most definitions of partnership will be analyzed. Different models of existing partnerships as well as biblical models presented in Scripture will be studied. In addition some barriers to mission-church partnerships will be identified in order to provide a better understanding of the different partners. Finally, this study will look at how partnerships are lived out in various contexts and what could be helpful improvements for collaboration and relationships.

#### **3.3.1 Elements of Partnership**

What are the different components of a partnership? What is needed to create a partnership that will pool resources in the mission-church venture? There are different partners who have their individual objectives. Do they need a common vision and common objectives in order to collaborate? What is the time frame in which the partners will work together? How shall the partnership be practically implemented?

##### ***3.3.1.1 Who are the Partners?***

Exploring partnerships between the West and the Global South, it is obvious that a multiplicity of different partners work jointly in one form or another. If only evangelism, church planting or social and relief work is considered, one already can imagine the various collaborators who come together on the mission fields to accomplish their goals. In numerous countries around the world Western denominations can be observed which work together and try to collaborate with their counterpart in the Global South. A large number of Christian organizations and mission agencies work all over the Globe. There are also denominations or Christian organizations who may work together with non-Christian

government organization or NGOs. Partnerships exist between regional churches and individual churches, and there are also individuals, who partner together in some mission projects. The question “who partners with whom” is not easy to answer because of the many different combinations. A table might be helpful to organize the different partner relationships.

**Figure 3. Examples of Partnerships**

Two-Thirds World	Denomination	Christian Organization, Mission Agency	Church	Individual	Government Organization/ NGO
West					
Denomination					
Christian Organization, Mission Agency					
Church					
Individual					
Government Organization/ NGO					

In many cases there are only two partners who will collaborate together, but there can also be circumstances where more than two partners join the same project. A distinction should be made between “**bilateral partnerships**” and “**multilateral partnerships**”. In a bilateral partnership for example a denomination partners with a denomination, a mission agency partners with a church union, or an organization partners with another organization. There are only two partners and the relationship is simple, but rather intense and it can easily become inward focused.

Cases also exist where several denominations and/or mission agencies join forces and work in partnership with one or more church unions or organizations on the mission field. These partnerships can be very complex and need much more organization and

structure than a bilateral partnership. On the other hand, a large amount of resources are brought into the partnership by the different groups and it probably creates a larger vision and has larger objectives than a joint venture with only two partners.

Addicott (2005:91) adds a third category of partnership: **“The Inclusive Partnership”**. Here not only the initial partners decide whom they want to invite, but the invitation to join is open to everybody and every partner or group can decide to buy into the project or not. The presence of the invited party is already seen as a resource brought into the partnership and the partnership is more flexible with its different partners, who might want to join just for a specific period of time. Once they feel that they have brought to the group what they had to offer, they may leave the partnership. The inclusive partnership can easily create sub-groups to work on specific projects. However, the relationships might not be as closely knit as in bilateral partnerships and the partners could become too vague when realizing their objectives. Addicott (:93) presents the three types of relationships in a helpful table.

**Table 1. Three Types of Partnership**

<b>Bilateral Partnership:</b>	<b>Multilateral Partnership:</b>	<b>Inclusive Partnership:</b>
Two partners only	Many partners	Many partners
Partners selected for a special relationship	Partners invited for what they might contribute	Everyone invited, some partners self-select out
Simple relationship	Complex web of relationships	Frequently changing webs of relationships
No specialist sub-groups possible	Specialist sub-groups form naturally	Sub-groups created with clear membership criteria
Not easy to expand the partnership to include others	As inclusive as we wish the partnership to be	Maximum inclusiveness, limited only by the perceived value to the partner
Resources limited to those of the two partners	Can extend invitation to any needed resources	Maximum resources theoretically available
Tends to look inward	Always looks outward	Proactively attracts “outsiders” in
<b>Advantages:</b> Simple, focused, easy to manage relationship	<b>Advantages:</b> Economic, enables sub-groups, more flexible resources	<b>Advantages:</b> Gives the biggest picture: a market place of opportunities
<b>Disadvantages:</b> inflexible, inward-looking, resources limited	<b>Disadvantages:</b> Complex, needs more forbearance and understanding relationally	<b>Disadvantages:</b> Too fuzzy to do business; needs strong sub-groups to be effective

Source: Adapted from Addicott (2005:93).

Either of these, the bilateral, multilateral or inclusive partnership in a multicultural context is not easy to organize. Considering all the different details the partners have to work out, such as vision statements, objectives, partnership agreements, accountability, evaluation of the partnership and others, it becomes clear how complex and hard to manage these relationships are. More partners also mean more relationships which might be very difficult to handle, especially if the partners come from different cross-cultural backgrounds. Another difficulty in the composition of the different partnerships is the question of majority and minority partners. Do the majority of the partners come from one cultural background or are they equally divided and do they have the same resources, the same authority and the same power weight in the partnership? These questions become more difficult to answer as the partnership gets more complex and much care needs to be given in order to treat each other equally.

### **3.3.1.2 Duration of the Partnership**

How long would it take to realize the project? This might be a question that is raised at the beginning of a partnership. If this is the case, the project is merely “task-oriented” and not “relationship-oriented.” Very often the partnership is already limited to a certain duration right from the beginning. The partners estimate the time frame at the start of the collaboration. In general the time frame for partnerships is first projected and the partners withdraw when the goal of the partnership is achieved. There can be short-term, medium term, long-term and open ended partnerships.

A *short-term partnership* will cover the time from one week to several months. This is often the case when specific projects have to be implemented. The partners are committed to finish the project in a certain amount of time and part from each other, when the project is completed. Here the partnership is rather project-oriented than relationship-oriented. Butler (2005:39) sees several advantages in short-term partnerships. “A short, intensive burst of vision-driven energy often is catalytic in helping people or organizations come together”. For developmental and relief organizations it might be easier and more effective to be involved in short-duration crisis projects, for example after an earthquake or a tsunami, than helping afterwards in a long-term involvement of rebuilding people’s lives, communities, schools or health care systems (:40).

There also can be short-term “relationship-oriented” partnerships, when for example one Western church visits a partner church in the Global South for one or two weeks, for example to achieve a small project. However, relationships in a cross-cultural setting are

normally hard to develop in this short time frame due to little personal contact with the people themselves and to the difference in language and culture.

*Medium-term partnerships* last from several months up to two years and are also often project-oriented. Projects such as setting up a bible school or radio station, training specialized workers, building a hospital or doing other developmental work would fit into this time frame. Here the project is central as well, although relationships between foreigners and nationals could develop and reach a much deeper level as it would be in short-term partnerships.

*Long-term partnerships* last from two years to ten or more years. This is the case, when the common objectives are so important that it cannot be accomplished in a shorter amount of time. Deep relationships can develop because there is a long-term commitment to work together.

And there can be partnerships that are *open-ended partnerships* which do not have a time limit. Such a partnership for example could be a Western denomination which works together with its counterpart in the Global South. These partnerships are not time-limited, because they focus mainly on the relationship of the partners, although they also might accomplish specific projects together.

Remarkably, Butler (2005:39) does not mention the open-ended partnership and it seems that his focus on partnerships is project-oriented, expressed in his question: "How long do you think it will take for your partnership to realize the vision?" Addicott also links the involvement of the partners to a project and working together, but not on a relationship for fellowship and communion. He states that partnership is not a "marriage relationship till death do us part."

"Such long-term commitment is wonderful to see, but is unnecessarily demanding for organizations which might want to work together. Their partnership may be quite limited in time – perhaps only until the specific task is accomplished. Hopefully, when that job is done, there will be a celebration, not an acrimonious divorce. Fellowship and relationship can continue at a different, mutually desirable level, but without the strong pragmatic focus on the work that draw them together in the first place. Relax! Agreeing to work with others is not a permanent commitment" (Addicott 2005:16).

Yet, the question of the duration of the partnership must also include the voice of all the partners as it will be seen later. The Christian mission-church partnerships should not only be project-oriented, but also relationship-oriented where fellowship and communion should be one of the elements of the partnership. If there is a mutual relationship within the

Body of Christ it cannot only be project-oriented and short- or medium-term. The different parts of the body are tied together as long as the body exists so that the relationship can continue even after termination of a project.

### **3.3.1.3 Content of the Partnership**

The question arises as to why the partners would come together and what is the content of the partnership. For what reason do the partners want to join forces and why do they want to collaborate? What is the purpose of the partnership? Some of the major motives in church-mission partnerships of the Western partners and those from the Global South will be identified here.

*Evangelism.* For the Lausanne Declaration in 1974 the main goal of working together was the evangelization of the World. Evangelization was and still is one of the main goals of partnerships. To fulfill Christ's Great Commission is the vision of the World Evangelical Fellowship Missions Commission (Taylor 1994:xiii) and the title of the consultation in Manila in 1992 talked about interdependent partnerships as "Kingdom Partnerships". Reaching the whole World is not the only reason for international partnerships. There are many missions and para-church organizations that work in evangelism within a country, region or city. Others want to evangelize a specific group or section of the society. Child Evangelism Fellowship for example works mainly among children and there are several organizations that work among students. Many of them work in several countries in cross-cultural ministries and partner with other organizations or churches in their partner-countries. Their main objective is reaching local people of the other culture for Christ.

*Church Planting.* Other denominations, church unions, missions and individual churches work specifically in church planting. They are also involved in evangelism, discipling or training, but with the objective to plant churches in other countries, or help their national partner denomination, union or organization to start new churches. Examples of these partnerships could be the multilateral partnerships of the "Alliance for Saturation Church Planting"<sup>131</sup> movement in the late 1990s or "DAWN Ministries."<sup>132</sup> These ministries try to bring many partners into a forum or network in order to motivate and train them for church planting. There are other missions, church unions or churches which work in bilateral

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<sup>131</sup> The Alliance for Saturation Church Planting dissolved itself in June 2006. See: [www.alliancescp.org](http://www.alliancescp.org).

<sup>132</sup> See: [www.dawnministries.org](http://www.dawnministries.org).

partnerships with other organizations and churches in their partner countries and they pool resources in their church planting efforts.

*Communion / Fellowship.* Even if partnerships are often project-oriented, there are those who also focus on communion and fellowship with each other to express the universal Body of Christ. Denominations, church unions or individual churches may be especially interested in this kind of relationship. This was practiced already in the 70s by several district congregations of the Lutheran Church in Germany (EKD). Schäfer (2004:6) gives some examples of these ecumenical partnerships between several local churches in Germany and their counterparts in the Global South. He sees them as an expression of an ecumenical existence and connects the relationship of the partners with the term “koinonia”. Bauerochse (2001:162) also focuses on interchurch relationships as ecumenical communities of learning and talks about the challenge of “konvivenz” and “koinonia”. Lately there are many Western individual churches who want to partner with other individual churches in the Global South as an expression of the universal Church. Sister church programs<sup>133</sup> were established for these reasons. Even if fellowship with the partners is the main objective, it often leads to other aspects of the relationship such as relief or development projects.

*Training / Education.* Other groups are not so much involved in evangelism or church planting, as training or education is their main focus. They start and support Bible schools or elementary schools or concentrate on training programs or leadership development. Western Bible schools may start a branch of their school in a partner country, or some mission organization may develop a program of theological education by extension, or train nationals in seminars or conferences. Other organizations are concerned with helping to establish elementary or even secondary schools or maybe a trade school in order to help their partners to develop an educational system. They believe that it is more effective to train nationals than having the work done by foreigners. Many small missions and even individual churches have adopted such a view in recent years. “Mission Catalyst International” for example is such an organization which works in training and equipping nationals.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Some examples are: Reciprocal Ministries International ([www.rminet.org](http://www.rminet.org)), Christians in Action ([www.christiansinaction.org](http://www.christiansinaction.org)); Evangelische Kirche in Hessen Nassau ([www.zentrum-oekumene-ekhn.de](http://www.zentrum-oekumene-ekhn.de))

<sup>134</sup> “Mission Catalyst International, Inc. is an interdenominational missions organization which is committed to helping finish *The Great Commission* in this generation by equipping and mobilizing national pastors, church planters, and missionaries in the 10/40 Window to plant effective, evangelical, reproducing churches among the world’s least-reached peoples. ... Our ministry involves training nationals through our **Great Commission Conferences** and our **Equipping for the Harvest Conferences**. Since our founding in 2002, more than 100 *Great Commission Conferences* have been held in which more than 15,000 nationals have been equipped for more effective ministry among *Unreached Peoples* in their countries” Available at: <http://www.mci3.org/> (accessed on 29/01/2013).

*Medical, Development, Relief.* There are many Western organizations who want to help in the area of health care, sustainable development (SD) projects, or relief programs after a disaster. In the area of health care, they may build or support hospitals or clinics, provide medical supplies, send specialized medical personnel or help in training. Preventive programs such as vaccination programs, Aids prevention or community health programs are sponsored in the partnerships. Sustainable development projects include agricultural programs or reforestation, trade or home economic schools, micro projects, which help to ameliorate the living standard of the national partners. These programs normally ask for a longer-term involvement of the partners. Other short-term help are the relief programs after a hurricane, flood, earthquake, famine or other disaster. Such help is needed rapidly and partnerships must be very flexible. They normally end when the urgent needs are met and other development programs need take over after this collaboration.

*Service (administration, finances).* There may be a need for supplementary partnerships in the area of service. Here a partner organization may send specialized personnel to help for example in the area of administration or project development. Keyes and Pate (1993:204) even talk about partnerships as a liaison agent that has the goal of developing other potential partnerships like “Interdev”. There are also partners (mainly Western) who only want to support the ministry or organizations in other countries financially.<sup>135</sup> Financial support in these partnerships can be directed to medical, relief, or development programs, the support of national workers or pastors, or to training programs. This kind of partnership is often seen as problematic because some believe it creates a dependency and they would reject this kind of partnership.<sup>136</sup>

#### **3.3.1.4 Implementation of the Partnership**

How does the partnership work in practice? How do the partners get together and what do they actually do to make their partnership work? It probably depends very much on the type of partnership in consideration.

If the partnership is about “strengthening the relationship” among each other, living out the community within the Body of Christ, and showing one’s solidarity with the partner,

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<sup>135</sup> A good example here is K.P. Yohannan’s organization “Gospel for Asia” which mainly wants to support national workers. See: [www.gfa.org](http://www.gfa.org). Christian Aid is another organization which helps national churches and organizations financially. They describe their ministry: “**Christian Aid** locates, evaluates and sends financial help to indigenous evangelical ministries which are serving the Lord primarily in countries closed to foreign missionaries.” Available at: [www.christianaid.org/AboutUs/OurMinistry.aspx](http://www.christianaid.org/AboutUs/OurMinistry.aspx) (accessed on 17/01/2013).

<sup>136</sup> See for example Schwartz (2000); (2007) & Van Rheenen (2002:39-40).

as it would be the case in a church-church or denominational partnership, the partners will probably organize mutual visits. Personal correspondence and personal exchange can be undertaken. The partners could learn about the other's culture and see how their faith is lived out in a different cultural context. Schäfer (2004:4) talks about a boom of ecumenical church-church partnerships in the 1970s and 1980s in the Lutheran Church in Germany. Often a sponsorship became a partnership, when the partners got to know each other better. Partners from the Global South were invited to visit the partner churches in Germany. But most often, because of lack of resources, these visits were financed by the Western partners. Schäfer (:9) talks about partnership as "koinonia" or fellowship which has been studied in the preceding chapter.

Other ways to partner can be the "sending of workers or experts" to the other partner. Missions or churches collaborate with each other by sending special workers that are available on the one side of the partnership and are needed urgently on the other.<sup>137</sup> This can be missionaries, theological teachers, trainers, administrative personnel, agricultural or industrial workers or elementary or secondary teachers who are sent by one of the partners. Normally these experts were sent in the past from the West to the Global South, but in recent years the direction of sending the personnel is interchangeable.

When talking about "teaching and training," it is not only personnel that is needed. For teaching and training there could also be a need for training materials or for the establishing of schools or training institutes. Many churches, missions or denominations have partnered in order to set up these training facilities for theological, vocational and educational training.

The sending of other resources such as finances or materials can also be an approach to help the other partner. Providing training materials, such as books, tools for vocational training or agricultural or other equipment needed by the partner, can be an expression of the partnership. Also the straightforward financing of different projects can be a means to help a partner who does not have the capacity to realize the project on his own.

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<sup>137</sup> Christliche Fachkräfte International is such an organization that sends out qualified workers to mainly Global South Partners. "Christliche Fachkräfte International e.V. entsendet weltweit Fachkräfte, die einheimische evangelische Kirchen und christliche Organisationen in ihrem Dienst vor Ort unterstützen. Schwerpunkt ist die Förderung und Ausbildung einheimischer Mitarbeiter." Available at: [www.gottes-liebe-weltweit.de/christliche-fachkraefte-international/motivation\\_2](http://www.gottes-liebe-weltweit.de/christliche-fachkraefte-international/motivation_2) (accessed on 17/01/2013).

Another example is COSIM, the coalition on the support of indigenous ministries. They describe their objective as follows: "**Coalition On the Support of Indigenous Ministries (COSIM)** is a learning community of evangelical Christians and organizations with a common interest in the support and capacity building of majority-world ministries. Our mission is to expand the understanding and practice of cross-cultural partnership with indigenous ministries for the advance of the gospel. We accomplish our mission through networking and sharing best practices, with emphasis on partnerships between North American and majority-world ministries." Available at: [www.cosim.info/about](http://www.cosim.info/about) (accessed on 17/01/2013).

These partnerships are often initialized and financed by the richer partner who usually comes from the Western hemisphere.

### **3.3.2 Models of Partnership**

A model is a pattern, plan, representation, description, or structural design to be imitated or emulated. Some of the existing models of partnership will be examined in order to identify the main function of each model, but also the weaknesses and strengths of the different models.

Although there is a general demand<sup>138</sup> for new models of partnership between the West and the Global South, very few actually present such new models.

Some pastors or mission leaders describe individual models that are based on a geographical or task-oriented partnership. Yet few of these models can be reproduced for other churches or organizations, because they are too specific. In the following selected models and types of partnership that have been described by some recent authors will be studied. First, some biblical foundations for partnership will be examined and then some models or types of partnership which can be found in the mission context will be identified. Finally, the difference between partnerships and networks will be explored.

#### **3.3.2.1 Biblical Models of Partnership**

Several authors, who work in Christian missions or Christian organizations, start out by mentioning the biblical foundation when talking about partnership, but few actually present biblical models for partnership. Many biblical texts can be cited that authors use, when they illustrate their understanding of partnership.

Helander and Niwagila (1996:94) go back to Genesis and demonstrate that humans were created in the image of God (*Imago Dei*). They describe a relationship of mutuality within the divine realm which was constantly referred to by Jesus when he talked to his father. George (2004:3) also mentioned the Trinitarian partnership in creation and redemption as a model for partnership in missions.

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<sup>138</sup> See Funkschmidt (2002b). Also one of the subthemes of the WCC missiology Consultation in London (April 2002) was: "New models of mission relationships and partnership." Available at: [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-and-evangelism/missiology-consultation-london.html](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-and-evangelism/missiology-consultation-london.html) (accessed on 17/01/2013).

Butler (2005:47) starts out with the broken relationship between humans and God as it is described in Genesis and describes how the restored and open relationship between God and his people will be the basis for an effective and durable partnership (:54).

Addicott (2005:7) in his book “Body Matters” uses the image of the Body of Christ as foundational for good functioning partnerships. Citing Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, he shows that the various members of the body, although having different functions, can work together in unity and interdependence.

Others cite Paul, as he partnered with God and with different co-workers in spreading the gospel and founding new churches. Paul calls himself and his companions “co-workers with God” (συνεργός, *sunergos*)<sup>139</sup> which implies that they work on the same task as God himself. In 2 Corinthians 8:23 (ISV) he calls Titus his partner (κοινωνός, *koinonos*) and fellow worker. Some writers use this concept of “koinonia” as the main reason for partnering with others.

Hyuk (1990:101) sees a model of partnership already when God, the Creator, gave Eve to Adam as his partner. He further cited Jesus, sending out his twelve disciples two by two as partners (Lk 10:1). He continues to describe how the Antioch church followed this model when they sent out Paul and Barnabas as their missionaries (Acts 13:1-3) and how “Paul maintained this basic principle of partnership and cooperation for the rest of his life”, teaming up with people such as Barnabas, Silas, Luke, Timothy, Mark and Epaphroditus.

As early as 1956 Max Warren proposed a “Theology of Partnership.”

“When, therefore, we speak of theology of partnership, we denote by that term an attempt to see partnership *sub specie aeternitatis*, to see it not only as convenient and desirable but as being in its ultimate significance an idea about God, an idea which does not cut across the grain of the universe but an idea which moves along it, being wholly consistent with the creative and redemptive purpose of God. In thus approaching our subject I would suggest to you a threefold understanding of it:

*First*, that partnership is an idea congenial to the very nature of God.

*Second*, that partnership speaks of God’s relationship with man.

*Third*, that partnership indicates the true relationship between man and his fellow-man” (1956:35).

Warren links partnership first to the very nature of God and out of it springs the relationship between God and humans and finally the relationship within the human family which is the basis for true partnership. It should be noted that most partnership discussions in mission circles only deal with Warren’s last point, which is the relationship between the

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<sup>139</sup> 1Cor 3:9 (ISV); see also 2Cor 6:1.

two partners. Nevertheless, the first two statements of his partnership reflections should not be neglected.<sup>140</sup>

Because of God's character which displays the unity within the Trinity, a person created in the image of God is able to act according to God's character and use this as the basis for unity in the relationships with others. Butler (1992:34) agrees with this view:

“So, community, relationships, how we operate in the field – these are born out of the character of God. This is not something we learn from secular models (though they frequently confirm the truth). This is not driven by anthropology and sociology but rather by God's character”.

Nissen (1997:121-145) attempts to describe nine biblical models of partnership. He sees “God's Oikoumene” – “The One Household of Life” as the theological basis for partnership and looks at partnership as something that God provided for the universal church. He presents the following models as:

1. *Covenant*. The covenant concept is widely used in the Old Testament. Nissen states, that “the idea of *covenant* insists that sharing life is definitional of God” (:124). God expresses the need for love, relationship and solidarity and does not dwell on the movement from the stronger to the weaker partner but the emphasis is on solidarity and availability.
2. *Koinonia*. *Koinonia*, frequently translated as fellowship, is one of the most important New Testament models. Although we find that the term *koinonia* is used as “partnering in a joint activity”, Nissen understands it more in the sense of “participation” in some object or activity (participation in the spirit or in someone's faith). However, he does not understand *koinonia* in the sense of “the sharing of the people concerned directly with one another” (:125).
3. *Body of Christ*. The meaning of this image is that the Church, local or universal, became not just one body, but the Body of Christ. Nissen cites the apostle Paul who develops this model in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 not only becoming one body, but also living out a “diversity and unity in the Spirit” (:127). Although the body has many different members, a certain mutuality of relationship within the body is recognized that is working towards the common good of the whole. Nissen also compares the model of the Body of Christ with the model of the church as a *new humanity* (Eph. 2:14-16) where the Gentiles became part of this new body in Christ.
4. *The Eucharist*. In using the verses in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17<sup>141</sup> Nissen points out that the Eucharist is one of the most powerful symbols of sharing and partnership. This is an image of the Body of Christ who gave himself to others and means that the partners participate in a mutual, very costly sharing with each other. It talks about the giving and receiving in the partnership.

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<sup>140</sup> The study of the creation in the image of God, the Trinity and the church as the Body of Christ in the preceding chapter shows the importance of Warren's threefold understanding of partnership relations.

<sup>141</sup> 1Cor 10:16-17 (ISV). “The cup of blessing that we bless is a sign of our sharing in the blood of Christ, isn't it? The bread that we break is a sign of our sharing (*koinonia*) in the Body of Christ, isn't it? Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, because all of us partake of the one loaf.”

5. *The Societas*. The *Societas* were a form of a Roman trade institutions which had a contractual agreement to which the members contributed their property, labor, skill, status towards the achievement of a common goal (:131). Nissen compares the *Societas* to a special partnership developed between Paul and the Philippian church<sup>142</sup> from which Paul received financial support. It was a “partnership in the gospel” (Phil 1:5) and a mutual relationship of giving and receiving. Nissen sees this partnership as a form of “a three-way reciprocity” between Paul, the Philippian Church and God himself, because both human partners are actually serving God (:131).
6. *The Collection*. Paul’s collection for the poor in Jerusalem<sup>143</sup> could be seen as the “first interchurch aid project (:133).” This collection is seen as a manifestation and result of the grace of God and this grace-relationship to God should also lead to such a relationship among one another. Sharing in Christ should show the way to sharing with each other. “This is what Paul calls “fellowship” or community (koinonia) (:133).
7. *Material and Spiritual Fellowship in Jerusalem*. Nissen describes the community of Acts 2 and 4 where the members are sharing common resources with people in need.
8. *Conciliar Fellowship*. Some of the problems in the early church were solved by what is here called “Conciliar Fellowships”. The problem of food distribution among the Hellenistic widows (Acts 6) and the “Council of Jerusalem” (Acts 15) are taken as models to solve inner problems, accept differences, and to restore unity in the Body of Christ.
9. *Criticism of the “rule of reciprocity”*. Here the parable in Luke 14:12-14<sup>144</sup> is used to teach that when we give something we should not expect to receive something back. Jesus criticized this behavior and asks us to give without being paid back. We should give freely without expectations. If we do so, we do not oblige the receiver to give something back. This attitude does not bind the receiver in servitude or gratitude. “All gratitude is to be directed towards God (:136).”

Nissen of course mentions that there is no prefabricated model or models for the partners to use. It certainly depends on their specific situation and he recommends that his proposed biblical models are used as an inspiration for models in their own context.

Above some biblical texts and models of partnership have been described which are foundational for partnership in World Mission. Some of these examples express more than just a working or partnering relationship and need further investigation. It seems that most existing partnerships concentrate on the horizontal relationship between the partners rather than the communion with God within their cooperation. This appears to be a missing element which should be looked at more carefully.

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<sup>142</sup> Phi 4:15-16 (ASV) “And ye yourselves also know, ye Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship (*koinonein*) with me in the matter of giving and receiving but ye only; for even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my need.”

<sup>143</sup> 1Cor 16:1-4; Rom 15:24-32; Gal 2:9-10.

<sup>144</sup> See also Lk 6:30-35.

At the conclusion of the Working Consultation on Partnership in Wheaton, IL, Larry D. Pate (1992:166) noted on the subject of the biblical basis of Partnership:

“Many of the contributors at the consultation chose pertinent biblical passages to introduce the concept of partnership. A summary of some of the most important is instructive:

Eccl 4:9,12. Synergy – two can accomplish more than twice as much as one and three is even better! (Panya Baba)

1Cor 3:9. Community – believers are both a means and an object of partnership ministry. (Panya Baba)

Rom 12; 1Cor 12; Eph 4. Integrated Asset Model – the integration of “body” parts so that the whole may function is a powerful scriptural analogy demanding partnership. (Phill Butler)

Phil 1. Comprehensive – Biblical models involving prayer, mobilization, and finances. (Luis Bush)”

The author agrees with Pate when he writes that “these few examples demonstrate that many theological treasures yet remain to be mined under the banner of Partnership” (:166). And one can agree even more with his statement that “our understanding of the biblical data has been impaired by our inability to see much beyond Western models of partnership” (166).

### **3.3.2.2 Models of Partnership in Mission Context**

In 1992 Butler (1992:28) described the “**vertically integrated**” forms of partnership in contrast to “**horizontally integrated**” joint ventures. He takes an example from the plastic industry. There might be a company which employs many people from specialists in petrochemicals, research, marketing and others. They produce their plastic articles for different objects such as automobiles, airplanes, or toys, but their main business is plastic. This is a *horizontally* integrated industry. If you want to construct for example a very complex object like a car, you need many other items like steel, electronics, rubber, and chemicals. All of those elements have to be *vertically* integrated for a single objective, the construction of an automobile (:30). If this model is transferred to churches and organizations in World Mission, then partnership needs to become more complex than it is right now. There might be a mission organization that has the objective of evangelization in different countries around the world. It can bring people to Christ, but they cannot reach the whole country for the Kingdom of God. In order to establish the goal of reaching a whole country for Christ other churches and organizations are necessary to join the partnership. To reach this goal there need to be organizations and churches involved which have specialties in

broadcasting, literature work, church planting, training and more. This would be a vertically integrated partnership for the sake of reaching a much broader objective than just one specialized mission organization can have.

Butler gives the example of the horizontally integrated model of broadcasting, in which broadcasting is used to reach three different language groups: the Olongos, the Dubis and the Zawads. Then he describes the vertically integrated model of partnership, in which several different ministries such as scripture translation, medical, development, broadcasting and others team up together to have a deeper impact on reaching the language group of the Olongos.

**Figure 4. Horizontally and Vertically Integrated Models**

	Olongos	Dubis	Zawads
Personal Witness			
Visiting Teams			
Literature			
Broadcasting			
Development			
Medical			
Scripture Translation			

Broadcasting (or any other specialty) may “horizontally” serve a wide range of language groups. However in a single unreached language group (like the Olongos above) the objective of seeing a viable national church is most likely when all the specialties are “vertically” integrated into a coordinated strategy.

Source: Butler (1992:31).

In the first model different broadcasting ministries could team up together or develop a common ministry in order to reach these different language groups. In the second model many different ministries could partner together to have a deeper impact within one language group. In 1994 Butler (1994:14) already identified ten of these vertically integrated partnerships which were operating among different language groups and he observed “that frequently these ‘vertically integrated’ partnerships have ‘horizontally integrated’ networks<sup>145</sup>, working groups, or specialized sub-partnerships within them.”

These partnerships work towards a specific goal. Butler presented his model at the working consultation on Partnership at Wheaton, IL, under the title of “Strategic Partnerships”. A strategy is a long-term plan of action designed to achieve a particular goal. The model of

<sup>145</sup> The difference about partnerships and networks will be addressed later in this chapter.

partnerships that Butler talks about is definitely goal- or task-oriented. Rickett (2000) even discusses the “Building of Strategic Relationships” with the partners in the non-Western World. That means he wants to build relationship in order to establish a plan to reach a long-term goal. Culturally speaking one might wonder how this is perceived by the non-Western partners. The topic of relationship-oriented and task-oriented partnerships definitely demands a closer examination in the partnership dialogue.

Keyes and Pate (1993:204-205) present seven different types of partnerships that are partly task- and partly relationship-oriented:

1. *Training Partnerships*. These should emerge to provide adequate training for non-Western missionaries who do not have adequate training opportunities. Eventually, missionaries from any part of the world should be able to obtain good theological and missiological training in or near their fields of placement.
2. *Pioneer Missions Partnerships*. International consortiums of the type being developed by Interdev which focus on unreached language and people groups should proliferate in the years ahead. This requires that partnering agencies unselfishly share goals, resources, and credit for the task.
3. *Denominational Partnerships*. Cooperation within denominations is common around the world. What must become more common are international partnerships within the denominations to pursue valid cross-cultural ministry tasks.
4. *Association-based Partnerships*. National and regional associations of churches and mission agencies are beginning to coordinate and to broker partnerships for ministries within their geographical areas.
5. *Global South Mission Partnerships*. Partnerships among the Global South missions have been slow in developing, but will increasingly be a necessity in the coming decades.
6. *Informational Partnerships*. There needs to be a spread of information-age tools to facilitate the tasks of world evangelism. This will become increasingly important as the information required to accomplish the remaining tasks of world evangelism increases.
7. *Partnership Development Partnerships*. Partnership to develop partnerships will be needed to coordinate potential partnership development, to investigate possible partnership tasks, and to serve as a liaison agent among partnering groups.<sup>146</sup>

Although relationships in these models are important, it could be said that they are merely oriented to fulfill some objectives or tasks. It also seems that these partnership descriptions are seen from the perspective of the Western eye and it would be good to

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<sup>146</sup> The “Coalition On the Support of Indigenous Ministries” (COSIM) could be considered as such a partnership. See: [www.cosim.info/about](http://www.cosim.info/about).

discuss these models with the non-Western partners who may value the relationship side more than the goal-orientation. These models are not really reflecting the communion and brotherly relationship which exists within the universal church of Christ.

Adeyemo (1994:245) describes eight models in light of partnership relationships with an evaluative viewpoint affirming that he would prefer the last of these models:

1. *Mother / Daughter Model.* Mission agencies plant churches and maintain an ongoing relationship with the national church. As it were, the mission agency “drives the car” until the national church is old enough to “take the wheel”; the two then “switch seats”. Definite tensions can arise in this arrangement. Frequently the Western agency wants to manipulate, and the national church resists domination. The two are brothers, but the agency is an “older” brother whom the national church must consult. The “umbilical cord” is not completely cut.
2. *Parachurch Establishment (Entrepreneurial) Model.* Under this model, parachurch relief and / or evangelism agencies set up their own structure and hire nationals to carry out the objectives of the enterprise. Among nationals there is a growing unrest and frustration with this system; some radical young evangelicals call this process “renting the nationals.” They feel like decorations on the cake, added for show so that agencies can boast of their national force.
3. *National Support Model.* Here, Western agencies and churches arrange direct financial support for nationals and their projects. Initially this model seemed to be the catch-all solution. Then we discovered that partnership is more than just giving money. Some nationals feel used when asked to fulfill somebody else’s agenda.
4. *Nationals-on-the-Team Model.* This model incorporates nationals working side by side with Westerners, and nationals must raise their own support to be part of them. Many churches in the West still are very reluctant to accept nationals as part of the team.
5. *Paternal Network Model.* Here, the indigenous mission agency requests assistance from its international counterpart.
6. *Secondment Model.* Under this model, a Western church or mission agency seconds, or loans, its personnel to a national church for a period of time. A variant of this is when the Western body financially supports national personnel under a three to five year program, with a yearly scaling down of Western funds as the national organization or church picks up the responsibility.
7. *Empowerment Model.* Western agencies supply the money, personnel, and technical assistance needed by the national churches. Rather than setting up its own structure, the agency empowers national churches to do the work. This model is being used more and more by relief and development ministries.
8. *Multinational Church Network (Enablement) Model.* Under this model, partners enable each other as members of the same body. The supporting Western

church does not act merely as camouflage for the Third World church's work; ownership does not lie in either party's hand. This model presupposes that neither the Western nor the Third World church has all it needs to fulfill the scriptural mandate; there is an acknowledgement of mutual need. Here mission and vision are church-rooted. We thank God for parachurch organizations, but it is not His desire to replace the church with parachurch structures. Here partnership and control of property belong to nationals. Partnership springs from love, which allows them to disagree. For nationals do not exist merely to rubber stamp Western ideas and decisions. Here there is true knowledge and discernment of people and their real needs. Partnership is more than money, people, experience, and knowledge. Here there is integrity and honesty.

With the presentation of these models Adeyemo puts his finger on several problems that he sees in existing partnerships. Paternalism, cultural differences, trust, money, power, dominance over the other and one's own interests are only a few difficulties he names in existing partnerships. He sees partnership with eyes from a Global South perspective and criticizes domination from the West towards the Global South. In his last model he also mentions that partnership should be church-rooted as living together within the universal Body of Christ. Partnerships are not a one-way road, but should have a mutual base where both partners can learn from each other and contribute towards each other's progress. Both partners have equal say and equal rights in their partnership. Leadership would spring out of both, the Western and the Global South cultures, and the leaders would empower, learn from each other and build each other up. This would be a true mutual relationship.

### **3.3.2.3 Networks and Partnerships**

Many networks in World Mission have been founded in the last decades.<sup>147</sup> There are local, national and international networks which want to advance the Kingdom work. The term "network" was often connected with radio broadcast or computer networks, but it also can be used for groups of people. A network is simply a group of people who interact together. It also could be defined as an extended group of people with "similar interests or concerns which interacts and remains in informal contact for mutual assistance or support."<sup>148</sup> The keywords here are "extended group of people", "similar interests", "assistance and support" and "informal contact". In contrast to a partnership the network is more an exchange and a sharing of resources in order to learn something for one's own

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<sup>147</sup> For example see: [www.globalconnections.co.uk/](http://www.globalconnections.co.uk/); <http://visionsynergy.net/about-us>.

<sup>148</sup> The Free Dictionary: network 2c. Available at: [www.thefreedictionary.com/network](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/network) (accessed on 17/01/2013).

project or fulfill one's own plans, where in a partnership the people work together to achieve a common vision or a common goal.

Butler (2005:34) defines a network as

“Any group of individuals or organizations sharing a common interest, who regularly communicate with each other to enhance *their individual purposes*.”

He distinguishes between a “weak or informal” network with a less active or intense relationship in order to share information or interests and a “strong or more structured” network which often is task-, project- or issue-oriented with a well defined structure and objective.

The network therefore should help the participants to get and share information and resources in order to move the project that they are involved in. It becomes a source of information and exchange where problems and solutions can be discussed, but the participants do not actually work together. Addicott (2005:93) sees networking as:

“recognizing that we each have resources that the other could make use of. We agree to lend or share our resources to assist each other fulfill our respective plans. In other words, we cooperate (= help each other achieve what each had already planned to do). Partnership on the other hand, is more like being side-by-side addressing a common problem. Together we develop a plan to solve the problem. We each commit resources to fulfill our common plan. In other words, we collaborate (=work together to achieve our common purpose of solving a common problem).”

However, Butler (2005:261) sees networks as incubators for partnerships, where on the macro level the network links people from large geographical areas together to discuss specific, but very large topics and on a project level the network can encourage the building of working partnerships dealing with specific issues.

Although many people agree that networks are very helpful for the Kingdom work and that today it has become much easier to network around the globe (there are many examples of global networks), some of the problems when dealing with networks need to be considered. Modern communication technology such as telephone and internet are very accessible in Western countries, but much less in poorer areas. Therefore many leaders in the Global South cannot easily participate in these networks. This is a huge disadvantage for them. The same is true for network meetings. Many leaders from the Global South may not be able to travel to network conferences. This could lead to the fact that the network becomes Western dominated. For a Christian international network to function, there also needs to be a common language. Most people would agree that this language should be English. But again, those who do not speak English cannot be part of such a network.

The question is also who initiates the networks. Because of easy access to communication tools and travel many networks are initiated and run by Western people and organizations. Therefore much care should be given to the fact that the network is not seen as something Western or foreign which is only superimposed. Goh (2004: par. 23) writes about Asian Christian networks:

“Christian networks, even with the strong Asian organizational impetus of the present era, are thus likely to be seen by dominant religious-political groups as a foreign intervention that threatens in some ways to destabilize the status quo.”

Much attention needs to be given during the establishment of international Christian networks to the fact that not only Westerners should initiate and participate in such networks nor should they become the predominant players. How can nationals with less resources or language abilities participate in those networks? How can a network avoid being seen as a foreign initiative? These questions should be answered in order to involve the participants in an adequate way. However, a network demands an even lesser degree of involvement than a partnership. Relationships and interaction will be less significant than in a partnership. The impact on cultures which are more relationship-oriented than the Western cultures needs to be considered.

### **3.4 Barriers for Cross-Cultural Partnership in World Mission Context**

Although there are many advantages for cross-cultural partnerships there are also difficulties and barriers for this kind of cooperation. Most people who are involved in cross-cultural partnerships are aware of the problems and several authors identify them while others seem totally ignorant of their existence. Those barriers which hinder “cross-cultural” partnerships need to be given special attention. Addicott (2005:104) calls these problems “dis-ease” and understands the actual problem of how one views, accepts and values the differences. This is a good start, but it should be recognized that many of the problems are deep-rooted in history and in culture, so that they are not easily revealed in everyday life.

Roembke (2000:95) in her book on multicultural teams talks about how difficult it is to change one’s own core values and that intercultural relationships are also affected by decision-making processes or leadership styles, which again are related to different thought or logic patterns (:163). These differences are located deep under the surface and it will often take a long time of living in a certain culture to discover and to understand them. In the

following, some barriers for cross-cultural partnerships will be identified which might help those who are involved in cross-cultural ministry to be aware of their existence and to be encouraged to search for solutions.

### 3.4.1 Sociological Barriers

#### 3.4.1.1 Colonialism and Paternalism

At the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century colonialism came about when Vasco da Gama and Christopher Columbus “discovered” the seaway to India and the Americas. The New World was conquered by the different colonial powers of Portugal, Spain, England, France, the Netherlands and Germany in order to rule over these “colonies” and to exploit<sup>149</sup> them. According to Encyclopedia Britannica Western colonialism is “a political-economic phenomenon whereby various European nations explored, conquered, settled, and exploited large areas of the world.”<sup>150</sup>

The European conquerors seeing the natives speaking a different language and having different behavior and habits concluded that these people had to be inferior and needed to be civilized.<sup>151</sup> The conquering of the new world was not just a political act, but along with the soldiers and merchants came the “missionaries” into the new world. The established church in Europe sent out priests or “missionaries” with the intention of Christianizing these new colonies. Bosch (1991:304) writes that “whether they liked it or not, the missionaries became pioneers of Western imperialistic expansion.” He states that the word “mission” was introduced for the first time by Ignatius of Loyola and that

“The church was understood as a legal institution which had the right to entrust its “mission” to secular powers and to a corps of “specialists” – priests or religious. “Mission” meant the activity by which the Western ecclesiastical system was extended into the rest of the world. The “missionary” was irrevocably tied to an institution in Europe, from which he or she derived the mandate and power to confer salvation on those who accept certain tenets of the faith (:228).”

Colonialism swept over the whole world, to the Americas, to Africa and to Asia. Because the colonialists saw themselves as superior, the slave trading grew to an extreme

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<sup>149</sup> “To make an unethical use of for one’s own profit.” (Webster’s New World Dictionary 1990:210).

<sup>150</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica: Colonialism, Western. Available at: [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/126237/colonialism-Western](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/126237/colonialism-Western) (accessed on 23/12/2012).

<sup>151</sup> Adamo & Enuwosa (2004:5) cite the following as an example of colonialist literature: “The heathen are spiritually lost, wicked, willful sinners, without Christ, having no hope and without God in the world. Their moral conditions are reeking with filthy and degrading habits... They are marked by abject poverty, wretched homes and unremitting.”

dimension, often with the approval of the established church. Later, when the protestant and evangelical mission came on the scene the situation changed to some degree,<sup>152</sup> because many of these missionaries were not sent by the King or an established church but by their mission societies. However, they as well were not free of colonialism and paternalism and racial discrimination which are still hurting the people of their former colonies. The wounds and scars of the inhuman and degrading treatment of the colonialists and religious workers are deep and are not forgotten today. Cooper (2005:7) understands that colonialism has not totally ended and that a certain neo-colonialism is on the rise:

“Colonialism is an issue that has not been completely extinguished. As an American evangelical missiologist, this author has to consider the issues presented in this paper with careful reflection. While the days of Western colonial expansion have seen their end, a neo-colonialism has risen within American evangelical missions.”

Christianity up until now was perceived as a “Western religion” in many parts of the world and people from the Global South realize, when thinking about the Gulf and Iran war, that Western imperialism has not disappeared.

Moon (2003:66) for example writes:

“Asian peoples who were under the Western colonial rule have negative sentiment toward Western countries and their missionary enterprise. Their sentiment toward Christianity has not been favorable. Furthermore, after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001 and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and in Iraq, the anti-American sentiment was generated in Asia and it naturally led to anti-Christian terror attacks. Asian peoples became more hostile and less tolerant towards both foreign and local Christians. This anti-American and anti-Christian sentiment in Asia restricts the mission work by foreign nationals. The Western mission, though having made significant contributions to the advancement of the Gospel in Asia for the last two centuries or so, is now forced to reduce its role by the changing tides in world history, secular and Christian alike.”

That this thinking also has a strong influence in the church and church ministry is not surprising. When it comes to partnership and collaboration, Western Christians need to be careful how they are looked at by their national partners and how they conduct their ministry. They have to realize, when starting to work in a different culture that they do not come with a clean slate. Moon (:67) continues:

“Being ushered into the post-colonial era, Asian churches have the uphill battle to change the image of Christianity from a Western/foreign religion to that

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<sup>152</sup> The great missionary-explorer David Livingstone founded the alliance for „Commerce, Civilization, and Christianity“ which was to characterize British Protestant missions in the colonial era (Thomas 1995:67).

of an Asian religion. That is, the de-Westernization of the image of Christianity in Asia is now the biggest challenge for Asian mission. In so far as Western faces represent Christianity in Asia, the de-Westernization of the image of Christianity would become a near impossible task for Asian Christians. The Western mission is expected to exercise their missionary prudence to make way for Asian mission, for the very presence of Western missionaries in Asia may unintentionally hinder the advancement of the Gospel.”

Although Westerners may think that they leave no room today for colonialism and paternalism in their present ministry, they might as easily judge that their leadership style, church planting strategies, evangelism methods, organizational styles, and handling of finances are much better than those on the mission fields where they serve and that they need to export them. Westerners often think that “we can do it” and that “we have it all” and when they come to the mission field they want to give and teach others. They hardly reflect on what they can learn from their partners and what the Global South partners are able to do better than the Western partner. Such an attitude would still be considered very paternalistic.

Paternalism is the authority exercised in a way that limits individual freedom and responsibility (like a father-son relationship) and that controls subordinates in a fatherly way for their own good. Fuller (1980:272) talked about the different stages in mission-church relationships as there is at first the “pioneer” stage, then the “parent stage” followed by the “partner” and “participant” stage. This image can easily mislead, because if someone is a father, he will still be a father, even when his children are adults. It is not easy to lay down fatherhood, when one’s children have grown up. A father always wants to give advice and help his children to do better, because he has more knowledge, wisdom, skills and experience in life, lived through many problems and he knows how to do it better.<sup>153</sup> When it comes to the mission-church relationship in a cross-cultural setting this attitude seems very arrogant. Of course in the first place a father-child relationship is something very positive, but when used in a mission-church relationship in a cross-cultural setting this easily can turn into a “over-under” relationship with the Western missionary (maybe unconsciously) believing to have a superior role.

Givule (2008:16) uses strong words when he talks about the problem of paternalism:

“It is reflected in their (the missionaries) attitudes and orientations with respect to the democratic organization of churches, the Western idea of time, the physical design of churches, the structure of worship services and church music, dress, housing, etc.

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<sup>153</sup> In the author’s own mission organization the last part of their church planting strategy is the stage of “watchcare” which still expresses certain superiority over the national partners. Here the partners should still be “watched over” or “taken care of” instead of accepting them as equal partners with their full voice for decision-making and voting.

In summary, the missionaries can be criticized for imposing a Christianity that was strongly acculturated to Western civilization. They should have avoided deculturalizing, depersonalizing and alienating Africans, because in so doing the missionary undermined the cultural foundations of societies that were to that point still strong.

Their paternalistic philosophy and spirit of superiority towards Africans was the ongoing basis of missionary action in Africa in general and in Congo in particular.

All of the activities undertaken in the mission field were initially conceived and elaborated on the basis of this philosophy. It is for this reason that the kinds of relationships that the missionaries maintained with the Christians they had evangelized were always overshadowed by a spirit of paternalism.”

The missionary today has to be very careful not to fall into the paternalistic trap. He constantly needs to ask himself, if he thinks that his culture and also his theology is superior to those of the host culture. Vigen (1979:477) talks about a “Kolonial-Sehnsucht” (colonial yearning) when the missionary dreams about the time, when the “white folks ran things”. He may be tempted to think that these “things” such as good roads, postal systems, commerce and others were better, if the colonialist would still be there. He may feel that the situation was much better in those days. Even today the missionary compares the living standard and how things are done with his own country back home and often comes to the same conclusion. “The way we do it is much better!” This is a superior and paternalistic mind-set.

Paternalistic views and actions can also favor a dependency relationship, where the weaker partner always thinks that he should depend on the stronger partner. Van Rheenen (1996:199) even states that

“this tendency towards paternalism is amplified when Western missionaries and agencies initiate a partnership and feel responsible for its success and continuance. As puppeteers control marionettes, Westerners frequently pull the strings that guide decision-making processes. ... In reality, paternalism frequently continues under the guise of partnership.”

Paternalistic thinking often originates from the question of power and control. The father exercises power and control over the child before the child becomes an adult and independent in choice and action. In partnership situations the question of power and control is a very sensitive one, especially when it comes to the question of money. Who is in control? Like the father, the Western partner has a hard time transferring power and control over to his national partner.

Furthermore, missionaries often have their own Bible studies (of course in their own heart language), their own missionary children’s schools, their own recreational activities or festivities without sharing these interests with the nationals. They need to ask themselves

how this behavior is viewed by their national co-workers. Any type of superior thinking will destroy trust and therefore a brotherly relationship and it will hinder a true collaboration and partnership. Missionaries therefore must be very cautious and should not give any reason to be seen as paternalists who think that they may be superior. They need to humbly accept cultural and other differences of their partners, recognize them as equal, and also acknowledge that the partner has an equal right in decision-making and handling of finances.

### ***3.4.1.2 Historical, Ideological or Political Prejudices***

Colonialism and Paternalism are rooted in Western history, but there are other historical, ideological and political factors that can hinder partnership. The world has become global today and partners come from many different countries and cultures. Several of these countries have been in war against each other and the scars of war are not easily forgotten, not even, when Christians work together in partnership. Just consider Asia. How many wars have taken place on this continent? Even in more recent history there were the wars in Korea, Vietnam, Japan, China, Taiwan, India and Pakistan. The same is true for Africa and Latin America, North America and Europe. Some of the countries that have been at war against each other are now sending missionaries into the respective country or are involved in other types of mission partnerships. Former enemies may now have to face each other and need to work on the same project. Even if they work in Christian organizations the wounds are often still present in their memories and they must overcome any hate, bitterness, or resentment that may still be there, even if it is unconscious.<sup>154</sup> These resentful sentiments have to be surmounted and it will be necessary to ask the partner for forgiveness for one's own bad attitude.

It is also important to consider that Westerners are not only identified with the culture from which they come, but also with the ideological or political systems in which they live. The systems of Capitalism, Socialism and Communism or Democracy and Dictatorship influence people more than they think and their beliefs and actions will express this. The people and also the partners with whom they work will identify them to a certain degree with these views. In France for example the evangelical movement is often presented by the

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<sup>154</sup> Miroslav Volf (1996:9) for example was challenged by the question of loving and embracing his enemies and wrote a political theology of identity, otherness and reconciliation which he called "Exclusion and Embrace".

media as coming from North America and that missionaries were sent by George W. Bush to conquer the country<sup>155</sup> .

Western partners will be identified with their home countries and the systems in which they live and people do not view them outside of this background. Sometimes the system can be seen as menacing to one's own system or culture. Wickeri (2005:4) draws the picture of the United States as the center of a "new empire" and he says:

"This is a different kind of Empire from empires of the past. There is no inside and outside of Empire. Empire has penetrated the internal political, economic, cultural and social structures of every country and region in the world. Empire reconstructs identities, crosses all boundaries; it overcomes nation states and reproduces cultures.

The United States is the center of Empire, its financial organizer, political arbiter and military enforcer. But you can be a good citizen of Empire in Nairobi or New Delhi just as easily as you can in New York or Los Angeles.

When Empire perceives itself threatened, its leaders will not hesitate to use whatever means necessary to bring things under control and extend its influence. The "war on terrorism," therefore, is an extension of Empire, globalization by other means. In the words of President Bush, "the United States will 'use this moment of opportunity' (i.e. the war on terrorism) to bring democracy, development, free market and free trade to every corner of the globe." The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and other places have direct consequences for every country in the world, and for the World Mission of the church."

Wall (in Escobar 2003a:49) remarks that

"American missionaries have tended to think of themselves as non-political: how can it be otherwise if church and state live in different spheres? Non-Americans have seen continual political implications in their activities: how can it be otherwise if church and state inhabit the same sphere or at least overlapping spheres."

The Western partners will automatically be identified with the system of the country they come from and their actions will be judged by this fact. Non-Westerners will also look at the religious and sociological situation of the Western countries. Historically many of them are perceived as "Christian Countries", but when they see the decline of Christianity and Christian values they may ask what right do these countries have to send out missionaries.

Western missionaries have to realize that they do not come as a dark horse. Bellah (1991:467) does not only perceive the United States as a political empire, he expands the dimension of global power to the economic market:

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<sup>155</sup> See the article in the French magazine "Le Nouvel Observateur" from the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2004 with the title: "Les évangéliques : La secte qui veut conquérir le monde (The evangelicals: The cult that will conquer the World; author's translation)."

“But the United States today is not only threatened by a quasi-totalitarian national security state. I would argue it is threatened by another kind of totalitarianism, one that, with our Lockean<sup>156</sup> presuppositions, we find it hard to recognize, namely, market totalitarianism. For over a decade now the errors of Lockean economic individualism and thin contractualism have been pushed to the unheard of extremes. The result is an unprecedented polarization of wealth and poverty in our society and public evidence of widespread misery ...” “What is clear is that this economic ideology which turns human beings into relentless market maximisers is destructive to everything we can call community, to family, to church, to neighborhood to school, and ultimately to the world” (:471).

This is not only true for the United States. The individual pursuit of self-interest is common in the Western World and coming to the Global South, the Western individual will take this baggage along. Most often one is not even aware of this and one will act as one would normally do, out of the own national and cultural imprint. Still, non-Western people will see the political and ideological influence that he carries along. Western missionaries will unconsciously be identified with the capitalistic system. Some of the traits of capitalism and marketing have also found its way into the missionary movement. It seems that if the right “management tools” are used, everything is possible. Churches back home want to see the “Bang for the Buck” and if the missionary enterprise advances too slowly, the missionary is called back as “non-effective”.<sup>157</sup> “Business as Mission” is another attempt where the business experience is used to do mission, maybe at the cost of theological profoundness. Here again, the missionaries are identified with the ideologies of their home country.

Lara-Braud (1983:5) describes it this way:

“The credibility of cross-cultural missionary outreach is increasingly tested by what North Americans are seen to be at home, and what they permit to be done in their name elsewhere. There are no Christian nations as such. That illusion disappeared with the era of Christendom. But the United States is correctly perceived as the most powerful nation in the world, and it is also seen as a society in which the majority of the population, including those most influential in public and private life, are Christians. That is why North Americans are held so accountable by others, and why those who know them best may wonder at their audacity in sending missionaries to other lands. People in those other lands know about the American tendency to excessive accumulation of material wealth, and to measure human worth in terms of income and possessions.”

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<sup>156</sup> John Locke was an English philosopher who argued that property is a natural right and it is derived from labor. His thoughts can be developed into an ideology which “promises an unheard of degree of individual freedom, an unlimited opportunity to compete for material well-being, and an unprecedented limitation on the arbitrary powers of government to interfere with individual initiative” (Bellah 1991:462).

<sup>157</sup> McKaughan (1997:15-24), influenced by management strategies (:15) and performance thinking (:21), denotes a veteran missionary who is ineffective as a problem which will undermine the expectations of each subsequent generation of missionaries (:22).

The same could be said for other Western European countries that send missionaries. Can these Western missionaries, with their background, be credible in their propagation of the Gospel message? Can non-Westerners trust them? Can they really work together in partnership?

The question is, if the Western partner will promote and propagate the ideology or system of his own country or if he will accept and work within the system of the host country.<sup>158</sup> He needs to learn to understand and critically question his own background and learn from the background of his partners. Westerners have a hard time questioning their own understanding of individualism, freedom, power, and money and this could become a barrier to their ministry.

As Jesus became human and dwelled among his people, he identified himself with other human beings, Christians also need to lay down their cultural imperialism and learn from their partners. Cross-cultural workers have often failed to do so and they need to repent for their imperialistic and ethnocentric belief and acting and they ought to ask for forgiveness.

### **3.4.1.3 Unequal Partners**

Today it is generally agreed that in a partnership the partners should be equal. The ideal is that every partner brings an asset into the partnership for the common good of everybody. If there is a benefit, it will be shared equally between the partners in the collaboration. Furthermore the partners share equally in both responsibility and liability. In the area of economic development the OECD (2006) promotes equal partner relationships stating that a characteristic of a good partnership is co-operation and equal membership:

“Co-operation within a partnership is collaborative; it will be effective if the partners share a strategic vision, pursue compatible targets, and are all equal members in a predetermined organisational structure” (:7).

All the members of a partnership need to be brought together on an equal basis:

“An area based partnership is usually designed to bring together all relevant actors within a region that can contribute to improving a given situation on an equal basis” (:3).

But they also acknowledge the challenges of this undertaking. First, because of the difficulty of bringing *all relevant actors together*, second, because of the fact *that all should*

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<sup>158</sup> Roembke (2000:51) illustrates that the host culture also can be sinful and cultural values should not be accepted without appropriation. Jesus carefully filtered cultural values through the word and character of God.

*have equal rights*, and last, that the *ownership* of the goals and the work must be demonstrated by the partner of the organization (:4).

Partnership should go in two directions and not as a one-way road. This would be the best scenario, but the reality is yet different.<sup>159</sup> Western countries have seen themselves in the past as “sending countries” and the countries in the Global South were regarded as “receiving countries.”<sup>160</sup> For a long time this has been the case because it was mainly the West which has sent numerous missionaries and resources into non-Western countries. Although this is not true anymore because the former “receiving countries” are now themselves sending missionaries to other parts of the world, the image of the “sending West” still exists. Kasambala (2004:162) in the light of equal partnership relations asks the following questions:

“And in light of inequality, in terms of economic power and technological advancement, how much sense does it make for the church in the so-called receiving world to become convinced of a partnership relationship with the church in the so-called giving world? What can one give when one has been on the receiving side for a very long time in history? And equally, what can one receive when one has been on the giving side for a very long time?”

The concept of now becoming a “receiving country” would seem strange and embarrassing to the West and would hurt the self-esteem.

The same is true for the sharing of other resources. The Western countries are rich and have the means to provide more resources than many countries in the Global South. They can afford to travel by airplane and they have easy access to cars, motorcycles, housing, healthcare and communication technologies, such as the internet, whereas their partners cannot compete with their standard. This leaves the partner from the Global South in an inferior position, because he is not able to attend conferences, has no easy access to communication or has limited study or educational possibilities.

Western churches and agencies can fund radio stations, schools, hospitals, church buildings and other projects in their respective partner countries. This again leaves the Western partners in a superior position, whether or not they want to be. Bowers (1997:186) puts it this way, that

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<sup>159</sup> Butler (1999:757) tries to understand partnership from the non-Western perspective saying: “Frequently, the power and intimidation associated with Western mission agencies’ larger budgets and administrative structures have made it difficult for non-Western leadership to have a sense of equity in participation and ownership of cooperative efforts.”

<sup>160</sup> Saayman (2000:4-22) criticized the polarization of sending and receiving church ecclesiology during the era of modern missions and describes how concepts like “mother- and daughter churches” or “sending and receiving church” slowly disappeared during the partnership era.

“in terms of material wealth, the sending churches of Europe and North America are the haves, and the traditional receivers are mostly the have-nots. To the degree that financial resources are the focus of the interaction, they are not equal partners; thus the term has a different connotation than in standard English usage, where “partner” usually implies equality.”

Western partner organizations or agencies repeatedly come with their own agendas to initiate a project or to send missionaries or other personnel because that is what they were created for. Funds have been given in order to reach the objectives of the church, organization or agency. If the Western partner now sends the resources, he most often imposes how the resources are spent and normally will have the lead in defining and running the whole project, and he will also ask for accountability when the project is finished<sup>161</sup>. This is called the “golden rule” – “The one who has the gold, rules.” Simply said, that he is the head of the project. The partners in the Global South are the receivers and most often in an inferior position in which they are not consulted or even participate, when decisions or policies are made.

Tiénou (2006:50) also shows the marginalizing of a *Global South Theology* and he talks about “global domination of Western theology.” This can leave a bitter taste concerning the relationship on the part of the “weaker” partner. Who wants to always be in an inferior position? Can this lead to an inferiority complex of the weaker partner?

Kang-San (2008:2) asks the question: “Who is in the driver’s seat?”

“Partnership is a relationship entered into because of the different strengths the partners have. For example, Western partners may contribute mission expertise and funding resources while the Asian partners contribute local field knowledge, passion and growing missionary force. However, both parties face the problem of operating with old paradigms of mission thinking. Notably, this happens when Western agencies refuse to give up control, or when Asian churches merely look to Western partners for financial assistance. A core ideal in any effective partnership is the concept of “equality and mutuality”. While both Western and Asian partners agree on this biblical and strategic ideal, when it comes to working it out in practice, Western-Asian partnerships are fraught with numerous difficulties.”

Although much progress has been made in the last decades to overcome the inequality of the different partners, the fact is that it is still present in many cases. How can this imbalance be overcome? Menzel and Müller (1997:340) see the solution in an interdependent relationship:

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<sup>161</sup> This sometimes has to be done because of the legal requirements of the Western country. The government has to have proof that donated money is spend in the way which is conform with legal laws and with the purpose of the organization. But the partners in the Global South, not having such a system do not understand the reasoning behind this fact. Lederleitner (2010) in her book “Cross-Cultural Partnerships” describes the whole complex of problems dealing with money and accountability in cross-cultural partnerships.

“But how should a fruitful partnership be brought about when the partners are unequal? Many factors can contribute to this inequality: difference in origins, differing outlooks on life and the world, different standards of living and lifestyles, the gulf between the rich and the poor, and so on. The impossible becomes possible if the inequality is first accepted, if the partner is respected, if the present dependence is recognized. Thus it is not the others who need our help, but we who need them; the byword becomes "interdependence."

Others like Kan-San (2008:3) talk about an incarnational model of partnership and a change of attitude in the missionary. This is definitely true, but if partnership is not a one-way road and if both partners should profit from the cooperation, the question needs to be asked, what can partners in the Global South offer and what can the Western partners learn from them. If people only consider the matter of money and power, they will miss out on the blessings that the partner from the Global South has to offer. Looking at World Christianity today, it is clear that most Christians today do not live in the West anymore.<sup>162</sup> Christianity has grown considerably in other parts of the world in the last decades. This begs the question what could the Western partner learn from the Global South? Can they learn from them how to evangelize, how to do church planting and how to do leadership training? There is much room here for further reflection and action.

Are the partners really unequal? Probably not, but the thought of inequality is still in the minds of each one and hinder a free exchange, collaboration and fellowship. This must be overcome and reconciliation might be necessary in order to live as the universal Body of Christ. To accomplish this, a vulnerable attitude on the part of the missionary is absolutely necessary.<sup>163</sup> Volf (1996:100) proposes a model for the “divine community” which includes repentance, forgiveness, making space in oneself for the other, and the healing of memory. These elements can be essential for cross-cultural partnership relationships and need further investigation.

### **3.4.2 Cultural Barriers**

In this partnership discussion, the subject of the cultural differences cannot be ignored. Cultural blindness or ignorance can be a hindrance and a stumbling block for the partnership relation. Lamin Sanneh (1999:72) questions the concept of partnership because of how the West dealt with their cultural priorities in the past:

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<sup>162</sup> See Jenkins (2002).

<sup>163</sup> For more information see also: “The Alliance for Vulnerable Mission seeks to promote Christian mission to non-Western people using a Biblical model of ‘vulnerability’.” ([www.vulnerablemission.com](http://www.vulnerablemission.com))

“We may justifiably ask, however, whether partnership as a prescription for a guilt-laden West does not carry too heavy a baggage of Western cultural priorities and their effective propagation on the Third World, to have much promise.”

It is not surprising that many Western authors, when writing about partnership, they write about strategies, vision, objectives, structures, and relationships, but very little about the cultural differences and cultural barriers.<sup>164</sup> In order to have a functioning partnership and an open and honest communication the partners need to understand the cultural obstacles in their relationship.

What is culture?<sup>165</sup> Hiebert (1985:30) defines culture as

“... the more or less integrated systems of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behavior and products shared by a group of people who organize and regulate what they think, feel, and do.”

Hiebert (1985:31) presents three dimensions of culture in some sort of concentric circles: a) the “Cognitive Dimension” which is represented by knowledge, logic and wisdom and this dimension is arranged on the outside; b) the “Affective Dimension” expressed in feelings and aesthetics being positioned in the middle; c) the “Evaluative Dimension” which is made up of our values and allegiances and it lies directly in the center (see figure 5).

Hiebert (:99) explains difficulties of judgment within the different levels as follows:

“We have misunderstandings on the cognitive level and ethnocentrism on the affective level, but what can go wrong on the evaluative level? The answer lies in premature judgments. When we relate to other cultures we tend to judge them before we have learned to understand or appreciate them. In so doing, we use the values of our own culture, not of some metacultural framework. Consequently, other cultures look less civilized.”

In multicultural partnerships people with various backgrounds and values come together and when the above factors are ignored, premature judgment can easily take place. A person can think that one’s own culture is superior, because one prefers the own values, rituals, and symbols and therefore may judge a different culture as inferior. This is very ethnocentric.

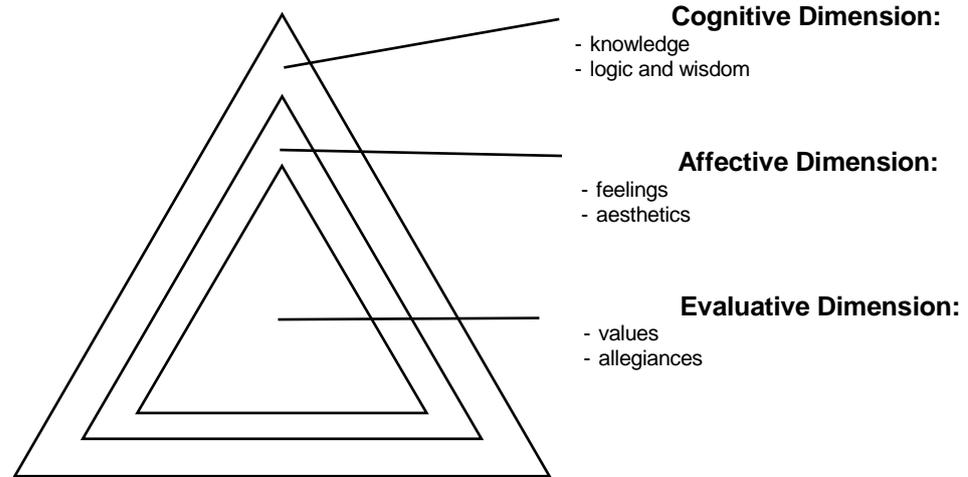
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<sup>164</sup> There is hardly any mention of cultural differences or cultural barriers in Butler’s (2005) and George’s (2004) books. But George has a good chapter on missional attitudes. Addicott (2005:117) has inserted a helpful chapter on cultural differences and Rickett (2002) also has added a few pages on intercultural understanding.

<sup>165</sup> There are many different definitions of culture. The Encyclopedia Britannica gives the following definition: “The earliest and most quoted definition is the one formulated in 1871 by Edward Burnett Tylor: ‘Culture or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.’” Available at: [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/146289/culture](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/146289/culture) (accessed on 23/12/2012).

Nida (1986:28) writes: “For him (the anthropologist), culture is all learned behavior which is socially acquired that is, the material and non-material traits which are passed on from one generation to another. They are both transmittable and accumulative, and they are cultural in the sense that they are transmitted by the society, not by genes.” Peterson (2004:17) gives his definition of culture: “Culture is the relatively stable set of inner values and beliefs generally held by groups of people in countries or regions and the noticeable impact those values and beliefs have on the peoples’ outward behavior and environment.”

**Figure 5. The Three Dimensions of Culture**



Source: Hiebert (1985:31).

Roembke (2000) in her book “Building Credible Multicultural Teams” makes it evident that cultural misunderstandings can generate distrust, suspicion and division in a multicultural partnership and that the partners can lose credibility in their relationship and in the communication of the gospel message. Culture has to do with one’s own value system<sup>166</sup> and beliefs and it is hard to change one’s inner values and belief system. Therefore it is necessary to study and understand the culture of the partner very well and to accept the cultural differences.

Hofstede (2005:6) proposes a cultural relativism and recommends that “information about the nature of the cultural differences between societies, their roots, and their consequences should precede judgment and action.” He cites Levi-Strauss (:6):

“Cultural relativism affirms that one culture has no absolute criteria for judging the activities of another culture as “low” or “noble”. However, every culture can and should apply such judgment to its own activities, because its members are actors as well as observers.”

When missionaries or partners enter a new culture they normally come with their own cultural baggage and it is hard for them to accept and appreciate the differences in the other culture. Nevertheless, they cannot stay ignorant of the other culture and need to adopt a learning and humble attitude towards the partner’s culture, otherwise cultural barriers will hinder the relationship and therefore the partnership.

In the following it will be examined how different elements of cultural barriers can hinder a good relationship and partnership.

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<sup>166</sup> See Roembke (2000:95), Hiebert (1985:33) and Hofstede (2005:7).

### **3.4.2.1 Language and Communication**

Language is one of the biggest obstacles in a cross-cultural partnership. Missionaries often underestimate the importance of learning the national language – and especially of learning it well. In his own ministry the author has seen missionaries struggle with the language, even after many years in the partner country. There were short-termers who came with the idea of evangelizing the country within a few weeks, without knowing a word of the national language. New missionaries especially want to offer English classes or English Bible studies in their countries of ministry “because the nationals want to learn English and here they can easily be reached with the Gospel!”<sup>167</sup> The danger in this is that the missionaries fall back into their own culture, because they cannot operate well in the national language.

When working in a multicultural and international setting, it is assumed that English is the applied language. Therefore many Western partners think, they do not need to learn the national language, but that the national is eager to learn English, because this may give status and maybe even economic advantages. If in a partnership only English is used as a common language, the non-English speakers are always at a disadvantage, because they cannot express themselves in the same way as a native English speaker.

Language is more than just the speaking of words to one another. It always has to do with relationships. Learning and using the national language is a sign of valuing the partner and the partner culture and voluntarily laying aside a stronger position. Todd (1999:447) points in the right direction when he talks about an incarnational language learner:

“Incarnational learners are those who, despite this principle, lay aside the economic and social advantages of being members of the more powerful language community and, against all odds, learn the language and take on the culture of the disadvantaged for no economic or social gain. They expend incredible energy and accept the most painful humiliation of sounding, in the beginning, like a stammering child.”

Everybody who has learned a foreign language and lived in a foreign culture knows this feeling that Todd describes, but if the partner wants to enter into a trust relationship, this is unavoidable. Todd (:448) also shows how learning the language and learning the culture are intertwined:

“To appreciate fully the richness of the language, one must participate in the culture. And in order to perceive more than just the outward behaviors, and really to delve into beliefs, values, and worldview, one must discuss them in the

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<sup>167</sup> The author has heard this argument numerous times from new missionary colleagues.

language of the culture. One must enter the culture and language and become, to the extent possible for an adult language and culture learner, an insider.”

Communication is not only the spoken word. Communication also takes place non-verbally. Normally it is only considered as “body-language”,<sup>168</sup> but non-verbal communication involves many other aspects. There are numerous non-verbal communication channels which also transmit a certain message to the receiver (see table 2).

**Table 2. Communication Channels**

<b>Spoken language</b>	<b>Speech, radio broadcasting</b>
Paralanguage	Rhythm, pitch, resonance, articulation, inflection, speaking rates and pauses, emotional tones
Written language	Writing, inscriptions, billboards
Pictorial	Road signs, street maps, magical drawings, astrological charts, diagrams, graphs, military insignias, college decals, logos
Kinesics	Body gestures, movements of hands and feet, facial expressions, eye contact, postures
Audio	Music (rock, jazz, waltz etc.), bells, gongs, drums, firecrackers, gun salutes, temple horns
Spatial	Standing distances, crowding, closeness and intimacy, separation between speaker and audience, marching in rank order (sometimes referred to as “proxemics”)
Temporal <sup>169</sup>	Meaning of “on time” or “late”, importance placed on time, New Years festivals, relative ages of communicators, sequence of events in rituals, length of church service, duration of a visit, length of a meal
Touch	Embraces, shaking hands, guiding the blind, touching one another’s feet, placing hands on one’s head, physical torture, religious flagellation, kissing for greetings
Taste	Cakes and sweets for celebration, prestige food, ethnic and cultural food, peace pipes, “hot” and “cold” food in South Asia, vegetarianism, sacramental foods, drinks
Smell	Perfume, incense, shaman’s smoke filled hut, body odors, smell of flowers,
Ecological features	Holy mountains, sacred trees, tabooed territories, hallowed rivers, historical sites, grave yards
Silence	Pauses in sentences, blank page, silence in court or temple, empty space in Japanese art, lack of response
Rituals	(Rituals use many of the systems above, but add another dimension of symbols, namely reenactment of symbolic performance.) Weddings, funerals, ritual sacrifices, church services, Lord’s supper, initiation rites
Human artifacts	Architecture, furniture, decor, clothes, cosmetics, symbols of wealth (watches, cars, houses, hats), symbols of power (rings, scepter)

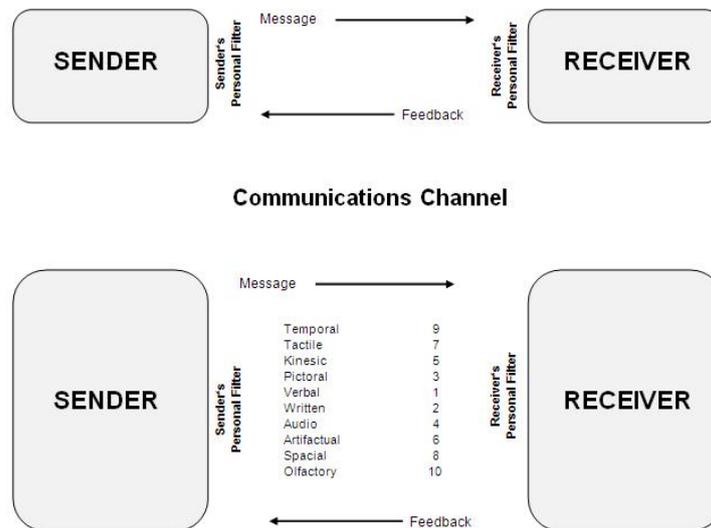
Source: Adapted from Hiebert (1985:145).

<sup>168</sup> Schubert (2007:172) for example, explains the importance of non-verbal communication in Tanzanian partnership relations: “Non-verbal communication is a big part of Tanzanian’s communication. Not understanding the non-verbal communication and being able to “read between the lines” can cause a tremendous amount of conflict. Thus, in cross-cultural collaboration it is extremely important for Westerners to be able to understand the non-verbal communication of the Tanzanian leaders and vice versa since they can be significant indicators. The message of body language might be very different from the spoken words.”

<sup>169</sup> Edward Hall (1990:4) also make mention of “fast and slow message” in communication and explains that a fast message (headlines, propaganda, commercials etc.) sent to people who are geared to a slow format (books, art, documentary, etc.) will usually miss the target. Hall (:13) also gives examples of the “monochronic and polychronic time-oriented people and cultures and make note of past- and future-oriented cultures (:17).

Every speaker also filters his message through his own (cultural) glasses and the receiver, when he as recipient receives the message, also encodes it through “his” glasses. The communication process is not complete if the receiver has not given feedback to the sender to tell him, how he has understood the message.

**Figure 6. Communication Filter**



Source: Roembke (2000:22).

The problems with non-verbal communication are listed by Condon and Yousef (1989:125-126). Although non-verbal communication is somehow learned within the system,

- it is often not systematized
- there are no dictionaries
- it is extremely difficult to ask for clarification
- it is difficult to control, because it conveys some feelings
- sometimes the spoken word and the non-verbal behavior does not seem to match.

The issue becomes even more complicated, when the communication happens cross-culturally. If a person (the sender) wants to transmit a message, he uses not just the different communication channels, but the channels also are tinted by his own culture. It is very hard for a person (the receiver) from a different culture to encode these channels, if he does not know the other culture very well. Therefore the partners must give great importance to language and culture learning to be able to communicate well with each other. Vulnerability on both sides is an absolute requirement. Miscommunication leads to loss of trust and broken relationship. The only way to overcome a broken relationship and broken trust is forgiveness and a new communication process.

In the following some other cultural differences will be examined, which could become barriers for communication and therefore in the long-term also barriers for the relationship between the partners and so endanger the partnership.

### **3.4.2.2 Individualism versus Interdependent or Collective Self-Construals**

*“Too many cooks spoil the broth.” “Charity begins at home.” “To each his own.”* These are some proverbs or sayings reflecting Western individualism.<sup>170</sup> The study of proverbs can help to understand a culture. Nussbaum (1998:30) has studied American proverbs and states that Americans like to be part of a group, but he also confirms that

“Americans do not mind group relationships. What bothers us is group obligations. We join groups easily and we leave groups easily. In other words, we join groups which serve our personal interests and we remain with a group for as long as we wish to enjoy it, but no longer. Americans’ ease with group relationships makes it easy for us to engage in conversation to form casual friendships with complete strangers but [it is] very hard for us to form deep and lasting relationships. Personal freedom or self-development is rarely sacrificed for the sake of the group.”

This is not only the case for Americans. Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (2003:52) show that especially Protestant countries have a more individualistic attitude than Roman Catholic countries. Roman Catholics approach God as a community, whereas in Protestantism every believer is responsible for himself. They come to the conclusion that “Latin Catholic cultures, along with Asian cultures of the Pacific Rim, score lower on individualism than the Protestant West (:53).” Evangelicals with their protestant roots are also marked very much by individualism. For them individual conversion and living a holy life is a personal responsibility. Christ died for “me”, personally, on the cross, so that “I” have eternal life. In contrast to the Roman Catholic Church, the local church has more importance for Evangelicals than the universal Church, the invisible Body of Christ. Evangelicals are divided into many little groups with slight theological differences. In many places these different evangelical churches have no fellowship with each other and have little contact, if the neighbor church is not in their denomination. Their main concern is the local church or denomination.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Merriam-Webster defines Individualism as follows: *a)* a doctrine that the interests of the individual are or ought to be ethically paramount; *also:* conduct guided by such a doctrine the conception that all values, rights, and duties originate in individuals; *b)* a theory maintaining the political and economic independence of the individual and stressing individual initiative, action, and interests; *also:* conduct or practice guided by such a theory. Available at: [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/individualism](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/individualism) (accessed on 18/01/2013).

<sup>171</sup> See Chapter 1.4.

Therefore in many Western countries the individual has become more important than the community (the “I” culture). Individual rights are valued highly and the individual is in the center of the society.<sup>172</sup> The “me” and “I” have become the center of life. That leads to self-reliance of the individualistic-oriented person. Hiebert (1985:123) talks about the North American culture of self-reliance:

“At the heart of a North American’s identity is self-reliance. Francis Hsu, a Chinese anthropologist, points out that the greatest fears Americans have are to be dependent on others and be without money. When the car breaks down, we hesitate to call friends for help. And when we need money, we would rather borrow from a bank than beg a loan from a brother or cousin. On the other hand, when others ask us for help, we take the request seriously, just because we know it is not made lightly. But we resent it when people constantly ask for loans, for help in baby-sitting, and for transportation. We expect people to take care of themselves.”

An attitude like this could be misunderstood in collective cultures. The message may be read as: “We do not need you,” “We can do it alone,” or even “We do not want you.”

Even when part of a group, the individual has learned to keep his independence. Hofstede (2005:75) shows that

“in individual societies most children are born into families consisting of two parents and, possibly, other children; in some societies there is an increasing share of one-parent families. Other relatives live elsewhere and are rarely seen. This type is the *nuclear family* (from the Latin *nuclius*, meaning “core”). Children from such families, as they grow up, soon learn to think of themselves as “I.” This “I,” their personal identity, is distinct from other people’s “I”s, and these others are classified not to their group membership according to individual characteristics. Playmates, for example, are chosen on the basis of personal preferences. The purpose of education is to enable children to stand on their own feet.”

Hofstede (:74) also shows that the majority of people in our world today live in cultures where the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual. Therefore it is important, when working cross-culturally, to have an understanding of collective societies.

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<sup>172</sup> That individual rights in an individualistic society are more important than the rights of the whole group could be demonstrated in books like “A Life of One’s Own” from the Author David Kelley. He writes on his webpage: “The welfare state rests on the assumption that people have the right to food, shelter, health care, retirement income, and other goods provided by the government. David Kelley examines the historical origins of that assumption, which, he shows, is deeply flawed. Welfare “rights,” he argues, are incompatible with freedom, justice, and true benevolence, and they have damaged the genuine welfare of those who can least afford to become dependent on the government.” Available at: [www.individualrights.org/](http://www.individualrights.org/) (accessed on 18/01/2013). Kelley is the founder of the Objectivist Center and follows a philosophy that originated by Ayn Rand. “Her philosophy of Objectivism rejects the ethics of self-sacrifice and renunciation. She urged men to hold themselves and their lives as their highest values, and to live by the code of the free individual: self-reliance, integrity, rationality, productive effort”.

Available at: [www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=objectivism\\_intro](http://www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=objectivism_intro) (accessed on 18/01/2013).

*“Mikono mingi kazi haba (Swahili).” “Anpil main, chaj pas lou (Haitian).” “Many hands make light work (English).”* This is a proverb that talks about working together as a community. In many parts of the world the community is more important than the individual. The individual is not autonomous; he finds his identity within the community.<sup>173</sup> The orientation is towards the goals and objectives of the group and not towards those of the individual. The individual, as part of the group, contributes to the interests of the whole group (the “we” culture). Hiebert (1985:122), talking about the Japanese society, notes:

“Because they are involved in different groups, they have different “faces.” In such situations maintaining “dignity,” “respect,” “honor,” and harmonious relationships is of highest importance. The most valued human qualities are those that help preserve group loyalties and maintain congenial social relationships. Qualities needed to achieve certain individual goals are secondary.”

For Westerners, this may become very confusing, because they are brought up differently. For them, it is their personal undertaking to finish a specific task, with or without the group. They are not used to reading “different faces”. For them, if the other person changes his opinion every so often, he is not honest or serious in the relationship.

When it comes to partnership, the question of individualism and interdependent or communitarian<sup>174</sup> understanding of the partners is crucial. Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (2003:60) show that the questions of representation, status and decision-making are handled differently in individualistic and collective cultures. Collective cultures prefer plural representation and therefore more than just one representative is sent to a meeting. For that reason, the process of decision-making often takes much longer, because everybody in the group needs to be consulted in order to come to a consensus decision.

When a person from an individualistic culture is sent to a business meeting, he or she normally comes with all the decision-making powers because the company trusts their representatives and they have the authority from the company. This gives them a special status. The representative from a collective culture would come with several other people and will consult the matter during the meeting with the others. When he or she comes with several colleagues, who will assist their colleague, he or she will look more important and this will give “him” or “her” special status.

In collective cultures family relationships are very important. When talking about family, it is not just husband, wife and children (the nuclear family), as it is in many individual

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<sup>173</sup> Helander & Niwagila (1996:91) give the example of the *Umoja* concept. The word *Umoja* is a Swahili word and means “I am because we are” and is used in East and Central Africa. It reflects the world view of a community in their context.

<sup>174</sup> Hofstede uses the term „collectivism“.

cultures, but it is the “extended family” with uncles and aunts, nephews, cousins, and sons and daughters in law. The individual person has an obligation towards these family members and if they need financial help or a job, they have to be assisted. If the partner organization, for example, has a job vacancy, the person in charge of recruitment, will most likely engage a family member, because of his obligations towards the family and because he knows that he can trust the members of his family. For the Westerner this might appear as nepotism and will be judged as very negative.

Hofstede (2005:75) states as well that, if children grow up in a “we” group (or in-group) which becomes the source of their identity, they will also be loyal to their in-group. This loyalty lasts for life and one of the worst things a person can do, is to break this loyalty. Westerners, on the other hand, have a more individualistic attitude and are more task- than relationship-oriented. Loyalty is not as important to them. When the task is finished, the relationship also could come to an end. This may hurt a person from a collective culture and trust may be broken.

The strong relationship between individualism and national wealth is examined by Hofstede (:114) as well as the fact that countries with fast economic development have also experienced a shift towards individualism. Nida (1986:250) on the other hand gives the example of the Indian culture, where a more social behavior is practiced.

“If a person gets too rich, or before he does, he is expected to spend his money on a fiesta, thus redistributing his wealth and remaining near the general economic level of the community.”

This provides a safeguard for the Indian community. But as the differences in wealth between the rich and the poor countries will increase, also the gap between the individualism-collective dimensions will only increase further.

When working in a partnership, these collaborations normally have an organizational structure. The understanding of organization also differs between individualistic and collective cultures. In individualistic cultures the organization is a means to reach the objective of the partnership whereas in collective cultures the social context of the organization is important. Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (2003:63) explain:

“In individualistic cultures organizations (from the Greek *organon*) are essentially instruments. They have been deliberately assembled and contrived, in order to serve individual owners, employees and customers. Members of the organizations enter relationships because it is in their individual interest to do so. Their ties are abstract, legal ones, regulated by contract. The organization is a means to what its actors want for themselves. ...

In communitarian cultures the organization is not the creation or instrument of its founders so much as a social context all members share and which gives them meaning and purpose. Organizations are often likened to a large family, community or clan which develops and nurtures its members and may live longer than they do. The growth and prosperity of organizations are not considered bonanzas for individual shareholders or gravy-trains for top managers, but are valuable ends in themselves.”

This must be considered when partnerships are initiated. The question of “who” initiates the partnership and what are the interests of each partner needs to be taken into consideration. Building partnership is a relational work and it is not enough to create a contract with a defined vision and objectives.

Christians working in international cross-cultural partnerships should especially be aware of the difference of individual and collective preferences<sup>175</sup>, because many misunderstandings may result from negligence of these factors. Westerners, especially when working in mission or church contexts, need to learn more about the communitarian cultures, because the communitarian aspect of culture is not just reflected in a group or family setting, but also in the church which is the universal Body of Christ. Western Christian partners dealing with collective cultures need to learn and give much importance to unity and the group relationship. The question of the living Body of Christ as an organism with many different members can also play a role in both partnership as well as organizational structures.

### ***3.4.2.3 Task Orientation versus Relationship Orientation***

The author was once working in France on a committee with an American missionary as part of that committee. When this missionary had a change in his ministry, he left the committee to concentrate on other assignments. Some of the French committee members complained that he had never been in touch with any of the other members after leaving the committee. For the missionary the task was finished and so was the relationship to his former co-workers. The French co-workers were disappointed that they never heard back from him.

This example raises the question: what is more important, the task or the relationship.<sup>176</sup> The opinions on this subject are divided. If the task is preferred and the objectives are more important than the relationship, the collective-oriented partner will be let

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<sup>175</sup> The question could be asked, if it is wrong to have an individualistic or collective preference. Which is better? Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997:58+63) deal with the question of breaking the vicious cycle and to reconcile Individualism and Communitarianism. The important element is to understand the other partner and be open to learn from him.

<sup>176</sup> See Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997:157)

down. If the relationship is valued more, then the task-oriented partner is disappointed, because he cannot accomplish his goals. This is especially difficult for Western organizations, which are often sponsored by certain foundations or churches, who want to see results for their “investment.” The fact is that both kinds of these partnerships exist.

### *Task- or Goal-Oriented Partnerships*

Many partnerships initiated from the West have as their objective to work on certain projects with a non-Western partner. For example, work-teams come to build schools, churches, hospitals or do paint jobs. This is very easily done for the Western teams because it normally does not require great language skills and knowledge of the local culture. In the last decades short-term projects of this kind have been promoted and their number has grown constantly. Other projects require more knowledge of the partner culture. Evangelistic events, work shops or training can only be done effectively, if the partner has some knowledge of the culture and language, unless he makes use of a translator, which is not ideal for good communication as it has been stated above. In these cases, the focus turns around projects. “We want to do something!”

An American pastor, who planned to come to a prayer conference to France, was asked what he would be doing in France. His answer was: “I am going there to pray!” “No”, said his interlocutor, “you do not understand, I mean what will you “do” over in Paris?” “I am going over to France to pray with the missionaries and the French brothers and sisters!” His friend could not understand that he would not work on a practical project (France V.I.E. 2004).

Addicott (2005:20) talks about “Body-Work” and clarifies that the reason for partnership is “to bring different assets to the table and agree to share resources, plan, pray and work together to fulfill a common purpose.” The emphasis here is definitely on the task. In evangelical circles the task for partnering was early on defined as fulfilling the Great Commission of World Evangelization.<sup>177</sup> In 1986 Pate & Keyes (1986:156) agree with McGavran that the Great Commission is “task-oriented” and that the task is reaching every people with a viable witness. Later other evangelical voices also called for social involvement.

Task-oriented cultures have a strong focus on the individual and his rights of self-actualization. The individual places more importance on the task, “getting things done”, than on the relationship with the business partner. The task is in the center. People will be evaluated by their jobs and not by their value in the community. If two people meet each

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<sup>177</sup> See LCWE (1974b:13) Chapter 8 of the Lausanne covenant.

other, the person normally will be characterized by what he does. “What do you do?” and not “Who are you?” is the question in Western cultures. Task-oriented people like to talk about work and during a long day of meetings, people again may meet at lunch for a “business-lunch” in order to continue the discussion they just left at work. At the “breakfast-meeting,” the “business-lunch” or dinner often work is the matter of discussion and not the effort to get to know the other partner.

People from task-oriented cultures will likely initiate a partnership or view an existing partnership in the light of the task. What are we going to do? What is the mission we will accomplish? They need to be aware that people from collective cultures also value the task, but they do not define themselves with what they do and they most often will value the relationship more than the task.

### *Relationship-Oriented Partnerships*

In the last decades church-church partnerships became very popular. Some of these inter-church partnerships were certainly task-oriented, whereas many others were relationship-oriented. Schäfer (2004:1) talks about “Ecumenical Partnerships” between two local Evangelical Lutheran Churches<sup>178</sup> in West Germany and their partner churches in Africa. These partnerships were church to church partnerships and seemed to be more relationship-oriented than task-oriented. Schäfer identifies these ecumenical partnerships as an expression of an ecumenical existence, as “koinonia” or community, and as “Lerngemeinschaft” (Learning Community). Bauerochse (1996) also presents a whole study on partnership and comes to the conclusion that partnerships should be ecumenical communities of learning.

The German Evangelical Lutheran Church had a good experience with partnerships on the parish or church districts level. The theme of the 3<sup>rd</sup> conference of the “Entwicklungs-politische Konferenz der Kirchen und Werke” in 2005 was “Church Partnerships” and it was stated (EPK 2005:4) that the churches of the North look at partnerships mainly as “Corporate Organization” (*Ökonomikum*), whereas church partners in the Global South would rather use the family as model for partnerships. Bauerochse (1996:178) also explains the African understanding of partnership and uses the terms friendship, community and brother- and sisterhood. Therefore much attention ought to be given to the question of relationship. Otherwise the non-Western partner may not be ready to collaborate with his Western collaborator.

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<sup>178</sup> Schäfer gives the example of the Evangelical Lutheran church in Hannover-Marienwerder (1971) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hamburg-Schnelsen (2002).

Ajith Fernando (2001:313), a Sri Lankan leader, writes:

“The whole thing that partnership requires is a spiritual heart fellowship, where you get into a country and get the feel of the people, and that takes a lot of time. I think those who want to establish relationships will have to be willing to invest time so that relationship is not just a business relationship. Our people don’t work on business relationships. I notice that a lot of people sign partnership agreements, and that’s something new that I have noticed in recent years. I think it’s a very good idea that people have (their agreements) in black and white ... but that’s not the way our people operate in their relationships.”

Various non-Western cultures value the personal relationship more than the task the partners will accomplish together. Collective cultures tend to be more relational than task-oriented. Relationship-oriented cultures define people rather by “Who they are” and not by “What they do.” They need to get to know the other person, before they can do business together. Usually they have a larger relationship network than in task-oriented cultures and the relationships in general are deeper. They live in extended families rather than in a small nuclear family. They get their identity from their affiliation with the group. Also the group will act as their social control. When separated from the group they are often not able to follow the code, because of being removed of their control system. Fernando (:313) laments that in the context of partnerships with Western organizations, some of the Sri Lankan leaders got divorced from their own people, going to a different (economic) level, and that “they became like the king of the kingdom.”

Escobar (1986:162) also makes a strong point that

“the Great Commission is not just task-oriented. It is oriented finally to glorify God and to build up the Body of Christ in unity. The “task-oriented” activism that loses this vision tends to be totally unconcerned with the unity of the body.”

As a result for Escobar it is not just important to get the job done, but also to foster the relationship within the Body of Christ. Because Western churches and organizations are naturally more task-oriented, they should give more emphasis on relationship-oriented partnerships in order to be more balanced and to value the universal church and collective-oriented cultures.

### *Correlation between Task- or Goal-Oriented and Relationship-Oriented Partnerships*

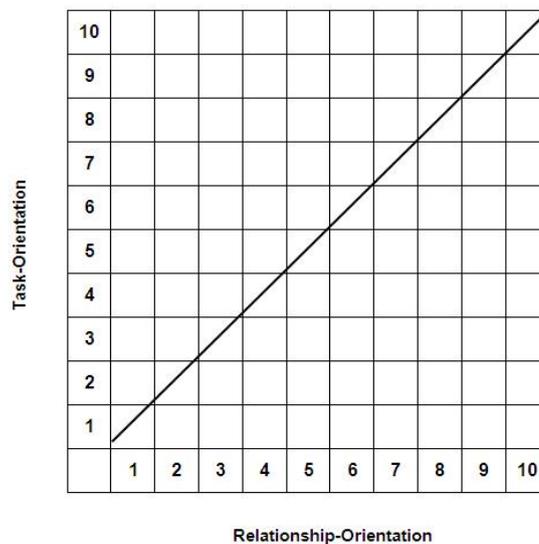
The relationship question is probably one of the most difficult ones in the partnership discussion and this is clear to most everybody who is involved in partnerships<sup>179</sup>. When the

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<sup>179</sup> Rickett (2002:55), Addicott (2005:43), Butler (2005:47), Roembke (2000) and others have placed great importance on the question of relationships in cross-cultural partnership.

relationship is bad, the partnership is jeopardized. How can the gap between the task- and the relationship-orientation be reconciled? First of all the partners need to understand that it is neither bad to be task-oriented nor relationship-oriented. It is a preference of the culture in which a person grew up. Yet when people are working together as partners, they need to learn to appreciate the preference of the other. The Western partner needs to be very attentive not to focus too strongly on the task and the non-Western partner should understand that he needs to help his counterpart on the relational side of the partnership.

**Figure 7. Correlation between Task-oriented and Relationship-oriented Partnerships**



The above grid could be a help for partners in discussing the subject matter. Each partner could identify where he would locate himself on the grid and where he would place the other partner. Then they should discuss, whether they are satisfied with the situation, or whether one of the partners needs to change his position. Hopefully they will come to an agreement for their collaboration. The situation should be reevaluated regularly.

Both partners must agree before stepping into the partnership, as to whether the collaboration should be formed rather for task purposes or relationship purposes. Do they want to work on a specific project, or do they want to come together for relational or fellowship reasons? Even if they decide for one or the other, they probably need to make adjustments towards the other culture. They ought to move towards each other in their understanding of the counterpart culture. The key will be to reciprocally step towards the partner and to learn from each other.

### 3.4.2.4 Understanding of Time

“You have the watches and we have the time” is an African saying concerning the use of time between Westerners and Africans. Indeed, there is a great difference in the understanding of time. The author, a German, was brought up to always be on time.<sup>180</sup> The first years of his ministry in Haiti, he would become very upset when the Haitians were not on time for the “rendezvous”. When people arrived up to two hours late for meetings, he felt he wasted a lot of time in waiting that could have been invested differently. It took quite some time to understand that the Haitian comprehension of time was so different than the German understanding.<sup>181</sup>

Westerners often have a distinct perception of time. Proverbs and sayings that have to do with time, reveal a lot about their understanding of time<sup>182</sup>.

“Time is money.”

“Time flies.”

“Making every minute count.”

“The sooner the better.”

“No time is like the present.”

“Now or never.”

“Make hay while the sun shines.”

“He who hesitates is lost.”

“The early bird catches the worm.”

These are only a few time-related proverbs or sayings that instruct the Western mind about the importance of using his time well. Like money, time can be spent, lost, or wasted and therefore time has great value for Westerners. You need to act soon and fast, if you want to reach your goals. Westerners like to control their time. “Time Management Seminars” are offered all over.

For various non-Western cultures the perception of time is not the same and misunderstanding as mentioned above can take place, if the cultures are not synchronized (in sync). What is time? There is no single definition for time. Time can be viewed as “the

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<sup>180</sup> „Fünf Minuten vor der Zeit ist des Maurers Pünktlichkeit,“ is a German proverb that says that you have to be at your appointment even five minutes before.

<sup>181</sup> Even when later working in France, where people arrive usually about 15 minutes late for a meeting, it was not easy for the author to adapt to this understanding of time.

<sup>182</sup> „Was du heute kannst besorgen, das verschiebe nicht auf morgen“ (What you can do today, do not postpone to tomorrow) and “Die lange Bank ist das liebste Möbelstück des Teufels” (The long bench is the favorite piece of furniture of the devil.) are some German proverbs encouraging the person to act as soon as possible.

measured or measurable period during which an action, process, or condition exists or continues, or as a non-spatial continuum that is measured in terms of events which succeed one another from past through present to future.”<sup>183</sup> Trompenaars and Hamden-Turner (2003:122) explain that our understanding of the past and the future is always influenced by our present thinking.

“All three time zones unite in our actions. It is true to say that our expectations of the future determine our present, as to say our present action determines our future; as true to say that our present experience determines our view of the past, as to say that the past has made us what we are today.”

There are cultures and individuals which have different time orientations. Western cultures are more future-oriented. It is important what a person will achieve in the future. They view the past as lost, passed, and it cannot be brought back or changed, therefore the future which still can be shaped is more important. Little emphasis is given on learning about ancestors, history, and traditions. Other cultures rather look back towards the past. History, past events, or the question of how they view the relation with their ancestors are very important. Wonderly & Nida (1963:245) give the example of the Indian who does not save his food or money for later use as opposed to the North American who is concerned with life insurance, college education funds, retirement pensions, and long-term commercial operations. The way one views time will determine his acts in daily life.

Hiebert (1985:131) points out that the American understanding of time is linear and therefore future-oriented<sup>184</sup>. In a linear understanding of time the individual starts with a starting point and moves towards the end. He likes timelines which have a start and an ending point. Planning, agendas and keeping the schedule is very important and time needs to be controlled. Time is measured in seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, and years. Linear understanding of time has also influenced the Western perception of theology with its understanding of creation and eschatology.

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<sup>183</sup> This definition of time is taken from the Merriam-Webster Dictionary: available at: [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/time](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/time) (on 19/01/2013). Time also could be understood in terms of duration, occasion, a historic period, a season, tempo or rhythm.

Harper's Bible Dictionary (1985:1073) explains that in the NT three Greek words for time are used. a) *chronos* (times) "is used when time is thought of as a quantity (e.g. a little time)," *chronos* "can mean a specific time." b) *kairos* (season) "is thought in terms of its quality (eg. as *time for something*)," *kairos* "can refer broadly to the present." c) *aion* (eon) "can refer to a broad sweep of time and is probably drawn from apocalyptic speculation of dividing the world into the present evil eon and the future eon, when God would redeem and transform evil reality into good ... the plural eons is often translated 'forever'."

<sup>184</sup> Here it may be noted that it is not only the American understanding of time, but in general a Western perception.

Hiebert (:131) further confirms that on the other hand in many parts of the world the understanding of time is not linear, but rather episodic or discontinuous as in many African countries. Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (2003:123) call it “sequentially and synchronically” organized activities.<sup>185</sup> There is no “single time scale, but many kinds of time – mythical time, historical time, ritual time, agricultural time, seasonal time, solar time, lunar time and so on” (Hiebert 1985:131). Again in some tribes time is like a pendulum going back and forth, or as in South Asia, time might be cyclical, where humans are born and reborn in an endless series of lives.

Hofstede (2005:207-238) explains the short-term and long-term orientation of time and the impact on family, school, business economic growth, politics and religion. The difference between the two orientations is shown in the table below (table 3):

**Table 3. Differences between Short-term and Long-term Orientation**

<b>Short-Term Orientation</b>	<b>Long-Term Orientation</b>
Efforts should produce quick results.	Perseverance, sustained efforts toward slow results.
Social pressure towards spending.	Thrift, being sparing with resources.
Respect for traditions.	Respect for circumstances.
Concern with personal stability.	Concern with personal adaptiveness.
Concern with social and status obligations.	Willingness to subordinate oneself for a purpose.
Concern with “face.”	Having a sense of shame.
Marriage is a moral arrangement.	Marriage is a pragmatic arrangement.
Living with in-laws is a source of trouble.	Living with in-laws is normal.
Old age is an unhappy period but it starts late.	Old-age is a happy period and it starts early.
Main work values include freedom, rights, achievement, and thinking for oneself.	Main work values include learning, honesty, adaptiveness, accountability, and self-discipline.
Leisure time is important.	Leisure time is not important.
Personal loyalties vary with business needs.	Investment in personal lifelong networks.
Concern with possessing the Truth.	Concern with respecting the demands of virtue.
There are universal guidelines about what is good and evil.	What is good and evil depends upon the circumstances.
Matter and spirit are separated.	Matter and spirit are integrated.

Source: Adapted from Hofstede (2005:212&232).

<sup>185</sup> Hall's (1990:13) terminology of „monochronic and polychronic” will be used in this study.

If missionaries from a short-term oriented culture come to work in a long-term-oriented culture, they will not understand how the people function and why they are doing what they are doing. They need to adapt to the time-orientation style of the host culture and they have to learn from the other culture why things are doing so differently from the missionaries' routine.

Another way to identify a different understanding of time is given by Hall (1990:13) in the concept of the "Monochronic and Polychronic" perception of time. Hall explains that in monochronic cultures time is experienced and used in a linear way as described above. People live with the clock or their watches and like to do one thing at a time and do not want to be interrupted whereas in polychronic cultures people like to do many things simultaneously. They like to be with many people at the same time and therefore interruptions are not viewed as negative, but as a possibility to interact with other people and to learn new things. Monochronic and Polychronic understanding of time can be experienced as shown in table 4:

**Table 4. Differences between Monochronic and Polychronic Time Systems**

<b>Monochronic People</b>	<b>Polychronic People</b>
Do one thing at a time.	Do many things at once.
Concentrate on the job.	Are highly distractible and subject to interruptions.
Take time commitments (deadlines, schedules) seriously.	Consider time commitments an objective to be achieved, if possible.
Are low-context <sup>186</sup> and need information.	Are high-context and already have information.
Are committed to the job.	Are committed to people and human relations.
Adhere religiously to plans.	Change plans often and easily.
Are concerned about not disturbing others; follow rules of privacy and consideration.	Are more concerned with those who are closely related (family, friends, close business associates) than with privacy.
Show great respect for private property; seldom borrow or lend.	Borrow or lend things often and easily.
Emphasize promptness.	Base promptness on relationship
Are accustomed to short-term relationships.	Have strong tendency to build lifetime relationships.

Source: Adapted from Hall (1990:15).

<sup>186</sup> For the concept of low and high context see Hall (1990:6).

Looking at the table above it is obvious that the time understanding of the partner from dissimilar cultural backgrounds may cause misinterpretation, if not frustration, when dealing with each other. The use of time in relationship is viewed completely different in these two settings. For some cultures it just means that one gives a lot of time to build the relationship. The people are valued, if partners spend time with them or just go and visit the other person. For task-oriented people, this might seem as a waste of time, because they rather want to finish the project they are working on together. On the other hand, non-Westerners will not see the importance of promptly finishing a certain task, if a good relationship is not built in the first place. For them this is more important. The relationship-oriented persons would rather invest time with somebody with whom they have a good relationship than working on a task which, in the other's eyes, is of less importance and would take away precious time. Such an attitude will be seen as inefficient in Western eyes. Both are in danger of misreading the situation.

The concept of punctuality can also be understood differently. If somebody grew up in a punctuality-oriented culture he would value the other person by being on time. One does not want to waste someone else's time by making him or her wait. For people in other cultures this may not be the case. Lingenfelter & Mayers (1986:41-43) compare time-oriented people and event-oriented people. The second group is more interested in the event itself and in the details of what is going to happen than when it begins and when it ends.

**Table 5. Differences between Time Orientation and Event Orientation**

<b>Time Orientation</b>	<b>Event Orientation</b>
Concern for punctuality and amount of time expended.	Concern for details of the event, regardless of time required.
Careful allocation of time to achieve the maximum within set time limits.	Exhaustive consideration of a problem until resolved.
Tightly scheduled, goal-oriented activities.	A "let come what may" outlook not tied to any precise schedule.
Rewards offered as incentives for efficient use of time.	Stress on completing the event as a reward in itself.
Emphasis on dates and history.	Emphasis on present experience rather than the past or future.

Source: Lingenfelter & Mayers (1986:42).

In an event-oriented culture, when somebody is on the way to a meeting and encounters a friend on the way, or if the person witnesses an accident (the event) one has to stop and talk with the friend, or watch the scene of the accident. At that moment it is not

important if one would be late for the meeting. The meeting would start, when everybody has arrived. African people would say: “A leader is never late, he is only delayed.” Another example could be an African church service, which can go on for hours without bothering a national but which would seem to a Westerner as much too long.

Hiebert and Hall talk also about the relation between time and space. Hiebert (1985:133) explains that for North Americans time is more important than space. “Land is a secular commodity and can be bought and sold like anything else.” But time is precious because when it is spent, it is irrevocably gone.

For many non-Western cultures the land is more important than time. Land is sacred and ties people to their ancestors. They may not be able to go back into the past, but they can go to the places where great events took place – their holy places. Hall (1990:15) also indicates that in polychronic cultures, people feel that too much private space disrupts the flow of information by shutting people off from one another and that they are used to open spaces where interaction with many people can happen.

When talking about the understanding of time, other factors such as tempo, rhythm, synchrony, scheduling time, the importance of proper timing, and fast or slow information flow also need to be considered. If partners come from different cross-cultural contexts they need to humbly learn the preference of their collaborators. It will take a lot of patience, effort and devotion on both sides to be able to understand this complex segment of culture. And of course it will take more time than a Western partner usually is willing to give to this process. However, there is no other way, if true relationship is desired.

#### ***3.4.2.5 Decision Making Process and Logic Patterns***

The decision-making process in cross-cultural partnerships is a delicate subject. Who makes the decision in a specific culture and on what basis are decisions made, is a question that needs to be understood, if the partners do not want to fail to communicate well. For a long time decision-making in World Mission was dominated by the Western partner because he habitually held the power position controlling money and other resources. The discord of that situation was expressed after the Whitby conference (1947) with the theme of “Partnership in Obedience” by an Indonesian pastor who spoke to a Dutch professor: “Yes, partnership for you, but obedience for us!” (quoted in Bosch 1991:466). Because of their history and their cultural background Westerners need to be careful not to fall back into neo-colonialism, but to regard the non-Western partner as a full-fledged equal person with the same rights in the decision-making process. Especially in mission work where partners work

cross-culturally together as Christians, they need to embrace God's diversity of people. Partners of other racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds need to be fully included in the structure of power and decision-making process.

Including other partners will not necessarily mean that one already understands the decision-making process within the other culture. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2003:60) compare the differences of this process in communitarian and individualistic cultures:

“Communitarian decision-making typically takes much longer and there are sustained efforts to win over everyone to achieve consensus. Voting down the dissenters, as often happens in English speaking Western democracies, is not acceptable. There will usually be detailed consultation with all those concerned and, because of pressures to agree collective goals, consensus will usually be achieved. If the group or home office is not consulted first, an initial “yes” can easily become a “no” later.

...The decision-making process in individualistic cultures is usually very short, with a “lonely individualist” making “deathless decisions” in a few fateful seconds. While this may make for quicker deliberations, “one-minute managers” and so on, it will often be discovered months later that the organization has conspired to defeat decisions managers never liked or agreed to. Saving time in decision-making is often followed by significant delay due to implementation problems. The individualist society, with its respect for individual opinions, will frequently ask for a vote to get noses pointing in the same direction.”

In communitarian cultures voting would not be appropriate because this would mean a lack of respect towards the individual and can expose a differing opinion of one person in the group. Within the decision-making process the Western partner needs to remember that in a communitarian or collective culture the whole group is more important than the individual and he needs to pay attention to the group (decision).<sup>187</sup> Both partners need to carefully ask, if the decisions are made by the majority or consensus or by personal power.<sup>188</sup>

It is not only the decision-making process that is important in partnership negotiations, but also the logic or thought patterns that are behind the process. Condon & Yousef (1986:210) ask the question of “what is reasonable” in cross-cultural communication and give the answer that “reasonable is likely to be that which sounds like what **we** would have said.” Every person grew up with certain logic in order to come to a decision, and a

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<sup>187</sup> Lewis (2006:171) gives the example of the Japanese “*ringi-sbo*” system of decision-making which is one of the most democratic procedures in an autocratic structure. The younger or low-ranking people often propose ideas that are developed by middle management and ultimately shown to the president. Each person is invited to attach his or her seal of approval so that unanimity of agreement is already assumed before the president confirms it.”

<sup>188</sup> See also Lingenfelter (1996:131).

person normally thinks that **one's** logic is the right logic. If one encounters and discusses with people from other cultures who have a different thought<sup>189</sup> or logic pattern, one may think that they might be unintelligent or illogical and one has a hard time understanding them or discussing with them.

The word "logic" comes from the Latin<sup>190</sup> word *logicus / logica* and means reason. This is a particular mode of reasoning viewed as valid or faulty. Condon & Yousef (:212) explain:

"Logic, or whatever we call linkages which show consistencies and relationships, is abstract and deductive. As such it can yield validity, but not "truth." One can be logical about facts; but one can be just as logical about nonsense data or nonsense. Thus logic (Aristotelian logic, symbolic logic, or "non-Western logics") is a learned system and a part of the culture in which it is learned."

How much our decision-making is influenced by our logic and our logic by our culture is not to be underestimated. Thomas & Inkson (2003:83) show that the Western decision-making process is guided by Western formal logic with its sequence of specific steps. First you have to define the problem, and then a range of potential solutions is generated. This is followed by a systematic analysis to the potential solutions to predict which will best satisfy predetermined criteria. Finally, the best alternative is chosen and implemented. This is a Western linear programmed approach. But Thomas & Inkson also ask the question, what Westerners would think, when decisions are made because of preference for a family member, based on a specific feeling, on religious influence, on political connections, or just because it seemed right. This would be opposed to Western values and judged as negative. Other cultures have different thought patterns which are their base for decision-making.

Roembke (2000:163) distinguishes between four thought or logic patterns:

- dialectic logic pattern;
- linear logic pattern;
- contextual logic pattern;
- existential logic pattern.

Germans and some central and northern European countries are used to the dialectical pattern for making their decisions. An opinion is stated, backed up by several facts (thesis), but then the other partner will give his opinion which could be the total

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<sup>189</sup> Definition of "Thought Pattern" in Oxford Dictionaries: "A habit of thinking in a particular way, using particular assumptions. A quality characterizing someone's thought processes as expressed in language" available at: [http://oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american\\_english/thought%2Bpattern](http://oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/thought%2Bpattern) (accessed on 19/01/2013).

<sup>190</sup> See also the Greek word *logikos /logiké*. λογική (logiké) is the feminine of λογικός (logikos), "possessed of reason, intellectual, dialectical, argumentative", and from λόγος logos, "word, thought, idea, argument, account, reason, or principle" (Liddell & Scott 1999; Online Etymology Dictionary 2001).

opposite of the first one (antithesis), also supported by several facts. The partner tries to persuade the first person to change his view. This can go back and forth several times, until finally both of them compromise in order to find the best solution (synthesis). This decision-making process can take longer than other styles and could become very emotional. Nevertheless, it also will motivate the participants because they feel that they have been part of the process and therefore own the decision.

In linear thinking there is a proposal and everybody builds upon this statement. The partners develop the proposal until it is explored enough and then they will suggest a new thought, which again is built up. After a few proposals have been developed, the best one will be chosen. This method is very goal-oriented and looks for a fast solution, but it cannot tolerate unsolved problems. It is a process of gathering information, evaluation and then choosing the best option.

Roembke (:164) sees African and Latin cultures using contextual logic. Contextual logic is painting a picture or telling a story. It uses various stories, pictures and proverbs to describe the message. It does not state the thesis directly, the thesis is described. No central point or statement is given, the whole story is the point and it is the duty of the listener to find out the meaning or thesis. When people from these cultures discuss, it is a long conversation and the debate seems hardly to come to an end. But the whole discussion is the answer to the question and after a certain time they all would agree and reach a consensus. People with dialectic or linear preference do not see what the main point of the story is and the whole procedure lasts way too long for them.

Existential logic is not linear; it is an experimental leap of faith to a new truth. The existential thinkers grasp something that is not yet there. They are intuitive. Because facts and quotes are not convincing for them, the existential thinkers or “feelers” try to create the same emotional response in the heart of their listeners to enable them to grasp their truth as well. Conviction is communicated from heart to heart. They are not happy until the listener “feels” with them, until what is in their heart is in the listener’s heart. They tell a lot of stories because then the other person begins to identify with them, develop a conviction and get the point. This process is based on subjective thinking and it is daring and risky, but it has to be experienced in order to come to a common understanding.

**Table 6. Comparison of Four Patterns of Logic**

<b>Dialectical</b>	<b>Linear</b>	<b>Contextual</b>	<b>Existential</b>
Thesis – Antithesis – Synthesis	Process of gathering information. Proposal ⇨ build up ⇨ conclusion ⇨ 2. Proposal	Painting a picture, telling a story	An experimental leap of faith to the new truth. Conviction communicated from heart to heart
logic	logic	emotional	emotional / intuitive
fast	fast	slow	slow
Paper- or project- oriented	Paper- or project-oriented	People-oriented	People-oriented

Source: Adapted from Roembke (2000:154).

How do people from one logic pattern respond to others? What are the dangers and what is the criticism that might be made?

The linears, contextualls and existentials think the “dialectics do not exercise love” in their communication. It seems too direct, hard and forceful, minutely analytical, and embarrassingly open. The dialectics think everybody else is “too shallow and shady,” not up front and trying to hide the truth. The linears and dialectics think that the “contextualls and existentials have no real point,” they ramble on and on without structure, are too vague and far too emotional. Conversely the contextualls and existentials think that the “dialectics and linears are all head cognitives and no heart emotives!” EQ versus IQ! All the rest think the “dialectics are too long and detailed,” and the linears are “accused by all as being too structured and goal-oriented.”

Considering these different thought patterns of various cultures it becomes obvious that partners from these cultures need to learn to understand the “logic” of their counterpart. Not only will misunderstandings occur, if these differences are not taken into account, but it can also cause a lot of frustration, a lack of empathy and even resentment.

### **3.4.2.6 Power and Trust Issues**

“Until the lion has his or her own storyteller, the hunter will always have the best part of the story.”<sup>191</sup> Adagba<sup>192</sup> explains this proverb as follows:

“This Ewe-mina Proverb refers to this unknown part of the struggle between the lion and the hunter because we Africans know well that a story is never

<sup>191</sup> Ewe-mina, a Benin, Ghana, and Togo Proverb.

<sup>192</sup> This proverb was explained by Mr. Simeon Messan Adagba 744 Robin Road Hillsborough, NJ 08844 USA. Available at: [www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-proverb-of-the-month/32-2006proverbs/224-april-2006-proverb-quntil-the-lion-has-his-or-her-own-storyteller-the-hunter-will-always-have-the-best-part-of-the-storyq-ewe-mina-benin-ghana-and-togo-.html](http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-proverb-of-the-month/32-2006proverbs/224-april-2006-proverb-quntil-the-lion-has-his-or-her-own-storyteller-the-hunter-will-always-have-the-best-part-of-the-storyq-ewe-mina-benin-ghana-and-togo-.html) (accessed on 30/01/2013).

complete until one hears from both sides. The one who does not have the voice is often the loser. This loser might well be the lion to the hunter, the servant to the master, the chief to his subjects, the wife to her domineering husband. It is in these circumstances when one voice dominates the other that this proverb is often heard.

The current history has been told and written from the dominating class's perspective-white and African oppressors alike-in such a way that the victims' voices are silenced. Our duty is to tell the African story in the way that does justice to our sufferings and our struggles.”

Partnership is built on a mutual trust relationship. It cannot really exist, if the partners do not fully trust each other. As it has been demonstrated, this trust relationship is not easy to establish. Especially in light of the past Western imperialism, colonialism and paternalism this is still a very delicate issue. At times Western missionaries or partners are still seen as a dominating force and their behavior will be compared to old habits and patterns which would be called neo-colonialism today. Numerous non-Western people think that the West with its economic and political power still dominates other parts of the World. These thoughts do not stop with church, or mission, or partnership collaboration, and there probably is some truth to these perceptions. In most of the partnership literature the question of power and trust is a major issue.<sup>193</sup> Can you really trust your partner or does he only want to carry out his own interests? There is a lot of suspicion, when it comes to partnership in cross-cultural ministry. Once, the author moved into a remote area in Haiti to work with a number of Haitian leaders. He was the only Western and white person in this group. With some Haitian leaders it took several months until a trust relationship was established and the suspicion had vanished. Trust takes a long time to be built, but also it can be broken within a moment, especially if power is misused.

Roembke (2000:31) believes that “one cannot speak of the encounters of culture without dealing with the issue of power.” Who exercises power over others? Clearly those who have money or economic power, but there are other elements which can make a person or a group powerful. There can be political or ideological power as well as access to knowledge, information, and technology that can be used to control others. Also those people who have dominant personalities can exercise power over others, those who have a certain vision, or access to the Medias.

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<sup>193</sup> See Addicott (2005:49); Butler (2005:47,52); Rickett (2002:75-84); Roembke (2000:26).

For a long time in mission context and partnerships there has been an imbalance of power, and certainly there still is.<sup>194</sup> Not just because of the economic power of Western organizations, but also in terms of theology, leadership skills or church planting methods. Western people and organizations most often assume that they are the “hunter who kills the lion”.

Power in itself is not dangerous, but the misuse of power is. The historian and moralist Lord Acton expressed this opinion in a letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton in 1887: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men."<sup>195</sup> Power can be like a drug and transforms people to where they fall into the trap of needing more and more power and therefore the craving for power can become destructive. People in leadership, especially in Christian leadership need to be extremely careful how they use their power in relationships with others. They can use power against or for the good of others. Some religious groups view power as negative and try to avoid it. This would be just the other extreme. The author believes that power is not evil in itself because God has given the power to carry out specific tasks. So power in itself is good. What makes it bad is the abuse of power that would hurt individuals and destroy trust.

When it comes to relationships within different cultures Hofstede (2005:46) talks about the issue of power distance between the superiors and subordinates:

“Power distance can therefore be defined as the extent to which the less powerful member of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. Institutions are basic elements of society, such as the family, the school, and the community; organizations are the places where people work. Power distance is thus described based on the value system of the less powerful members. The way power is distributed is usually explained from the behavior of the more powerful members, the leaders rather than those led.”

Hofstede (:45) distinguishes between small- and large-power-distance countries. In small-power-distance countries superiors do not seem to be too autocratic and paternalistic and therefore the emotional distance is very small.<sup>196</sup> That invites employees to express a preference for a consultative style of decision-making which demonstrates interdependence between the boss and the subordinate.

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<sup>194</sup> See Schäfer (2004:7). He confirms that there still is a power division between the North and the South with paternalistic behavior. He also talks about the “Helfersyndrom” (litt. the helper syndrome - This syndrome results in a person helping others in order to ease his or her own pain or to ignore his or her own problems. It may also be compared with the “Messiah Complex.”) which often wants to help others fast but is sometimes inadequate and not well thought through. See also footnote 117.

<sup>195</sup> Citation available at: [www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/288200.html](http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/288200.html), accessed on (19/01/2013).

<sup>196</sup> For more information on small- and large-power-distant countries see Hofstede (2005:39-70).

In large-power-distance countries

“there is a considerable dependence of subordinates on bosses. Subordinates respond by either preferring such dependence (in the form of an autocratic or paternalistic boss) or rejecting it entirely, which in psychology is known as *counterdependence* – that is dependence but with a negative sign. Large-power-distance countries thus show a pattern of polarization between dependence and counterdependence. In these cases the emotional distance between subordinates and their bosses is large: subordinates are unlikely to approach and contradict their bosses directly (:46).”

If people from these different backgrounds work together in a partnership and do not understand the subject of power-distance, cultural misunderstandings are to be expected. It is not easy to understand and to accept the difference in this area. When the author once asked an American colleague what he found most difficult in working with Russians, he responded: “Their leadership style.” This is obvious because it is so different from the American collegial and participative leadership style. To accept and adapt to such a different style seems to go against one’s own values and is barely acceptable. If people from a small-power-distance country works under others from a large-power-distance country they will have difficulties establishing a trust relationship, because they feel the partners do not give them enough opportunity to openly discuss the matter and that they deserve more trust to be involved in the decision-making process.

Power is not only a matter in the political or economical realm, the misuse and misunderstanding of power also happens in the mission, church, or partnership context. Cross-cultural partners should be aware of how they and their use of power are perceived and understood by the other partner. Abuse of power can be subtle and unconscious as well as conscious and intentional which is worse. Trust often is broken because of misunderstandings, even when one of the partners did not intend to misuse his power. Either way, both partners need to make an effort to use the power for the good of the other partner. Jesus is a good example of the use of power for the benefit of others. Roembke (2000:35) calls this the “creative use of power.” As mentioned before, power is a God-given gift and God intended for his people to use it wisely in relationship with others. The Bible often talks about God’s power which also is given to the Son. The Son on the other hand has promised to give it to his disciples through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, God-given power cannot be bad. Saayman (1993:84) acknowledges that creative power is only possible in the context of the new creation (redemption). He sees the cosmic kingship of Christ and the creative and renewing action of the Holy Spirit as sources for creative power and in this way disciples of Christ should act against the abuse of power.

“The Holy Spirit as source for creative power empowers people to a continuous renewal in all their relationships, which can be compared to the “putting on of the new self” (Col 3:9-10) (:87).”

Only if Christians live in the spirit of renewal, they can love their neighbor as themselves and will they be able to use the given power for the benefit of others. This is also true for the partners in a cross-cultural mission context. The Christian Spirit of renewal, forgiveness, and love for each other needs to guide the power question in dealing with partners within the Christian mission context.

### **3.4.2.7 Money Issues**

One of the most sensitive and most critical issues in cross-cultural partnerships is still the issue of money. Partnership between the West and the Global South countries demands equality, but when it comes to money and resources there is no real parity. Since Whitby (1947) the money question is discussed and often not solved. Freytag (1948:90) talks early on about “Partnership in Finances”, but laments the disparity in the salaries of the international missionaries and their national colleagues. This is a very thorny subject and in many parts of the world this has not changed yet. The salary gap between the international and the national partners is in many cases immense. Will this lead to jealousy, covetousness and distrust on the side of the poorer partner? The consequences of the divergence in wealth are reflected in daily life and life style. The foreigners can afford better housing, health care, cars, food etc. which could be seen as unjust by the poorer partner. Hiebert (1985:126) points out that private ownership may lead to a different philosophy of life in certain Western cultures:

“One particularly important expression of American individualism is private ownership of property. At an early age, children have their own toys and rooms. They may be encouraged to share what they have, but the fact that they own these things is not questioned. Later, ownership is extended to most things – land, cars, trees, pens, and books. ... Private ownership carries the exclusive right to use and dispose of property.”

This concept of ownership is not shared in many countries. In communitarian cultures property is seen differently to the point that ownership lays with the tribe or the kinship. Land for example does not belong to an individual, but to the clan. Because property is not perceived as a private good in many cultures, the willingness to share what a person owns is more common in these societies. When the author lived in Haiti in a small village, he owned one of only three cars that existed in the village. People did not express jealousy

because he possessed that car, but he was expected to share the car with the people in the village when there was an emergency or when friends or neighbors needed a ride.

There are numerous examples in missions where the lifestyles of the missionaries created a breach, too often unconsciously, in the relationship between the foreigner and his national partner. Bonk (2007:173) explains that

“many missionaries in an effort to help people economically, have unwittingly assumed the role of patron or feudal master. If they refuse to fulfill the obligations associated with that role, the understandable result is confusion, frustration, and even anger. The sincerity and honesty of such missionaries are questioned.”

Greenway (1992:126) gives his own example when, as a young missionary, he first came to the village where he and his family were supposed to live. Their luggage arrived several months late and so they had to live out of the suitcases and purchased a few necessary items. They started to build relationships with their much poorer neighbors. Finally after several months their luggage came loaded on five bullock carts: Eighteen barrels and two big crates! Greenway was ashamed of all his belongings in comparison with his poor neighbors and felt his credibility was at risk.

The question of one's lifestyle can undermine our credibility in the sight of his partners. What houses a person chooses to live in? How does he spend his leisure time? Going to restaurants, to the movies, to nice hotels for a week-end trip, sailing, scuba diving or other activities will probably be impossible for some of the national co-workers. Greenway (:128) gives the example of some missionaries who did water skiing on a river in an African country and hired some nationals to chase the crocodiles away. He rightly asks the question if a person does bond to people or to things. Here the credibility as missionaries or as partners is at stake and can lead to a climate of distrust.

The other money question in partnerships has always been: Who will administer or control the money that is given for a certain project? This is a very important question because it is automatically involved with the task of distributing the resources for the different parts of a project and ultimately with the question of who finally directs or leads the project. In the past, the partners were not equal when it came to the distribution of resources. Konrad Raiser (1984:43) rightly analyzes:

“In the long run there can be no real partnership in regard of lasting worldwide inequality in power, e.g. between rich and poor, donors and receivers. Material dependency destroys human relationships elsewhere, too, however hard one may try to achieve partnership.”

One of the resolutions of the Whitby conference (1947) was that the responsibility for the use of money should be with the church where the money is spent (Freitag 1948:92). This was a dream which has not come true. Kham (2003:177) for example writes:

“The current condition of relationships between Western mission agencies and non-Western nationals is characterized by lack of trust and suspicion. Some mission agencies and missionaries see Asians as adolescents or young adults, and do not fully trust them to take leadership role yet. ... Some Western mission leaders have the mentality that says, “We brought the money and we have our own goals for certain countries, and we must be in control over the money.” This is the so-called “golden rule” in South America, which means the one who has the gold sets the rule. Though this has been the case in most parts of the world, it is an unbiblical and unhealthy philosophy and practice.”

If only the Western partner is in control of the resources, the trust relationship will be questioned in the long run. Of course Westerners often justify this behavior because of the need of accountability towards their donors and their governments. Yet, structures can be found where the sharing of resources would be allowed without problems. Maybe instead of financing individual people or projects the partners can agree to transfer the funds to the non-Western partner organization<sup>197</sup>.

Others do not want to bring the Global South partner into a money dependency. Pluddemann (in Ott & Netland 2006:256) even sees the danger that emerging churches themselves are slow to become involved in cross-cultural missions, if they depend on the funding from more wealthy countries. In this case the Western partner should help to develop adequate strategies in the partner countries to develop possibilities for economic growth and the improvement for their own funding. Kornfield (1991:232) also regrets that because of “financial paternalism” local projects often collapsed, when the project partners left (and with them the money) because the project belonged to the foreigners or the outsiders and not to the local people or community. This can only be resolved when the national partners are involved in the decision-making process and the distribution of the resources.

However, while dealing with money, the foreign partners need to be very careful to understand local money matters and habits. The best scenario would be, if they would not make money decisions on their own, but within the body of the local church or agency.

Funkschmidt (2002a:362) gives the example of the CEVAA/CWM/UEM missions who reorganized their structures in order to give their churches in the South a

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<sup>197</sup> Van Rheeën (2002:41-42) prefers a financial partnership model and recommends that the money instead of going directly to individuals, „should go through a local accountable structure of mature Christian leaders”.

“full participation in decision-making processes by allocating to them the majority of seats in the councils, executive committees, etc. Since this includes full control over the current budgets and assets of these mission organizations, one can rightly speak of a communion of goods, even though the individual member churches remain vastly differently resourced in financial terms.”

These missions have dared to give the control of the resources over to their Global South partners and they have shown a biblical attitude of sharing which was called by Funkschmidt a “communion of goods.” The Western partner needs to understand that he is privileged by the grace of God to live in a richer part of the world and that it is a Christian attitude to care for the poor. There is a need to share one’s riches as a wise steward within the Body of Christ. Bonk (2007:173) proposes that Western Christians, and this is also true for mission or church organizations, should adopt the attitude of the “righteous rich” and use their resources in alignment with biblical standards. He believes that “rich Christians are called upon to be energetically proactive and economically generous in their expression of concern for the poor.” This is the attitude which needs to be adopted in cross-cultural partnership. When this is done the Western partner will be seen as trustworthy and as an equal, valuable, and credible partner with whom it is worth staying in relationship.

#### **3.4.2.8 *The Fourth Self: Theology***

Christian partnerships have been founded on a Christian basis and therefore the question of theology should be important to both partners. Along with financial paternalism often comes “theological paternalism.” Kornfield (1991: 235) believes that there is

“a strong connection between our financial paternalism and our Westernization of the gospel. The greater the funding from Western agencies and individuals, the greater the danger of spreading “another gospel” – i.e., a Western gospel – whose form is often irrelevant and out of context of the people in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Cultural strings are often attached to our money, because “he who pays the piper calls the tune.”

This may have been especially true for church denominations or denominational missions who wanted to uphold “their doctrine and their theology.” Earlier Western missionaries imported their theology and especially their ecclesiology into their countries of ministry. They did not realize that their doctrine and theology was culturally tinted and they did not make an effort to contextualize their theology. Particularly in the age of globalization many non-Western pastors and theological thinkers realized that the theology which they have received in the past was a “Western” theology and colored by Western culture rather than by a truly biblical and indigenous one. When Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn in the

late 1800s called for principles of the 3-selves: self-governance, self-support, and self-propagation, they did not think about the fourth self: self-theologizing. Hiebert (1985:196) accurately asks the question if the young churches do have the right to read and interpret Scripture for themselves.

Bosch (1991:452) indicates that some of the self-theologizing had already taken place after the Second World War in the late sixties, but admits that it was often unnoticed and clandestine and most often outside of the mission churches. He described the situation with the words of the African theologian John Mbiti who complained that the “church in Africa is a church without a theology, without theologians and without a theological concern.” But Bosch perceives this era as the beginning of the development of an autochthonous African theology. Probably the same could be said for the other Global South continents.

That many Western partners did not realize that they came with their own cultural and theological baggage is obvious. But that this fact is seen as theological paternalism by many non-Western partners is probably not yet understood. Tite Tiénou (in Ott & Netland (2006:47) verbalizes this reality:

“The West’s self-perception that it is the center of scholarship is a corollary of the hegemony postulate. Here the assumption is that the West represents the center of scholarship and the rest (usually Africa, Asia, and Latin America) fits in the margins. This assumption is seen in the reflex of dismissing third world scholarship without real or adequate basis. So, for example, a seminary president in the United States can declare an African seminary “not a real seminary.” I have encountered this on numerous occasions.”

How should Western partners at present deal with this situation? First, they need to understand that their theology grew in the context of their Western worldview and that this is the way they understand theology. Hiebert (1985:198) confirms that already the use of the English language can prejudice the understanding of the Bible. Westerners mainly grew up with a more reason-oriented, rational and individualistic approach to the Bible. Other cultures, for example, come out of animistic and collective backgrounds and approach and understand theology therefore in a different way. The whole sphere of the supernatural (spirits, demons, angels, hell, supernatural healing etc.), for instance, rarely has a place in Western theology, because of the demystification of the Gospel, whereas in the Bible and in other cultures this subject plays an important role. Theology is always understood with the background of culture. Western missionaries can never fully comprehend people who grew up in Africa, Asia, or Latin America, because their history is already so different from that of their non-Western counterpart. Cultural values are so ingrained that it is almost impossible to fully understand

them.<sup>198</sup> The same is true for theology. Western theologians always interpret theology with their Western cultural bias. Nicholls (1979:25) states already in 1979 that

“it is now widely accepted that all theology, including biblical theology, is culturally conditioned and therefore in some sense relative. Theologizing is understood as a human fallible process, so that no theology is perfect or absolute.”

He therefore calls for a contextualizing of theology.

That leads to the second answer of how Westerners should deal with this subject matter. Looking at the growth of Christianity in non-Western countries today begs the question of what could the West learn from these countries theologically. Western missionaries and agencies think that it is “normal for them” to go into Global South countries to evangelize, to do church planting, to do theological education and to train the leadership. Very few would ask the question if Global South missionaries should come to their countries and what they could learn from the Global South theology. First, there needs to be an attitude of accepting the fact that non-Western theology is also a valid theology. As seen above, many non-Western theologians approach the Bible very differently than Western theologians and an exchange could be very fruitful for both sides. Then there should be a practice of a reciprocal theological exchange if the partners want to work together in the Body of Christ. Hiebert (in Ott & Netland 2006:305) admits that global theologizing is not an easy task, because it raises the question of the relationship between systematic (philosophical), biblical (historical), and missiological theologies and implies the use of different categories and logics in its formulation. Even so, he sees that the missionary is central as a mediator to global theologizing, because he has learned to identify himself deeply with the other culture and is an “Outsider-Insider” (:300). He can help the churches or agencies in the West and their partners in the non-Western world to come to a better understanding of the truth of Scripture. Both partners have to discover the biblical truth together in the context of the particular framework of their cultures. Each one can and needs to learn from the other in this theological dialog.

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<sup>198</sup> Codrington, an early missionary and ethnographer wrote: „When a European has been living for two or three years among strangers, he is sure to be fully convinced that he knows all about them; when he has been living ten years or so amongst them, if he is an observant man, he finds that he knows very little about them, and begins to learn.“ (Quoted in Ott & Netland 2006:290). Partnerships are generally more short-term oriented and the two partners often live in different countries or even continents. The question is, if they really have the time, or take the time to build a long-term relationship in order to deeply learn and understand the other’s culture and theology.

### 3.5 Contextual Partnership in World Mission

Usually when talking about contextualization it is generally connected with theology and the interpretation of the Bible.<sup>199</sup> Nicholls (1979:21) sees the birth of the word “contextualization” in 1972 and it was used for the first time by Shoki Coe and Aharon Sapsezian, directors of the Theological Education Fund (TEF). Western mission theology was then seen as culturally conditioned by the Western culture and needed to be stripped of Western cultural preconceptions. It was claimed necessary to replace the word indigenization<sup>200</sup> and inculturation with contextualization which would include the realities of contemporary secularity, technology, and the struggle for human justice (Bevans 2005:26).<sup>201</sup> The national theologian should now interpret Scripture within his own cultural context. Flemming (2005:20) claims that the context is defined by a variety of boundaries such as regionality, nationality, culture, language ethnicity, social and economic status, political structures, education, gender, age, religious or theological tradition, worldview or values. All these issues should be taken into consideration when working within a cross-cultural context.

Vanhoozer (in Ott & Netland 2006:100) talks about this cultural adaptation and explains:

“Contextual theology, according to this view, is a matter of extracting the doctrinal kernel from its original cultural husk and then reinserting it in, or adapting it to, a new cultural husk.”

However, not only theology is embedded in that cultural husk, the same is true for the concept of partnership.<sup>202</sup> The individual partner comes with his own cultural understanding of partnership and collaboration. It was stated above that small cultural differences can already lead to a multitude of misunderstandings and distrust. Therefore the perception of partnership needs to be considered within the specific cultural context.

Nicholls (1979:24) clarifies that there are

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<sup>199</sup> It is not intended to undertake an indebt study of contextual theology at this point, but only to apply the idea of contextual theology to contextual partnership. For further reading on contextual theology see Nicholls (1979), Hiebert (1985), Hesselgrave & Rommen (1989), Flemming 2005), and Bevans (2005).

<sup>200</sup> Bosch (1991:448) explains that during the Western colonial expansion theology was culturally tinted and that „since Western culture was implicitly regarded as Christian, it was equally self-evident that this culture had to be exported together with the Christian faith. Still, it was soon acknowledged that, in order to expedite the conversion process, some adjustments were necessary. The strategy by which these were to be put into effect was variously called **adaptation** or **accommodation** (in Catholicism) or **indigenization** (in Protestantism).”

<sup>201</sup> Flemming (2005:18) gives the following definition: “... *contextualization* is better able to embrace the gospel’s interaction with all kinds of contexts, including social, political, economic, religious and ecclesial settings. I therefore reserve *inculturation* primarily for speaking of the encounter between the gospel and the human culture.”

<sup>202</sup> Flemming (2005:19) states that “there is still no consensus regarding whether the gospel (or Scripture) or the cultural context should play the lead part in determining the shape of the contextual process.”

“two levels of contextualization – cultural and theological. The former one relates primarily to two surface levels or segments of culture, ... namely, the institution of the family, law, education and resulting from them the observable level of cultural behavior and the use of artifacts.”

The second, theological level belongs to a “deeper level of culture, namely, the world view and cosmology and the moral and ethical values that are derived from them.” Initially the first level should be looked at and understood, although the second level may impact the relationship in a partnership as well.

Hiebert (1985:230) uses the terms “enculturation” and “acculturation.” A person is enculturated, when growing up and learning the beliefs, values and social behavior within the own culture. When a person enters another culture it is proposed by Hiebert that the missionary or the cross-cultural worker needs to observe and imitate cultural fundamentals in order to learn to live in the foreign culture until one becomes “bicultural.” Cross-cultural partnership needs to be understood within the context of the culture in which a person wants to work and live in. Bevans (2005:4) remarks that

“as our cultural and historical context plays a part in the construction of the reality in which we live, so our context influences the understanding of God and the expression of our faith.”

The same is true for our understanding of partnership. If somebody from an individualistic culture lives and works within a communitarian culture as one would do in the home culture, one most likely would create a lot of misunderstandings. The result would be a relationship of distrust which would probably in the long run end in isolation of the one coming into the new host culture.

When entering a cross-cultural partnership both partners should learn the other culture as best as they can. Western cross-cultural partners need to understand that they have to make a specific effort to learn the partner’s culture because it is the host culture in which they are working in. They cannot expect the partner, who is the host, to adapt to the Western culture.<sup>203</sup>

In adapting to the other partner culture Nicholls (1979:30) warns about cultural syncretism on the part of the receiving partner adapting the lifestyle of the partner now coming into the host culture:

“A contemporary example of cultural syncretism is the unconscious identification of biblical Christianity with ‘the American way of life.’<sup>204</sup> This form

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<sup>203</sup> The same would be true for a missionary from the Global South who would come to work in a Western country.

<sup>204</sup> Nicholls talks about the „American way of life“, but the same could be true for other Western countries.

of syncretism is often found in both Western and Third World, middle-class, suburban, conservative, evangelical congregations who seem unaware that their lifestyle has more affinity to the consumer principles of capitalistic society than to the realities of the New Testament, and whose enthusiasm for evangelism and overseas missions is used to justify noninvolvement in the problems of race, poverty and oppression in the church's neighborhood (:31)."

Therefore, the partner who is receiving a colleague from another culture needs to be conscious of his own cultural background in order to adapt to and learn about the partner culture. This demands once more a humble attitude of questioning one's own culture critically. Nicholls explains that some Western or non-Western cultural traits and behavior may not be in conformity with the standards of Scripture, so people need to let the Bible judge the culturally tinted message they receive, as well as their own individual culture in order to discover and correct some of their own cultural traits which are not in accordance with biblical values.

This leads to the second example which is also concerned with partners going into a cross-cultural context and trying to win the national partner towards their own culture:

"The second form of cultural syncretism is more aggressive and self-conscious. It is the spirit of the Pharisees and Judaizers who sought to force their cultural forms of religious conviction on their converts. Its modern form is often seen in mission or denominationally founded churches, as enforced ecclesiastical structures, or in social standards of right conduct and worldliness totally alien to the local culture. In the eyes of non-Christian neighbors, Christianity carries the image of a foreign religion (:31)."

This also can happen within a completely Western intercultural setting, often even unconsciously. The author once observed a French church plant originated by two American missionaries. When a French colleague became involved, tension arose and it came to a split. When the members of the new French church were asked whether they wanted to stay with the American mission group or if they wanted to disengage all together with the French church planter, they choose to disengage, giving the reason that the church would become too American. Western partners need to be cautious that they do not convey their own culture, but to work in a way that respects and values the host culture. They also should humbly question their own culture for unbiblical traits. In observing the host culture, they have to be very careful not to prematurely judge it, but together with a cultural guide from the host culture they should take the Bible as their guideline and discover which cultural traits are conform to Scripture, which are neutral and which are against the biblical norm.

This demonstrates that is important to contextualize in cross-cultural partnerships. The question of relationship, trust, leadership, finances etc. will play a significant role in the

partnership and is valued differently by either partner. Some behavior might be judged as sinful by one culture while people from the other culture would consider it as normal. Who is right?

Three different cultural sets need to be considered in a cross-cultural partnership in the mission context: The distinctive culture of the Western partner, the culture of the national partner and thirdly the encultured gospel of the Bible. For the Western and non-Western partner, the Bible should be a starting point for their theological reflection. Both need to come to an agreement that the scripture is the base for their theology and also for their collaboration. Nicholls (1979:61) describes the process of finding the truth together well:

“The prophetic ministry of the gospel calls for a de-culturalization in every culture of the accretions to true faith. From Moses to John the Baptist, the biblical prophets condemned elements of culture which were contrary to the Word of God. At the same time the prophet’s ministry fulfills and re-creates the truth of every culture. The gospel renews and transforms those elements of culture which are true to God’s general revelation.”

Therefore both partners need to learn from each other’s conception of the Bible and make use of it for a deeper understanding of the different elements in their partnership. This process will enrich both parties and they will come to a fuller appreciation of what God wants for them in their partnership and relationship.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In the first part of this chapter the history of partnerships in World Mission has been studied. It is obvious that there is still quite some reluctance and apprehension on the side of many non-Western partners, because of the colonial heritage of the Western missionary movement. The term partnership does not really seem to fit when it comes to the relationship between the churches and organizations of the Western and the Global South. As it has been explained in Chapter 3, most of the partnerships are very much goal- or task-oriented and are formed for specific projects. The organic relationship which should be natural to the universal Body of Christ only plays a secondary role. This is definitely due to a Western task-oriented and individualistic cultural preference as it was shown before. In the West evangelical churches are more individualistic than collective-oriented and the local church seems to be more important than the universal Body of Christ. The worldwide communion within this Body is of minor importance. Whether the paternalistic attitude was really overcome in the last

decades can be questioned, because partnership still seems to be a one-way road from the West to the Global South. Western churches still want to export their help and knowledge, finances and training, but very little is documented where Western churches and organizations have accepted help or training from non-Western partners. The impression persists that these “weaker” partners do not have anything to offer, which is not true.

However, it is not said that above described partnerships are without any benefit, but if one only talks about partnership in the conventional sense, the concept of partnership as “Christian relationship” will be missed. There is more than just working together on projects. The organic relationship in the universal Body of Christ, as described in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, needs to be rediscovered and lived out by the global partners. Saayman (1993:88) warns about a historical polarization and challenges the reader to understand mission contextually as a new creation in power and faith in order to overcome such a polarization. He states that the

“creative, renewing action of the Holy Spirit is essentially corporative in character, revealing itself not in individuals, but in the community of Christ’s followers, who are representatives of the new humanity through their bond with the second Adam” (:86).

Therefore, the partners in the World Mission context need to come together with a humble attitude as brothers and sisters in Christ.

## **4. Mission-Church Partnerships and Organic-Complementary Kenotic Communion in World Mission**

In Chapter 2 the relationship of human beings with the eternal God and with other humans was examined. The Creator God has created all people and ordained them to live in relationship with himself and with other human beings. The study of the Trinity and the Church as the Body of Christ has shown that, for Christians, this relationship needs to be lived out in the local and universal church. Therefore the relationships in mission-church partnerships need to flow out of the spiritual relationship that exists within the universal Body of Christ. However, Chapter 3 has shown that this is very often not the case, whether in history of Christian partnerships or in today's partnerships around the globe. Many sociological, cultural, or theological barriers lead to misunderstandings and finally to damaged and broken relationships. Kham (2003:179) is right when he remarks:

“Christian partnership in mission begins with the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all of humanity, particularly over the people of God to whom the missionary mandate is given. As a community of the redeemed, whether we recognize it or not, we are one family and partners in the harvest.”

In Christian World Mission, partnership cannot be considered apart from the spiritual community of the children of God. In the past partnerships have by and large turned around the task that has to be fulfilled and the personal relationships with each was of some importance, but were not necessarily based on the fact that Christian partners are bound together in Christ in a spiritual community. The following chapter will investigate how this specific aspect could be added to the relationships in Christian World Mission. Christian spirituality often is the missing link between the partners in Christian World Mission partnerships.

### **4.1 The Forgotten Dimension of Partnership**

In his definition of partnership Kham (:179) talks about a secular partnership model and a Christian partnership model. The secular partnership model comes from the business world and does not include the spiritual dimension. It only has a horizontal dimension because the members do not necessarily have a relationship with the living God. The

Christian Partnership model cannot neglect the spiritual side of the partnership because it is based on a Christian foundation and the members have a spiritual relationship.<sup>205</sup>

#### 4.1.1 The Secular Dimension of Partnership

In the Secular Model there are two or more partners involved and the goal is to bring their resources together in order to reach a common objective. The partnership is task- or goal-oriented and it is only a secular relationship. The spiritual dimension does not play a role in such an alliance. The relationship is horizontal from partner to partner and the commitment towards each other and towards the task last only as long as the project lasts.

**Figure 8. The Secular Model**



Relationally there is not necessarily a deeper commitment towards each other, because the relationship is only work-based. The members are not bound to each other by an outside authority. But if the partnership is also based on a spiritual foundation other elements need to be part of the “Christian Partnership.”

##### 4.1.1.1 The Importance of the Task

In our modern world partnerships take shape around the globe every day. The goal of (business) partnerships most often is to produce better and more in order to sell the products on the world market. The importance of these partnerships can be defined by “What is done?” and not as much by “Who is doing it?” The outcome of the partnership is more important than the participation of the employees involved. The employees are replaceable. The vision of the leadership and the expected synergy are of importance as well. The skills that people bring to the partnership need to fulfill the vision and lead towards a certain synergy in order to produce more and better. If the outcome is not as expected the “human resources” can also be exchanged. Or if the members do not like the task or the

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<sup>205</sup> Kham (2003:179) explains that in the secular model each member has only a horizontal dimension in their commitment and relationship. The secular model has established its own self-identity and the members can join or leave as they want. In contrast, in the biblical model of partnership the members have a commitment to a) Jesus Christ; b) to each other as communion; c) to the task of mission.

relationship anymore, they can easily disengage from the collaboration. So the main focus is on the task and what the partnership produces and not as much on the human resources which are involved. Even Christian churches or organizations have entered in a so-called faith/secular partnership, or religious/secular partnership. Here the church or Christian organization works together with a non-Christian or government organization in order to partner in some social or justice programs and they are based on a common understanding of a civic framework. Such partnerships do not ask for personal relationships of the individual partners or the spiritual relationship towards God or others. It may not even ask the question concerning the ethical dimension, as long as the results as they are foreseen are produced. God does not necessarily play a role in such a partnership.<sup>206</sup>

#### **4.1.1.2 A Social Relationship**

In the secular model of partnership the relationship is first of all a human relationship. A person is free to join or disconnect himself from the partnership. It is a pure horizontal relationship that can be entered with the beginning of the partnership and that can be exited when the partnership is brought to a close. Partners perceive themselves as equal in power and accountability and they have equal access to information and knowledge. They are valued by what they bring into the partnership and if the partnership works well they also can support the success of others. This is most often just a “working” relationship and not as much a “personal” relationship. As seen above, the relationship is based on the task. Affinity or even friendship may occur, but even if it does not, the partners can work together. There is no spiritual relationship or spiritual responsibility as in the case of relationships within the Church or in a Christian organization or partnership. The partners do not automatically have a mutual responsibility towards each other, as long as working towards the common goals is achieved. There might be some social responsibilities towards each other, but there are no spiritual ties as they would exist in a Christian community. The partners meet each other as human beings who are not deeply attached to each other. In their relationship as well as in their commitment towards each other and towards the tasks, God does not play a role. It is a purely secular relationship. In such a partnership the relationship is based on a common understanding of everybody’s civic responsibility to guard the rights of all, even if somebody deeply disagrees with somebody else. The base for such a relationship is human and not spiritual.

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<sup>206</sup> An example of such a partnership could be when a non-government organization comes into a village and works with a local church on a water drilling project. Although there is a local church involved there may not be a spiritual connection among the partners.

#### 4.1.1.3 *Christian Partnership with Task or Goal Orientation*

In church-mission partnership the foundation for the partnership is most often Christian-based. If the partners are Christians, each one of them has a spiritual relationship to God and also with each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. This dimension can get lost, especially when the partnership centers only on projects or tasks. The relationship is reduced more or less to a working relationship which centers on the task to be accomplished.

**Figure 9. The Christian Model**



Each one of the partners is a Christian, but that does not have a large influence on the relationship. The negligence of the spiritual communion in their partnerships can be intensified if the partnership is cross-cultural. The partners come together to work on the task or project, but do not have a spiritual exchange or Christian fellowship with each other. When foreign workers or missionaries live together as a group in a host country they too often fellowship within their own culture and language group and do not seek deeper spiritual communion with the host partner, except maybe in the church service on Sunday morning. The Western partner who comes from an individualistic context will have particular difficulties engaging with somebody from a collective context. The spiritual aspect of their relationship is often simply forgotten or neglected. Kham (2003: 182) warns about a one-sided task-oriented partnership:

“Most writers define partnership in terms of task-based relationship. Fulfilling the Great Commission is what brings Christians together for the partnership. While we need to have partnership to do the task of evangelization, we must not forget the fact that Christian partnership is not based on tasks or projects only. It is not the task that makes us one, but it is the oneness we have in Christ that causes us to work for the Lord hand-in-hand. If our partnership is brought about by tasks or projects only, then the partnership will no longer exist or be needed, when projects are accomplished. Since Christian partnership is based on being a part of the Body of Christ with one hope, one Lord and one baptism, partnership must continue until Christ returns.”

Kham is right that Christian relationships in World Mission cannot rely on tasks or projects alone. The relationship is spiritually based and this spirituality is Christian because the partners are parts of the Body of Christ, the universal Church. Christian communion is basic in any Christian partnership relation. The relationship cannot stay horizontal just among human beings. It also has a vertical dimension which is embedded in the relationship of both partners with the eternal God. What makes a partnership Christian? The answer can only be that it is the spiritual relationship of the partners with the eternal God and the spiritual relationship of the partners towards each other. That means that the members will live also in a Christian commitment towards each other and cannot just leave the communion at any given occasion. This commitment will be expressed in the attitude that the partners have for each other and will be lived out in a Christian communion of the partners.<sup>207</sup>

#### 4.1.2 The Spiritual Dimension of Partnership

Since Christian partnership relationships have a spiritual dimension, the concept of Spirituality needs further investigation. Spirituality is closely related to the word “spirit”. Whereas the past understanding of spirituality always connected it with religious life, recent understanding now disconnects spirituality from the divine and talks now about secular spirituality. In this study the emphasis will be on the understanding of a Christian spirituality.<sup>208</sup> Woods (1996) studies Christian Spirituality through history and gives the following definition:

“I will use the term (in this book) to indicate the particular ways in which Christian men and women have come to understand, value, and direct their lives as disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. ... Christian spirituality as a whole always focused on awareness of and faith in the abiding presence of God, the Spirit of being, life, and relationship that grounds and supports all human experience. In fact, Christian Spirituality originated and developed as a growing consciousness of the special reality of God’s presence as companion and friend in Jesus and his first disciples” (:10).

Kritzinger (2004:163) defines Christian spirituality as the way one lives a Christian life which acknowledges the spiritual or interior dimension of human life with relationship to God. He explains that there are different spiritualities which have common features:

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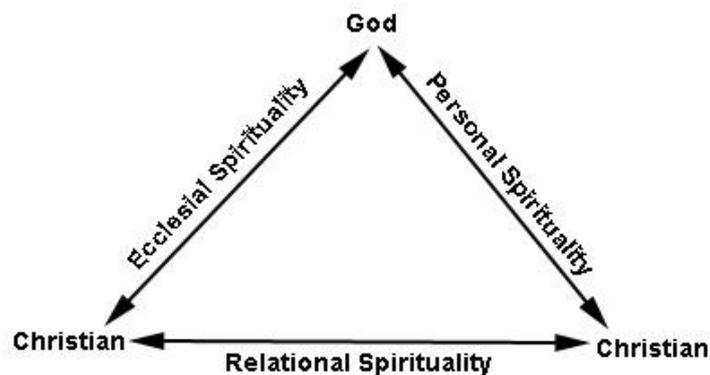
<sup>207</sup> This is not to discard all secular partnerships. Secular partnerships are good and can produce good results. Here the difference between secular and Christian partnerships should be elaborated because in World Mission this aspect should not be neglected and is important to use it as a common base for Christian collaboration.

<sup>208</sup> Escobar (2003:109) in discussing the Christian mission makes a comment about the authority and the way in which the mission is done. Whereas in Christian history it was perceived that the authority of the missionary came from kings and queens he now proposes that mission needs to be done in “the aspect of Christian spirituality, the imitation of Christ or *imitatio Christi*. Here Escobar links Christian spirituality directly to Christ.

“Each spirituality is rooted in an experience of God; spirituality contains a call for an ongoing conversion; it demands faith in Jesus Christ; it required self-transcendence; it is personal and communal; it brings the person into the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection; and it is missionary” (:163).

Given that Christian missionary workers are living in different relationships, with God, within the church, with their Christian partners, and also with the world around them, diverse spiritual relationships should be considered. First, the difference between a secular and Christian spirituality needs to be elucidated. Then the personal relationship of the Christian with God and the spiritual aspect will be looked at. Because the Christian worker lives in the community of the church, the ecclesial spirituality will be given some attention. As a Christian worker in a mission context is working in partnerships with other Christians, the relational spirituality is of importance. The following diagram will explain the various relationships which relate to the different spiritualities.

**Figure 10. Spiritual Relationships**



Kritzinger explains that spirituality also needs to be missionary (see above). In the past too often spirituality meant the withdrawal from the world and was only concerned with the inner life of the Christian. But if spirituality also means that the Christian needs to be involved in the world “missional spirituality” is as well of importance and should not be ignored.

#### **4.1.2.1 Secular and Christian Spirituality**

What is the difference between secular and Christian spirituality? Secular spirituality<sup>209</sup> seems to be an oxymoron, because in the past, spirituality has always been

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<sup>209</sup> Bigger (2008:61) holds that the term “spirituality” cannot be reduced to piety or religiosity and that a person is not spiritual, because they adhere to a particular form of worship. In the studies of spirituality he rather sees “spirituality as a general psychological construct, whose benefits and pathology need to be understood. That spirituality is inbuilt in the human species – presumably a product of evolutionary biology ... is a useful starting point” (:62). It is based on emotions and creativity, which a person searches for inside the self and his world in order to find meaning for life (:66). In secular spirituality the search for the meaning of life comes out of the personality of the person himself and not out of a relationship to a divine being.

connected with belief and religion. This has changed. Secular spirituality is totally horizontal and disconnected from the divine. Secular spirituality could be described as “the goodness of the spirit” which means that someone gets in touch with his inner qualities beyond thoughts and thinking. This means that the person tries to improve his own moral code which should lead to a certain self-improvement. The person wants to find the sacred in the secular and is concerned with the inner peace of the individual. This can happen through personal practice, such as meditation, rather than through belief in a divine being. Secular spirituality can also allow the person to develop a greater relationship with the world he lives in. The philosophy professor Daniel Dennett gives an example:

“Of course I have spiritual moments in a bland sense of that word. I suppose, but I think the right sense. I have times when I am just transported with awe and joy and sense of peace and wonder at whether its music or arts or just a child playing or some other wonderful thing off of my sailboat, being amazed at the beauty of the ocean. I think that people make a mistake of thinking that spirituality in that sense has anything to do with either religious doctrines or with immateriality or the supernatural. The world is a stunningly interesting and glorious place and at every scale and the awe that one can experience because one understands something about how the parts are put together is I think far greater than the sort of awe of incomprehension. Just I think, I think it's, the universe is much more wonderful the more you know about how it is put together.”<sup>210</sup>

Secular spirituality ascribes therefore spiritual dimensions to some secular beliefs and behaviors. The objective of meditation is based on human experience and is not concerned with the inner relationship with the divine. It will recognize the wealth of the secular which should lead towards a better understanding of the world around the person and the person himself.<sup>211</sup>

Not so in Christian spirituality. Christian spirituality has first a vertical dimension towards the divine, but also a horizontal dimension towards the fellow brother and sister. Christian spirituality originates in the spirituality of the Triune God himself. John 4:24 declares that “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” The relationship with the Triune God is a spiritual relationship. The woman at the well was concerned with the external location for divine worship, but Jesus made it clear that true worship is not concerned with the place of worship, but rather with the spiritual inner condition of the worshipper. God is in the center of Christian spirituality and he should guide

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<sup>210</sup> See Internet source: Available at: <http://bigthink.com/ideas/13465> (accessed on 21/01/2013).

<sup>211</sup> The author rejects the idea of secular spirituality, because it is in opposition with the Christian spirituality as it is revealed in the Bible.

and direct the thinking and acting of his followers. This is true for an individual Christian as well as for the gathered community which is his Church.

#### **4.1.2.2 Personal Christian Spirituality**

If Christians have a personal relationship to the Triune God, their spirituality is foremost a personal spirituality. In the Christian tradition, spirituality originates from the Holy Spirit, and therefore Christians are encouraged to live by the Holy Spirit, listen to him, and to follow his instructions. "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit" (Gal 5:25). The whole life of believers should reflect the inner devotion to God through faith which will be nourished through the word of God. In listening to God's word they will orient their whole life to what is good and pleasing to God (Rom 12:1). The key words for personal Christian spirituality are presence and transformation. Through the Holy Spirit, God is present in the life of believers and wants to transform their thinking and actions into a godly life. Believers should be transformed into the image of the Triune God himself. They should be a reflection of God through their lives. Therefore their spirituality is always active and not static. In the late 1980s the church historian Lovelace (1988:25-35) compared the understanding of Christian spirituality between the Protestant and the Roman Catholic tradition. Whereas in Protestantism the idea of justification by faith shaped the understanding of protestant spirituality, Roman Catholic spirituality was rather influenced by thoughts of sanctification. Luther saw the efforts for sanctification in the Roman Catholic Church as a means for their salvation and therefore stressed faith in Christ for justification. Lovelace explains that

"Reformation spirituality assumes that the simplest believer leaps to the top of the spiritual ladder simply by realistic faith in Jesus Christ. Consistent Protestants start everyday at the top of the ladder, receiving by faith what only God can give and what cannot be achieved by human efforts: assurance of salvation, and the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit. ... Luther stands the *via triplex* on his head. Union with Christ, received by faith, is the foundation of evangelical spirituality, not the final achievement. The illumination of the Holy Spirit then comes in to break up our darkness and shows us our sins. Purgation of sin, finally, is a sanctification process in which we are led by the Spirit to recognize, confess and put to death the particular patterns of sin that are present in our characteristic fallen nature" (:27).

It becomes clear that justification and sanctification stand in tension with each other. Lovelace goes on to compare Roman Catholic spirituality with the spirituality in some other currents of Protestantism such as the more legalistic Puritans (who also had an emphasis on sanctification), Pietism (which had a vision for an individual spirituality) and the evangelical

awakenings (which had a concern for moral and social reforms and the transformation of society). In the modern Evangelicalism he acknowledges that the spirituality “suffers again from a sanctification gap” (:33). He holds that “Neo-evangelicals have developed a better theology of culture, but they generally reflect a rationalistic de-emphasis on spirituality” (:33). It needs to be taken into account that Lovelace wrote these ideas in the late eighties. In the post-modern era a new search for spirituality developed, but as seen above it is not necessarily a Christian spirituality that seeks a personal relationship with the Triune God.

Waltke (1988:13) studies the understanding of justification and sanctification among diverse evangelical groups and also finds a different comprehension within these groups:

“Evangelicals of the Augustinian and Reformed persuasion find justification and sanctification not as chronologically separate spiritual experiences but as synchronic and unified ministries of the Spirit that accompany his gift of faith. Armenian evangelicals, on the other hand, regard the Spirit’s sanctifying ministry as subsequent to a person’s exercise of faith. Evangelicals of the holiness movements go one step further and look for a second blessing as the *sine qua non* of spirituality.”

Nevertheless, Waltke defines spirituality as “love for God and man” (:10) which comes from the commandment in the Old Testament (Deut 6:4-5) and which is repeated in the New Testament (Mark 12:29-30). This love involves all one’s heart, all one’s soul and all one’s strength which means it involves the whole person. It also indicates that the Christians live in an “I-thou relationship” (:11) and that they should lead a spirit-filled God-centered life. In order to do this the Christians need to learn what grace and forgiveness in Christ means and they need to live in the fear of God to avoid sin in their lives. The substance of personal spirituality is the Love of God which should flow out of repentance and forgiveness of sin. Waltke summarizes:

“Faith in God, fear of God, and repentance before him are all foundational to love of God because they lead to a gratitude for his forgiveness” (:16).

Thus spirituality entails not only the love of God, it also includes a love for others which should lead to a spirituality of the believer practiced in community.

#### **4.1.2.3 Ecclesial Spirituality**

The spirituality of believers is not only a personal spirituality between the individual and God. Since they are incorporated into the larger Body of Christ they cannot live their spiritual life apart from other believers in this body. The fellowship of God is called the temple of God which is indwelt by the Spirit of God (1Cor 3:16). The individual members

of the church are built together, as individual stones, into this spiritual temple of God. The spirituality of the members of the Christian Church could be called an ecclesial spirituality. Acts 2:4 explains that all the new believers at Pentecost received the same Spirit when they came to faith and 1Cor 12:13 testifies that “we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body”. As a result this Spirit will guide the spiritual lives of the individual believers in the community. They have a special relationship with each other and are called “Brothers and Sisters in Christ” because they are the children of God (Rom 8:16). The relationship is even deeper because as the Christian becomes a part of the Body of Christ, he is incorporated into an organic relationship with the different parts in the same body. Since the body is one, the spiritual life of the believer needs to reflect a love for others (1Joh 4:20). It is only in community that believers will be able to discover, if they really love others in the community. Living in a close community will reveal the individual believer’s hidden traits of sin and those of others (such as anger, jealousy, greed etc.) that need forgiveness and redemption. It is in community where the believer learns to forgive and to accept others in love and where one is able to reestablish a renewed relationship with the other. Believers are challenged to live their life according to the Spirit (Rom 8:4). Through the work of the Holy Spirit individual believers in the Church can have a close communion (Koinonia) with each other (2Cor 13:14).

Another aspect of ecclesial spirituality is the “self-giving” to others and the mutual service of the members within the body. Christ himself has given the example of the great servant (Mt 20:28) and encourages his disciples to become slaves or servants for others, if they want to be the first. Real freedom in a Christian life means becoming free from sin and serving one another in love (Gal 5:13). Paul gives a lengthy explanation of the proper use of the spiritual gifts in 1Cor 12 and explains that each one of these gifts is given to serve others. These gifts should be used to build others up and for the spiritual growth of the members and the whole community. Paul also encourages the followers of Christ to have a “spirit of unity”, when they live their spiritual lives in community (Rom 15:5). It is the Holy Spirit who brings them together and unites them in the love of God. Ecclesial spirituality could be summarized in the appeal that the apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians (4:2-6):

“I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all”.

#### **4.1.2.4 Relational Spirituality**

Christian believers who enter into a partnership with others have their own “personal” spiritual life with God. In being members of the Christian Church they will have to live out their spirituality with others in the communion of the church. As partners, especially as cross-cultural partners, Christians also will have to live their spirituality in relationship with their Christian co-workers. The nature of spirituality can be quite different when the partners come from a different culture. The spirituality of a Westerner, who comes from an individualistic, material world, will not be expressed in the same way as the spirituality of someone who comes from a communitarian, poor country. To experience the different kind of spirituality, one only needs to look at a prayer meeting in a Haitian rural church and in a German Brethren Church.<sup>212</sup> The Haitian prayer meeting would be much more emotional than the one in Germany. Also the reality of the spiritual realm, of spirits and demons in an animist country is much more evident to the Haitian people than to those in the rational West, even among Christians. How do partners live a different spirituality in their relationship? How can they fellowship together, if their spiritual background is so different?

First, they need to accept the other in the love of Christ (Rom 15:7). Often the difference in one’s spirituality is rooted in the difference of culture, but the otherness can be accepted if it is not against biblical norms. The Bible does not give a direct command about how one should express his spirituality in practice<sup>213</sup>, so the acceptance of the other practice of spirituality is the first step to living a different spirituality. The second step is that the believers would be open to learn from each other. There is such richness in the different cultures and also in the expression of one’s spirituality. Westerners are always amazed, when they come to Africa to see how African believers express their faith in singing, clapping their hands, and dancing. They wish they could do the same in their home countries, but this would not be authentic. Nevertheless, they can learn from the others. Spirituality has to do with the emotional side of the person, as well as with the rational side. Therefore the partners need to observe each other. Instead of criticizing, they need to ask why the others are doing what they are doing. What is the reason behind this action? How do others live their faith with God?

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<sup>212</sup> This is the author’s own experience, who lived in both contexts for a while. The Haitian prayer meetings normally were much more emotional and the people were praying out loud together, so that the whole church was full of weeping and shouting during the whole prayer meeting which normally lasted much longer than in Germany.

<sup>213</sup> Some cultures, if they express their prayers loudly and with much emotion, are closer to the biblical account than many Western expressions of prayer.

It is clear that, if both are Christians, they both have the Spirit of God living within them, who directs their personal spiritual lives. The Spirit has given them different spiritual gifts and has made every Christian unique, so that others can learn from them. This kind of learning process could be an enrichment for both partners, if they listen to each other and are willing to engage with each other.

#### **4.1.2.5 Missional Spirituality**

Spirituality in the World Mission context always needs to be a missional<sup>214</sup> spirituality. In the beginning secular spirituality was introduced which has no connection with the Divine. Missional spirituality on the other hand seeks to have a Christian impact on the secular. It is directed towards a secular society which has no relationship to God. In his book “A Spirituality of the Road” David Bosch (1979:11) complains that “spirituality or devotional life seems to mean withdrawal from the world, charging my batteries, and then going out into the world.” In this spirituality the world is seen as a threat and the Christian has to flee from it. Bosch sees spirituality not as a flight from the world, but an active engagement in the world.

“Fundamental to any definition of spirituality is that it can never be something that can be isolated from the rest of our existence, as the battery-operated metaphor suggests. “Flesh and Spirit” in the Bible do not refer to two segments of our lives, the one outward and worldly, and the other inward and otherworldly, as though we are spiritual when we pray and worldly when we work. No, flesh and spirit refer to two modes of existence, two life orientations. Being spiritual means being in Christ, whether we pray or walk or work. Spirituality is not contemplation over against action. It is not a flight from the world over against involvement in the world” (:13).

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<sup>214</sup> “Missional means to participate in God’s mission as he *and* we work out his will in the World” (Helland & Hjalmarsen 2011:26). Missional is a term that is used in the “missional church” movement and describes the mission of the church in the world. Mission is the *Missio Dei*, the mission of God and it is God himself who is active in the world. Therefore the church as well should not be only directed inwards but outwards towards the world. Missional faith and missional spirituality need to be directed towards the World. Reimer (2009:221) translates missional as “being missionary from one’s nature” (vom Wesen her missionarisch).

Guder (1998:3ff) explains the origins of his studies about the missional church: The network “The Gospel and Our Culture Network” began in the late 1980s in North America and Great Britain which has evolved quickly in the last few decades. People involved in this movement came to an ecclesiological understanding of the church which is sent into the world.

Those who are involved in the missional church movement are Tim Keller, Darrell L. Guder, Alain J. Roxburgh, Ed Stelzer, Michael Frost and Alain Hirsch.

Hirsch explains that “A proper understanding of *missional* begins with recovering a missionary understanding of God. By his very nature God is a “sent one” who takes the initiative to redeem his creation. This doctrine, known as *missio Dei* – the sending of God – is causing many to redefine their understanding of the church. Because we are the “sent” people of God, the church is the instrument of God’s mission in the world.” He further explains the development of the missional mindset: “*Missional* represents a significant shift in the way we think about the church. As the people of a missionary God, we ought to engage the world the same way he does – by *going* out rather than just *reaching* out” (from “Defining Missional”, 2008, in *Christianity Today/Leadership Journal*, Available at: [www.christianitytoday.com/le/2008/fall/17.20.html?paging=off#comments](http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2008/fall/17.20.html?paging=off#comments) (accessed on 21/01/2013).

Therefore the Christian is sent into the world as the image of the living God. Bosch believes that the missionary himself is part of God's message as he moves into a different world and "as Christ himself has to become visible in his life and conduct" (:56). Instead of withdrawing from the world, the Christians should recognize that their presence and participation in the world can be used by God to help people understand what it means to live a Christian life. If non-Christians see how Christians live their lives in community and brotherly love and in particular if they come from a different cultural background, the message and testimony for the non-believer is even stronger. Missional spirituality always needs to be directed towards the world.

Helland & Hjalmarson (2011:23) give an example of Jesus' life with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) when Jesus explained to her true spiritual worship. He drew a missional connection to his disciple because shortly after explaining the situation, he asked them to open their eyes and to see the fields that were ripe for the harvest. So Jesus connected spirituality and missions. Helland & Hjalmarson see missional spirituality not first of all for one's personal spiritual growth but for God's self-realization in this world:

"Missional spirituality is not primarily about self-improvement, spiritual disciplines, personal devotional life or even spiritual formation for our own sake. Spiritual formation, ... is our continuing response to the reality of God's grace shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in community of faith, *for the sake of the world.*"

"*Missional* means to participate in God's mission as he *and* we work out his will in the world. *Spirituality* means to live in and by the Holy Spirit" (:26).

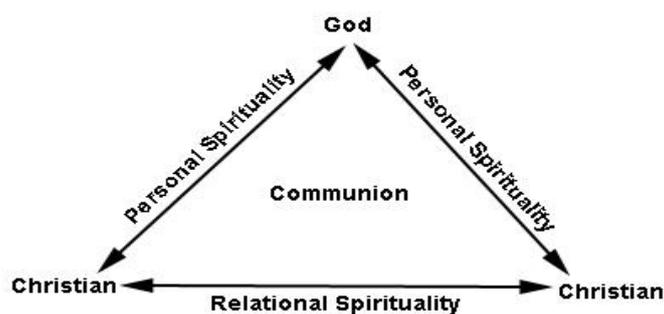
The authors also contrast "Missional Spirituality" with "Temple Spirituality". While temple spirituality seems to be dualistic, as for the believer the Sunday is sacred while Monday through Saturday is viewed as secular (:27). Missional Spirituality needs to engage believers in everyday life as they live their lives in the image of Christ. Communion plays a large role, since non-believers can see how Christians act with each other in daily situations of their life.

Therefore Missional Spirituality plays a large role in the relationship of the partners in World Mission because it is not only important that the Christian partners get along well in their relationship, but that this very aspect gives credibility to their testimony in the eyes of those who are not yet Christians. The loving interaction of believers with each other and even with non-believers from different cultural backgrounds will point to the God who has created them so differently and who wants to enter into a relationship with them. People are longing for an intact community and for spirituality that fills their empty hearts. In the community of believers with God and with each other he can find a good example. Mission and spirituality cannot be divided.

### 4.1.3 From Collaboration towards Communion

The word collaborate comes from the Latin words “com” (together) and “laborare” (to work) and means basically working together. It is simply understood as a process in which two or more partners or organizations work together to achieve a common goal. In most partnership collaborations, as the word verbalizes, the work or task is the focus of the cooperation. This is especially true, if the initiative for the partnership begins from the Western side of the partnership which normally is much more task-oriented<sup>215</sup> than if initiated from a Global South country.<sup>216</sup> For such partnerships the foundation of the relationship is the work that has to be done or the task that should be accomplished. Often the spiritual communion of the partners is only a side issue which is possibly considered, but which is in general of minor importance. Reflecting back on the question of the spirituality of the Christian partners and their embodiment into the communion of believers, the following question must be asked: Shouldn't the foundation for the partnership be situated rather in the spiritual communion of the partners rather than in the task they are performing? The ministry they are doing together should flow out of their Christian foundation that is lived out in practice through faith. Both partners have their personal spirituality and their relationship to the Triune God himself. As such they also function in a relational spirituality towards each other. Therefore the foundation for their relationship should be their communion within the Body of Christ.

**Figure 11. Communion in the Body of Christ**



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<sup>215</sup> Lingenfelter & Mayers (1987:81-89) give a good overview about task-oriented and person- or relationship-oriented people, considering the (Western) missionary as rather task-oriented.

<sup>216</sup> Exceptions to this statement can be seen in special Church-Church partnerships that are established specifically for the purpose of fellowshipping with each other. Such partnerships are described in Chapter 3.

The communion of the partners should be considered as essential and the work or the task should arise out of the community. As already shown, many cultures in the Global South are more relational and communitarian and will definitely appreciate such an approach. Clearly the reason for this is not only that many cultures are communitarian, but that the Triune God himself is first of all communitarian and out of his inner communion of the Trinity, he sends out into the world. This is not to say that the task is not important. If Christ had not come into the world and died on the cross, salvation for humans would not have been possible. Yet Christ came into the world *because* he lived in that perfect communion of the Trinity out of which he was sent into the world. This gave him the strength to walk through his sacrifice and made salvation possible. In the same way, the communion of believers will support the task which should be accomplished. Bosch (1998:472) sees the community as the primary bearer of mission and Moltmann (1977:302) understands that the “*assignments within the community* only come into being by virtue of the common commissioning of the community itself.” He understands the community and the commissioning as inseparable:

““For there is no community without special assignments and no special assignment apart from a community. Community and particular assignments grow up simultaneously, together, and are therefore dependent on one another. Assignments can only be given and carried out in the fellowship of God’s people. It is only at Christ’s charge that the people of God is gathered together” (:305).

Christ is the one who gives the task to the community and who directs the fulfillment of the task through his Holy Spirit. If the community of believers is the center of the relationship, both partners will discern with their spiritual gifts how the task is undertaken and both will be led by the Spirit to fulfill the assignment. If community is the center for the partners then many issues which normally lead to disagreement, misunderstanding, false expectations, and conflicts would be precluded. Ministry can be done out of an understanding of faith and grace and even if misunderstandings arose, believers would have the means to overcome them in brotherly love. The makeup of the community will be examined later in this chapter. First, the attitude that should be prevalent in a spiritual community will be described and then how cultural barriers and maybe other barriers can be overcome by living out such a spiritual attitude.

## 4.2 The Kenotic Constituent in World Mission Relationships

A frequent cause for problems in missions or partnerships, as described in Chapter 3, is the obstructive attitude of the people involved. How often in the past were Western missionaries accused of colonizing people of other races or cultures? How often did they think of themselves as superior or thought they needed to “civilize” the heathens? How often in mission history did the missionaries or partners think if they brought the resources they also needed to have the right to say how the resources should be used and how the work should be directed? Disagreement, misunderstanding and controversy are the results of an unhealthy attitude of the partners.

The story of the disciples in Matthew 18 reveals how important teaching about the right attitude was for Jesus. The disciples came to him and asked who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Mt 18:1) and Jesus taught them a lesson about the right attitude. They had to learn that in the kingdom of heaven being the greatest or the most powerful one is not a proper mind-set, but rather being humble as a child and living an attitude of forgiveness in the community.

Jesus himself gave the best example as the servant who came into this world and gave his life for others. He did not come to be served, but to serve (Mt 20:28). He did not come into this world with the power of a ruler, but with the humbleness of a servant. God himself adopted a “condescending” attitude and lowered himself to the level of the human being. The primary idea of condescendence (lat: condescendere) means voluntarily abating of, yielding up, or descending from a position of superiority to a position of a non-equal. Condescendence is one of the central points of Martin Luther’s theology.<sup>217</sup> Reimer (2004b:52) observes a Christological foundation in Luther’s understanding of condescendence:

“The Lutheran principle of condescendence is founded in the deepest sense Christological. It follows the incarnational model of Jesus Christ (Jn 1:1ff) and the theology derived from the practice of the apostle Paul” (author’s translation).

In his incarnation and kenotic action the loving God comes down towards his own human creation. Condescendence means that the eternal God, the Emanuel is with us (Mt 1:23). Partnership in missions today needs to learn from the master and adopt the kenotic attitude of Christ himself.

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<sup>217</sup> See Berkhof’s discussion about Luther’s tension of transcendence and condescendence (Berkhof 1990:118).

## 4.2.1 The Incarnational Aspect and Otherness

This study researches the relationship between partners who come from different cultural backgrounds. In the mission context workers often cross cultures in order to partner together with people from other language, race or cultural backgrounds. Missionaries leave their home country to minister in other parts of the world. They have to leave things that are very familiar to them such as food, transportation means, language, educational systems, and thought patterns and then start to partner with others who come from totally different backgrounds. Too often differences arise because the missionary does not understand the cultural background of his host co-worker. They need to adapt to the culture.<sup>218</sup> Lianne Roembke (2000:70) holds that missionaries always need to adapt to the host culture inside of the biblical norms and that they cannot expect the host culture to adapt to their own culture which they bring along. They need to learn and to value the new culture. In learning the culture of their partners, they will communicate well, understand them better and appreciate them more. Too often the other culture is judged with the glasses of one's own culture and things that are not well understood are criticized. This will lead to an attitude of superiority on the side of the person entering into this new culture. The attitudes of the partners are key in the relationship and indicate if trust can be built up and if a relationship of confidence can be established or not.

The example of the incarnation of Christ should be the guide for somebody entering a new culture. He left the glory of the communion of the Trinity and came into his creation to give his life for others. Christ came into this world for the human being. He humbled himself and came as the servant who gave his life for all people. The apostle Paul encourages the Christians in Philippi to have the same attitude as Jesus Christ (Phil 2:5) and "to do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (:3-4).

This incarnational attitude is necessary for cross-cultural ministry. The Christian workers need to humble themselves and become incarnational migrants and incarnational learners. They need to forget about the things that seem to be better in their own culture and need to investigate the great things in the host culture. Volf (1996:38) uses the example of Abraham who left his native soil in order to go into a future that God had promised him and he concludes: "Christians take a distance from their own culture because they give the ultimate allegiance to God and God's promised future" (:51).

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<sup>218</sup> This is true for Western missionaries moving into a Global South culture, but it is as well true for those who come from the Global South and become missionaries in Western cultures.

For the sake of the other partner the cross-cultural workers stop comparing their own culture with the host culture. Instead they start to explore and to learn the new culture in order to make steps towards the people they want to serve. If the missionaries start to learn the host culture, they value and respect the people living in that very culture. They move towards them and show consideration for them.

Aquino (2000:44) explains that the incarnation reveals that humans have not been created to live in isolation, but in community. He connects the church's role in human transformation with the significance of the incarnation for the life of the church and its ministry. Reimer (2009:155) investigates the incarnational character of the church and concludes that the mission of the church demands an intentional entrance into the life of those whom the church wants to reach for Christ. This is not only the case for those who are not yet in the kingdom of God, but missionaries or cross-cultural workers also need to enter into the life of those whom they call their brothers and sisters. Roembke (2000:54) describes such an incarnational attitude as "the essence of missionary service."

The same way as Jesus came out of love for humanity into this world and as he valued all people in giving his life for them in order to reestablish the relationship between God and them, missionaries need to enter "in love" into the others culture and not only into their culture, but into their personal life. If they enter into the lives of others, they will establish not only a working relationship, but also a living trust relationship with their brothers or sisters. Jesus took on the human form and identified himself with the people when he came to this world. In the same way missionaries or Christian workers need to "identify themselves" with the people of the other culture in which they serve. They first identify with the nationals, when they learn the foreign language. In learning the other language, cross-cultural workers communicate silently: "We want to talk to you." "You are so valuable to us that we will make the sacrifice of one or two years of learning your language." But they also need to learn other aspects of the culture and show that they are willing to acculturate into the partner's culture. When this happens the national partners understand that the foreigners are moving towards them and that they value them and their culture.

#### **4.2.2 The Importance of Self-giving**

Giving and sacrificing are main subjects in the Bible. Missionaries and cross-cultural workers sacrifice many things in order to serve in the host culture. They give up being with their extended family, speaking their own language, their familiar food, clothing, their career, and

many other things. But even if they give up so many things back home and enter into “the others” culture there is no guarantee that the national will understand this and that automatically a trust relationship is developed. As it was shown, in the past there were many misunderstandings and barriers for trust relationships. The cross-cultural worker comes with his historical colonial and paternalistic baggage and may be perceived as only wanting to accomplish his own goals. The Westerner with a tendency towards task-oriented ministry would then be interpreted as not having an interest in developing a deeper relationship with the people. There are prejudices on both sides of the relationships. How to overcome these prejudices?

It is by giving his life in love to others. It was elucidated in Chapter 2 that God is a God who gave himself out of love for all people. John 3:16 reveals the self-giving God in sending the second person of the Trinity for the salvation of humanity. Jesus himself said in Matthew 20:28: “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Serving others means giving one’s life to others. If the missionaries or cross-cultural workers want to serve in missions, they need to be aware that they will give their lives to others. Jesus does not ask more of his disciples than he himself was willing to give. He gave his life to others and expects his disciples to give their lives as well. This giving one’s life is not necessarily meant to give it in a physical way, but Jesus expects the disciples to die to their own self, when he said: “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it” ( Mt 16:25).

The importance here is that the disciple first is asked to lose his life for Christ himself. Therefore, there is a command for the self-giving attitude. First, the disciples are asked to give their lives to God, second, they should give their lives to others, and third, they should be consecrated to the task.

The apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Roman Christians that above all they should sacrifice their lives out of love to God himself: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship” (Rom 12:1). This relationship between the Christian and God himself is more important to God than the ministry the Christian performs. To first offer one’s life to God is God’s “good, pleasing and perfect will” (:2). The second act of loving self-giving is to give your own life to others. The above example in Matthew 20:28, when Jesus said he would serve others and give his life for them, was used as a teaching example for his disciples. He taught them that whoever wanted to be first must become a “slave” to others (:27). Here giving one’s life does not literally mean to die, but to humble oneself, serve

others and overcome one's own egoism. The passage in Matthew 20 begins with the story of the mother of the two sons of Zebedee who wanted her sons sit next to Jesus in paradise. Jesus took this request to teach his disciples something about power. In the kingdom of God the greatest is not the one who rules and has authority over others, but the one who gives his life in the service for others. This needs to be considered in cross-cultural ministry. If the missionaries or cross-cultural workers come with a superior attitude they will not win their brothers and sisters and will not be able to build a trust relationship with them. But if they humble themselves and give their lives in love to others, they will build bridges to others and will overcome many cultural barriers which would hinder them otherwise from having a fruitful ministry.

Koeshall (2010:12) taking the example of the Trinity says that "self-giving and self-sacrifice is the *modus operandi*" of the Trinitarian union. In the same way it needs to become the modus operandi in a partner relationship. This is the condition on which the actual work or the task of the missionary can begin. When the relationship is right, the task can be undertaken. Further, when the ministry of the worker is considered and if he or she is a Christian, they need to perform it out of their relationship with God himself. In Colossians 3:17 the apostle Paul reminds his readers that: "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." The ministry of a Christian worker is given directly from God and should glorify God through what should be accomplished on the mission field. This also means a certain sacrifice and self-giving. Paul reminds the Corinthians "to always give themselves fully to the work of the Lord" (1Cor 15:58). Christian ministry in missions entails giving up one's own rights, one's own life and one's own egoism for God himself, for God's ministry, and for others whom the missionary or the cross-cultural worker is serving. But the same attitude is also demanded from the national partners who are served by the expats. It needs to be reciprocal. Both partners should adopt such an attitude of self-giving, if they are Christians and serve God together.

### **4.2.3 The Kenotic Attitude of the Partners**

Chapter 2 explained that kenosis originating out of the Trinity needs to become the foundational attitude for a missionary or cross cultural Christian worker. Scripture expects believers to empty themselves and give themselves to the people they want to serve. They cannot come with a superior or arrogant attitude into a partnering relationship with national workers. They need to adopt a humble and learning attitude of love and service when they encounter their partners.

The Catholic missionary and professor for missiology Luc Mees (2007:3) talked about the “Kenosis of the Missionary” and identified a triple kenosis as the “kenosis of incarnation”, the “kenosis of the road” and the “kenosis of the cross”. He explains:

When we look at Jesus’ life and ministry, we can distinguish three moments or dimensions of his *kenosis*: the *kenosis* of incarnation (identification and solidarity with human reality), the *kenosis* of the road (being on the move, reaching out to all people, especially the most abandoned), and the *kenosis* of the cross (faithfulness in assuming the ultimate consequences of his mission).

Following the example of the kenosis and incarnation of Christ, missionaries need to enter respectfully and deeply into the culture and life of the people they are serving. They need to love the people, need to learn and understand their culture and they need to listen to them. The apostle Paul was able to enter into the world of others and to identify with them. He explained that to the Jews he became a Jew, to those without the law he became somebody without the law, to the weak he became weak, he became all things to all men so that by all possible means he might save some (1Cor 9:20-22).

Mees further describes the kenosis of the road as leading the missionary into solidarity with the struggles and movement of the people and a willingness to share what they have with each other (:4). The kenosis of the cross needs to be able to live under the cross and help others to carry their own crosses. This can mean to leave one’s own security and to live in fear, persecution and solitude and to give up one’s own life, so that others can live. Mees continues to talk about the “missionary praxis in the manner of Jesus” and explains:

“Mission has its origin and foundation in the *Missio Dei*, in the salvific presence and action of God in history. Mission originates from God’s boundless love for God’s creation and for the human beings created in God’s image. The goal of the *Missio Dei* is the Kingdom of God. *Kenosis* is the means by which one becomes part of the mission of God. The kingdom that Jesus announced and inaugurated is one that is founded on and maintained by a self-emptying love for all. ... If *kenosis* is constitutive of Jesus’ mission, it follows that missionary praxis always has to be carried out in the incarnational way of *kenosis*” (5).

If kenosis is also constitutive for the missionary praxis, this kenotic attitude is not only to be adopted by the missionary, but by both partners in their Christian relationship. If both are Christians, the example of Christ is valid for both of them, because they are not just working together on a specific project, but they are both part of the universal Body of Christ. This kenotic attitude is expressed in a mutual concern for each other. If somebody lives out of this kenotic attitude, he will not harm the other, but rather love him, help him and build him

up. The Bible is full of these reciprocal claims. The first command is repeated several times, which is that of equal love. “Love each other” (Jn 15:17; 1Th 4:3). This is the requirement for a kenotic attitude of the partners. Christians are also asked to “encourage each other” (Rom 1:12), to have “equal concern for each other” (1Cor 12:25), to “carry each other’s burden” (Gal 6:2), to “forgive each other” (Eph 4:32), to “build each other up” (1Th 5:11), and to “confess sins and pray with each other” (Jas 5:16). Consequently Christian partnerships in World Mission need to be guided by more than just working together. A kenotic attitude on the part of both partners in World Mission is essential for all relationships with each other.

### **4.3 Overcoming Sociological and Cultural Barriers**

Chapter 3 analyzes the sociological and cultural barriers which often hamper good relationships in World Mission. Colonialistic and paternalistic attitudes from the past are still deeply engraved in the cultures and memories of those who have been mistreated at earlier times. Even today cultural insensitivity, an attitude of superiority, and an unawareness of the host culture by the missionary or cross-cultural worker who enters a new ministry culture<sup>219</sup> can hurt the national partner and harm the relationship so that communion and collaboration are nearly impossible. Trust will be broken and the relationship will easily be breached, if social or cultural “faux pas” occur. The consequence is that the partners will withdraw from each other. Therefore the partners need to learn enough from each other’s backgrounds that these mistakes are avoided. In reality this does not happen because people are so deeply rooted in their own cultures that it is very difficult to fully understand somebody from a different culture. What else could be done to overcome these sociological and cultural barriers and to live in a trust relationship with brothers and sisters from a different culture?

#### **4.3.1 Forgiveness and Reconciliation**

Nobody entering a new culture will be free from social or cultural mistakes, even if he has given a lot of effort to learning the host culture. Mixing up the meaning of two different words in the host culture and using the words in a wrong way can provoke a funny situation and the two partners may laugh about this. But it is different, when it comes to a

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<sup>219</sup> Ingleby (2006:5) believes that even today “much of our thinking about mission history and therefore about mission is still too triumphalistic, too Eurocentric, too androcentric – in a word, too colonial.”

misunderstanding of values which are deeply rooted in the culture and which are culturally interpreted differently. Values such as personal rights, money, property, power, personal freedom, space, etc. are often not easy to understand because they are usually hidden below the surface<sup>220</sup> and this leads to conflict among the partners.

This conflict may turn into a difference of opinion or quarrel so that the two partners feel they cannot work or live together anymore and that the best thing would be to part ways. This happens often enough and the result is bitter feelings towards each other.

This situation should not be the end of the relationship, if both partners are Christians and if the relationship is lived in an understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation. The partners, even in a situation of conflict, can move towards each other. The Bible offers a way to resolve a situation of dispute. There can be forgiveness and reconciliation for such conflictual situations. If a Christian is sinned against, the Bible normally recommends that he or she forgives the adversary. They can ask for forgiveness because God has also forgiven them their own sins (Mt 6:14). The Bible frequently instructs believers to forgive others who have sinned against them (Eph 4:32; Col 3:13) and teaches that one's own forgiveness by God is connected to their forgiving others (Mt 6:12-15; Lk 6:37). If there is conflict in a relationship, the Christian, who is sinned against is asked to go to the brother who has sinned against him and to talk to him in order to restore the situation (Mt 18:15). On the other hand if Christians recognize that a brother or sister holds something against them or that they have sinned against a brother or sister they need to go towards them and seek reconciliation (Mt 5:23-24). God wants people to be reconciled with himself and with each other. This reconciliation happens through the ministry of Jesus Christ on the cross. Because the Christians have experienced this reconciliation with Christ, they can also be reconciled with other brothers and sisters in Christ. The Bible even affirms that Christ has given the believer the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-21).

The apostle Paul gives an example of reconciliation when he explains to the Ephesians that through Christ the barriers and dividing walls between the Jews and pagans have been destroyed:

Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the

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<sup>220</sup> See Hiebert's (1985;31-33) evaluative dimension.

dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility (Eph 2:12-16).

If in Christ believers are brought together as one in the body there should not be a division of the members of that body. However, this can only exist, if Christians live a life of forgiveness and reconciliation. Schreiter (1992:10) describes reconciliation as a missionary task concluding:

“We still dream of overcoming racism, economic oppression, the subjugation of women, and other sources of conflict that scar our world. We have a message of reconciliation. And part of being missionary is continuing that *missio dei* that will bring about all things to be reconciled to God, whether on the earth, above the earth, or under the earth.”

This reconciliation is not just a missionary task, but a task of every believer and not just with non-Christians, but also needs to be practiced within the Christian community. Christian partnership and communion cannot stay alive without forgiveness and reconciliation. Old scars and traumas that have hurt partners cannot be overcome, if Christians do not live such a life of forgiveness and reconciliation. Cultural misunderstandings and mistakes cannot be defeated if each partner insists on his own rights.

Fung (2010:2) sees reconciliation as foundational to a Christian partnership:

“Thus, reconciliation is the foundation of all Christian partnership. Reconciliation is to happen not only between ethnic groups, but also between generations, between the old and the young and between genders. For the Spirit of God has been poured out on all peoples. God’s new community includes those from the West and East, from the North and South, sons and daughters, young and old, men and women (Acts 2:17). Every generation owes the next generation a commitment to journey with them and partner together in serving God’s purpose (Acts 13:36)”.

If reconciliation is the foundation of the Christian partnership, then there is a possibility of overcoming social and cultural barriers. If the Christian partners in a World Mission relationship lay aside their own rights and live a life which is affected by kenosis and reconciliation, a brotherly relationship is possible and conflicts can be defeated. Even old offenses and deep-rooted scars can then be overcome through the love of Christ and can be forgiven and reconciled. This opens the way towards a relationship where partners respect and trust each other in a brotherly relationship in Christ.

### 4.3.2 Accepting Otherness

“Two of the greatest problems faced by missionaries entering new cultures are misunderstandings and premature judgments. These are particularly damaging, because one is generally unaware of them” (Hiebert 1985:111). If the missionaries do not know the other culture, values, and habits of the national people, they would normally compare them with their own background and often use this as basis for their judgment. They come to the conclusion that what the nationals are doing is wrong and that they should not accept the other way of acting. The missionaries become disoriented and feel threatened by their counterpart or by the other culture and as a result they may possibly reject both, the partner and his culture.

Sundermeier (1996:128) explains in his intercultural hermeneutics:

“The Encounter with the foreigner leads to the encounter with the own self”.<sup>221</sup> The main point is to apprehend the “being other” (Andersheit) of the other person and to accept it and subsequently initiate the process of understanding (:130). The missionary and the national need each other. Both constitute each other’s identity. They reciprocally depend on each other (:135). So the missionaries cannot withdraw into their own culture, but need to move towards the nationals and engage with them.

Sundermeier (:155) proposes four levels of understanding (table 7) for the person who wants to engage with the foreigner:

The first one is the *level of phenomenon* in which the foreigner is looked at from a distance. The encounter should be descriptive and the person encountering the foreigner should be non-judgmental.

The second level is called the *level of signs*. The person meeting the foreigner needs to understand the signs and read them in its original context. He is sympathetic towards the other culture and starts to participate through his observation and a beginning learning process. Sundermeier explains that participative observation does not mean that the observer becomes part of the other culture. He is still an outsider (:163), but it leads to a certain alienation from the observers own culture which will give him some empathy for the foreign culture which in turn leads him to the next level, the *level of symbols*. Symbols are present in all cultures such as the white doctor’s overall, the traffic signs or logos that need to be read to understand the culture. All symbols are conditioned by the culture. Here the observer needs to

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<sup>221</sup> Author’s translation.

interpret the symbols well and start to identify them, live with them and slowly identify himself with the culture. Sundermeier talks here about a “comparing interpretation” in which the observer needs to approach himself little by little and weigh carefully the differences and bear with some foreign elements of the culture (:170). The last level is that of *relevance* in which the observer not only needs to respect the other culture, but also the foreigner, as a human being, himself. Sundermeier elucidates that because of the equality of human beings they need to treat each other with acceptance which leads to what he calls “Konvivenz” (:190).<sup>222</sup> He uses this expression, which comes out of liberation theology and basic-communities of South America, and which means that the observer and the foreigner are living their ordinary lives together in a certain commitment or dedication. Sundermeier sees three foundational pillars of Konvivenz. It is a “helping community” (Hilfsgemeinschaft), a “learning community” (Lerngemeinschaft), and a “celebrating community” (Festgemeinschaft).

**Table 7. Levels of Understanding the Foreigner**

Foreign Counterpart	Subjective Attitude	Objective Recognition	Operational Level
Level of Phenomenon	epoché <sup>223</sup>	Descriptive analysis	Perception in distance
Level of Signs	sympathy	Contextualization	Participative observation
Level of Symbols	empathy	Comparing Interpretation	Partly Identification
Level of Relevance	respect	Translation/Transfer towards us	Konvivenz

Source: Sundermeier (1996:155).

Having elaborated on this, one needs to realize the importance of the concept of Konvivenz for the inclusion of others. This is not just because of the cultural hermeneutics which Sundermeier has explored. As stated earlier the context of this study is the communion within the Body of Christ. If Sundermeier explains that the forth level of engagement is Konvivenz, how much more is this true if the members of this cultural encounter are also members of the Body of Christ? The barrier that would separate the two should be even lower than for those who are not living in Christian community.

Hiebert (2008:289) describes the biblical worldview of others and otherness and also affirms the common humanity of all people concluding that “at the deepest level of identity

<sup>222</sup> Sundermeier (1996:190) describes “Konvivenz” as „... ein mit Hingabe tatsächlich gelebtes Leben, das Erfahrung und Praxis, Individuelles und Kollektives, Partizipation und Austausch umfasst.“ It is carried by three foundational pillars which are a community of help, a community of learning, and a community of celebration.

<sup>223</sup> It means in philosophical terms an abstention of a judgment.

as humans, there are no others – there is only us.” But looking at Scripture and the context of the church he adds the Christian aspect to his first conclusion:

“In the church there are no others, there is only us – members of one body, brothers and sisters in faith” (:290).

In the Body of Christ, the different members, with their different cultural backgrounds, need to move towards each other in their otherness, accept others with their differences and live together in Christian community. If Sundermeier sees Konvivenz in the areas of helping each other, learning from each other and celebrating together, it should be added that the concept of Konvivenz in a Christian community needs to be expanded to all areas of life. Jesus himself is the best example of living an other-centered life. He was concerned about the individual people around him. He approached those who were avoided by others like the tax collectors or the lepers. He overcame cultural boundaries, when he talked to the Samaritan woman. He ate with, talked with, and healed those who were outcasts of the society. Jesus also turned to sinners and forgave them their sins through his death on the cross. He who had no sin accepted those who sinned against God and others out of his love for human beings.

### 4.3.3 Mutual Learning

One of the areas of Konvivenz proposed by Sundermeier is that of mutual learning. This area should be examined closer, because it is important for relationships in World Missions. Hiebert (1985:111) explains that the Western missionaries make assumptions about the national’s worldview when they enter a different culture. They see the reality with their own eyes and compare it with their own worldview. But the Western worldview differs too often from the worldview of the culture in which missionaries serve.<sup>224</sup> So they need to study the culture in which they are going to work. Only in becoming a student of the other’s culture, will they be able to understand not only the culture in which they work, but also the actions and the life of the people of that culture. On the other hand it is just as important for nationals to make an effort to understand the culture of the person who has entered their sphere. Only if the nationals understand where the missionaries come from and how they function can they be gracious when the missionaries make cultural mistakes and forgive

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<sup>224</sup> The Western missionary is shaped by a rational worldview which could be expressed by his *analytical approach* of either-or thinking – his planning for the future – his pragmatism, by a *mechanic worldview* of production and profit and quantification, by *individualism* with its search for identity and self-reliance, contractual group thinking, private ownership and humanism, by *equality* which leads to informality, competition and free enterprise, direct and confrontational communication and cooperation, by the value of *priority of time over space* which fosters a linear use of time which is future-oriented and expresses an emphasis on youth, and by an Emphasis on sight which is characterized by abstract knowledge, the storage of information in writing, the emphasis on knowledge and a systematic approach. See Hiebert (1985:112-137).

their cultural “faux-pas”. It should be noted that for nationals it will be more difficult to understand the visitor’s culture, because they have never left their own culture.

There is another aspect as to why the learning experience needs to be mutual. No culture is pure and free from sin. Therefore the Bible needs to be the norm by which the culture is measured. Sinful behavior in a culture needs to be identified through biblical norms and corrected. Roembke (2000:17) talks about absolute cultural values:

“The only absolute cultural values to which every culture must bow are the eternal biblical values, to which Jesus held. These are the values above time and above culture, not bound by culture, but which should penetrate and reform culture. All cultures, the host culture, even supposed Christian cultures, must be held up to the eternal light of Christ and his Word.”

Hiebert (1985:103) also supports this dialogue between Christians of different cultures:

“The critical hermeneutics that involve a dialogue between Christians of different cultures can help us all to develop a more culture-free understanding of God’s moral standards as revealed in the Bible.”

Both believers, the one’s from the host culture and the one’s who have entered the host culture, need to go together to Scripture and learn what the biblical norms are and what kind of behaviors would flow out of these norms. They need each other and mutual learning for their Christian community. Collaboration needs to stand on biblical ground. In this learning process they can mutually help each other in biblically reflecting on Scripture, because both come from different cultures and all cultures need to be evaluated by the norms of the Word of God. Hiebert (2008:321) encourages to “learn to see the world through the eyes of others”. Then coming back into one’s own culture it would be judged differently. Hiebert also calls for the church to “globally seek to articulate a biblical worldview”.

“It is important that missionaries, theologians, and church leaders meet and dialogue with one another, both to learn their own worldviews and also to recognize alternative Christian responses and, in the process, to read the Scriptures in a new light as transforming all worldviews we bring with us. In this dialogue we need to listen carefully to non-Western Christians who tell us how they see us” (:321).

For the missionaries it means becoming incarnational learners<sup>225</sup> and humbling themselves, giving up their own privileges in order to move towards the other culture and the other person. Moreover for nationals it means the same. They also can explore the missionaries’ cultures and worldviews and together they can measure both cultures against

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<sup>225</sup> Todd (1999:446-452) writes about the missionary who needs to become an incarnational learner of the language and culture as he enters into other peoples life and relationship. This is a painful process, because the learner has to give up his own privileges and advantages. But since learning another language and culture is a relational process it is finally rewarded with becoming an insider who is able to relate to the national in a more appropriate way.

biblical norms to better understand their beliefs and the basis for their community. Bauerochse (2001:130-131) proposes partnership as a community of learning and believes:

“Only when partners deliberately use their partnership as a community of learning and expect intercultural exchange, with the inevitable conflicts associated with it, can they work together simultaneously to overcome the disproportionately strong emphasis on project aid and to foster a relationship based on equality and reciprocity.”

Bauerochse combines community and learning from each other which are necessary for an equal and reciprocal relationship. Both are necessary for a good relationship in the Christian community. However, it is not just the learning from each other which is important, but also sharing one's life with each other.

#### **4.3.4 Living Together as the Body of Christ**

In Chapter 2 the image of the Body of Christ was studied and it was shown that in Christ believers from different backgrounds are united in the same Body which is the universal Church. Overcoming cultural and sociological barriers is only possible, if the missionaries and the Christian nationals view themselves as parts of the same Body of Christ, in which the word of God is foundational and in which the spiritual union of the Church is lived out. The missionaries need to become incarnational missionaries which means that they are not just collaborating with the national Christians, but that they are living with them. For believers to be incarnational it requires identifying oneself with the other culture and with Christians of the other culture. It means laying down one's own ethnocentrism and prejudices. This is possible only when there is a common base for understanding. As it was shown before, living in the Body of Christ provides this understanding. The Christian faith tears down the boundaries that exist between different races, social casts or classes and status. In Christ everybody is a member of the same Body and is unified in the Body.

The study of the image of the Body of Christ in Chapter 2 reveals that connections within this body are organic relationships and that the relation between the different partners is not just organizational, it is a living relationship of the members. Bonhoeffer<sup>226</sup> (2009:140) identifies the living Body of Christ with Christ himself.

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<sup>226</sup> Although Bonhoeffer (2009:141) wanted to avoid the application of organism for the inner-church relationship, because he would not accept a Roman Catholic interpretation in which the collective ranked over the individual, here it should not be interpreted this way. Christ is the Head of the Body and the believers are members of the same Body, who organically are interconnected and interdependent of each other. However, one can agree with Bonhoeffer that the members of the Body are there to serve each other [Dienst aneinander].

“Where the Body of Christ is, there Christ truly is. Christ is in the church-community as the church-community is in Christ (1Cor 1:30, 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16; Col 2:2:17, 3:11). *To be in Christ* is synonymous with *to be in the church-community*.”

Living in Christ means also living in the organic community of the Church. This is an organic connection. As Christians this living organic relationship or communion needs to be taken into account when the partners in World Mission relationships meet each other. Being connected as organic parts of the Body is the heart of Christian communion. It also should be the heart of a Christian partnership relation.

Bosch (1991:172) argues that “the members of the new community find their identity in Jesus Christ rather than in their race, culture, social class, or sex.” In the church there is no longer a separation between “Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). This truth wants to be put into practice in the partnership. Too often cultural differences are presented as reasons for differences or for difficulties of living together. In Ephesians 5 the apostle Paul encourages the church to become imitators of God and live, like Christ, a life of love. Then he gives instructions to the believers, how they ought to live with each other (Ephesians 5:3-28) closing with the words: “No one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church – for we are members of his body” (:29-30).

Close relationship and community are at the very heart of God. He has formed human beings in his image. Christians, who want to obey the word of God and want to be guided by the Holy Spirit, need to be united with other Christians in Christ, no matter what cultural background they have. If they are willing to live in communion, in the Body of Christ, cultural and social barriers can be overcome.

#### **4.4 Towards a Glocal Communio**

The Study of the Trinity in Chapter 2 reveals the inner-Trinitarian community which exists between the three persons of the Godhead. Out of this communion flows the communion of the believers among each other. This communion can be called a glocal “communio.”

It seems that this term is only ascribed to the Roman Catholic context. “Communio” and “Sanctorum communio” (the communion of the Saints) are definitely strong Roman Catholic terms that especially came into focus after Vatican II when the Roman Catholic Church wanted to renew the Church’s relation with the modern world and called for an “ecclesiology of

communion” (Ouellet 2012:1). A fruit of this change at Vatican II was the Roman Catholic review “Communio” which was called into life by Hans Urs von Balthasar and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. But (Ratzinger) Pope Benedict XVI (2010:123) soon realized that “Communio” was not just the name of the review, but became a program within the Roman Catholic Church:

“The word *communio*, which no one used to notice, was now surprisingly fashionable – if only as a foil. According to this interpretation, Vatican II had abandoned the hierarchical ecclesiology of Vatican I and replaced it with an ecclesiology of *communio*” (:124).

Nevertheless, the view of the communion of Saints which Hans Urs von Balthasar (1988:163) held, is only the communion within the Roman Catholic Church and not among other churches. He wrongly believes that in the reformed churches the communion of the Saints does not take place, since “salvation occurs essentially between God and the individual believer” and the church becomes “the invisible church of true believers” and the “external and visible church of the congregation that gathers for worship”. Balthasar asks the question which one of the two really corresponds with the church that the apostle Paul describes as the “Body of Christ? He comes to the conclusion that neither of the two models really describes the communion of the Saints (:166). It can only be the church of the apostles, which was an organism and a hierarchically organized community.

Balthasar is mistaken when he detaches the individual believer from the community of believers. Even in protestant theology the believer is at the same time part of the local and the universal Church. Protestants also use the apostle’s creed in which they confirm the Church as a “sanctorum communio”. The Official German Catholic – Lutheran Dialog (Root 2004:10) confirms the church as *communio*:

“Such notions of a “*communio-ecclesiology*” that had been developed in the early church are characteristic today in the teachings of the Orthodox as well as the Roman Catholic Churches, the Anglican as well as the Lutheran churches, and significant shaping factors in the dialogues between them.”

The image of the Body of Christ and the practice of the New Testament church give examples for the inner fellowship which the believers in Christ have with each other (Acts 2:42, Phil 1:5, 1Jn 1:3). Thus it can be concluded that the concept of “*sanctorum communio*” is not just a Roman Catholic concept, but that it is biblical and that the faith of believers in God and his Son Jesus Christ brings them together into this community.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> The „*Sanctorum Communio*“, the communion of the Saints should here not necessarily be understood as an organized church, but as the communion of the believers who belong to the local and universal Church. Here the concept of a communion of the Saints as understood in the Roman Catholic tradition, where the communion of the Saints could mean a relationship with those people who were beatified and can be venerated, is not supported. Communion of the Saints is a spiritual union through Christ of living believers within the local and universal Church.

Pannenberg (2004c:103) observes that the communion of believers comes from a long tradition and touches the local as well as the universal Church:

“The Reformation view of the church as the *communio* that is united with Christ its Head in the unity of faith and love among its members stands in a tradition that reaches back to the patristic church and is rooted in the NT (1Cor 10:16-17; Eph 4:15-16), the point being that the church finds primary realization in the worship of the community assembled at each place. But this is never a matter of one congregation isolated in its particularity. At each local liturgical celebration where Jesus Christ is himself present the whole global fellowship of Christians finds its manifestation. For where Jesus Christ is, there is the whole (“catholic”) church.”

Bonhoeffer (2009:174) in his writings of the “Sanctorum Communio” describes that “community with God for us exists only in faith” and

“that my community of love with my neighbor can also exist only by having faith in God, who in Jesus Christ has fulfilled the law for me and loves my neighbor, who draws me into the church-community, which means into the love of Christ, and creates a bond between myself and my neighbor. Only this faith allows me to understand as love what I do to the other and calls me to believe in our community as the Christian community of love” (:175).

Because of their faith in God, Christians are called by Christ to live in this Christian community of love. In the apostles creed it is called the Community of the Saints, of those who are made holy through the blood of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament “Saints”<sup>228</sup> are those who believe in the sacrifice that Jesus Christ has given to them and therefore they have received a new life in Christ. They are added to this community by the will of Christ himself through the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13; 4:30). Althaus (1929:2) researches the “Sanctorum Communio” in Luther’s writings and remarks that *communio* means that the believer not only has part *with each other* in the salvation that God has given, but as members of the universal Church, they also have part *of each other*. Communion on the one hand means “being with each other”, but on the other hand it also means “being for each other”. If this is true it has consequences for the relationships and partnerships in World Mission. One cannot just come together to “co-laborate” with each other. The whole life of the Christian believer is involved. Being there for each other means more than just working together.

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<sup>228</sup> Saint (Greek=*hagios*) means sacred, pure, blameless or consecrated and is most often used in the New Testament in a general sense for believers in Christ in a specific location (e.g. the Saints of Jerusalem), (Acts 9:13), “to all in Rome who are loved by God and called the Saints.” (Rom 1:7).

#### 4.4.1 More than Partnership

The historical and sociological study of the partnership concept in Chapter 3 has shown that the relationships in Christian World Mission are generally based on the two partners who are coming together to work on a common project. In the past, most often the Western partner entered the realm of the non-Western partner with his resources and offered to collaborate together on a certain project. Although both partners in this context were Christians, the partnership relationship of both evolved around the project or work which they wanted to accomplish. This by itself is not negative and will not be criticized here. Project partnerships are good and recommendable and if they produce fruit on one or both sides they should be continued. In this case the basis for the relationship would be the task of the partnership project in which both partners are engaged.

It was also shown that partnership projects are not enough as the basis for a Christian relationship. There needs to be more in a Christian relationship than just working together. When things go wrong or misunderstandings arise how can they be overcome in a Christian partnership? Addicott (2005:104) talked about a “dis-ease” or conflict in the partnership and then he also recommended going to Scripture (Mt 18:15-20) to confront and to resolve conflict (:111). If in the partner relationship both partners are Christians and share the same faith in the salvic works of Jesus Christ, then the basis for their collaboration needs to be deeper than just a working relationship. In Christ they live in brotherly communion which was ordained by Christ himself. He has brought his children into this specific fellowship that they should be one in him. Therefore the basis for a relationship of Christians in World Mission should not only be the “working together” or the partnership itself. The basis is Jesus Christ himself and the relationship needs to be grounded in the Christian communion of the believers, in the communion of the Saints. The first church (Acts 2:41-47) gives a little glimpse of the communion of the first Christians. They believed and were baptized and devoted themselves to the apostles teaching, to fellowship (Koinonia), the breaking of bread, and to prayer. They enjoyed each other’s presence, shared their goods with each other, ate together in their houses, and they worshipped together. Here is more than a collaborating partnership. The Bible describes a “togetherness” of the disciples (Acts 5:12; 6:2) and explains that ...” in him (Christ) you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (Eph 2:22). Verses like this, demonstrate how the disciples shared their lives with each other in Christ, in the context of the community.

Today the term and the concept of partnership is very common in World Mission contexts. Mission organizations, Christian help organizations and churches have the goal of partnering together worldwide. In missiology the term of partnership is studied to a great extent and many recommendations are made and proposals given in order to partner worldwide with each other. Most often these partnerships are formed to “do” something together which is commendable. But if the partnerships have a Christian foundation, then the partners also need to be concerned about their “being with each other”, because they are parts of the one Body. The Christian communion which Christ himself has called into being must be the foundation of a Christian partnership relation. Partnership is not enough. Christians have the responsibility to engage with each other in community. They need to work with and for each other, to love each other, to help each other, to encourage each other, to exhort each other and to forgive each other. Christian community is the basis of every real Christian partnership. The apostle Paul exhorts the Ephesians to be connected within the Body of Christ and that they need “in all things (to) grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph 4:15-16).

#### **4.4.2 A Glocal Community**

Chapter 2 has already elaborated that the church exists as a local as well as a global (universal) church. The term “glocal” brings the local and the global expression of the church together. As a communion of believers the church exists locally as well as globally. This is not new and has always been the case. God himself is concerned about the individual as well as the nations. God’s word and glory should be proclaimed among all the nations (Ps 9:11; 22:7; 46:10). Jesus has sent his disciples to all the nations (Mt 28:19) and at the end of time people from every nation, tribe, people and language will stand before the throne and they all together will worship the Lord (Rev 7:9; 15:4). God’s children come together as the Body of Christ locally, but also globally. In missions the connection of the local and the global has especially been evident. Local churches have sent out its missionaries to evangelize and bring people into the fellowship of Christ, into the Church. Local missionary work has had global influence. First the gospel spread out from Jerusalem into Judea, Samaria and into the early known world (Acts 1:8). Then in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century it spread out from the West into the countries of the Global South. This one-sided Western flow of missionary activities has come to an end, since today mission is from “everywhere to

everywhere.” Mission has become glocal. New technologies have also changed the way of how mission is done today. There are global conferences all over the world. Getting from the USA to Hong Kong is no longer difficult. Today it is very common for missionaries to connect worldwide through the internet sending out e-mails and having video-conferences with people from Europe, Africa, Asia and the USA at the same time. The global village has also become a reality in missions.

This has consequences also for the church which is involved in the missionary movement. Never before were the members of the local church so closely connected with members of the global church as today. Churches from the West go to Africa or Asia on short-term mission trips to visit or work with a partner church or a partner organization. Migration from Global South countries to the West is very common today and many Christians also follow this migratory trend and become members of churches in the West or start their own missionary movements. The glocal community is reality today. Roberts (2007:45) explains the difference that has taken place in the last decades concerning the glocal church:

“I used to understand the church primarily as a gathered community; I now see it as a scattered or sent community. This goes against everything we know of churches in the West.”

Robert does not just comprehend glocalization as a phenomenon that is touching the geographical area, he also sees glocalization touching all domains of society, such as economics, agriculture, education, medicine, justice, art, governance and the family (:41). The church needs to be ready to engage not just spiritually with other parts of the world, but also in their involvement with the social problems of the partners.<sup>229</sup> If the communion is glocal, it must engage with the other parts of the Body globally as well as locally.

How does the glocal community understand each other and how do they live together? Living within the universal Body of Christ has become reality and the question of how the different parts of the Body fulfill their function is of importance. Chapter 2 elucidated how the members of the Body need to function in communion with each other. Differences must be overcome through the attitude of kenosis. They ought to accept each other as parts of the Body of Christ and serve each other with the gifts they have received. Glocal communion should never be (or continue to be) a one-way street. If mission today is a glocal communion, then each one of the partners has something to give and to receive.

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<sup>229</sup> To wholly describe and deal with the social problems in a glocal Christian community and offer solutions to glocal social problems would go beyond the scope of this work and needs to be investigated in a different research project. Nevertheless, an attempt to describe a model of a new glocal community will be offered in Chapter 5.

As the different parts of the universal Body are “connected” organically with each other, so the members of the glocal community are inter-connected with each other through Christ. There is a connection between the brother in a church in the Paris area of France with a sister, who lives in down-town Hong Kong. There is a “connection” of the missionary from Philadelphia who has a supporter in Kansas and who works with a new believer in a church plant in Cambodia. There is a connection of an Australian Board member of an international mission who is involved in sending missionaries to Indonesia working in a village with Indonesian believers. The connection is through Christ in his Body which is the church community. God wants this connection because all these believers are his children and have come into the glocal community of Christ. Each of these members need to learn what it means to be a member of this universal community, especially, when they meet each other in person and develop a personal relationship with each other. Their relationship has to be grounded in the kenotic attitude of love, sacrifice and service towards each other.

#### **4.4.3 An Eschatological Community**

The glocal community is also an eschatological community. In a glocal community the unity of the Church, demonstrated through mutual love for each other, will also be valued by those who are not yet part of this community. As a glocal community, in which the love of Christ reigns, the church has an influence in the world. Jesus said: “By this *all men* will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (Jn 13:35). The spiritual union of a glocal community will have an impact on the world.

For Bosch (1991:165) the Church is the interim eschatological community which does not have a place for the individual isolated self or for the selfish (:165), but has a mission in the world. The Church is “missionary by its very nature”, therefore it is called to be a new living community and should manifest the reconciliation and redemption which is brought by God to the world. “The church is the church *in* the World and *for* the World” (:169). It is called by Bosch “the world in obedience to God” (:168) and “the life and the work of the Christian community are intimately bound up with God’s cosmic-historical plan for the redemption of the world” (:178).

Reimer (2009:48) examines Hebrews 13:14: “For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come”; and refers to the church as a “pilgrim community”. The Church is an eschatological community which needs to live in the present the socio-political reality as well as a community which lives towards the future in which it

expects the glory that has been promised by God. Reimer also calls the eschatological people the “eschatological family” (Mk 3.36; 10:28-31) (:66) which is a community that lives “here and now”, but which is also directed towards the “there and then”.

Van Eggen (in Ott & Netland 2006:164) explains that

“... the church has no native country. The universal nature of the gospel has meant that the church could find its true self only as it becomes a global village open to, including, calling, and embracing all humans.”

That means that the church today has a responsibility to be involved in missions in the whole world to proclaim the Kingdom of God that Jesus has already announced when he was with his disciples. The great commandment of Jesus to make disciples of all nations is today more a reality than ever before and the global community is part of this eschatological mandate.

Bonhoeffer (2009:283) also describes the church as an eschatological communion:

“Christian eschatology is essentially eschatology of the church-community [Gemeindeeschatologie]. It is concerned with the fulfillment of the church and of the individual within it. The concept of the realm of God, however, refers not merely to the fulfillment of the church, but also to the problems of the “new world”, that is, the eschatology of culture and nature. In speaking only about the fulfillment of the church and of the communities, we are dealing with only a part of the whole problem.”

Bonhoeffer then addresses the question of judgment and eternal life, holding that “the Christian community as a collective person can expect eternal life, whereas the society dissolves” (:284). Therefore the community of believers, which is willed by God, is part of God’s acting of grace in the last times. Bonhoeffer continues:

“We learned that the community as a collective person exists from God to God and that it must be conceived as being established through the will of God, and as such standing at the last judgment” (:284).

He explains the role of the individual and the community at large within these acts of God:

“God’s judgment and grace apply to persons. This means that judgment and grace apply to all individual persons [Einzelpersonen] within the church-community – to the plurality of spirit [Geistvielheit] – as described above – to marriages and friendships that have become part of the sanctorum communion, and finally to the unity of these, the collective person of the church-community, the unity of the spirit [Geisteinheit]” (:287).

God has desired communion with the individual believer, but also communion with his church. Therefore he has sent his church into the world to make his name known in

order to gather to himself a community of believers which is called his church or his bride. The bride belongs to the bridegroom (Jn 3:29) and God will rejoice because “the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready” (Rev 19:7). This is the community of believers, the church which Christ has loved and he

“gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Eph 5:25-27).

This global community has been planned, saved from their sins, prepared by Christ himself to be with him in eternity.

## **4.5 Conclusion**

The Church has become global. Never before in time has the local church been so closely connected with the global church as today. Interpersonal relationships of Christians and Christian leaders around the globe are more easily possible today. Christians collaborate around the globe in different projects. People from all over the world are on the move and Christians move along with them, so that the Church has a multicultural face in many countries. Mission also has changed in the last decades and as mission is now from everywhere to everywhere the Western domination in the mission endeavor has come to an end. The majority of the world's Christians today live in non-Western countries. Since mission is changing so much the subject and concept of partnership has become very popular in World Mission. Many mission organizations and church denominations want to partner with other Christian organizations and churches around the world. Since the West is losing its dominating position in World Mission, the concept of partnership seems the way in which mission needs to develop.

However, partnership as generally understood is but one aspect of the world wide mission movement. There is much more than partnership. The study in Chapter 2 has shown that God intended much more for believers than collaborating together. First of all he has created humans to enter into a relationship with God himself. Furthermore, as believers, as children of the living God, he has foreseen bringing them into a living community of all believers which is the universal Church that Christ himself is building (Mt 16:18). This universal Church is created out of the very being of God, who lives in a Trinitarian

community. As God lives in community, he wants his children also to live in this godly community which is expressed in the local as well as in the global Church.

This is the major challenge of World Missions today. As the local church and the global church are growing together into a global village, the local and the global church are faced with the question of how they are going to live out this new relationship. How are the local churches connected with the global community of Christ and how are global Church organizations involved with local churches around the globe?

Since Christians from different countries are living in their own cultural frameworks, the cultural differences will also be a challenge that can only be overcome by an acceptance in love and by a brotherly life of kenosis. Christian churches and mission organizations around the world need to find a way of living together that is not just based on partnership. Global communion needs to be explored in depth and needs to become the basis for their relationships. This is God's goal for his church, that there may be a unified group of believers standing before his throne and worshipping him with one voice (Rev 5:13).

## **5. A Proposed Model of Organic-Complementary Communion on the Basis of Kenosis**

The title of this research dissertation is “More than Partnership” and in Chapter 3 several models for partnership have been examined. Most of these partnerships have a working relationship as a foundation for the relationship. The study of Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 revealed that a working relationship is not sufficient for a model of partnership in World Mission. The basis for the relationship in World Mission needs to be the communion of the believers in order to make a healthy and brotherly relationship possible. Only this would be a good environment in which a strong partnership relationship will occur. This type of brotherly communion must grow organically and cannot be imposed by an organization or hierarchy. It has the image of the Body of Christ as a model and comes out of the love of God and the love for others. Therefore, the model for this new glocal communion must be a spiritual model which is based on the faith of the believers, in which the individual Christians need to serve each other with the gifts that have been given by the Holy Spirit. However, serving each other implies being interdependent and thus the relationship becomes a complementary relationship in which the different members need each other in order to grow into the fellowship that God has foreseen for them. How does such organic-complementary communion look and what are the elements of such a communion? The following is an attempt to describe a spiritual model of communion in World Mission, which should not just be foundational for partnership relationships, but also for any local, regional, and global (glocal) relationships to be lived out among individual believers, Christian denominations, organizations and churches in the World Mission context.

### **5.1 Kenosis as the Foundational Attitude for Communion**

In proposing a new model for a communion relationship in World Mission it is evident as shown above that the attitude of the believers towards each other is of extreme importance. In the past the reason for the failure of functioning partnerships, collaboration and relationship was the attitude that the partners had towards each other. Western missionaries were often accused of a colonialist and dominating attitude, and national partners were accused of not collaborating well and of an attitude or tendency to plead for

money, goods, or services. An attitude is one's disposition or opinion towards somebody else. It is the way someone thinks or feels about somebody else. So if the attitude is false or wrong, the relationship will be affected. If somebody has false impressions or a wrong understanding of the partner, or if there is a pejorative or hostile attitude towards the other, the relationship is in danger. Especially in the mission context where the partners come from different cultural backgrounds, misunderstandings can occur very easily, trust is broken quickly, and a skeptical attitude towards each other can separate even believers.

Therefore the kenotic attitude as described in Chapter 2 and 4 needs to become the foundation for the communitarian relationship in the glocal context. Only then will the individual partners, co-workers or believers be able to humble themselves and draw closer to an equal level with their co-believers. Only then will they be able to accept each other as equals and be able to serve each other. If believers adopt this kenotic attitude they will be able to abandon their own interests (Phil 2:4) and to support the interests of others. Repeatedly cross-cultural workers or missionaries were seen as working for their own interests, the interest of their organization, or the interests of those who have sent them. The people back home want to see conversions, the advancement of the work or the "progress" which they would consider as an expansion of the work. Yet, decisions were often made without the cultural understanding of what "progress" meant to the non-Western partners with whom they were supposed to collaborate.

Adopting a kenotic attitude means to humble oneself and to serve others. In order to do this the believers need to give up their own rights out of love for God and for their neighbor. Obviously Western cross-cultural workers have for example the right to ride a nicer car and live in a nicer house than their national co-workers, when the standard in the host country is much lower as in their home country. They have the right, to fly back home when they are sick, use their money to entertain themselves in their free time and just visit with people from their own culture for their leisure time, but if it disturbs a healthy relationship with their national friends, they should voluntarily give up these things in order to build a credible trust relationship with them. The apostle Paul adopted this kenotic attitude, when he said he would make himself a slave and that he became all things to all men in order to win as many as possible (1Cor 9:19-23).

A kenotic attitude of the believers can also imply to give up power and control and becoming vulnerable. Jesus Christ had the power *not* to give his life for humanity and he could have taken over control during his arrest, trial and crucifixion, because as God he is

omnipotent. He had the power and control not to be crucified, but out of love for humans, he laid aside his rights, his power and control and became vulnerable in order to save all people.

Particularly in World Mission the person or organization which provides the majority of the resources has the power and wants to have the control of the proceedings.<sup>230</sup> In a communion relationship power and control need to be shared equally. This is not easy to accomplish, because again misunderstanding of cultural concepts can lead to distrust and power struggle. Here the partners need to be vulnerable towards each other and trust each other based on the foundation of their common belief in Christ and his self-giving attitude. As Ross C. (2010:147) reminds the believer not to adopt a “crusading mind”, but a “crucified mind”. If Christians live the communion relationship with an attitude of the crucified mind, they will be able to give up their power and control and share it with their fellow-believers.

## **5.2 An Inclusive and Interdependent Christian Communion**

The “Conversion of the Missionary” was a process described by Thelle (2006:115) in which foreign missionaries to China around the 1900s discovered the value of the host culture and began to be transformed by it:

“Feelings of cultural superiority and contempt for the native culture no longer dominated, and the missionaries had to reorient themselves and find ways to integrate Chinese traditions into their understanding of God’s work in the world. Earl Cressy, an American observer, described this new awareness as “the conversion of the missionary.” The missionaries had come to the Far East with a burning passion for preaching the Christian message, but in the process they discovered that the East had also spoken its message to them. Abroad in the Far East they represented a universal religion and wanted to change the society to which they had committed their service. At home, though, they changed peoples’ attitudes by bringing a new breadth of cultural vision, helping them to appreciate more fully the greatness and worth of the civilizations of the Far East. “He had gone out to change the East, and was returning, himself a changed man... The conversion of the missionary by the Far East results in his being not only a missionary but an internationalist, an intermediary between the two great civilizations that inherit the earth.” (:115).

These early missionaries had discovered that there was also great value in the culture in which they were working. Most likely they not only valued the culture, but also the people with whom they had been in contact. They discovered that not everything in the host culture

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<sup>230</sup> See Kang-San (2008:1) who believes that “Past Western paternalism still exerts its control due to the fact that the power associated with mission paradigms, leadership patterns, structures, economics and technology is still located in the hands of Western churches and agencies.”

was bad and unbiblical and that the culture and the people had in return something to offer for them. This conversion of the missionary was an attitude change towards the foreign culture and foreign people they had encountered. This encounter had also changed their attitude and hopefully also their life and their relationship with those who came to work with them. This attitude change led to a deeper study and appreciation of the “other” culture and people.

The OECD (2006:7) also affirms that successful partnerships must take “an inclusive approach”, believing that the “relevant actors are involved in planning and implementation”. Especially in terms of communication should the partnership be inclusive:

“To make a partnership inclusive it is important that all voices within it are heard. This both requires and guarantees a balance of influence, mutual respect and care in the organisation. Good communication will facilitate meetings, decisions and interactions between partners. One should not forget that the partners have to play a two-way communication role, acting as the link points between the organisations they represent and the partnership itself” (:15).

Cross-cultural workers need to move towards the “other” and overcome the barriers that mutual misunderstanding can produce. This is especially true, if they are believers and belong to the universal Body of Christ which makes them part of the same community. If there are cultural, racial, social, or gender issues that hinder them from moving towards each other they need to “convert” in order to be part of and live in community.

It is not only the missionary who needs to be transformed by Christ in order to accept “the other”. The unity of the body needs to be lived out by the missionary as well as by the national Christian. Christ has torn down all the barriers and exhorted believers to “love each other” and therefore mutual acceptance of each other is required for all Christians.<sup>231</sup> The Christian community is characterized by the unity and mutual acceptance of the believers and not by erecting barriers and exclusion of each other.

The above story also shows that the host culture and the host people had something to offer to the foreign missionaries. In the encounter both parties were transformed. Both, the foreign missionary and the person from the host culture needed each other in order to discover what it means to fully be the person God intended in creation. They needed to interdependently learn from each other. Only in the encounter with each other were they able to look beyond their own cultural boundaries and learn from each other what it means to be a human being in a different culture. Interdependence is not only important in order to learn the other culture, but is a characteristic of the diverse members in the Body of Christ.

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<sup>231</sup> See Jn 12:15+17; 1Th 3:12; 4:6; 2Th 1:3.

## 5.2.1 An Inclusive Christian Communion

In the beginning of this study, the author talked about his personal experience in his early missionary career. He lived on a mission compound in a house which most of the nationals could not afford. The missionaries had their “English Bible study” to which the nationals were not invited (or even if they were invited, they could not participate because of the language barrier) and the missionaries celebrated their national holidays and personal anniversaries among themselves. The nationals and even the national believers, most often were excluded in these meetings. Exclusion can take place because of the difference of race, nationality, skin colour, gender, language, social status, theology or the difference of interests. Exclusion speaks to the other: “You do not belong here,” or “We do not belong together.”<sup>232</sup>

Christian Communities in World Mission, whether it be a church, a denomination, or a mission organization, should not be exclusive, but rather inclusive or all-embracing. Inclusion means that all members have the right and even the obligation to participate. Ephesians 4 proposes a common base for a believer which is based on God himself and the work of the Son on the cross (V.4-6). This spiritual foundation makes unity possible among believers, and this should lead to build up the body together (V.13+16). The individual believer needs to be part of this Christian community and be committed to live and work for the common good of the community. If one is part of the Body of Christ one should not have an exclusive attitude, shutting out other members of the same body but rather inviting them into the community, since the body only functions correctly, if the individual members function interdependently with each other. Inclusion means recognizing the oneness of the Body of Christ and the need for interdependence among the different parts of the body.

Inclusion of others into the community is not always reality, not even in a Christian community. Too often the individual believers or even other Christian communities have been excluded from other communities. Volf (1996) has dealt with the problem of exclusion in his book “Exclusion and Embrace”<sup>233</sup> and unmasks exclusion as the sinful activity of division by an individual or Community. As a solution to the sinful act of exclusion he proposes repentance and forgiveness by the participants and the attitude of “embrace”. This

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<sup>232</sup> Volf (1996:67) explains that “exclusion can entail cutting of the bonds that connect, taking oneself out of the pattern of interdependence and placing oneself in a position of sovereign independence.”

<sup>233</sup> Note, that Volf is not exclusively talking to the Christian community but that he proposes his discussion to a general audience. But since Volf, as a Christian, recognizes the relation between the creator and his creation and proposes solutions from a theological perspective, his study will be very helpful for Christian communities as well.

is only possible through the model of the grace and love of the triune God himself who has reached out to people in their sinfulness in order to invite them into his holy presence.

“... God’s reception of hostile humanity into divine communion is a model for how human beings should relate to each other. In four central sections I will explicate this thesis by analyzing “repentance,” “forgiveness,” “making space in oneself for the other” and “healing of memory” as essential moments in the movement from exclusion to embrace” (:100).

If God is reaching out in grace and love to sinful people in order to restore relationship with them, this is also possible for believers who have excluded themselves and others from their mutual presence. They must reach out in love to their fellow believer, repent and ask for forgiveness where they have hurt their brothers or sisters and open their arms to invite them into their community.

The process of invitation is described by Volf as “embrace”. Volf identifies four structural elements of embrace which are “opening the arms, waiting, closing the arms, and opening them again” (:141). This process describes the opening of the arms as an invitation towards the other to be invited. It talks about the desire to have a relationship with him, inviting him to be a “part of my life and I am to be a part of his life.” It means opening a space in one’s life for the other. The second part is the waiting for the other to move towards me. This is a voluntary act on the part of the other. It is a one-sided sign of the process which leaves the possibility for the other to move in or to stay out of this invitation. The third act described by Volf is the closing of the arms which needs to be an act of reciprocity. Both partners are active and at the same time passive. “It takes two pairs of arms for one embrace” (:143). It is a reciprocal giving and receiving. The last act is to open the arms again which signifies, that one person does not absorb the other person, but respects him in his own being. In Volf’s description of the final act of embrace “the opening of the arms underlines that, though the other may be inscribed in the self, the alterity of the other may not be neutralized by merging both into an undifferentiated “we” (:144).

Embrace is a special act of invitation into the presence of the other or into the community. It means that the community includes those who would normally be excluded by their race, culture, skin color, gender, or religion. It needs to be noted, that a community can also become exclusive, if “others are so different from us.” Therefore a Christian community needs be careful to stay missional and inclusive. In the context of World Mission the inclusiveness of Christian communities plays an important role because God himself is the example of inviting others to come towards him. Out of his immeasurable love he has invited

the whole world through the kenosis of his Son to come into the community with him (Jn 3:16). God is standing with open arms in front of humanity in order to invite everyone to come into his presence. The example of kenosis shows, that inclusion is not self-centered, but other-centered. This “*de-centered center* of the self-giving love” (Volf 1996:71) invites the other to come into the Body of Christ and become an equal part of this body.

The apostle Paul made clear that the members of the body are valued equally and that there should not be rivalry or competition among them (1Cor 12:13-27). In an inclusive community members feel that they are “part of it”, that they are accepted by others and they feel safe, valued and respected. Being part of an inclusive community means also that the members have access to the benefits of the community and therefore to the resources, to trust, opportunities, and equal attention. The members are treated equally in their participation, the sharing of resources and in the decision-making process. This needs to become the model for an inclusive Christian community in World Mission.

### **5.2.2 An Interdependent Christian Communion**

The study of the Body of Christ in Chapter 2 confirms that the different parts of the Body are inter-connected with each other in a relationship of interdependence. All the members of the body or of the communion are interdependently bound together. One cannot exist without the other. They need each other and are dependent on each other in order to exist.<sup>234</sup> The apostle Paul confirms in 1Corinthians 12 that the different members need each other and cannot be cut off the Body. They are created and are part of the faith community in order to serve others on an equal basis. One part of the body cannot say: “I do not need you!” (1Cor 12:21). Even the part which seems to be the weakest part turns out to be the most necessary part (:22). All parts of the body are important to the other parts and to the body as a whole and need each other interdependently.

Interdependence means to be mutually dependent on each other or to rely on each other. Therefore both sides in the mutual relationship need to come together on an equal basis and are essential for the relationship. But in the context of World Missions relationships there are many discussions, especially from the Western side of the

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<sup>234</sup> Volf (1996:65) uses an example from God’s creation describing creation as an „intricate pattern of “separate-and-bound-together” entities which makes creation to a “formation and maintenance of a network of the relations of interdependence”. In this concept of creation the human being needs “the other” in a relationship of interdependence. In this context “exclusion can entail cutting of the bonds that connect, taking oneself out of the pattern of interdependence and placing oneself in a position of sovereign independence” (:67).

partnership, about the “weaker” partner becoming dependent on the resources of the “stronger” partner. This is probably still a result of the “three-self” formula<sup>235</sup> of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson who would opt for the self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating of the native churches.<sup>236</sup> But becoming “self-” or independent churches would remove them from a relationship of interdependence. The fear of dependency has led some missiologists to look more deeply into this subject.<sup>237</sup> Rickett (2000:14-25) also recognizes the relationship within the Body of Christ and talks about a healthy dependency in which the partners enter into the relationship with “reciprocity and responsibility” (:17). An unhealthy relationship would be “if one partner maintains the control over the decision-making process”, if “one partner’s contribution is valued more highly than the others”, or if “a partnership is not joining in a common purpose and sharing complementary resources” (:18).

One could agree that the dependency of native churches on Western churches would be a problem, but another problem that has barely been considered is the “non-dependency” of the Western Churches on their brothers and sisters in the Global South community. Interdependence means that the partners are dependent on each other, that there is reciprocity, and that they interdependently share resources with each other. If the dependency of the non-Western churches or institutions is always in the focal point, what about the dependency of the Western churches and institutions on their counterpart in the Global South? Here both partners need to learn new lessons. Western partners need to ask what they have to offer and what they can learn from the non-Western partners. On the other hand, the non-Western Partners also need to ask themselves, what they can learn from the Western partners and what they have to offer to them. The relationship cannot only turn around the financial resources that flow basically in one direction. If they live in an interdependent community, there is much more to share than just money. They need to look mutually at the needs of the other and be willing to jointly build up the whole body.

Ramseyer (1980:34) in view of the unequal monetary resources states that “either we abandon our talk of interdependence or we revise the standards by which we decide what is

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<sup>235</sup> Reese (2007:26) defends the three-self formula trying to give answers to the objections of the formula. One of the objections is that there is too much “self” in the formula. Reese opposes this opinion stating that the formula just wanted to produce mature churches and affirms that “these churches had no need to remain dependent on outsiders” (26). But this is exactly what would follow that the independence of the churches would remove them from the need for interdependence.

<sup>236</sup> See also Bosch’s (1991:331) comments of Venn’s and Anderson’s introduction of the “three-self” formula.

<sup>237</sup> One of the leading evangelicals who is involved in the discussion of dependency is Glenn Schwartz who has written a book and several articles on dependency and is the executive director of World Mission Associates (WMA). WMA is providing resources about avoiding dependency and promotes “self-reliance” to churches and institutions worldwide (see: [www.wmausa.org](http://www.wmausa.org)).

really important in the life of the church.” He proposes looking at the resources that God provides for the church such as spiritual resources (:34). But he also proposes following Christ in the rejection of power and adopting the position of powerlessness (:35) and realizing that the values of an industrial West cannot be the norm for other cultural areas, because they would create one-sided feelings of superiority (38).

An interdependent community today is a glocal community, which means that there are at the same time connections from the local to the global and from the global to the local. Since mission has become a mission from and to all continents (from everywhere to everywhere) the old “sending and receiving” attitude also needs to be overcome. It should be recognized that all communities can be involved in sending as well as in receiving. A paradigm shift in the mind of the Western churches as well as in churches from the non-Western world is indispensable. Saayman (2000:19) has clearly recognized this when he wrote:

“A truly missionary church lives in mutuality and interdependence with other missionary churches throughout the world. It is therefore a community continually sending out and receiving missionary impulses to and from "Jerusalem" as well as "the ends of the earth," simultaneously evangelizing and being evangelized, healing and being healed, liberating and being liberated.”

The new glocal communities ought to recognize, that they need each other and that they can only be genuine Christian communities, if they embrace each other, recognize their mutual dependency and live interdependently together. Galatians 6:2 reminds believers to carry each other’s burden because this is the way to fulfill the law of Christ and 1 Corinthians 12:25 exhorts the members of the community to have equal concern for each other. As the study in Chapter 2 has revealed interdependence is a characteristic of the Trinity and a characteristic for the organic community of his body that Christ has called into existence, thus, it will serve as well as the model for glocal Christian communities in World Mission.

### **5.3 Elements of Organic-Complementary Communion**

In the following the essential elements for Organic-Complementary Communion will be developed. There are some visible elements for a community which is “a group of people” who have a “common interest” and who meet in a certain “locality.” There is also a certain permanency to such a group which exists normally for a longer period (for example a town or city, or an institution or denomination). But community is also based on a common interest or a common sentiment which is not as visible as the outer signs of the community.

Moltmann (1977:307) only lists three assignments within the community which are *kerygma*, the charge to proclaim the gospel, *koinonia*, the charge to baptize and celebrate the Lord's Supper, and *diakonia*, the charge to carry out charitable works. However, this list will be expanded and completed with other elements which characterize the Christian community as additional important elements for organic-complementary communion will be identified. These elements have partly been discussed in the preceding study, but will be listed here as the essential elements that should govern Christian communities in the challenge of cross-cultural missions.

### 5.3.1 Living Together

The passage in Acts 2:42-47 can give insights about the relationship of the first disciples after the ascension of Christ. They have been together on a regular basis for fellowship, teaching, and the breaking of bread in their houses. They also shared their goods with each other. They were living together! As elaborated in the former chapters the partners in World Mission have often worked together and their personal relationship was mainly based on a common task. They did not necessarily share their lives together. In sharing life together the participants do not just share their resources, for example their time, money, knowledge etc., but they need to share themselves with the others. Giving oneself to the community and sharing one's own life with the community is the basis of living together in community.

The El Escorial "World Consultation on Koinonia: Sharing life in a World Community" (WCC 1987:83) also used the body image as a "liberating metaphor for sharing life in community." The body image is seen here as an organic metaphor in which the Spirit of God and the people of God as the body are associated. This association means that they organically live together in one communion.

The New Testament explains that believers have this living relationship with Christ (1Th 5:10) and that he lives in the believer (Col 3:3; Rom 6:23). Through this life in Christ, believers are also organically connected with each other.

"Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so *in Christ* we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Rom 12:4-5).

Sharing life together in the World Mission context means practically, that believers move towards each other in love. That they share what is on their hearts, share their

happiness and sorrows and pray together. That they invite each other into their houses and spend time together, eat together, play together, talk together, and have fellowship with each other. To live in fellowship with other Christians is for the believer an expression of living together in community. Reading the Bible together, sharing the findings, growing together spiritually, and mutual prayer are manifestations of their shared life in Christ. Most of the following essential elements are examples of the shared life in community.

### **5.3.2 Learning Together**

Since God has created people so differently, with different gifts and talents and with different cultural backgrounds, this difference presents an opportunity to learn from each other. To learn means to acquire new knowledge, skills, behavior, and values from others. Children go to school to learn the basic things of life, as adults workshops and seminars are attended in order to gain more knowledge about professional approaches. Even believers go to church or Bible colleges and seminars to learn more things about God and theology. Most often this learning is culturally biased and will work in the individual's own culture, but not necessarily in a cross-cultural setting. If Christians work in the cross-cultural setting of World Missions, they have a great opportunity to learn things that they never would learn at home. This is a chance which they should not fail to notice. If they come with an open mind and want to learn within the new culture, they will be blessed by a national tutor. The worldview and values which they have learned back home appear in a new light in the other culture. Hiebert (1985:102) encourages such a learning attitude:

“We need to study both the values of the culture in which we minister and those of our own. By this approach, we can develop a metacultural framework that enables us to compare and evaluate the two. The process of genuinely seeking to understand another system of values goes a long way in breaking down our monocultural perspectives. It enables us to appreciate the good in other systems and be more critical of our own.”

Such learning is also mutual. In the encounter with the foreigner, the national tutor can learn as well, if he has an open mind toward the other's culture.

Learning in the Christian context is not just about learning another's culture. In the encounter with other persons one can also learn about what the other's perspective is on being human, what it means to be a Christian, how they perceive God and salvation, brotherly life or forgiveness. All these issues may uncover different meanings if they are discussed with a

brother or a sister from a different cultural context. Believers in the World Christian community need each other, because the horizon of their own culture (or knowledge) is limited.

Bauerochse (2001:119f) explains the advantages of intercultural learning as gaining insights in the new culture as well as getting to know one's own culture better. He proposes interchurch partnerships as a basis for ecumenical communities of learning. Bauerochse here is on the right track, but cross-cultural missions requires more than just *interchurch* partnerships. All individual cross-cultural workers, missionaries and nationals as well as mission communities need to become such a learning community which Bauerochse proposes. Everybody ought to learn from everybody. The apostle Paul encouraged his young mentee Timothy to learn from his teachings and to pass the things which he had learned on to others, who again would be able to teach others (2Tim 2:2). The passage in Ephesians (4:11-13) highlights that God himself gave the gifts of apostles, prophets, pastors, evangelists, pastors, and teachers in order to build up the community of believers "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (:13). This unity in faith and the fullness of Christ cannot be taught only by believers from one culture. All believers need to participate in this educational venture in order to enrich the whole community. Teaching and learning are traits of the Christian community. Without this mutual learning the richness of creation and the wisdom of God will rest concealed and the community life of the believers will suffer a great deficit. Without mutual learning there will be little growth of the individual believers and of the global communities and the fullness of God will not be uncovered.

### 5.3.3 Serving Together

Missionaries go to the mission field in order to "serve", and missionary duty is often called "service" and the missionaries are "servants." These indeed are very biblical terms introduced by Jesus himself. Jesus came into this world, "not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28).<sup>238</sup> Here the Greek word "*diakoneo*" is used which means to be ministered to (Carrez & François 1984:68). Jesus encourages his disciples to serve others and told them that the one who wants to be the greatest should serve others (Lk 22:26-27). Some of Jesus parables show that people within God's kingdom are meant to serve God and other's (Mt 18:32; Lk 9:62; Lk 12:35; Jn 12:26).

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<sup>238</sup> The word serve and service appear about fifty times in the New Testament.

The apostle Paul explains that service is a gift<sup>239</sup> to use in the communion of Christians (Rom 12:7). He encouraged the Galatians to serve each other in love (Gal 5:13) and called himself a servant<sup>240</sup> of God (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; Tit 1:1) or a servant of the Gospel (Eph 3:7). God's people should be prepared to serve the community for the common good (Eph 4:12). Paul also uses the word servant for other Christians, who faithfully serve God or the church (Rom 16:1; Eph 6:21). When the apostle exhorted the people in the church, he encouraged the slaves to serve "wholeheartedly" because they are not first of all serving their masters, but God himself (Eph 6:7).

To be a servant on the mission field is often not as easy as described in the beginning paragraph. Serving demands humility and sacrifice and very often the theory is easier than the practice. Bosch (1979:67-68) in his book "Spirituality of the Road" writes:

"Missionaries find themselves in the same dilemma today. Because of our history of paternalism and racial superiority feelings, we are usually in little danger of identifying too closely with the people in the younger churches. ... In all this, the emphasis is almost entirely on one-way communication. We tell them exactly how they ought to behave, what they ought to do, how they ought to believe, and what they ought to abandon. We prescribe carefully prepared gospel recipes. But – and this is the core problem – only rarely do we allow them to experience all this together with us. They do not go with us together on a journey of discovery to search and find together."

Bosch criticizes a one-way communication and compares the missionary who comes out of a world of affluence "as the rich uncle who visits the poor relatives and hands out chocolates" (:70). Instead he would rather like to see the missionary as a "beggar who tells other beggars where to find bread" (71).

Serving together indicates that both sides are mutually involved in the practice of reciprocal service. In missiological circles there is repeatedly a call for serving the poor, needy and the weak<sup>241</sup> which raises the question again: Is such a service only one-sided? Can the poor or the weak also serve those who are rich or "not needy"? Who is poor and who is rich? Is serving only a question of money or also of other resources?

The author once experienced a blessing of service from the so-called weak or needy. While working in Haiti, he had to move into a rural area in order "to serve" with several churches in a certain region. Before he had even moved to the new place, the church community had worked very hard to prepare the house, in which he would live. People from

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<sup>239</sup> Using the gift of service is also mentioned in 1Pt 4:10; 5:2.

<sup>240</sup> Here the Greek word "doulos" (slave) is used which is employed figuratively and describes the bond between the master and the slave.

<sup>241</sup> See van Rheenen (1996:165) or ECT (2003:19).

the church brought fruits and vegetables as gifts, paid visits and a widow from the church came every once in a while to sweep the terrace. These people with their limited material resources served the (rich) missionary who came to serve them.

“Serving together” means that cross-cultural workers, together with national believers minister jointly to the whole community and God himself because serving others is also serving God. Service does not only come from the Western partners who have many financial resources, but the poorer, weaker, or needy partners can also reflect how they can serve the community with the gifts that God has given them. Serving others is not just a one-way street, but both partners can find ways to better serve the other members of the body. Serving others is an expression of love. Bosch (1979:71) encourages mutual service:

“The relationship between missionaries and nationals has far too often been that of condescending benefactors and irritated recipients of charity. True love, on the other hand, is accepting that you are dependent and expecting something from the other one. This attitude helps one to discover himself and also to discover avenues of giving. The best I can give somebody is to enable him to become a giver.”

And this is true for both parties in the World Mission context, for the cross-cultural worker and for the national. If they are both members of the body, they need each other and need to serve each other. Each one needs to serve and to be served. The Western partners need to learn how to receive and the non-Western partners need to find out what they have to offer. One-sided service is unhealthy. The apostle Paul explains that the members that may be seen as the weaker part are indispensable (1Cor 12:22). Everybody has received some gifts from God and should use them to serve others for the enrichment of the whole community.

#### **5.3.4 Suffering and Celebrating Together**

The Body of Christ, characterized by the attitude of kenosis, includes the trait of self-giving. Such an attitude of self-giving demands a certain defenselessness, powerlessness, weakness and vulnerability. Bosch (1979:75) talks about “the courage to be weak.” Jesus has exemplified this courage to be weak, when he went to the cross in order to save humanity. As the Son of God he could have avoided this, but he freely chose to suffer and give his life for others. Because he was strong, he could choose to become weak and endure the suffering for others. Moltmann (1981:22) talks about the “active suffering” of God which he calls “the voluntary laying oneself open to another and allowing oneself to be intimately affected by him; that is to say, the suffering of passionate love.”

Jesus told his disciples that they as well will suffer like the master himself suffered. After informing them that he would be rejected by the religious leaders and would suffer at the cross (Lk 9:22) he also told his disciples that if they wanted to follow him earnestly, they must deny themselves and take up their own cross daily (:23). If they wanted to save their own life, they must lose it and if they were willing to lose their life for Christ, they would save it (:24). For the apostle Paul it was not a surprise that he had to suffer for Christ and for the Gospel.<sup>242</sup> He encourages the young Timothy to “join him in suffering for the Gospel” (2Ti 1:8) and “endure the hardship with us as a good soldier of Christ” (2Ti 2:3). He wanted to know Christ and “the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings” (Phil 3:10) and foresees that “everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2Ti 3:12).

Furthermore, the apostle’s suffering for Christ also became a suffering for his brothers and sisters. He gives testimony to his brothers and sisters that he suffered as well for them in his ministry (Eph 3:13; Col 1:24). Living in the community means partaking in the suffering of the brothers and sisters. The apostle explains the solidarity in the body that “if one part suffers, every part suffers with it” (1Cor 12:26). Suffering in the body affects all members of the same body. If one single part of the body hurts, then the whole body is affected. Bonhoeffer (2009:180) explains how to bear each other’s burden (Gal 6:2) in community. It goes beyond the ordinary sense of “being with one another” and does not rest on the human will, but exists only in the community of saints.

“My burden is borne by the others, their strength is my strength, in my fear and trembling the faith of the church comes to my aid. And even when I come to die, I should be confident that not I, or at least not I alone, am dying, but that Christ and the community of saints are suffering and dying with me. We walk the path of suffering and death accompanied by the whole church” (:180).

In many parts of the world suffering belongs to the daily life of the people and believers are not excluded in the hardships of life. Poverty, ethnic conflicts, war, human trafficking, and the AIDS epidemic or other diseases allow millions of people around the world to suffer. For many Christians (most often in non-Western countries) their belief is one of the reasons for their suffering persecution. Christians in the West are mainly excluded from such suffering or they want to exclude suffering in general with all means from their lives. They feel if they have to suffer, there is something wrong with their faith. If they suffer there must be a solution. They do not understand that suffering often belongs to the Christian life.

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<sup>242</sup> See also 1Pe 4:16; 2Cor 4:9; 1Pe 4:19.

Ajith Fernando (2007:9) uses the verses from Colossians 1:24-29 as the foundation for his book “The Call to Joy and Pain” and calls for sufficient emphasis on a theology of suffering (:11) in order to establish a basis for a non-avoidance of suffering and the endurance of pain. But he also exposes that suffering is a blind spot for Western Christians:

“I think that one of the most serious theological blind spots in the Western church is a defective understanding of suffering. There seems to be a lot of reflection on how to avoid suffering and on what to do when we hurt. We have a lot of teaching about escape from and therapy for suffering, but there is inadequate teaching about the theology of suffering. Christians are not taught why they should expect suffering as followers of Christ and why suffering is so important for healthy growth as a Christian. So suffering is only viewed in a negative way.”

Western Christians ought to take on a new understanding of what suffering means for the Christian community. On the other hand both, the Western and the non-Western communities need to come together in order to express solidarity with each other in their suffering. The non-suffering part of the community should support, encourage, help and assist the suffering partners with all his means. Here the attitude of self-giving is demanded. Ignorance, which is looking the other way, is not helpful. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, it was neither the Priest, nor the Levite who bowed down to the suffering person with compassion, but it was the Samaritan who showed mercy and love (Lk 10:30-36). The Samaritan became a neighbor to the one who suffered. Suffering together means joining the suffering of Christ for mankind and adopting the kenosis attitude of self-giving.

It is not only the poor or suppressed Christian that needs solidarity in his suffering. If it is mutual suffering, the non-Western Christian also needs to join the problems that Western Christians are suffering. Western Christians suffer under a post-Christian society, in which God’s values are being dismissed little by little. The West becomes more and more de-Christianized and is suffering its consequences. The egoistic, individualistic or materialistic life-styles expose a different suffering than in the Global South, and the consequences are that people suffer under loneliness, meaninglessness of life, or under the surfeit of food, information, ideas, or emotions which make them sick. The de-Christianized West suffers also from a rejection of God himself. Two-thirds of Christian believers today do not live in Western countries; therefore these countries need to join the suffering of the godlessness of the West.

The apostle Paul mentions not only the “suffering together” of the hurting parts of the body, but on the other hand he speaks about rejoicing together, when there is reason to rejoice (1Cor 12:26). Fernando (2007:10) points out that through his studies of Colossians 1:24-29 he has learned to follow the

“biblical practice of not talking about pain without talking about the blessings of it. Joy is a commonly mentioned blessing of suffering in the New Testament. The passage ... presents both joy and pain together.”

Romans 12:15 encourages believers to “rejoice with those who rejoice and to mourn with those who mourn.” Global Christians have not only reason to show solidarity in suffering, but also in rejoicing and celebrating. First of all, God is their source for rejoicing and celebrating. The apostle Paul writes to the Romans: “Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” (Rom 8:17). Suffering and Glory belong together.

Secondly, God’s salvation is the best reason for the global Christians to celebrate with each other. The Bible gives many accounts of celebrating together because of God’s giving himself to this world. Many parables and stories that Jesus has preached center on the festivities, celebrations or weddings,<sup>243</sup> which give a foretaste of the great celebration of people of all nations, languages in front of the Throne of God (Rev 7:9). Living in a global community today is a shadow of this eternal celebration. Celebrating together means that believers of the same faith come together to learn from each other about the eternal God, they come and pray together and they come and worship the great creator together. These celebrations will have diverse cultural expressions and will enrich communities from different cultural backgrounds. George (2004:69) described such a multicultural celebration in a testimony:

“Latin Americans have taught me not only what it means to be in solidarity with those who suffer, but also the importance and joy of celebrating life together. It seems that those who most profoundly experience suffering are the ones who most intensely celebrate joy. Fiestas are at the heart of Latin culture, birthdays, wedding anniversaries, baptisms, church anniversaries, inaugurations, and other commemorative occasions all provide opportunities to enjoy life with music, laughter, and food.”

George chooses the right word, when she uses the term “celebrating life together.” When this happens in a multi-cultural context it could be said, that the community celebrates unity in diversity. “Being with one another” using Moltmann’s terminology does not just happen in suffering, but also in celebration, in unity and diversity of different cultural backgrounds in World Mission.

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<sup>243</sup> See here Mt 22:2; Lk 14:16; Lk 15:23.

### 5.3.5 Sharing Together

Sharing with others is a biblical concept. God himself is the very image of sharing with others. As creator, he is the giver of life to all people and gave them everything that they needed to exist (Gen 1:27-30). To reconcile humans with himself he also gave his Son out of his love for the world (Jn 3:16), and he is the giver of all good gifts (Mt 7:11). For a person being created in the image of God, God also expects that person to be generous and give to others. In the Old Testament people shared their goods with others, especially in the form of hospitality, when they shared their houses and food with others, often even with strangers.<sup>244</sup> The people of Israel shared their goods with the priest and Levites who served with their office in the community. Sharing with others and hospitality is also one of the great values of a leader as well as an ordinary Christian in the community.<sup>245</sup> When John the Baptist answered the people in the desert about what they should do to live a God-pleasing life he said: "The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same" (Lk 3:11). Jesus himself values the deeds and sharing with others as a service to himself (Mt 25:45). He was the best example of sharing his life, compassion, and gifts with others.<sup>246</sup>

In the early church the sharing of resources seemed to be a matter of course. The early Christians had everything in common and even sold their possessions and goods and gave to anyone in need (Acts 2:44-45). The apostle Paul exhorts the community in Rome to share with God's people who are in need and to practice hospitality (Rom 12:13).

The "sharing of life" (1Th 2:8) in the Christian community originates out of love for each other and also means the sharing of the non-material as well as material resources which exist in that community. Christians can share comfort and sufferings (2Cor 1:7), joy (2Cor 2:3), trouble (Phil 4:14), faith (Phlm 1:6), and God's grace (Phil 1:7) and glory (2Th 2:14) with each other. Going further, the Gospel also encourages the believer to share material goods with God's people who are in need (Rom 12:13) and do good deeds and share with others (Heb 13:16).

When in the past the subject of sharing was addressed in the mission context it was mainly understood, that the richer part of the community would share financial and human

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<sup>244</sup> See Lev 25:35; Gen 18:1-8.

<sup>245</sup> See 1Ti 3:2; 5:10; Heb 13:2; 1Pt 4:9.

<sup>246</sup> George 2004:12) gives a great example from Jesus' ministry how he shared his life in love with Lazarus and his family (Jn 11+12) and how his example was affecting the believers in his environment.

resources with the poorer part of the community.<sup>247</sup> This attitude must be overcome. This is not mutual sharing which is required in a Christian partner relationship and this is not “sharing together” because it was only one part who was sharing from his resources and the other part was receiving. Young (2012:93) identified the discontent of African leaders and students about the inequality of sharing:

“The African leaders and students I interviewed believed, that if we are truly the Body of Christ, we must find a way to share resources so that “there may be equality” (2Cor 8:14 KJV).”

Does that mean that the West has to stop the sharing of material resources with the poorer parts of the world? Not at all! Just the opposite is true. If God has blessed them with material goods they “must” share them with others, even if the others may become dependent on them. On the other hand, if God has given other parts of the world spiritual blessings they also must share these with the West because as a World Christian community Christians live in a universal body in which one part depends on the other.<sup>248</sup> There is nothing wrong with the West sharing material, technological goods, or knowledge with the rest of the world. But Christian communities and churches in the rest of the world also need to share their knowledge<sup>249</sup>, their faith, their zeal for evangelism and church planting, their vivid spirituality and other gifts which they have received from God with others in the same body. Sharing faith with each other is essential for the community, “so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ” (Phlm 1:6). Only if all believers in the body share their gifts and resources mutually, will the body be built up as God has anticipated it in his wisdom.

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<sup>247</sup> See Marsh’s (2003:374) example of the Anglican churches sending missionaries into non-Western countries: “The idea of cross-cultural exchange was either absent, or at best peripheral. Instead of mutual sharing, the Society’s structures in the 1960s were thus geared to the sending of personnel and finance in a one-way direction from churches in the West to the South.”

<sup>248</sup> Here the author may have a different understanding from those who want to avoid a dependency of the Global South partners from the Western partner. If one calls for interdependency, both partners will depend on each other. For some this may mean that they bring resources (eg. money) into the partnership because they are available whereas the other partner can offer great non-financial resources.

<sup>249</sup> Andrew Walls (2006:18) talks about the sharing of theological resources of the Western church and the non-Western World: “Can librarians devise a way which will challenge the Western church to make available in the non-Western world resources which are at present available only in the West. The new colonialism is colonialism of information. Having said that, Africa is packed with resources for study that are not being used: there are research materials in every town and village. There’s a huge published literature that’s not collected by learned institutions, either in Africa or the West. And there are richer resources for understanding the life of the early church: first, second, or third century in the life and the experience of the church in Africa than you would find in even the Bodleian and the Vatican’s libraries combined.”

### 5.3.6 Working Together

Working together is another essential element for the glocal Christian community. This study has researched the working together in partnership of glocal Christians. Partnership is not a wrong concept, but this study shows, that there is more than partnership. The attitude of the partners and the foundation for a Christian partnership is spiritual. That is not to say that Christians do not need to work together in a World Mission context. On the contrary, they have to work together. Work is part of creation. God himself created (worked) the universe (Gen 2:2; Ps 8:3) and has also foreseen that a human beings have to work for their sustenance (Gen 2:15). It should be clear that the work Christians are doing together is in reality God's work. The Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul to a "work to which he has called them" (Acts 13:2). Paul reminds the Romans that serving Christ and the work in the kingdom is the "work of God" (Rom 14:18-20). He also encourages the Corinthians to give themselves "fully to the work of the Lord," because their "labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1Cor 15:58). Christians join together in the work of the Lord and "each part does its work" in the body (Eph 4:16). The foundation of collaboration in the global community is God himself, who has called individual believers into his work.

Yet, often one part of the body cannot complete the work alone which he desires to accomplish. One needs others to work together because the task is too big and a single member has not enough strength to do it all. The apostle Paul wisely describes how the different parts of the body need to work together:

"From him (Christ) the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as *each part does its work*" (Eph 4:16).

Each part of the body is gifted by God to fulfill a specific function and the parts need to work together to sustain the whole body. The term here is "collaboration" which comes from the Latin word *collaboratio* (com = with and laboro = work) and means jointly working together. The term is very close to cooperation which signifies the effort of working with another or others.

The Manila Manifesto (MM 1992:301) talks about "Cooperation in Evangelism" stating:

"Cooperation" means finding unity in diversity. It involves people of different temperaments, gifts, calling and cultures, national churches and mission agencies, all ages and both sexes working together.

We are determined to put behind us once and for all, as a hangover from the colonial past, the simplistic distinction between First World sending and Two-

Third World receiving countries. For the great new fact of our era is the internationalization of missions. Not only are a large majority of all evangelical Christians now non-Western, but the number of Two-Thirds World missionaries will soon exceed those from the West. We believe that mission teams, which are diverse in composition but united in heart and mind, constitute a dramatic witness to the grace of God.”<sup>250</sup>

Working together in partnership is a necessity in order to build the kingdom of God. And again, the “together” needs to be stressed which is expressed in unity and diversity. As the manifesto has pointed out, missions today means that the Western and the Global South communities work together.<sup>251</sup> It is not enough for Western missionaries to go to “the mission field” and labor for the nationals in church projects, Bible schools, and development or health projects. On the other hand, the phenomenon of “mission reverse” is increasing, in which non-Western missionaries come to the West and evangelize and start churches.<sup>252</sup> Are they doing this alone without consultation or collaboration with the national Christians and Churches in the country? Mutual consultation and collaboration will be necessary in the future to fulfill the global task of working in God’s kingdom. If Christians work together there must be an equality of power, responsibility, and accountability. They should listen to each other if they want to work together. They ought to develop a common plan for the projects and share common responsibilities. They also will want to develop a kenotic and loving attitude of self-giving towards the others in order to respect and value each other. With such an attitude, trust and confidence in the others can be developed. This is the foundation for fruitful and successful collaboration in partnership.

### 5.3.7 Discovering Theology Together

“Whose Religion is Christianity”? asks Lamin Sanneh (2003) and tries to investigate global Christianity after a post-colonial era by contrasting the West, which was influenced by the Enlightenment and became very secular, with other parts of the world where Christianity has grown and developed a strong influence in the respective cultures. By now it is very clear, that Christianity is no longer (and as a matter of fact, never really was) a Western religion, but that the West has lost its pre-eminence. Voegelin (2011:117) recognizes that in fact, the West/North never had the monopoly for the Christian faith. Walls (2006:18) shows

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<sup>250</sup> Available at: [www.lausanne.org/en/documents/manila-manifesto.html](http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/manila-manifesto.html) (accessed on 23/01/2013).

<sup>251</sup> As an example the Alliance for Global Missions could be referred to. Available at: [www.alliance4gm.com/home](http://www.alliance4gm.com/home) (accessed on 23/01/2013).

<sup>252</sup> See “Migration und Mission”, em 2011, 3/11.

clearly that Christianity did not begin as a Western religion and that Africa has nearly 2000 years of continuous Christian history, as well as Asia with nearly 1500 years before the first European missionary ever arrived.

As a matter of fact, the center of gravity of World Christianity has now shifted from the West to the South as a result of two major changes: “the de-Christianization of the West and the Christianization of the non-Western world” (Tiéno 2006:40). Globalization is another factor that needs to be considered when it comes to the sharing of the Christian faith with each other. Beattie (in Tiplady 2003:220) sees the religious resurgence, and not just that of Christianity, as a reason for a need to a new theological discussion. More than ever before, since Christianity is a global phenomenon, a reflection about the facts of the Christian faith needs also take place in light of different cultural backgrounds. Ott and Netland (2006:30) discuss the terms “global theology” and “globalizing theology” and find the latter better fitting because they understand theology as an ongoing process. They define globalizing theology as follows:

“Globalizing theology is theological reflection rooted in God’s self-revelation in Scripture and informed by the historical legacy of the Christian community through the ages, the current realities in the world, and diverse perspectives of Christian communities throughout the world, with a view to greater holiness in living and faithfulness in fulfilling God’s mission in all the world through the church. Thus, theology is to be an ongoing process in which Christian communities throughout the world participate. While theologians from the West can be expected to continue to exert considerable influence in this conversation, non-Western participants should be full partners in the process” (:30).

Theology has become a matter which concerns not just believers from the West, but from the worldwide Christian community. This is not to say that the Western theologians need to retreat and stop doing theology, but rather that they recognize that they are missing something, if they do not acknowledge that their non-Western partners have something to contribute to a global theology. They need to theologize together in order to learn from each other to reach a deeper understanding of theology. Walls (2006:7) gives the examples of the positive influence of the Christian faith crossing over from the Judaic into the Greek world saying, that the “crossing of cultural frontiers can extend and enlarge theology” and that “the cross-cultural diffusion of Christianity has in the past produced some of the most creative movements of theology.”

Theology of the West and the non-West need each other. All theology is tainted by the culture in which it is done. Theology in the West is very much shaped by Greek thought and reason. In the light of the global changes that are happening, Walls (2006:19) sees

“Western intellectual leadership of a non-Western church to be incongruous” and is looking for a fresh vision, fresh verve, fresh excitement in academic study. He testifies that

“the Western academy that I’ve known and loved and worked in now seems to be sick, tired, crippled by careerism and compromise with mammon – whose altars are as sanguinary as any monarch.”

These are very strong words, but they are echoed from non-Western theologians like Bulus Y. Galadima (in Tiplady (2003:201):

“Believers from these regions (Africa, Asia, and Latin America) should be encouraged and empowered to develop a new spirituality that is not Western but biblical. Western spirituality is not fitting for them, because it does not respond adequately to their context. Instead of recreating and forcing Western spirituality upon the church in other parts of the world, Western missionaries ought to encourage new believers to trust the leading of the Holy Spirit in their lives to respond to the needs in their context. Through the enablement of the Holy Spirit, the new non-Western churches will refresh those from the West.”

In Western theology there is not much space for the non-material, spiritual world, because it cannot be explained by logic. Here Western theology alone is not sufficient and can learn about the non-material world, the spirit world, spiritual warfare, or faith-based prayer from other non-Western believers. Beattie (in Tiplady 2003:221) gives another example in which non-Western theologians, who live in a context of a religious plurality, could be of help for Western theologians living in cultures, where other competing religious communities are not present and followers of differing religions (re-)act negatively towards each other.<sup>253</sup> Another illustration would be the theology of suffering. Christians who live in cultures which are struck by poverty, disease, war, and persecution could be of help to develop a more biblical theology of suffering for Western countries. Other topics which would profit from a theological cultural exchange would be the subjects of “God, prayer, community,” as well as “leadership, freedom, economy, or politics.” Both, believers from the Western communities and believers from the non-Western parts of the world would much profit from such a discussion, finding the biblical understanding together from a mutual theological exchange of these subjects.

Believers from different cultural communities will expand their knowledge, if they theologize together in order to better understand God’s plan for his creation and to understand how Christianity is lived in different cultures. They need to learn from each other,

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<sup>253</sup> Reference should be given to Miroslav Volf’s (2011) book “A Public Faith” in which he talks about coercive faith which tries to eliminate other religions and which leads to violence (:38). Volf applies this to the Christian faith and argues that it would be wrong to eliminate Christian faith, but rather he promotes a strong faith which is active, well understood, offers blessings, gives moral guidance, and which is well engaged in the world (:54).

what it means to live as a Christian in a different cultural context. Still another fundamental goal of all theological exchange and theological learning is to discover the fullness of God (Eph 3:19) and Christ (Eph 4:13) and what it means to discover, to live, and to celebrate the universal community of the Body of Christ.

## 5.4 Creation of a Common Space

Talking about glocal Christian communities the question that remains is how can Christians living in such a glocal context come together as faith communities and live their faith in a multicultural world. To live in community they need to come together in a geographical space which becomes the actual basis for their community. Without actually coming together, it is impossible to develop social relationships and a feeling of mutuality and togetherness. Such a space or platform is needed to actually live their faith together in reciprocity. It will here be called a “common space.”<sup>254</sup> Such a “common space” is the platform or the fellowship place where Christians from different cultural backgrounds can come together and share knowledge with each other, dialogue about common values, do theology together, cooperate with each other, reflect about solidarity in the glocal Christian community and celebrate together.

“Common space” in this context signifies more than just a geographical space where believers come together for exchange. In the study of the Trinity it was explained that the mutual personal indwelling of the three persons of the Godhead is the image of communion with God and communion among Christian believers.<sup>255</sup> Participation in the communion of the triune God is the basis for the communion among the believers. Volf (1996:128) argues that the love which exists within the Trinity “seeks to make space *in God* for humanity.” Out of this fact Volf draws his conclusion: “Having been embraced by God, we must make space for others in ourselves and invite them in – even our enemies” (:129). Making space for others begins first of all with change in the heart of the individual believer. As described

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<sup>254</sup> The term „common space” was used in the EU-Russian summit in May 2007 which describes the practical ongoing cooperation of the EU with Russia for a better mutual understanding in 2005. This happens in terms of a fourfold “common space” as a common economic space; a space of freedom, security and justice; the common space on external security; and the common space on research, education and culture. Available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/682&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en> (accessed on 13/08/2012).

The roadmap for a common economic space between the EU and Russia was introduced in 2005 in order to set out a number of principles and priority activities and to set up dialogues in order to further the partnership. It could be described as a platform of these partners who seek to come together and to collaborate with a common understanding.

<sup>255</sup> See also Volf (1998:128).

before Volf sees the first act of embracing, the opening of the arms as “a sign that I have created space in myself for the other to come in and that I have made a movement out of myself as to enter the space created by the other” (:141). Creation of a common space needs to begin with the action of opening the arms towards each other. This is an action of kenotic attitude. If the embracing of the other is true for the individual Christian, it must also be true for the whole Christian community. One Christian community must open its arms to make space for another Christian community. They need to create a common space for each other.

How should the constitution of such a common space look like? It was shown that in the first century the community was presented as the organic Body of Christ, which is presented as a living organism or something similar to a movement. Guder (1998:248) explains that the missional church as “the people of God, in all their diversity, may be understood as a universal community of communities.” A community of communities is a movement and not a predetermined institution. In a global world it means that the community needs to stay mobile and able to cross boundaries. Bosch (1998:50) believes that one of the failures of the early church was that “it ceased to be a movement and turned into an institution.” This is not to say, that communities, churches or institutions cannot be part of that common space, just the opposite, they need to be part of this universal platform in order to communicate and to have communion with the others, but the common space should not turn into one single institution.

On the contrary, “common space” does not exclusively happen in one single location and one single form. It can take form as a living community, as a multicultural workgroup, or as a multi-cultural conference or consultation. The community can be a short- or a long-ranged community in which people from different cultures live together. The workgroup can mean a long-term or short-term involvement such as for example conferences or consultations which are limited in duration. Most essential is that all these different forms be marked by the above described involvement of living together, learning together, serving together, suffering and celebrating together, sharing together, working together, and discovering theology together.

In a glocal world the “common space” must express itself on several different levels: on the local level, on a regional or area level, and on the international level. If mission is today from everywhere to everywhere, then multicultural believers find themselves in many different cultural settings and locations. Galadima (in Tiplady 2003:199) recognizes “that *cross-cultural* is no longer geographically defined. In most urban areas, the mission field is

only a 15-minute drive away.” Most of the local churches and institutions in World Mission today have lost their monocultural composition, especially in larger cities in Western countries. The world has become a global migration center and many people have left their homelands because of conflicts, economic, or social reasons and are living as “foreigners” in a multicultural setting. In such a situation local believers can open their arms and embrace them into their communities and institutions and create a common space together with them. Christian churches especially need to recognize the opportunity for helping, learning and having fellowship with people from a different background. People have migrated to another country and live there as foreigners and because they are unfamiliar with the culture, lonely, and have problems with the foreign language, they try to connect with people from their own culture. This is also true for Christians in a foreign country. Finding familiarity with their own background, they rather integrate into ethnic churches, if they exist in the host-country. The ethnic church gives them a feeling of warmth and security. This can result in a variety of ethnic churches living door to door with each other, but often with minimal contact among each other. Reimer (2011:30) recognizes the problem of migrants coming into the West (here Germany) and proposes the concept of “multicultural church planting” in which he sees the community of the church as a space for encounter (Begegnungsraum) where the Christian hosts invite those who are coming into their region.

Another possibility for the creation of a common space is on a regional or area level. Christian believers, Christian churches, denominations, or institutions can meet on a regional or multinational level for exchange and community. Most of the common space initiatives of denominations or institution occur only within their own denominations or in institutions which are alike. Christian churches, denominations or institutions should take the initiative to cross territorial borders, but also “cross-cultural” borders and thus come together in a larger area in order to exchange and live their faith together. Some good examples of recent years are initiatives of CCA (The Christian Conference in Asia) whose churches believe that the “purpose of God for the church in Asia is life together in a common obedience of witness to the mission of God in the world.”<sup>256</sup> Other examples could be the initiative of “Mission.net”<sup>257</sup> in Europe or “Comibam” in Latin America<sup>258</sup> which brings thousands of (young) people together from their area to reflect jointly on the subject of missions. There are theologians who meet in order to think about theology in their regions

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<sup>256</sup> The Christian Conference of Asia available at: <http://cca.org.hk/Test/about-us> (accessed on 23/02/2013).

<sup>257</sup> Mission-net available at: [www.mission-net.org](http://www.mission-net.org) (accessed on 23/01/2013).

<sup>258</sup> See Pluddemann's (2006:253) explanation about COMIBAM.

as the FEET (Fellowship of Evangelical Theologians)<sup>259</sup> or the EATWOT (Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians).<sup>260</sup> All of these regional initiatives desire to come together to form a community, celebrate their faith in God, and try to learn from each other what it means to serve God in their specific area.

The same should be true on an international level. Common space must be created world-wide. The whole world is in God's focus and the Church is the universal Church of God. Denominations, mission agencies, churches, and Christian institutions need to embrace each other and open their arms towards each other to create international common spaces<sup>261</sup> which will provide platforms for their communion, for their living the Christian faith, for their meeting each other in joy and suffering, for working together to overcome injustice and poverty in this world, and for doing theology together in order to grow into the image of God together and to build up the world as it was intended by the creator. Therefore, the common space cannot be satisfactory if it is only a platform for exchange and reflection, but it can also become an agent for transformation. Reflection without transformation is ineffective. Community needs to become a transformational community which has an influence in the world. Both partners who come together at this common space, the Western partner and the partner from the Global South, must be transformed mutually through meeting together and their mutual exchange in face of the transforming power of the living God. Therefore the common space can become the basis for the community to provoke change in the world. The apostle Paul encourages the community in Rome to

“not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Rom 12:1).

Transformation happens best in community, when brothers and sisters come together with their God given gifts and reflect together and work together on godly solutions.

## **5.5 Looking into the Future Together**

So how does the future look for partnerships and church mission relationships in the worldwide context? The Lausanne Covenant (LC in Scherer & Bevans (1992:256-257)) already recognized in 1974 the need for cooperation and partnership in World Mission (7+8)

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<sup>259</sup> Fellowship of Evangelical Theologians available at: [www.feet-europe.net](http://www.feet-europe.net) (accessed on 23/01/2013).

<sup>260</sup> Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians available at: [www.eatwot.org](http://www.eatwot.org) (accessed on 23/01/2013).

<sup>261</sup> Internationally this is already happening to some extent in conferences of the WCC and the Lausanne movement, but it also needs to happen more with churches, denominations, mission agencies and other Christian institutions.

stating that “a growing partnership of churches will develop and the universal character of Christ’s church will be more clearly exhibited.” This is now becoming reality. But Lausanne was also calling for a right attitude on the part of all the partners in this new global reality:

“The gospel does not presuppose the superiority of any culture to another, but evaluates all cultures according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness, and insists on moral absolutes in every culture (1Cor 9:19-23). Missions have too frequently exported with the gospel an alien culture and churches have sometimes been in bondage to culture rather than to scripture. Christ’s evangelist’s must humbly seek to empty themselves (Phil 2:5-7) of all but their personal authenticity in order to become servants (2Cor 4:5) of others, and churches must seek to transform and enrich culture, all for the glory of God” (:10).

The Bible shows that in World Mission, there is much more than just collaborating with each other, more than a working-partnership. Believers are members of the Body of Christ, who need to move towards each other and form the brotherly relationship and communion that God has foreseen for his children. In the future the world will grow even closer together and people and believers from all different cultures and backgrounds will come together in relationships. The only possible way of living together in harmony is the kenotic way of Christ in which people and communities come together in a humble attitude, open their arms towards each other and make space for others in their lives. This would be a foretaste of what God is anticipating in Revelation 7:9-11:

“After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God.”

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