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## PARTNERSHIP IN MISSIONS AS A TOOL FOR WORLD EVANGELIZATION

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*Editor's Note: Because North American readers may not be familiar with particular scholars in Africa, Dr. Audi was asked to identify them by their titles in this article.*

### ***Abstract***

Partnership, though challenging, can be a valuable tool for world evangelization. The teaching of the Bible and the experience of the Church have shown that joining effort and resources enhances effective ministry, making the Church achieve formidable results in relatively shorter time. Partnership harnesses resources and potentials around the world and encourages mutual participation and engagement globally without duplication or negligence.

### **INTRODUCTION**

“Partnership” is a common term, widely used in the business world,

political circles, educational arena, religious groups, etc. Human life is designed with the need for others in a relationship; hence, a partnership is not a new concept. The human lack of self-sufficiency informs the craving for a relationship with God and fellow humans, making interpersonal relationships of love between humans into platforms to demonstrate the possible relationship of humanity to God. While it is easier in some facets of life to meet this need as in marriage (Gen. 2:24), it is harder in others such as a partnership in evangelization (Acts 15:2, 36-40).

God in his wisdom has designed His kingdom work, not as an avenue for certain experts to have a monopoly of ideas and success, but as a creative means for partnership among His children, working on different fronts to accomplish His work on earth. The Bible exhibits various forms of mission partnership in the lives of His servants at different times, revealing the significance of partnership in ministry. For example, Joshua partnered with Moses, Aaron, and Hur to wage war against the Amalekites (Ex. 17:8-15); Nehemiah partnered with fellow Jews to carry out some specific tasks in the rebuilding of the broken walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 2:8; 4:15, 16). Also, Paul partnered with some other believers to accomplish the mission to the Gentiles (Phil. 1:5; 4:15).

The enormity of the task of world evangelization implies that immense resources are needed to accomplish it. The magnitude of the task and the enormous need for resources are captured in Jesus' description: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Luke 10:2 NIV). This task and need remain herculean even today. A statistical report reveals the magnitude of world evangelization, noting that while in 1970 the world population was listed as 3,696,189,000, the Christian population was listed as 1,228,609,000, meaning that 33.2 percent of the world population was Christian. The report projects that by 2020, if the current trend continues, the Christian population will be 33.3 percent of 7,656,531,000.<sup>1</sup> The report further revealed:

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1 Center for the Study of Global Christianity, "Christianity in Its Global Context, 1970-2020: Society, Religion, and Mission," Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, June 2013, 9, accessed December 28, 2018, <https://www.gordonconwell.edu/ockenga/research/documents/Christianityinits-GlobalContext.pdf>.

In 1910, over 80% of the world's Christians lived in the global North. By 1970 Christians could be found in all the world's countries, but their distribution among countries and regions was still far from even. The global South was home to 76% of the world's total population in 1970 but only 43% of all Christians. By 2010 the figure for each had risen, but the gap between them had narrowed: 84% of all people, and 59% of all Christians, lived in the global South. Those percentages are expected to increase to 85% of all people and 66% of all Christians by 2020. The figures would be even higher if not for emigration from the South to the North.<sup>2</sup>

This report affirms that the numerical gap between Christians and non-Christians continues to be wide. More people will be in need of the gospel. The growth status of evangelicals is revealed by two statistical sources. The *World Christian Database* put evangelicals globally at 96,044,000 (2.6% of continental population) in 1970 and 285,481,000 (4.1%) in 2010, and it projects 349,494,000 (4.6%) in 2020. *Operation World*, on the other hand, put evangelicals at 126,251,000 (3.4% of continental population) in 1970 and 545,887,000 (7.9%) in 2010, and it projects 653,682,000 (8.5%) in 2020.<sup>3</sup> The two sources define evangelicals differently.<sup>4</sup>

Duro Ayanrinola, General Secretary of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship, while discussing partnership in mission, quoted Tim Lewis of Frontier Missions: "If we're looking at reaching the unreached people of the world, no single organization, no matter how powerful, and how muscular it might be, has the capacity to do what needs to be done without the help of other people."<sup>5</sup> The crux of the above quotation establishes the significance

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2 Ibid, 14.

3 Ibid, 17.

4 "The WCD currently uses a 'structural' approach in defining Evangelicals. . . . Christians are also considered Evangelicals when they are members of an Evangelical church, congregation, or denomination. . . . Operation World's philosophy of defining and counting Evangelicals focuses on the theology of Evangelicalism in defining adherents. . . . Evangelicals are largely Protestant, Independent or Anglican, but some are Catholic or Orthodox." Ibid., 16.

5 Tim Lewis, quoted in Duro Ayanrinola, "Future Challenges in Missions for the Nigerian Baptist Convention," in *Resource Book of Nigerian Baptist Convention Mission Summit* (Ibadan: Baptist Press Nigeria Ltd, 2003), 13-18.

of partnership in mission.

In line with the above understanding, this article examines the concept of partnership as a tool in achieving the goal of propagating the gospel worldwide, and it argues that partnership is the most promising, efficient, and necessary tool for evangelizing the whole world with biblical justification in spite of attendant challenges. Partnership's justification, challenges, use as a tool, assessment, and benefits are discussed.

## Understanding Partnership

According to Andre Abah, a partnership exists when there is a close working relationship between individuals and/or organizations, which agree to work together for a specific purpose because they can achieve more together than by themselves.<sup>6</sup> In the legal sense, a partnership is a relationship existing between two or more persons who contractually associate in a joint principal role in a business. In that regard, S. Ogoh Enyi affirms that partnership in missions requires cooperation of individuals or organizations based on biblical guidelines for the goal of fulfilling the Great Commission mandate.<sup>7</sup> The research leader for the Global Missions Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, Ayanwande Ayanlade Ayandokun, asserts that churches are to “employ partnership with God and fellow believers as the strategy for the work.”<sup>8</sup> A “true partnership in a mission allows for the sovereignty of the Triune God in its principle, method, practice, and goal.”<sup>9</sup>

Tom Steffen quotes Luis Bush, who defined partnership as “an association of two or more Christian autonomous bodies who have formed

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6 Andre Abah, “Strategic Partnership in African Missions,” *Missionary – A Journal of Mission Practice in and from Africa* 2, no. 2 (May 2003): 154-164.

7 Stephen Ogoh. Enyi, “Mobilizing Teams for Prayer and Partnership in Missions,” in *Perspectives and Practical Approaches to Ministry and Missions*, ed. O. Kehinde Babarinde (Ibadan, Nigeria: Publications Department, Nigeria Baptist Convention, 2013), 105-113. Enyi, is the immediate past Global Missions Director of the NBC and currently a lecturer at the NBTS, Ogbomosho.

8 Ayanwande Ayandokun, *Partnership in Missions: Expediting World Evangelization through Partnership in Mission* (Lagos, Nigeria: Gloryline Christian Publications, 2013), 31. Ayandokun is currently a Partnership/Mobilization Officer of the Global Mission Board of the NBC.

9 Ibid, 52.

a trusting relationship, and fulfilled agreed-upon expectations by sharing complementary strengths and resources to reach their mutual goal.”<sup>10</sup> Invariably, Steffen advocates that institutions work, not apart from each other, or under each other, or unified but separate, but as equal partners. Such a theory protects the commission of both the receiving nation’s church and the sending institution or church. According to Steffen, “a growing number of nationals and expatriates” make the argument “that in God’s economy, inclusion, interdependence, and role changes should replace isolation, independence, or departure.”<sup>11</sup>

For S. Cueva, partnership establishes and preserves a permanent relationship of mutual commitment and dialogue. He explains that partnership begins with what we have in our hands and the willingness to give what we have unconditionally.<sup>12</sup> Simply put, partnerships can be substituted with “mergers.”<sup>13</sup> It brings people together with a purpose in relation to a specific task that must be accomplished. A partnership is subject to some attributes, characteristics, and qualities in order to make it work. There is the need for a specified term of operation for an effective partnership, an absence of which will destabilize the relationship.

Oluwabukunmi Popoola, Minister of Missions and Church Development for the Lagos Central Baptist Conference, explained that cooperation is usually characterized by “volunteerism,” “purposefulness,” “mutual trust,” “confidence,” and some “forfeiture of individualism”.<sup>14</sup> Also, Timothy Olonade, Vice President of International Training for Leadership Ministries Worldwide, noted that effective partnership, of necessity, has the following three major requirements among others: “financial

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10 Luis Bush and Lorry Lutz, *Partnering in Ministry: The Direction of World Evangelism* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 46, cited in Tom A. Steffen, “Partnership,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. Scott A. Moreau (Grand Rapids: Baker Books House, 2000), 727.

11 Steffen, 727.

12 S. Cueva, “Partnership,” in *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations*, ed. John Corrie (Nottingham, England: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 273-275.

13 William D. Taylor, “Lessons of Partnership,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (October 1975), 406-415. See also Oluwabukunmi Popoola, *Passion for Missions: Raising Mission-Minded Members* (Lagos: Kingdom Life Ministry, 2013), 68.

14 Popoola, *Passion for Missions*, 68.

accountability,” “information management,” and “collaboration.”<sup>15</sup> A partnership is regarded as the coming together of two or more partners or parties with the aim of jointly doing something that none of the two can achieve easily if carried out single-handedly. Hence, some necessary terms and conditions are applied for its effectiveness.

Since the 1970s, missiologists have been thinking about partnerships between evangelicals in the Northern Hemisphere and those in the Majority World.<sup>16</sup> Missiologists see the need to grow this category of interconnectivity across continents in order to evangelize the world. Partnership suggests that every church in Christ must be a church in mission, united to the other churches in respect and love. Real partnership in mission should avoid and prevent competition. Christ’s command to preach the gospel to the whole world can only be done by all churches uniting all their strengths and resources. In other words, the one church of God around the world should act as a united body in God’s mission, the *missio Dei*.

Al Gilbert maintains that “a partnership is multitier and lasts multiple years.”<sup>17</sup> Christians can easily join with other Christians on a short-term mission trip, but a lot of effort is required to develop a partnership. Scott Moreau, Gary Corwin, and Gary McGee also alluded to the necessity of working cooperatively in missions, but they also point out the inherent challenges. They wrote, “Creating and carrying out partnerships in which each member is valued and has something to offer to the partnership is difficult under the best of circumstances. This is especially true when the partnering organizations are from different cultures and have widely differing management and organizational structures and styles.”<sup>18</sup>

Duro Ayanrinola proposes four principles that could address the deficiency observed in several cases in the following.<sup>19</sup> First, there must

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15 Timothy Olonade, “100 Years of NBC Missions: Past, Present, and Future; Recruitment, Equipping and Networking in Missions,” in *2015 National Missions Summit – GMB, Resource Booklet*, 33-36.

16 Cueva, “Partnership.”

17 Al Gilbert, “The Local Church and the Mission of God,” in *Discovering the Mission of God*, ed. Mike Barnett (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 607.

18 A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, & Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 286.

19 Ayanrinola, “Future Challenges in Missions for the Nigerian Baptist Convention,” 14.

be compatibility in the doctrinal beliefs and ministry values. All the parties in a partnership must hold as non-negotiable those doctrines that are necessarily and inextricably tied to the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. The implication of this first principle is that potential partners should understand each other's doctrinal position and believe that they and their constituencies can work comfortably together without making issues out of the differences. Second, there should be a focus on the common goal—the unfinished task. The common goal for all the parties should be the mobilization of Christians for world evangelization. Third, there should be an attitude of equality. With this, there must be a focus and concentration on complementary values that build strong relationships. And fourth, there should be trust and financial accountability. The aspect of financial transparency and accountability cannot be undermined in any partnership relationship.

Fundamental elements must be considered to establish and strengthen strategic partnerships firmly. Such elements include the partners: mission agencies, national denominations, local churches, parachurch organizations, and academic training institutions; other elements involve the place of the participants: local, national, or international levels. Other fundamentals include motivations, methodology, and the duration of a strategic partnership. The duration must vary, depending upon the specified goals.

According to Ayanwande Ayandokun, “partnership in mission depicts Christianity adequately because it shows how the Triune God calls all believers into (an) eternal loving relationship, cooperation, fellowship, friendship, and partnership with Him and fellow believers.”<sup>20</sup> Ayanwande Ayandokun argued that “the refusal to practice partnership in mission is equal to the refusal to practice authentic Christianity.”<sup>21</sup> In a nutshell, partnership spurs all Christians and reproducing churches to equip one another and partner with one another to pursue world evangelization, which has immense benefits for the advancement of global evangelization.

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20 Ayanwande Ayandokun, *Biblical Strategies for Reproducing Churches: Biblical Strategies can Transform and Make Your Church Join those Expediting Global Evangelization with Multiplication* (Lagos: Gloryline Christian Publications, 2013), 105.

21 Ibid, 106

All members of individual local churches should understand the divine mandate to embrace either short-term or long-term mission endeavors to realize global evangelization. Samuel Moffett, a renowned mission scholar, states that Christians are called to engage in both evangelism and social action; but that is not enough. What the church needs for the future in a mission is more than that: it needs not just an uneasy truce between faith and works, but a partnership.<sup>22</sup>

The significance of partnership cannot be trivialized, as William R. O'Brien observes. O'Brien quoted Rene Padilla: "The scene is set for partnership in mission on a global scale."<sup>23</sup> Padilla stresses, "The kind of global partnership that is needed, however, will be possible only on the basis of honest recognition of cultural differences, and real willingness to learn from one another across cultural barriers."<sup>24</sup> Caution is needed because there are economic imbalances across the globe. Partners should not expect that contributions will always be the same in all areas.

In summary, partnership is highly affirmed for effective mission work. Partnership requires mutual trust, understanding of diverse cultures, commitment, and willingness from all stakeholders. In missions, partnership extends to prayer, funding, training of missionary workers, evangelism/outreach, research, and church planting. Partnership in missions deals with spiritual life and destiny. Whatever the outcome, a partnership will have an eternally good result or leave a bad mark on humanity. Therefore, a mission partnership must not be undertaken half-heartedly or with levity; rather, a partnership requires a serious commitment.

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22 Samuel Moffett, "Evangelism: The Leading Partner," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), D208.

23 Rene Padilla, "Toward the Globalization and Integrity of Mission," in *Mission in the Nineteen 90s*, ed. Gerald Anderson, J. . Phillips, and Robert T. Coote (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 31-32, quoted in William R. O'Brien, "The Power of Collaboration," *Missiology: An International Review* 33, no. 1 (January 2005), 11.

24 Ibid.

## BASES FOR PARTNERSHIP

The bases for partnership are very broad. A partnership has biblical, theological, ecclesiological, and missiological support. A few of the various bases of a partnership will be discussed briefly below.

**Biblical Basis** – Fundamentally, partnership emphasizes unity, and this is demonstrated in God, even at creation. Cueva insists that *koinonia* is the nearest biblical word to a partnership and has four aspects: sharing in common projects, sharing of gifts, sharing in suffering, and sharing of material resources.<sup>25</sup> The aspect of sharing is seriously connected with the partnership: sharing in praying for others (2 Cor. 9:14), sharing resources together (2 Cor. 9:8-10), and sharing praise and thanksgiving to God (2 Cor. 9:12-13). Sharing with others is the expression of obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 9:13).

Though there is no particular biblical verse rendering the word “partnership,” an inference could be drawn from the practical application of some scriptural texts to establish the mandate. Popoola maintained that passages of the Bible that encourage unity and generosity affirm partnership. Such passages that he identifies include Judges 1:1-4; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Acts 15:2; 1 Corinthians 3:5-15, 12:12-26; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Revelation 1-3.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, Yomi Oladeji, Scripture Union Nigeria National Director, said that the nature of the Godhead (John 10:30, 38; 17:11, 22; 1 Cor. 12:4-6); the nature of the Church (1 Cor. 12:12, 20-21, 25); the nature of the missionary task (Eph. 4:4-7, 11-16; 1 Cor. 3:5-9; Jn. 4:36-37); as well as the diversity of God’s creation in styles (Matt. 11:2-19), roles (1 Cor. 3:3-11), and audience (Acts 15:1-11) affirm partnership (Ps.133; Phil. 4:2-3; Amos 3:3). Such a biblically guided partnership provides a platform for discussion of concerns relating to “information,” “money,” “personnel,” “time,” “knowledge,” “resources,” “love,” “prayer,” and “credit.”<sup>27</sup>

**Theological Basis** – Partnership embodies the theological idea

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25 Cueva, “Partnership,” 274.

26 Popoola, *Passion for Missions: Raising Mission-Minded Members*, 70.

27 Yomi A. Oladeji, “Strategic Partnership for the Mission Work,” in *Equipping the Harvest Force: Life-long Biblical Discipline and Exposure for Those Sensing God’s Call to Global Harvest*, ed. Timothy O. Olonade (Jos: CAPRO Media Services, 2000), 88-89.

of a covenant in which two or more persons agreed to participate in a determined vision, action, purpose, target, methodology, and strategy to accomplish one or more tasks by cooperation.<sup>28</sup> Theologically, the radical change of hermeneutical horizons meant rethinking of partnership, not in terms of master-servant, or older-younger, but in terms of *koinonia*, mutuality, inter-dependency, and companionship.

**Ecclesiological Basis** - Ecclesiologically, the local church should be the main agent of mission, out of which the various missionary structures are empowered. By her divine structure, the church is designed for a partnership where each person or group will contribute for the common good or edification of all. Each part is brought together to raise a formidable army for the Lord in fulfilling His purpose for meaningful progress, as explained in Ephesians 4:11-13.

**Missiological Basis** - Mission has been understood in terms of sending churches and receiving churches, but after the International Mission Conference of Whitby (1947), this idea moved towards "Partnership in Obedience." Such a change came about by the demand and real desire of some people for a change.<sup>29</sup>

Additional grounds for engaging in a partnership are historical. Examples are given below in the assessment section. The contexts where partnerships are employed have often yielded unprecedented results in Christian ministry. A partnership will yield a greater result, however, if particular challenges are addressed.

## CHALLENGES TO PARTNERSHIP

Engaging in a partnership is not without attendant challenges. Denying these will jeopardize the instrumentality of partnership in world evangelization. An effective partnership can only be achieved when these challenges are identified and addressed consciously by stakeholders. Moses Audi, when discussing networking, identified six challenges to be given priority attention:

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28 Cueva, "Partnership."

29 Ibid.

1. Justifying the message of mission. . . . 2. The challenge of diversity and proliferation. . . . 3. The challenge of addressing felt need in missionary context. . . . 4. The challenge of participation of appropriate persons. . . . 5. The challenge to restore the Apostolic and prophetic character of the Church. . . . 6. The challenge of the unity of the Church and mutuality of responding to missionary needs.<sup>30</sup>

Some of the other challenges to acknowledge and to overcome are discussed below.

**Doctrinal Position** – One of the major challenges concerning partnership is the issue of doctrinal affirmation of the partners. Incompatibility in doctrinal beliefs and ministry values stand the chance of disrupting any partnership in mission. In practical reality, there have been occasions when mission agencies cannot continue with the collaborative efforts because of a doctrinal breakdown. As earlier pointed out by Duro Ayanrinola, it is extremely important that all the parties involved in partnership hold as non-negotiable those doctrines that are necessarily tied to the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**A Question of Mutual Trust** – Human beings are difficult to know intimately or to predict. Many people are full of deception and pretense. This situation makes it difficult to have absolute trust in one another because unforeseen problems may result in devastation, destabilization, and an unrecoverable downfall. Such a downfall may bring collapse to business, relationships, or lives. A partnership must be weighed and guided carefully to avoid deception.

In view of the above situation, partners often face the challenge of having someone to trust. Mistrust of partners as individuals or groups plays a major role in having an adverse effect on the effectiveness of partnership.

**The Challenge of Genuine Commitment** – Today, another important challenge that often faces partnership in mission is a lack of commitment. Determination and loyalty are required for success in any human endeavor, and a partnership is no exception. Therefore, if a party is committed and

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<sup>30</sup> Moses Audi, “The Challenge and Prospects of Networking in Missions in an Age of Globalization: An African Perspective,” *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 10 (December 2005): 85.

devoted to the terms of the agreement, the other party is expected to do the same. But, where the reverse is the case, certainly the partnership will work effectively in achieving a common goal. The need for total commitment of both partners in every aspect of the partnership cannot be overemphasized.

**Identity Problem/Domination Tendency** – Crises erupt in partnerships when the partners fail to understand or recognize individuals’ cultural differences and real willingness to work together in unity. Christopher Little notes that besides the identity problem in partnership, it is inevitable that the partner with the most highly valued resource will dominate. Such domination directly points “to the inherent danger of inadvertently imposing a Western formulation of Christianity upon the global church.”<sup>31</sup>

**The Challenge of Right Partners** – The right environment and the right policy will positively affect any good structure. The challenge of securing the right persons in partnership is a big problem, requiring due attention. The type of work to be done together in any partnership requires finding the right partner to work with. There is a need to have people who share the same vision, have the same goal and objective, and are determined to work together, irrespective of their differences. In any situation where visions, objectives, strategies, and goals are in opposite directions, there cannot be a sustainable or effective partnership. The need to have the right partners cannot be overstressed.

**Lack of a Proper Term of Agreement/Condition of Service** – This is another challenge for the practice of effective partnership in mission. A concrete agreement should be reached on what are expected to be the contributions and modes of sharing of profits and losses by each partner. Any defect in meeting this challenge will spell doom for collaborative efforts.

**Worldview Differences** – The different views about reality affect the possibility as well as the nature of the partnership that may ensue. Various worldviews may conceive of partnership as a contract, quota, or mutual sharing.<sup>32</sup> This gap in perspective is especially wide between the Northern and Southern hemispheres and could be blamed for failed experiments of

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31 Christopher R. Little, “Breaking Bad Missiological Habits,” in *Discovering the Mission of God*, ed. Mike Barnett (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 487.

32 Audi, “The Challenge and Prospects of Networking,” 81-83.

partnerships for world evangelization.

**The Challenge of Attitudes and Personality Traits** – Other challenges militating against partnership are identified as unhealthy rivalry or competition, ego (pride), lack of due process, insecurity, fear of betrayal, and deviation from the originally-stated goal.

## PARTNERSHIP AS A TOOL FOR WORLD EVANGELISM

This section answers the question: In what way is partnership a tool? Eight of the many ways partnership can serve as a tool for taking the gospel to the ends of the earth are identified as follows.

First, partnership enables effective harnessing of resources for world evangelization. The resources of the partners are brought together for the purpose of world evangelization. These may include expertise, financial and material resources, logistics, technical know-how, and human resources. The potential for expertise in many areas in ministry is more reachable with wider sourcing of resources and their management in a partnership context rather than outside it.

Second, working together provides the context for accountability. Each partner is held accountable to the assigned task. Also, the assessment of the work could be done from differing perspectives. This arrangement gives a wider and more effective assessment of progress. The emic and etic perspectives provide more comprehensive refocusing with greater prospects of efficiency and acceptability.

Third, the expected unity of faith as anticipated by the Lord and Savior of the universe can be fostered. The resultant unity consists of unity in diversity. When the accommodation of nonessentials is welcome and the emic inadequacies are transformed by the etic assessment, genuine unity and growth result. The corruption that comes as a result of unconscious practices is reassessed by a new eye.<sup>33</sup>

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33 See Moses Audi, "The Challenge of Cross-Cultural Missions in the Twenty-First Century," in *Theology in Practice*, ed. Stephen O. Ayankeye and Emiola Nihinlola (Ibadan: Scepter Prints Ltd., 2010), 132f. See also Moses Audi, "Heterogeneity and the Nature of the Church: A Biblical and Theological Reflection," in *Contemporary Issues in Systematic Theology: An African Christian Perspective*, ed. Moses Audi, Olusayo Oladejo, Emiola Nihinlola, and John Enyinnaya (Ibadan: Scepter Prints,

Fourth, with a partnership, the effective spread of evangelistic engagement of targets can be achieved. The context and calling of the partners will be adequately covered. More resources (human, financial, and material) can be harnessed for the work as well.

Fifth, partnership empowers the church through internal rejuvenation. Each partner brings a variety of gifts that can be used for the missionary task. In this way, each partner is learning a new dimension of ministry beyond the confines of their local constituency. This type of partnership is a blessing to global evangelization. The zeal of the partners will be motivation for those who are getting discouraged.

Sixth, working with like-minded people allows for sustainability and effective communication of the gospel message. The dynamics of communication among the partners will prepare them for engagement with the different missionary targets. The possibility for sustaining the work is greater because some of the partners have the advantage of proximity and contextual affinity for the targets.

Seventh, effective transformation of worldviews and purification of Christianity can take place when the partnership is given a chance. Transformation is faster as the gospel is coming with some level of effective interplay between the pilgrim and indigenous elements of the Christian faith. In multicultural partnership, the indigenous elements tending towards syncretism can be easily identified within the indigenous elements of the partners and the contexts of the field.

### **An Analysis of Partnership as a Tool for World Evangelization**

Effective partnership for world evangelization requires collaboration, networking, synergizing and cooperating with others for periodic, specific, short-term or long-term partnering. Mutual dependence is crucial for qualitative achievement and fulfillment of the missionary mandate of the Church. There is a decline in a partnership interest in the face of growing missionary needs invariably informed by the growing tendency to independence, ownership questions, and several other challenges identified above. As Ayanriola noted, the “deficient of some profound principles”<sup>34</sup>

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2011), 98-112.

34 Ayanrinola, “Future Challenges in Missions for the Nigerian Baptist Convention,” 14.

need to be given attention. Also, when the partnership is not well handled, it slows down the pace of work and thereby discourages collaboration or networking with others. In spite of the growing number of churches or Christian bodies, the task of world evangelization is getting further out of reach. The growing challenges such as persecution, insecurity, fear of betrayal, distrust, distraction, loss of focus, failure to uphold the initially agreed terms of working together, etc. play major roles in the reasons why partnership seems unsuccessful.

It is evident that in some cases, unhealthy rivalry and competition have arisen instead of bringing progress, development, and achievement of the expected fruit of such cooperation due to the fact that each of the partners places priority on their own identity over and above the common goal. Defaults in fulfilling one's part, of the agreed roles or refusal to engage in partnership, bring retrogression instead of progress. For instance, churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention from Lagos are involved independently in the Republic of Benin as an international mission field while the Global Mission Board (GMB) of the same convention serves in the same field. Critical evaluation of the act reveals that enormous resources are being wasted in terms of finances, humans, materials, time, and opportunities just because there is a lack of proper harmonization. A partnership among the churches and GMB would foster more effective use of resources and results. Working together should not be understood as showcasing one's intelligence, affluence, or ability; rather, it is harnessing resources in order to achieve what is difficult for one person or group to achieve easily, all alone.

On the other hand, there are examples of partnership initiatives that showcase the value of working together, as advocated in this paper. An example of partnership in mission is OneStory. Scott Holste states, "OneStory is a partnership involving Campus Crusade for Christ, YWAM (Youth with a Mission), Trans World Radio, Wycliffe Bible Translations, and the Southern Baptist International Mission Board."<sup>35</sup> Holste continues, "OneStory teams work with native speakers to develop chronological sets of Bible stories spanning from God's creation of the world to God's

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35 J. Scott Holste, "Finishing the Task," In *Discovering the Mission of God*, ed. Mike Barnett (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 335.

redemption through Jesus Christ.”<sup>36</sup>

A number of evangelical mission organizations are now focused on engagement of the unengaged and unreached people groups of the world. One cooperative effort involving several of these groups is the “Finishing the Task” partnership.<sup>37</sup> The effort’s aim is to help existing churches in the United States and elsewhere plant reproducing churches among every people group in the world. In the same vein, the Nigerian Evangelical Missions Association (NEMA) has embarked on a project to reach the unreached people groups in Nigeria. An individual member of the association is to adopt a people group that they are willing to reach. This is a step in the right decision that will speed up the evangelization of the unreached in Nigeria.<sup>38</sup>

Other partnerships between churches and mission agencies for evangelization with significant results include Calvary Ministries (CAPRO), Joint Christian Ministry in West Africa (JCMWA), and Mission Evangélique Luthérienne au Mali (MELM). CAPRO engages in mission training and field engagement internationally with a smaller scale of partnership. JCMWA is a network organization with a membership of about thirty bodies from Northern and Southern hemispheres.<sup>39</sup> The MELM, on the other hand, brings four bodies from the Southern Hemisphere and three from the North into missionary partnership. Developments like these are an inspiration for greater missionary partnership in today’s world.

## **BENEFITS OF PARTNERSHIP TO WORLD EVANGELIZATION**

No matter how difficult or challenging a goal may seem, there are some benefits attached to its accomplishment. Some benefits of an effective partnership are highlighted below.

**Cooperation** – While expounding the benefits of partnership,

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36 Ibid.

37 See “Finishing the Task,” accessed March 18, 2019, <https://www.finishingthetask.com/>.

38 See Audi, “The Challenge and Prospects of Networking,” 80.

39 Ibid.

Adebowale Omikunle listed cooperation as one of the advantages.<sup>40</sup> He upholds some activities of cooperation as compiled by Bruce Powers. Powers emphasizes that

cooperation enables churches to be involved in these and other activities: Starting new churches and mission points; Sharing Christian fellowship; Supporting one another in times of need; approving persons for ordination to the Gospel ministry; Determining criteria related to denominational recognition; Assisting one another with leadership training for volunteer workers in church programs.<sup>41</sup>

An effective partnership does not allow partners to be easily disconnected, removed, or harassed because they are well connected against such.

**Progress in Mission Work** – Partnership provides an opportunity for an increase in church planting with wider outreach or coverage. When churches, groups, agencies, or organizations work together effectively, they will cover wide areas of operation. Strong, self-propagating, self-supporting, and reproducible churches will be planted.

**Promoting a Good Working Atmosphere** — Effective partnership promotes an atmosphere conducive for working. Ministry opportunities are made available as partners are better equipped by the diverse ministry gifts of others for the common good of everyone. Partners share their costs, human resources, and information. The results will be good.

**Establishment/Development of Churches** — Partnership helps to accelerate the establishment, growth, and development of churches, thereby helping them to fulfill the mission mandate through the Great Commission given by Jesus Christ. Partnership also helps to curtail the excesses of wayward partners, and by so doing, helping to maintain the sanctity of God's word, strengthening the weak partners, and raising a formidable end-time army of the Lord. Above all, God is highly glorified

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40 Adebowale Omikunle, *Devotional & Denominational Convictions: Serving God's Purpose in Your Generation* (Ibadan: Nigerian Baptist Convention, 2014), 41-42.

41 Bruce P. Powers, "Cooperative Relationships," in *Church Administration Handbook*, 3d ed., rev. and updated, ed. Bruce Powers (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 255.

when a good partnership is in place.

## CONCLUSION

World evangelization is a global mandate for the global Church; no single church, denomination, mission organization, or Christian foundation can accomplish world evangelization alone. The entire Body of Christ must work together in complete obedience and in strategic partnerships to accomplish the task. Partnership in mission is a collective venture, and it includes every aspect of mission endeavor, including prayer, loving care, funding, skills, and ideas. The clarion call of the Bible that must be heeded is the call for all believers to preach the Gospel of our Lord to the whole world before the end comes. Consequently, all hands must be on deck to carry out this enormous task in the unity of faith, purpose, and operation. All Christians need to cooperate, unite, and harness all their resources to ensure the fulfillment of the task. Partnering in the mission task is inevitable. Christians should stop duplicating efforts, thereby wasting resources and time, and prolonging the Lord Christ's Second Coming.

In the opinion of the authors of this article, though challenges and difficulties abound, partnership in mission is good and beneficial. The problem, to a large extent, lies in the way that partnership is practiced by the parties concerned. In summary, a partnership is considered to be a real opportunity to spread the Gospel faster, wider, easier, better, and more cost-effectively. The time has come to formulate partnership agreements that will make partnership effective for the purpose of achieving the mission mandate.

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