

# Towards partnership in mission: The Church of Scotland's World Mission Council Policy, 1929–2006

Graham A. Duncan\*

## Abstract

This study investigates the concept of Partnership in Mission (PIM) from a historical perspective and evaluates its appropriateness as a current model for mission. The origin and definition of the term, the historical development of PIM in the World Mission Council (WMC) of the Church of Scotland (CoS) and its predecessors are considered. The period under review can be said to begin with the twentieth century missionary movement and the 1910 Edinburgh conference of the International Missionary Council [IMC] and continue until the present time, although the main focus will be on the World Mission Council during the period 1997–2006.

**Keywords:** Board of World Mission, Church of Scotland, *Kenosis*, *Koinonia*, *Metanoia*, Mission, Partnership in Mission, World Mission Council, Unity

## Introduction

Partnership in mission (PIM) is a laudable concept in the furtherance of God's mission. It has a distinguished history despite the difficulties experienced in making it a functioning reality. It has the potential to enable sending and receiving churches to experience fellowship, humility and dignity in relationships. However, the issue of power in the "older" sending churches has been an intrusive factor in preventing the theory from becoming a reality. In the case of the Church of Scotland, despite great strides being made over the years to develop mutual relations, increasing problems presented an opportunity for such relationships to become authentically interdependent. Unfortunately, recent vulnerability on the part of the Church of Scotland World Mission Council has led to a return to a colonial/imperial approach to partnership. PIM remains the official model for mission in the absence of any other appropriate or acceptable model to explain and accommodate recent changes in mission policy in the Church of Scotland which disadvantage partner churches.

---

\* Professor Graham A. Duncan is a minister of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) and the acting head of the Department of Church History and Church Polity at the University of Pretoria. He can be contacted at: [graham.duncan@up.ac.za](mailto:graham.duncan@up.ac.za)

## The concept of partnership in mission

The practice of true partnership is a difficult and elusive ideal. To the degree that the ideal is reached, partnership expresses maturity of each partner as well as maturity of their relationship. Both are equally valued; each values what it has to give to the other as well as what it can receive from the other. Each is accountable to God for the way the mutual commitment is expressed. They engage in dialogue, respect one another's opinions, and learn from one another. The challenge of living out the ideals of partnership is one practical way in which God's grace is experienced and expressed. May God's mission on earth be enhanced by a growing, maturing expression of true partnership within the body of Christ (Bowers 1997:260).

One of the perennial problems in partnership is the lack of accountability on both sides of the relationship. Donors fail to see the need to account for the manner in which they have accumulated and allocated resources, and recipients claim they are oppressed when they are not trusted to use funds received. There is mutual suspicion rather than mutual trust which is a denial of the reconciling purpose of mission.

### Definition of mission

Mission is God's work in reconciling the whole of the created order to Godself in which human beings are called and invited to participate by being sent through the love of Christ (Matthew 5:43–45) that all might achieve life in all its fullness (John 10:10). It involves a partnership between God and humans who constitute the Church, of sharing of the Word that is love in a practical way and the resources of the universe which ultimately belong to God:

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it,  
the world, and all who live in it;  
for he founded it ... (Psalm 24:1).

Mission is an exercise in vulnerability as we share in God's reconciling purpose which was achieved by Godself becoming weak and helpless, particularly in the sacrifice of Jesus of Nazareth. Mission is the place of identification with the marginalised. He stood alongside those who "suffered outside the city gate ... Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore" (Hebrews 13:12–13). Because it is selfless, mission is authentic going beyond our human capabilities resulting from *koinonia* with God manifested in a community of caring which expresses the love of God through his son, the Word enfleshed.

Despite all this:

Mission has often been understood and practiced as a current flowing only in a single direction: from north to south, from rich to poor, from the powerful to the powerless, from male to female, from white to black, from 'Christian' civilization to godless cultures.

This reduces mission to something that some people do to others, rather than a common sharing in God's mission of love to the whole world (WARC 2004:7).

This brings us to the concept of partnership which aims to remedy these Manichean dichotomies and relate to mission in Jesus' way.

## Definition of partnership

Partnership is concerned with relationships and particularly the freedom and integrity of indigenous churches. Problems in this area are the consequence of a history of unequal relationships where the pride of the sending churches has often resulted in the humiliation of the receiving bodies as the result of a colonial missiology born out of imperialistic designs (WARC 2004:7). Younger churches tend to be recipients of policies formulated by sending churches without consultation to which they have to conform to attract material support (Verkuyl 1978:317).

The prime need is for *metanoia* as a turning from independence in relationship towards interdependence (*koinonia*) in order that both partners can begin to listen to one another in a relationship of comparative equality. There is a great need to respect the independence, autonomy and separate identity of partners in a context of interdependence: "Partnership requires mutual respect of each others decisions" (PCUSA 2006:37). Beyond the question of sending mission partners, whatever their experience or qualifications, there has to be an acknowledgment that the best source of leadership is to be found locally. Partnership has to take account of the intellectual and spiritual quality of Christian leaders in younger churches and the desire on the part of these churches to express their selfhood despite the many positive effects of the missionary movement:

Our response to the search for selfhood in Third World churches must be that of partners. We are partners with them in their search, so that we and they together may be more truly ourselves, for the sake of mission and the Gospel (Lyon 1978:25).

Consequently, partner churches must be empowered to set their own policy if a spirit of genuine independence is ever to develop. The key here is to note that this is an exercise in mutuality where both partners benefit or sacrifice together.

Partnership is *kenotic* (Philippians 2:6–8) in order to achieve *koinonia*, through its identification with Jesus and the marginalised in societies. Therefore it is more than what we presently know as networks of co-operation. It requires a higher degree of mutual commitment. Lyon (1978:3) suggests it is "giving and receiving within the one body of Christ" of what is held in common making partnership the core of mission for "the biblical records challenge us to partnership and relationships" of interdependence (Sogard 1996:205, cf. Verkuyl 1978:312). This has been achieved in some

quarters through co-operative giving and multi-lateral decision-making, for example the Caribbean and North America Council for Mission (CANACOM). The body of Christ image of the church in 1 Corinthians 12 demonstrates this dependence on the head, Christ, where all parts are interdependent and where all members are “equal, indispensable, and useful” (Verkuyl 1978:312). This necessitates new approaches to mission. There is a consequent need to return to the Early Church principle with the “all things held in common” (Acts 2:44) principle that churches would help each other from a common pooled resource. We live in a time of fresh opportunities to replace one-sided attitudes of paternalism and colonialism in an ecclesiastical sense. New Testament interdependence can be achieved through multi- as well as bilateral relationships (Verkuyl 1978:314). Paternalism has been replaced by an ecumenical approach.

Partnership is *koinonia* or community, the unity which comes from holding all things in common (cf. Acts 2:42ff.). First Peter 2:9–10 presents Christ as the fulfilment of God’s promise and the new community, the new Israel, is his chosen instrument in this cause. This is a costly business:

The picture that emerges from the Scripture of the church in mission is of a community of people bound together by a common loyalty to Jesus Christ whom they acknowledge to be the source of their lives. It is a community, the members of which share together in a relationship of communion with God, and who are called to communicate to society what they receive together within that communion (Lyon 1978:32).

It is interesting to note the role of communication in the formation of communion and community. Thus anything that detracts from this purpose constitutes a rejection of Christ and others. This would include policies designed to dominate receiving churches. The focus of partnership became distorted when it concentrated on the sending by one party of personnel and money, despite Bühlmann’s suggestion that giving ought to be spontaneous (1974:383). “It should not be necessary for newly consecrated missionary bishops to set out on six months begging tours” (Bühlmann 1974:390). Yet, the churches of the Third World also have much to give that cannot easily be calculated: a dynamic awareness of the presence of the living God, an expectancy of God’s action to right wrongs, a conviction that the Church is a community of committed people possessing a distinctive identity and the value of differing lifestyles. And, in addition there is a theological benefit to be derived:

[T]he flood of mystical and Gnostic thinking which in the West is following in the wake of this secularization would have been less alarming if we with our non-Western Christian brothers had analysed these processes (Verkuyl 1978:332).

The churches of the West have been largely impervious to new theologies emerging from among their partners “on the basis of their own history and

their own insights” (Bühlmann 1974:393), for example African Theology, Black Theology. And when they are reported on it is as mere novelties, rather than as serious theologies to be engaged with and interrogated which may legitimately raise “healthy doubts about the obviousness of one’s own theological approach and can open up new horizons by framing questions in a fresh way” (Bühlmann 1974:386). However, we have to be wary of what has been described as:

a kind of barter, where the human and financial resources of the north are “exchanged” for spiritual resources from the south. The “exchange” is in fact a myth: spiritual resources are not commodities that can be transferred from one context to another unchanged (Van Hollander 2004:10).

We are well aware of the vitality and exuberance of African worship for example, but is it really what we want in our western context? Would this not actually be viewed as inauthentic and a form of entertainment? Yet, we can conscientise people through teaching, preaching and praying. Also, how do we reconcile a spirituality that is formed in the context of an African traditional lifestyle with one that is influenced by western New Age thinking? In addition, it has to be recognised that receiving churches are not perfect by any means. They suffer from many of the same weaknesses as their patrons. Yet, this does not detract from the disparities which hamper the development of authentic partnership, and deliberating on failings is no substitute for elevating strengths with a view to enhancing relationships.

The focus on money and personnel has had a detrimental effect on the growth of partner relations and has caused distrust despite the fact that many missionaries testify to the enrichment of their own ministries. Yet, the development of reciprocal relationships has not been a priority despite their bridge-building potential for reconciliation (Bühlmann 1974:389, 393). This is extraordinary in the light of Lyon’s comment made as long ago as 1978 (:36):

That is inexcusable, but it would seem that it is only when men and women from abroad are seen at work, in a setting close to home, that their impact is recognised .... They have not been expected to work with us in mission in our lands, and have been given little opportunity to share insights into the Gospel with us here [!]

This demonstrates a tremendous unwillingness to receive. Yet, in ecumenical circles there was a great desire on the part of Third World churches to share their problems and seek advice. The West, on the other hand, gives the impression that it has little or nothing to receive despite the costly sacrifices made by the poor in financial terms. However, in terms of personnel:

The exchange of personnel must be completely voluntary on both sides, and each ought to retain the right to call a halt to it in certain situations. The native churches must clearly have the authority to decide how many and what kind of experts they want and where they want to use them (Verkuyl 1978:318).

There is also an issue regarding the duration of service with partner churches:

The young churches also need people whose friendship and partnership are of much longer duration and who are willing to stand with them amid the temptations, threats, challenges, and storms which swirl about their heads (Verkuyl:318).

Sending churches have at times sponsored Third World Christians serving with them but normally for specifically short-term contracts, and there is a tendency for the short-term 'tourist' missionary contract to be employed which is acceptable in certain circumstances but is not helpful in producing long-term in-depth relationships. Third World churches expect those who come to be fully committed to entering into the life and witness of church, society and culture. This is part of the apostolic tradition which takes place in the context of increasing impoverishment, disease and ignorance, where the wealth of the West is obscene. Philip Potter, then General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, asserted:

There is something demonic about a powerful, rich sending agency negotiating with poor people and poor agencies. How can there be 'real' partnership between poor and rich. Partner was a nice word which we fell into the habit of using, but now we have become afraid of using it because we know what it all came down to in practice (Verkuyl 1978:320).

Financial aid has too often has been linked to the sending body having power *over* the receiver and this power has sometimes been exercised by mission partners whose remit has included checking on the use of the money. Disparities in allowances between foreigners and locals arouse deep resentment.

By comparison, the giving of the churches of the West is minimal. Yet, this leads to the relationship becoming one of the humiliated and the domineering: "Christian mission has degenerated into the display of the glory and richness of the 'Christian West to the 'pagan' East'" (Song 1975:54). It is quickly forgotten that "Money belongs absolutely only to God; we are merely stewards" (Lyon 1978:43 cf. Psalm 24:1) and that the resources of the West were accumulated at the expense of colonised nations whose poverty can often be traced to the extraction of valuable resources from their countries of origin. We are called to share to the maximum extent of our ability: "we must keep the question of financial assistance to young churches on our agenda as long as world prosperity has not reached an acceptable level". In the meantime, "native churches have a complete right to appeal for help to churches in the rich countries to pay their full-time workers at least the pre-determined minimum. This is an undeniable implication of the biblical idea of interdependence of churches" (Verkuyl 1978:322).

It is only when poverty assumes a human face and we are touched by the need to relate in a more authentic partnership that our obedience and self sufficiency and consequent alienation is challenged often as the result of our spiritual poverty, while the material poverty of the poor has thrust them into a relationship of absolute dependence on God out of which they are able to reflect God's love (cf. Luke 6:20–21, 24–25):

Only by rejecting poverty and by making itself poor in order to protest against it can the church preach something that is uniquely its own: "spiritual poverty", that is, the openness of man [sic] and history to the future promised by God. Only in this way will the Church be able to fulfil authentically—and with any possibility of being listened to—its prophetic function of denouncing every injustice to man (Gutiérrez 1974:301f.).

The only way to avoid misunderstandings and problems is to consult in depth and with absolute honesty with all stakeholders. Concomitant with this is the need for transparency and accountability on both sides in a *kenotic* sense where ultimate dependence is on God alone and not on residual resources. A dichotomy was evidenced in the Indian context where Bishop Azariah was contrasted with some of his colleagues, thus demonstrating the value and danger of *kenotic* partnership:

"All others filled their bags and went away, but Bishop Azariah emptied his for the Lord." Villagers in Beerole recounted in 1986. "He gave *all* his life for us".

[note] 56. Group interview in Beerole, A.P., 4 April 1986. Just what the 'others' took in their 'bags' from Dornakal remained unspecified (perhaps money? perhaps enhanced prestige in the church?) (Billington Harper 2000:195).

This is the source of our joy and fulfilment (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:3–13). Weakness and vulnerability become the hallmarks of the approach to mission (2 Corinthians 12:9f) whose methodology is characterised by conscientisation, contextualisation and communication that open the way to true dialogue which is "Christian love at its deepest, for in dialogue we give ourselves up to the other, in order that [t]he [partner] may receive not us but Christ" (Lyon 1978:68): "Receptor orientation, or true love in communication means that our primary concern is what is best for the other person irrespective of the cost to ourselves" (Sogard 1996:199) and that may involve sharing both threats and challenges to our common existence. Perhaps this is one area in which the declining churches of the West can learn much from their partners if they are prepared to be transparent and to learn from others' experience.

The important challenge is to enact these sentiments in the twenty-first century in a way we have failed to do in the twentieth century. Partnership is an integral part of the success of any successful strategy. However, it must be formed in the process of answering the question regarding the aim of partner relationships. Is it maintenance, or the discernment and meeting of real needs? And by whom are these needs determined? There has been:

a recognition of unequal power relationships in mission (2 Corinthians 8), and the rejection of a vertical, top down approach, with far-reaching implications for our life in the *oikumene* .... Mission means risking our identity for the sake of the gospel, losing and saving our life in order to discover, once more, who God is calling us to be (WARC 2004:6).

It is a matter of challenging the assumptions of the present order and being transformed through a renewal of the way we think and act (Romans 12:2). A possible way forward is for parties to work at developing a list of priorities which specify the exact needs in terms of the experience of personnel to be involved in the context of prayer, study and consultation which is the optimum route to insight. Scherer (1987:238) has developed a thesis which is apposite:

As current structures tend to dominate the international and inter-racial character of mission, and are therefore inadequate for expressing oneness in Christ, high priority should be given to designing structures for sharing mission resources and engaging in joint planning on a regional, national or local basis. This is especially necessary in the case of Western sending agencies and growing churches of the two-thirds world.

What is clearly needed is “a focus on mission that will produce fresh missiological thinking and energy in response to the new contexts in which [Reformed] churches find themselves at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (WARC 2004:6).

Partnership is costly and this is a lesson that has still to be experienced in depth by the churches of the North. Nowadays, many of them are running short of the resources they have used to maintain relations of dominance for many years. It can be painful to learn to relate in different ways. “It means trying out, opening up, letting go” (Van Hollander 2004:10). Growth is painful, as is letting go, but it results in maturity. Even the churches of the North need to grow so they can reach beyond their comfort zones to even greater maturity.

We now examine one particular sending church’s approach to partnership and responses to changing circumstances.

### **The Church of Scotland’s historic approach to partnership in mission**

From the time of the 1929 union, but having its roots in the earlier 1910 International Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh, independent foreign missions attempted to operate through limited co-operation with one another as the colonial approach, relative to missions disintegrated during the First and Second World Wars. Here, we note the growing independence of younger churches in the context of a growing desire and demand for political independence in these same nations. This occurred as the developing concept of partnership acted as a harbinger of change.



In 1947, the Foreign Mission Committee reported to the General Assembly that from the early years of the twentieth century the formation of national churches significantly altered church relations. The theme of interdependence was stressed (Ross 2005:27):

...we Christians of the Older Churches can no more stand alone in this post-Christian era without the fellowship of the Indian, Chinese and African Churches than they, without us, can be perfected in their mission. We need each other as we need Him who is able to make Home and Overseas one (Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee Report to General Assembly [GA] GA 1947:345).

This involved a radical realignment of the instruments of mission focusing on the integration of Church and Mission, for hitherto mission councils controlled by missionaries had dominated the institutions of mission and impaired their search for freedom and dignity. A means of integrating the institutions into the national churches that would transfer control to these churches was necessary. The first steps were taken in India<sup>1</sup>. Yet, despite some success:

[t]he theory of partnership outran what it was felt possible to implement .... No rhetoric of partnership could conceal the reality that the Church of Scotland, through its missionaries and its grants of money, still exercised an inappropriate control (Lyon 1998:47).

This was the crux of the problem that would hinder partnership which was perceptibly noted by Neill (1964:527): "It is possible to change the entire outward appearance of the fabric, and yet to leave the essential structures untouched". Open and responsible partnership was in fact eschewed in favour of a dominating/dependent model of the concept.

This was only to be expected in situations where missionaries had been used to exercising authority, a situation that the Church of Scotland inadvertently endorsed which had consequences that went beyond its expectations. However, the policy was clear with regard to missionary personnel:

There must surely be a profound distinction between the relationships of Older and Younger Churches which are only linked by the casual and informal contacts of individual Christian laymen, however open their discipleship, and those Churches which are bound together by the presence of a missionary group on a solemn contract of service, offered, supported and guaranteed by the Older

---

<sup>1</sup> "Bishop VS Azariah of the Anglican church had also been involved in the formation of the autonomous Indian Missionary Society of Tinnevely (1903) and the National Missionary Society (1905) in an attempt to enable the church in India to manage her own affairs with self-supporting and self-governing organisational structures. This was a remarkable example of a movement that achieved independence from and equality with western missionary societies without developing any major hostilities in working relationships" (Billington Harper 2000:73, 75).

Church and accepted, integrated and commissioned by the Younger (GA 1952:370).

In other words, missionaries were there to stay!

The concept of partnership had a broader focus in Africa where it took on political, economic and racial dimensions. Concerning the formation of the Central African Federation:

While the [Church and National] committee welcomes the ideal of Partnership [in a secular sense] which is the declared objective, and recognizes the economic advantages of Federation, it is not satisfied that the social and political interests of the African peoples are adequately safeguarded in the present scheme. The fundamental question is spiritual, not economic. If the ideal of Partnership is to be gained, mutual trust between races in Central Africa is essential (GA 1953:141).

Trust was the crucial issue but not only between races in Africa, also between them and races beyond the continent.

It was not until the 1960s, that awareness developed of the changed global situation. This was partly the result of the political and economic changes which were taking place worldwide related to independence, the growth of racism and world poverty. These changes affected the now independent national churches many of whom were entering partnership with governments in addition to overseas churches, as in the case of education. The Church of Scotland responded to this altered situation by bringing together all bodies concerned with mission abroad into an Overseas Council (1964) to avoid continuing overlapping of responsibilities and at this time a partner church consultation was held in St Andrews in 1965.

From the 1970s, the fundamental task of world evangelisation was re-affirmed and a novel approach to mission was expressed: "our service is within other independent churches to whom we go by invitation" (GA 1970:483), predominantly through the sending of personnel. It is interesting to note from this time the value attached to overseas visitors particularly bursars described as "living links with sister churches in other lands" (GA 1971:471). "The presence of these visitors from Africa, Asia, Europe and South America enriches the Church of Scotland and keeps us ever mindful of the world-wide nature of Christ's Church" (GA 1970: 522).

In 1971, the Overseas Council affirmed its intention to find new ways of expressing its relationship with its partner churches "not at our direction but by mutual consultation and planning" (GA 1971: 433). A further development at this time was the introduction of a new Partner Plan/Deputation scheme for missionaries on leave in Scotland. This scheme had a particular value in that it provided opportunities for sharing news and deepening interest within Scotland. It became an effective means of communication. At this time the concept of reverse mission developed as

“African Christians are beginning to plan for mission to the world in addition to their evangelistic projects in their own nations” (GA 1972: 506).

Although the word “partnership” does not appear in 1973 the Overseas Council, following the Bangkok Conference of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, took up the theme of partnership:

It is no longer a question of the Christians of the West offering the good news to “pagan” lands, but Christians from all nations of the world helping each other to realize the richness of the Gospel message and to witness to their faith to those to whom Christ means nothing (GA 1973:461).

In this the Council recognised that:

[a]gain there is a new sensitivity today in both giving and receiving. It is said to be more blessed to give than to receive but the right methods of giving have to be found. It certainly needs grace indeed to keep on receiving (GA 1973:461).

This sensitivity was remarkable in its perception that others’ perceptions and understandings of giving and receiving might be different, indicating that offence might easily be caused.

It is interesting to note that as the concept of partnership was developing with regard to the overseas context, the mission in and to Scotland was maintained separate from it, as it still is at the time of writing although varying degrees of co-operation have existed for many years. No serious attempts have ever been made to integrate mission, though:

We are realizing more and more that mission is one at home and overseas. There is still, however, too great a separation in the minds of men [sic] with regard to mission in Scotland and mission to the rest of the world. It is one mission with Scotland at the receiving as well as the giving end (GA 1973:462).

At this time, questions begin to emerge concerning the nature of the relationship between the Church of Scotland and her sister churches in relation to “the place of the missionary from the West and the implications of dependence on annual grants from overseas for the work of the Church” (GA 1973:463). While these two were not ostensibly linked, in fact they were often two sides of the same coin. Yet, in the deliverance of that year the continuing witness of missionaries was affirmed (GA 1973:503). Further, missionaries developed a sense of insider understanding: “the pain of poverty and at the same time the upsurge of feelings of self-reliance – the desperate need for help, for money and people and yet the revolt against dependency” (GA 1975:361).

The first actual mention of “partnership” appears in 1974 in the Overseas Council’s report to General Assembly with the theme “Giving and Receiving”, and here it appears in the repeated context of sensitivity:

In the relation of Church to Church there is on the part of Churches in under-developed countries an increasing sense of the dignity of man [sic], a desire to stand on their own feet and to show to their nation that they are a Church in their own right, not dependent on “charity” from the West. This giving and receiving

of money – indeed of people – is a delicate matter. These Churches are anxious that their own members should support their Ministry and church structure, but this is often very hard for them and sometimes impossible to achieve (GA 1974:377).

Clearly, for the younger churches this is a serious matter affecting their integrity in relationship to their own governments, supporting churches and themselves. With particular regard to the use of money, while there was progress, there was still an overtone of control evident:

It is an essential part of true partnership that money is seen to belong to that part of Christ's work in the world that needs it most. Gratitude should not be expected nor strings attached, but the wise stewardship of resources must be honoured by both Churches (GA 1974:377).

The question arises how this stewardship is to be honoured if there are no strings attached and if, in fact, it really belongs in practice as well as in theory to the place of deepest need? This would remain a vexed issue.

The existence of multi-lateral church relations in some situations is acknowledged where:

the various Sending Churches meet regularly with the overseas Church concerned to discuss mutual problems. This ... is good provided the Church itself does not feel in any way dominated from outside, but on the contrary helped in the best way possible (GA 1974: 377).

The need for overseas contributions to the life of the declining home church was emphasised: "If the Church of Scotland fails to feel itself part of the world Church, it can only become ingrown and self-centred" (GA 1974:378).

The moratorium<sup>2</sup> issue surfaced in 1975:

The Overseas Council sympathises deeply with the longings of a John Gatu<sup>3</sup> to help his Church in Kenya to maturity. The working out of the process is not easy. The churches in Africa speak often with two voices. The Overseas Council must be sensitive to know how to respond. This varies greatly from Church to Church and none has in fact put a moratorium into affect .... All churches want to be independent. When they ask for help the need is real (GA 1975:361).

The last comment explains the "two voices" comment. The positive aspect of the moratorium debate was that it raised important matters for discussion that were extremely pertinent to the issue of partnership. The great needs of the churches determined the outcome of the debate.

The concept of partnership in the Gospel was further developed under the annual Overseas Council's report theme "Together in a Divided World"

---

<sup>2</sup> A temporary suspension of the sending and receiving of resources in order that the younger church can attain to full personhood through its own means and resources to enable it to participate in mission on its own terms.

<sup>3</sup> General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa and a leading exponent of moratorium.

(1976). It was “the mark of mission” (GA 1976:324). That is, that which defines mission. It provides hope in a sadly divided world. The role of the sending church is “to respond costingly to the demands partnership makes” (:324) where diminishing direct control of mission is not the end of missionary responsibility in a context of:

growing and already enormous demands the opportunity for mission world-wide lays upon the whole Church of God .... At the same time we hear them say to us that we must be prepared to receive from them what we need, so that together we may be better equipped to share the Gospel, and to participate in God’s mission of healing and saving to the end of the world (:324).

Then there was a stress on openness to receive “what our fellow Christians can give to us for our strengthening” (GA 1977:330). What the sending church needs is never defined and this has always been a problem in partnership. Receiving churches’ needs are blatant—personnel and money. But what exactly do sending churches need, and who determines those needs? Had it been possible to answer this question, many of subsequent misunderstandings might never have arisen. Again the need for sensitivity is stressed but it is never clear how this worked out in practice and how receiving churches viewed this approach.

Certainly good communication was vital with the necessity of being “sensitive to the issues and problems facing its partners, and must be ready to respond with understanding, a process that often involves not just long correspondence, but consultations and visits” (GA 1976: 325). Personnel continued to play a pivotal role: “The Churches want missionaries and ask unequivocally for them” (:325). However, the Overseas Council acknowledged that “Even the word ‘partnership’ has been suspected to be a hypocritical camouflage for unwarranted interference” (GA 1977:330) despite the emphasis on its laudable aim which it saw as “to strengthen the Churches overseas ... and to encourage members of the church here [Scotland] to appreciate that the mission to which all are committed is one mission whether at home or abroad” (GA 1978:316).

Despite the visits made by representatives of both partners, including bursars, there was an increasing demand for “ministers of their churches to serve in Scotland, on similar terms to those in which our overseas staff serve in theirs” (GA 1982:315). This did begin to happen in small ways but legal and other problems were always brought to the fore to explain why this was not a viable prospect. Sometimes, even language was used as a hindrance when for years mission partners had operated (and still do) without a great knowledge of local languages. Attempts to expose theological students to other contexts virtually came to nothing although exchanges of theological tutors met with greater success (GA 1983:333–334).

The link between mission and unity was stressed as both an outcome and aim of partnership. It was often expressed as solidarity with suffering

partners throughout the world, particularly in southern Africa (GA 1982:317–319). This was expressed officially in the formation of the Board of World Mission and Unity in 1984 with the aim of furthering the “conviction that the Church is called to a partnership in the Gospel with Christians of every confession and denomination” (GA 1982:320).

The entire concept of partnership came under serious threat in 1984 as the result of an amendment proposed to a deliverance proposed to General Assembly to the effect that the Church of Scotland withdraw support from the Women’s Guild educational project on South Africa which had very positive effects in boycotting South African goods. The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa challenged the Church of Scotland on this matter which “puts the relationship between our two churches in serious jeopardy”. The relevant communication continued:

On the issue of racism in general and apartheid in particular there is no longer any room for neutrality. To keep quiet and refrain from positive action is to join hands with the forces of oppression. Hence the good reception that this Deliverance has enjoyed on the side of our oppressor .... Any person who wishes to intervene in the South African situation ostensibly in the interest of the oppressed must seek to listen to them and learn from them what their needs are. We support the Women’s Guild education programme on South Africa and offer our prayerful support to all those in the Church of Scotland who are involved in the costly and sacrificial battle against apartheid (GA 1985:320).

The General Assembly re-affirmed its strong support for its partnership and fellow South Africans affected by the doctrine of apartheid, having listened and heard!

During the period (1929–1999), the Church of Scotland, through its mission agency, made a serious commitment to develop new forms of relationship arising out of the novel concept of partnership in mission, despite problems of implementation in practice. Younger churches reacted negatively to any form of western hegemony, while older churches recognised the need for fellowship, yet found it difficult to express this and work constructively with its partners to achieve the desired goal. Important principles of partnership in mission which emerged were the following: interdependence, participation in community, collaboration, mutual confidence and help, respectful consideration, mutual consultation, the need for reciprocity, a holistic approach to partnership and mutual accountability. All the ingredients of faithful partnership in mission relationships were there. They just needed to be taken seriously and implemented with conviction.

But all was not well within the Church of Scotland (*inter alia* due to strong numerical decline and resulting financial problems), and particularly its Board of World Mission.

## Recent developments in Church of Scotland World Mission Council Policy

It is difficult to determine exactly when problems in the administration of the Board began but these were consistently manifested in poor and deteriorating relationships both within the department and with mission partners. It is also difficult to know how many cases were instituted against the Board by its employees because an air of secrecy surrounded these dealings in which the Board was involved. One particular case attracted the attention of the General Assembly and became a public matter to the serious detriment of the Board's public image (GA 1998 37/1–11).

In October 1997, the Board of World Mission received the report of a Special Commission of the General Assembly. It identified problems relating to contracts and regulations for overseas staff and the structures of the Board and the Department of World Mission which immediately established its own internal Committee of Enquiry, and a great deal of work was done in the following months which required that:

a review of the Board and Department is undertaken [as] a matter of urgency. This will include an audit of the Departmental staff to ensure that there is a fair and equitable distribution of work and the staffing levels match present and foreseen requirements (GA 1998:22/27).

The Committee of Enquiry reported to the Convener in January 1998. One of the substantial recommendations which was taken seriously was to undertake a review of the Board's structures and operations:

Particular concerns of the Board include our reduced allocation from the Mission and Aid Fund, the future of our work in Israel and a petition seeking the appointment of a Commission to look into the Board's relations with its staff. This led to the McKinsey consultancy exercise. The immediate context for the work of the consultants was organisational challenges, despite multiple special commissions and internal enquiries in recent years to try to address them (McKinsey 2000:4).

[Problems in] relationships between Board and staff members resulted from lack of clarity regarding the purpose of the Board which is to formulate policy while the staff members are to implement it. One of the most critical issues in the report concerned the role of mission partners, many of whom did not feel valued. Also, it was planned to hold a consultation with representatives of 26 partner churches at St Andrews in 1999 which would allow some reflection on external relationships. So it was not only internal relationships that were at issue here. A positive outcome was the result with the joint determination of mission priorities.

In 2001, when it was resolved to prepare a new remit on the strategic direction of the Board, a "Draft Statement of Identity and Purpose" was formulated. In its discussion of the meaning of partnership, the Statement (:1) said: "Within such partnerships there are resources of trust, of shared

understanding, and of common purpose which are a strategic resource for mission in an often divided world". Yet, common purpose was not always a priority with regard to deployment of mission partners, for there were occasions when there was a conflict between "the thinking of bodies who have to employ our folk and then we lay down our own, sometimes impractical from their point of view, rules" (e-mail, EF<sup>4</sup> to Strang, 25 September 2003, DPP).

The year 2002 saw the beginning of a movement within the Church of Scotland which aimed to challenge the system of allocating a proportion of the centrally co-ordinated Mission and Aid Fund of the church. There was a feeling that funds for overseas mission work should be raised from local congregations which should be more directly involved in such work. Change was further heralded when, at the same time, the Board reviewed its policy on overseas appointments and instructed all its committees to explore the possibility of localising appointments. However, partner churches were not asked if they thought that this was a relevant approach. It was imposed on them:

Even after we [Board members] had lost the battle we were insisting as had been the case from the first mooting of the paper, that our partner churches had to be properly consulted and each mission partner seen personally and listened to sensitively. We were assured as we had been from the beginning that this was being done and the travel budget showed the visits. What your message shows is that not every visit was what we meant by pastorally sensitive and caring (e-mail, ST to GH, 11 November 2004, DPP).

This approach of being partnered with supposedly mature strong churches became integral to the overall policy changes which were to be implemented within two years although this was denied by one of the area secretaries:

The duty to explore and test the appropriateness in localising posts during the contract review process is an instruction of the Board and dates from 11 September 2002 ... The current process regarding the Board's Future Shape is completely different. The circumstance the Church of Scotland finds itself in has overtaken previous events and discussions. The consultation processes with overseas staff started in early February 2004 (e-mail, Strang to GH, 12 January 2005, DPP).

This is somewhat disingenuous as the prime circumstance of membership and financial decline in the Church of Scotland which had caused the current crisis was not a novel development. It had been in process for many years and was admitted by the General Secretary: "The Church of Scotland is steadily losing ground within Scotland itself" (e-mail, Ross to GH, 28 January 2005).

---

<sup>4</sup> Due to the sensitive nature of this aspect of contemporary mission history, it has been necessary to conceal the identity of correspondents. The author has retained a complete list of correspondents. The names of Board officers have been retained since the correspondence sent out in their names exists in the public domain and was never classified as confidential.



A new policy document was agreed in September 2002 with a fresh approach to policy formulation as the result of “reducing resources” (Agreements with Partner Churches/ Institutions for Mission Partner Support, WM/02/7112, 11 September 2002). All of the boards of the Church of Scotland suffered, but the Board of World Mission suffered from a 25% cut in its budget as the Church of Scotland gave priority to national mission work in Scotland.

On 4 February 2004, the Board of World Mission gave its approval in principle to the “broad outline” a proposal of great potential significance to the “future shape” of the Board’s work. This was the result of a remit given to the Board’s Business and Finance Committees “to prepare an interim report on prioritisation” at its meeting on 28 November 2003. It was sent to mission partners for comments and suggestions for it was recognised that “it is vital for the Board’s thinking to be informed by the realities of ‘the field’ and here we depend heavily on your input” (e-mail, Ross to All Mission Partners, 10 February 2004, DPP). However, there was an aspect of the correspondence which was subversive of relations with partner churches:

It is also our intention ... to discuss the proposals with our partner churches and benefit from their perspectives. Obviously, this will take time and meanwhile please exercise discretion lest any of our partnerships should inadvertently be damaged (e-mail, Ross to all Mission Partners, 10 February 2004, DPP).

Even at this late stage in the policy formulation, overseas partners were excluded from the process and this in itself was a damaging approach to adopt. The report focused on a balanced budget, fundraising, categorisation of priority missionary commitments<sup>5</sup> and implementation. It had become a matter of course that communication and care operated at a low level of efficiency. Two mission partners wrote:

We received a resume of the minutes from the last meeting including the “passed” restructuring paper which states clearly which are the priority countries. This was how we heard we would not have our contract renewed. We then received a copy of the updated policy on redundancy, but when we wrote and asked which parts applied to us the personnel department would not give us an answer. We have *never* been written to personally about our future and have been shown very little compassion or consideration from the Board as far as the ramifications of this decision are concerned. When we have expressed concern to people in 121 about our future, the response has been “well we might not have jobs either” – hardly sympathetic (e-mail, WX. to Board Members, 3 November 2004, DPP) [emphasis in original].

The same might be said of informing partner bodies:

The partner church ... was only told because we asked for a letter to be written to them. Communication with the partner church has been so bad that they

---

<sup>5</sup> These would later be designated as Centrally Supported Partnerships (CSPs) and Locally Supported Partnerships (LSPs). Only CSPs would attract ongoing support from the Church of Scotland in terms of finance and personnel.

cannot accept what is happening and are continuing to make plans for us as if nothing has changed (e-mail, WX. to Board Members, 3 November 2004, DPP).

The entire exercise seemed to deviate significantly from that employed at the time of the St Andrews' Consultation held in 1999, when considerably less far reaching proposals were discussed with partners at a much earlier stage of implementation. In this later case partner churches were only to be involved at a late stage of the discussion and raises the significant question, what does this imply about the theology and nature of partnership, particularly where there were clear precedents for this from earlier partner church consultations? The issue raises the question regarding who sets the terms of partnership and its *raison d'être*? At no level was there adequate consultation even with partner congregations within Scotland.

It is difficult to determine exactly when and how the process of consultation with partner churches began, if at all, prior to final decisions being taken. Within the Board there were different understandings of this. It was known by 8 September 2004 that a residential consultation had been called for May 2005 (e-mail, Ross to All Overseas Staff:9, DPP).

Ross referred to financial pressures within the Church arising out of problems of the substantial underinvestment of the Pension Fund<sup>6</sup>, the changing priority of the Church of Scotland towards localised expenditure rather than overseas mission<sup>7</sup>, and the burden of renovating a hospice in Israel into a five-star hotel whose cost, he described as "beyond measure". He also mentioned a move from central to local organisation of mission work.

The Board of World Mission met on 14 April 2004, and *inter alia*, considered two major issues relating to partnership with other churches. The first was massive cuts in its budget from the central funds of the Church of Scotland; the second was the Assembly Council's review of the Church of Scotland's central structures with a recommendation that the Board of World Mission would become one of six organisational units in a re-shaped central organisation. The move to local initiative had its source in the "Church Without Walls" report submitted to the 2001 General Assembly of the Church of Scotland which "urged congregations to research an area of

---

<sup>6</sup> This was claimed to be the result of international trends. However, it is interesting to note that despite this the Pension Fund Trustees were very slow to act to remedy this situation.

<sup>7</sup> He would later say "the commitment of the Kirk to mission beyond our shores has significantly slackened" (e-mail, Ross to All Mission Partners, 23 June 2004, DPP). This became clear in the rise of 143% in the income of the Church of Scotland despite a decline in membership of 40% between 1984 and 2004: "While the communicant membership of the Church of Scotland continues to decline, the offerings of members and adherents continues to rise" (GA 2004, Supplementary Report, Stewardship and Finance Committee:1). This makes it clear that in spite of increasing revenue, the Church of Scotland's priorities had certainly altered when they would no longer maintain their overseas commitments at previous levels.

the world church and establish a personal partnership with a congregation or project” (Joint Committee Report:3, DPP).

The Board met next on 8 September 2004 and took a number of steps to proceed with its plans. It noted that a new World Mission Council would come into being on 1 June 2005. This Council would fulfil the remit of the Board. The paper on the “Future Shape of World Mission” (Ross to All Overseas Staff, 10 September 2004, DPP) was adopted in its original draft form. Attached to this document were the “Findings of the Review Group of Work in ‘Non-Priority Countries’” (*ibid.*). This was devoted almost entirely to financial matters. Work in “non-priority” countries was to be phased out by 2008. Mission partners in these countries would similarly be phased out through non-renewal of contracts leaving them with the options of seeking continued employment in their countries of service, seeking another appointment with the Board, or returning to Scotland to work or retire. It was in this document (Movement of People, DPP) that the first clear reference to consulting partner churches is made:

At the same time, the Board is mindful of the urgent need for consultation with partner churches so as to keep them abreast of the far-reaching changes taking place in the life of the Church of Scotland and to draw on their wisdom and encouragement (:9).

This was to be achieved by visits to partner churches and a consultation to be held in Scotland just prior to the 2005 General Assembly. It is interesting that suddenly the need for consultation was considered “urgent” once the process was drawing to a close. Only then is the “wisdom and encouragement” of partners sought as if they had nothing to contribute to the ongoing process from its inception.

On 6 December 2004, Board of World Missions sent its first official communication to partner churches regarding the “Future Shape” of its missionary work. In this letter there was a section on phasing in the new arrangements and one on “Consultation” (To: Church of Scotland Partner Churches, December 2004:3, DPP):

For many years the Board has been committed to working in a consultative way with partner churches overseas. This commitment remains strong today. During this year, as the changes we are facing have become clearer, we have availed ourselves of every opportunity to share our situation with partners when we have had occasion to meet. To our regret, what has not been possible is a full consultation process leading to an agreed decision before action is taken. This would be our normal way of proceeding and we are uncomfortable that it has not happened. We need to seek your forgiveness if this has been hurtful and ask you to understand that we have been placed in circumstances where we have had to respond quickly to a fast changing situation and which have not allowed the kind of full and extensive consultation which we would have wanted to complete before final decisions were taken. Despite these difficulties we remain

committed to moving forward in a spirit of partnership and on the basis of thorough consultation.

This contradictory comment is revealing for despite the historic commitment to consultation, this commitment had not been honoured in recent years. Yet, the Board wished even at this late stage to enter into “thorough consultation” though decisions had already been reached and are on the verge of implementation: “... now that the Board had defined the way ahead more clearly following the current consultation process a structures approach in respect of our Partners would be embarked upon” (Statement from Board of World Mission to All Mission Partners, 7 December 2004, DPP). This virtually obviated the need for a consultation of partners, such as was envisaged for May 2005, unless the purpose was to appease, not only the partners but, the growing concern within the Church of Scotland at large. “[F]actors outwith its own control” (ibid.) were attributed by the Board to the situation (Statement from Board of World Mission to All Mission Partners, 7 December 2004). However, this was only partly true for much of the Board’s inability to sustain its work was due to the Tiberias project: “the Kirk’s missionary programmes are being devastated by a £20m cash shortfall which critics blame in part on the controversial decision to spend £10m on a luxury hotel in Tiberias, Israel” (Breen 2004:6). The final meeting of the Board in April 2005 had noted that two executive secretaries had been made redundant along with one office secretary (e-mail, Ross to Mission Partners, 29 April 2005, DPP); this compared with redundancy for twelve mission partners.

The consultation took place at Carberry Tower from 17–19 May 2005 with representatives of 21 partner churches. Its timing was extremely significant: “It seems incredible that they are meeting with representatives of the Churches one week before the General Assembly, by which time their proposals will be in the Blue Book”<sup>8</sup> (e-mail, AK. to GH, 30 December 2004, DPP) which precluded any amendment to the decisions about to be implemented.

At the consultation, the “new shape” of the Council was explained to partner church representatives and an apology was proffered:

that, owing to constraints within the Church of Scotland, this new shape was adopted without the full consultation which would have given partner churches the opportunity to sharpen the Board’s thinking. The partner churches graciously accepted the Board’s apology and extended their forgiveness. The Board undertook to acknowledge at the General Assembly the lack of full consultation with partner churches.

However, World Mission was operating from a defective notion of repentance:

---

<sup>8</sup> Published collection of Committee reports and papers for General Assembly.

In many cases of conflict there is a need for *repentance* (metanoia) before reconciliation can take place. Because there may be a situation of wrongdoing and guilt, personal or collective, that has caused the enmity or estrangement, true reconciliation cannot take place until the guilty party has repented of sin and wrongdoing (“Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation”, WCC 2005:109).

The World Mission apology appears to be a mere formality rather than a genuine admission of guilt premised on a theological understanding of what had gone wrong. It was not even:

[m]ere self-laceration arising from an unclear sense of guilt [which] is at best an unprofitable pursuit and at worst can lead to paralysis of the will. ...The outcome of penitence (if it is related to the reality of spiritual challenge and to the regenerative power of God) is resolute, constructive and carefully-considered action (Neill 1976:20).

This was hardly the case so any reconciliation achieved was false in this regard; there was no indication of a movement towards a concept of reconciliation through “restoring justice” (De Gruchy 2002) or making restitution for offence and hurt caused.

The partners issued a common statement (Partner Church Consultation 2005:21–22) in which they lamented the lack of consultation and challenged the meaning of both the concepts of “partnership” (described as “an elusive concept”:22) and “consultation” in the light of what had happened. They commented on the rights of partner churches to make their own decision, and also on the mutual responsibility that requires consultation when decisions affect the “Other” and the relationship. Picking up on Ross’ use of Paul’s “body” image, they expressed hurt at not being called upon when one part of the body (i.e. the Church of Scotland) was suffering “We would have liked to have been able to share the pain with her and prayed with her for guidance and healing, but we feel we were not offered that chance” (:22). This comment perhaps strikes at the basic problem of the partner relationship.

During the subsequent General Assembly, a former Moderator, the Very Rev John Cairns, read a statement on behalf of 19 of the partner church representatives under the auspices of the Assembly’s Business Committee in which he raised, among other things the matter of moral responsibility in partner relations:

Among other things they had discussed the meaning of “partnership”. One overseas representative said “Each member church has the right to make her own decisions like the recent decisions of the Board of World Mission ... but if she is in partnership she also has the moral responsibility to consult her partners especially when these decisions so radically effect (sic) the relationship between them”. The representatives were asked what advice they would have given had they been consulted and they did not see the point of responding because the decisions seemed to be irreversibly made. But it was agreed the division of countries into two categories (Centrally funded and Locally funded) let [sic] to

misunderstanding and ill-feeling. It was further felt that the selection of which countries were chosen for which category was seemingly arbitrary and “had we been consulted we would perhaps have suggested that things be done differently”. They urged the new World Mission Council to become more consultative in its decision-making in the future (Aitken 2005:13–14).

At the General Assembly, held the next week, the Convener expressed the apology of the Board to partner churches and mission partners. Those who did not hear the spoken apology never received it. However, the section of the deliverance which read: “Commend the Board on the vision and courage with which it has reshaped the overseas work of the Church and endorse the new shape outlined in the report” (GA 2005, Deliverance 3) produced one of the liveliest debates of the Assembly. A number of powerful speeches were made by former servants of the Board, mission partners and others who affirmed that there was no possibility of their supporting the Board’s proposals. While admitting the need for changes, they objected to the manner in which they had been enforced. It appears that many commissioners were not totally aware of the gravity of the decisions they were making. The Board won the vote by 284 votes to 278 which indicated that this was a matter on which the Church of Scotland was deeply divided (Aitken 2005:12–13). Within a few days of the close of the General Assembly, the new World Mission Council was established.

## **Assessment and conclusion**

World Mission’s policy developments meant substantial change for all the parties except World Mission itself. Mission partners had to face changes in their status, positions and incomes; partner churches lost a great deal of communication, support and grants; all World Mission lost was a few staff members for, in large measure, it continued with reduced commitments; and partner congregations and presbyteries gained greater involvement in partnership. During this period under review, there was an in principle move from “broad extensive and varied involvement” towards a limited involvement based on questionable criteria.

The mandate to “read the signs of the times” (Strategic Commitments, 2001–2010, Ross to all overseas staff, 6 July 2001, DPP) was easier for the Board to read than to discern what was going on within its own immediate domain. For instance, its 2001 Strategic Commitments demonstrated the Board’s inability to deal with this with its mission partners: “seeking to strengthen the witness of the church in situations of division, conflict and oppression” (Ross to all overseas staff, 6 July 2001, DPP).

In sum, partnership had come to mean continuing to relate with the world church through its work in European and overseas charges, centres in Israel and Palestine and a select group of “younger” churches with no guarantee that even these churches could be supported in the long-term. Its

policy of maintaining Locally Supported Partnerships could give the impression of maintaining a relationship but appeared rather more as an example of “having one’s cake and eating it”. Perhaps the apogee of the colonial model was the use of the term of self designation: “The Church of Scotland as one of the ‘mother churches’ of the Reformation” in its 2006 report to General Assembly (The Ministry of Reconciliation, *The Commitment* :2). In mission circles the use of such a term (even in inverted commas) nowadays is problematic.

The development of world mission policy was, in part, determined by the *Church Without Walls* initiative; yet the result for partner churches was a Church despite walls, for barriers were erected which alienated partners through a process of ecclesiastical thuggery. The Board appeared to have learned nothing despite the McKinsey consultancy.

The methodology employed is incomprehensible in the light of the critique provided by the McKinsey consultancy and a valuable opportunity to cement and develop human relations. It is difficult to understand the unwillingness to consult with partners at an earlier stage in the opening years of the third millennium, when mission partners were informed of the impending crisis, even in such a threatening situation where mutual support could have been discussed and offered. Exposure to vulnerability through threat and emergency could have done much to enhance partner church relations and strengthen the concept of partnership in mission. An example from the United Church of Canada will suffice here. When it became apparent to its Division of World Outreach in 1996 that budget cuts would be necessary, it took immediate steps to consult its partners on determining a basis for reductions in allocations. It:

has succeeded in involving its partners in other countries in setting priorities for the use of its resources. It has exercised accountability to its partners for the allocation of funds and has shown a very marked degree of transparency in those relationships (Brown 1997:236).

The matter of needing to exercise control in a situation where the Board had lost control of its future led to the adoption of a controlling approach to partner churches instead of a consultative partnership approach which had been adopted in days of less threat (cf. the 1965 and 1999 St Andrews Consultations). Failure, weakness and vulnerability in World Mission have stimulated the re-emergence of a domineering approach moving the centre of concern away from harmony towards conflict and confrontation.

Recently, World Mission’s theoretical concept of partnership has not been consonant with its practice. It was no longer governed by “limits to our freedom of action” (GA 1967:620). Therefore, it lacked integrity. It became a matter of partisanship and not partnership in mission in the selection of churches to become centrally supported partnerships. This involved a denial of its missional integrity. These countries were selected on the basis of

dubious criteria (history, need and potential), when applied to all partner church relationships. Whereas it might have been possible through discussion with partners, to maintain multi-partnership relations in Africa for example, in line with continental developments such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

As the Church of Scotland became more and more vulnerable through membership and financial decline, its attitudes were replicated in its World Mission policy. This in turn, led to an inappropriate abuse of power. World Mission had missed the point that: “God has chosen what the world counts weakness. He has chosen things without rank or standing in the world, mere nothings, to overthrow the existing order” (1 Corinthians 1:27b–28); and “I am content with a life of weakness, insult, hardship, persecution and distress, all for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (1 Corinthians 12:10). Here is the essence of *kenosis*.

There appeared to be a lack of vision while policy was dictated by financial necessity. The question was “Who sets the agenda when it comes to partner church relationships?” Is it one partner, or both in consultation? The experience of the Church of Scotland’s partners was that of “He who pays the piper, calls the tune” (cf Lyon 1998:194). Even at the 2005 Partner Church Consultation, the agenda was set by the Board of World Mission prior to the consultation and no discussion was allowed concerning the history of the relationship of partnership, thus depriving the participants of a foundation on which to base their deliberations, a vital factor in churches which operate in the non-Western world. At the present time, the indications are that, unless there are significant changes in the Church of Scotland as a whole and its World Mission Council in particular, current approaches to missional involvement are likely to lead to the demise of the World Mission Council, with its wonderful tradition of outreach, in its present form. That change is likely to be as painful as struggling through the present crisis.

However, in the final analysis, only a *kenotic* missiology can replace a relationship based on unequal power relations and lead to true *koinonia*, for it:

must mean a renunciation of power. Churches of the North need to reject their reliance on power, placing themselves in faith before God in solidarity with peoples who have been marginalised, so that all peoples’ hopes and dreams may be transformed in God’s image. The *kenosis* of mission keeps the church from initiating a new form of colonialism, and mission becomes the power of self-emptying (Wickeri 2002:349).



## References

### Primary Sources

- Foreign Mission Committee. *Reports to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*. Edinburgh: Church of Scotland (1929–1964). Edinburgh: Church of Scotland.
- Overseas Council. *Reports to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*. Edinburgh: Church of Scotland (1964–1984). Edinburgh: Church of Scotland.
- Board of World Mission and Unity. *Reports to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*. Edinburgh: Church of Scotland (1984–1994). Edinburgh: Church of Scotland.
- Board of World Mission. *Reports to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland* (1994–2005). Edinburgh: Church of Scotland.
- World Mission Council. *Reports to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland* (2005–2006). Edinburgh: Church of Scotland.
- Board of World Mission. (1999). *Partner Church Consultation*. Edinburgh: Church of Scotland Board of World Mission.
- Board of World Mission (McKinsey). (2000). *A new way of working for the Board of World Mission: Final report*. Edinburgh: Church of Scotland Board of World Mission.
- World Mission Council. (2005). *Partner Church Consultation*. Edinburgh: Church of Scotland World Mission Council.
- World Council of Churches (WCC). 2005. “*You are the light of the world*”: *Statements on mission by the World Council of Churches, 1980–2005*. Geneva: WCC.
- Duncan Private Papers (DPP). Papers in the possession of the author. [This includes extensive correspondence for the period 1997–2006, in addition to a variety of BWM and WMC papers.]

### Secondary Sources

- Aitken, D. 2005. Assembly notes from Presbytery Newsletter. *St Columba's Newsletter*; September:12–13.
- Billington Harper, S. 2000. *In the shadow of the Mahatma: Bishop VS Azariah and the travails of Christianity in British India*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Bowers, J.M. 1997. Partnership and missionary personnel. *International Review of Mission (IRM)* 86 (342), July:248–260.
- Breen, S. 2004. Kirk's cash crisis hits overseas missionaries. *Scotland on Sunday*, 19 December:6.
- Brown, J. 1997. International relationships in mission: A study project. *International Review of Mission (IRM)* 86 (342):20–248.
- Bühlmann, W. 1974. *The coming of the Third Church: An analysis of the present and future of the church*. Slough: St Paul.
- De Gruchy, J.W. 2002. *Reconciliation: Restoring justice*. London: SCM.

- Gutierrez, G. 1974. *A theology of liberation*. London: SCM.
- Lyon, D.H.S. 1978. *How foreign is mission?* Edinburgh: St Andrew Press.
- Lyon, D.H.S. 1998. *In pursuit of a vision*. Edinburgh: St Andrew Press.
- Neill, S. 1964. *A history of Christian Missions*. London: Penguin.
- Neill, S. 1976. *Salvation tomorrow: The originality of Jesus Christ and the world's religions*. London: Lutterworth.
- PCUSA 2006. *A season of discernment*. Louisville: PCUSA.
- Ross, K. 2005. The Kirk is bigger than you think it is. *Life & Work*, May:26–27.
- Scherer, J.A. 1987. *Gospel, Church and Kingdom: Comparative studies in world mission theology*. Minneapolis: Augsburg.
- Sogard, V. 1996. Missiological education through decentralised partnerships, in *Missiological education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century: The book, the circle and the sandal*, edited by J.D. Woodbury, C. Van Engen and E.J. Elliston. Maryknoll: Orbis: 198–207.
- Song, C.S. 1975. *Christian mission in reconstruction*. Madras: CLS.
- Van Hollander, J. 2004. Unless the grain dies: The continuing challenge of partnership in mission: Council for World Mission: A global community of Churches. *WARC Update* 14 (1):8–9.
- Verkuyyl, J. 1978. *Contemporary Missiology: An introduction*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Wickeri, P.L. (ed.) 2002. *Scripture, community and mission*. London: CWM.
- Wickeri, P.L. 2002. Towards a kenosis of mission: Emptying and empowerment for the Church and for the world, in *Scripture, community and mission*, edited by P.L. Wickeri. London: CWM: 332–356.
- World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) 2004. Together in mission. *Reformed World* 54 (1), March:5–11.