# CHURCHES AND AGENCIES IN PARTNERSHIP

*Posted on January 11, 2022 by Eddie*

An excellent series of articles on partnerships between mission agencies and majority world churches.
**Category:** Observations

The latest edition of Mission Round Table from OMF International has just been published online. If you are interested in mission then you really should subscribe to this valuable online journal.

I was particularly taken by an article entitled Exploring the Challenges of Partnerships between Foreign Mission Agencies and the Filipino Church by Iljo de Keijzer. This is a well thought through exploration of some of the issues involved when western agencies partner with churches in the majority world. It raises problems, explores biblical principles and then suggests solutions. It is well worth a read both for the content and as a worked through example of how to approach complex questions in a Biblical and reflective manner. A few quotes:

> *... money is needed for planting churches through partnership, but how can we do this without creating dependency? The support from abroad really helped in the church planting efforts of these groups, but it also created a sense of entitlement that saw the rich West as being obliged to give money. Using money in church planting and partnerships is not a simple black-and-white or right-or-wrong case. It is complicated and many deep issues are involved in finding the best way of using money for furthering the kingdom of God.*

> *It is also astounding to see that Paul takes offerings from the Gentile churches planted during his missionary journeysâ€"the â€œmissionary churchesâ€ â€"instead of the other way around, to help the poor in the Jerusalem â€œmother churchâ€ (1 CorÂ 16:1â€“4;Â 2 CorÂ 8;Â GalÂ 2:10; RomÂ 15:26â€“27). If the people among the Gentiles have shared in the spiritual blessings of the Jews, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.Â This is different from how we often do missionsâ€"missionaries tend to give both spiritual and material blessings. Paul is appealing to theirÂ utang na loobÂ or â€œindebtednessâ€ to those who helped to get the gospel to them.*

> *Partnership has to be mutual:Â Can we accept something in return from those we serve? As a mission organization, we need to work hard to find ways that will bring outÂ meaningful, multi-tiered, multi-faceted participationÂ in ourÂ partnerships because it does not suffice to just give money to partner organizations.*

One of the reasons that I appreciated this article is that it is accompanied by three others which

respond to it and which expand issues found in the original. I particularly enjoyed the response by Melba Maggay which opens like this:

> *Part of the problem of the Western missionary movement is that it has come to the shores of recipient cultures from a position of power. Missions had been a handmaiden to colonization and, in recent times, conduits of theological and cultural influence from the countries where they came from, facilitated by having in their possession money and other resources.*
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> *Whether they are aware of it or not, Western missionaries come with a paradigm like that of the multinationalâ€"selling a pre-packaged gospel by promising resources and technology transfer.*
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> *There is much talk these days about contextualization, but I wonder if we have fully grasped what this means in the way we do â€œmission.â€*
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> *The incarnation tells us that we cannot McDonaldize the gospel: same ingredients, same size, same way of cooking anywhere in the world. The God of the universe came to a particular culture and a particular time. Unlike the Indian avatars whose fleeting appearances are lost in the mist of legends, Jesus can be pinned down on a calendar; he had a history and lived in a small-town community and a particular geography.*
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> *Have we ever thought what the gospel could look like in the places where we have been sent? Have we ever asked the locals what good news means to them? Has our interaction with them brought us to what Latin Americans call a â€œhermeneutical suspicionâ€ â€"making us aware that our reading of the culture and even of the Bible may not be all that accurate nor universal?*
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> *Also, the incarnation means we come as servants, emptying ourselves of what power or privilege might look like in those places. It is not an accident that Jesus was born and lived among the lower classes; he was not seen as being loaded with resources. The entry of a foreign missionary in a community, by the mere artifacts he brings inâ€"a car or motorcycle, appliances, camera, computer, and other gadgetsâ€"signals to the people that there is plenty more where he comes from and so raises undue expectations.*

You can find the other two responses here and here. If you are interested in this topic, Global Connections have an excellent set of guidelines for British churches who want to partner with churches in the majority world.