

## TERMINOS Y CONDICIONES

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## **Collaboration of Latin missionaries in historic churches**

Papers presented at

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A special programme for missionaries, pastors, mission leaders and those interested in missions, to understand the current situation in Europe, its identity, history and needs. There were sessions on research, challenges and special needs for mission in Europe.

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### **Introduction**

Approximately two decades ago it would have been exhilarating to talk about Latin missionaries working in collaboration with historic churches in Europe. I remember that my sister Lidia came as a missionary to London to work amongst English people in 1984. She didn't speak the language, nor did she know much about British culture. Her only contact with Britain was friendships with many British missionaries who had stayed at our house at some point. However, after a year, she attended the Anglican church of St. Michael, Chester Square in Victoria, London. Years later she was taken on as part of the staff as an evangelist in a café that the church ran at that time. Obviously she learnt English, the culture and integrated herself into Anglican life to such an extent that Nicky Gumble, the founder of Alpha courses, said that Lidia was the best Latin evangelist that he has known amongst English speaking people. Today, this kind of experience is rapidly replicating itself in many European countries.

For this subject, my missiological approach will concentrate on a reciprocal contextual collaboration. My aim will be to concentrate on three missiological questions which will help us to have a greater understanding of the purpose for the collaboration of Latin missionaries in historic churches, even though I will give examples outside of this framework. In my opinion, it needs pointing out that Latins are not so much interested in knowing whether they are going to work with historic churches, as their greatest interest lies with how Europe can be evangelised. This includes collaborating with all denominations, both historic and non-historic. Moreover the greatest missionary contingency is rising up from non-historic churches.

### **What do we mean by reciprocal contextual collaboration in Christian mission?**

The word collaboration is closely related to the English word 'partnership', which in itself carries a wider concept which can only be defined by applying it to the context it's used in. This is one of the reasons why new terms are being used to try to define what I call a reciprocal contextual collaboration in the extension of redemptive mission. Others such as COMIBAM have assigned, since 1987, the term missionary co-operation, even though recently they are beginning to use the term "strategic alliances". This arises from the influence of the American missionary Phill Butler in his book "Well connected."



Butler is a scholar of relationships through communications and strategy in Christian mission. From this perspective, he tries to show that strategic alliances are the way forward for mission in the third millennium. Butler (2005:8) also emphasises the importance of international networks for the strategic development of the ministry and for this, he suggests five aims:

1. Bring hope to the members of Christ's church.
2. God's people working together is more powerful and effective than individual initiatives.
3. Provide the 'how' of the process for an effective co-operation.
4. Be a tool to sell the vision of people working together.
5. Encourage the message of Jesus to be shared that will change the unreached of the world.

There is not space to stop and analyse these objectives. However, I agree that working together brings hope to the church, and a united collaboration makes the church more powerful and effective. These two objectives are applicable to any mission context.

The question that we should ask now is: How can we collaborate reciprocally between the 'North' and 'South' if we do not understand the missionary language that we are using? Currently, a greater participation in mission is being emphasised at a relational level which allows us to impart what we really are trying to explain in our statements and dialogues. For this reason, I propose the need to ask ourselves more questions about reciprocal contextual collaboration with an analytical reflection focus on the missionary practice that we are developing. This is with the aim of building new missionary bridges that challenge us to obtain better mutual collaboration in the mission of the present century. On the other hand I assume that this focus would require us to invest more time in relationship dialogues and the need to achieve reciprocal agreements that facilitate the fulfilment of God's mission in the context of new mission realities.

The book of Philippians 1:5 emphasises the Biblical focus on reciprocal collaboration. Let us look at the explanation of collaboration in the different versions of Pauline theology of mission according to this Biblical text: The Queen of Valera translates, "for your communion in the gospel," the Bible of the Americas translates, "for your participation in the gospel." All translations offer an implicit reference to the preaching of the gospel with the participation of two partners, in this case the apostle Paul and the church of Philippi. This is what the apostle Paul is trying to remind his audience and his partners in the preaching of the gospel. Who were his partners in mission? The church of Philippi - a church with a forward-looking missionary theology of prayer and permanent collaboration in the extension of the Christian faith in the first century of the emerging Christian church.

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Conversely, the terms communion and participation are translated in the New International Version in English as 'partnership' (in this case the translation was participation-collaboration), and in the new King James version 'fellowship' is used (in this case the translation was communion). We can therefore assume that reciprocal contextual collaboration is a missionary imperative for collaboration, participation and communion that arises in the heart of a missionary church. In this sense, the church of Philippi is a model to follow - where the apostle Paul thanks God for the participation of his sending church in missionary work. At the same time the apostle remembers and reflects on the co-operation of his partners. For these reasons, we assume that effective collaboration generates a missionary prayer, and on the other hand, healthy memories of what teamwork and being in a team mean. To summarise, a reciprocal contextual collaboration means: Collaboration, since God's Mission is of God and we are only collaborators; reciprocal because we are Christ's body with a diversity of ministries to mutually support each other as the body of Christ; and contextual, because the attitude of our missionary work is incarnational, which means that it includes the conscious recognition of the reality of social, political as well as religious, cultural and economic contexts.

## **Why talk about collaboration with historic churches?**

When we talk about historic churches, we are referring to churches born out of the Reformation. Historic churches such as the Lutheran, Anglican, Baptist, Calvinist and Reformed churches are denominations which have their origin in the Protestant Reformation begun by Martin Luther in Germany in 1516. Other churches such as Methodist, Assembly of Brothers and Pentecostals are called "free churches"; they have their origin subsequent to the Protestant Reformation. However, it is important to remember that this first reformation didn't reach France, Italy, Spain and other European countries, as it did in Germany, the United Kingdom, Holland and the Scandinavian countries.

It is also appropriate to remember that the historic churches are currently growing in a secular context. In relation to this, the academic Andrew Kirk (Cueva 2004: 159) suggested in his essay "The Mission of the Church in the Secular World," that the West is not an ordered and homogenous unit. For Kirk, who was a missionary in Argentina for 12 years, the Western world lives as though God does not exist, or as though He only exists in certain marginalised areas of life. This thesis brings us to consider the context of the reality of a secular world, and also the reality of a Christian faith with a lack of a greater missionary effectiveness.

History shows us that the United Kingdom is the country which has sent more missionaries abroad to extend the gospel in Africa, Asia and Latin America. However, over the years, we now notice a change in the practice of mission where the sending of European missionaries has gradually been declining. What is the basic reason for this missionary decline in Europe? I assume that there are at least three basic factors for this



change: spiritual decadency in the life of the church, political and social changes in mission countries, which makes the access of missionaries currently more difficult, and thirdly the change of mentality influenced by postmodernism and a secular world. Therefore we need to take up the challenge to collaborate with those Latin missionaries who work within the historic churches making a missionary contribution for spiritual renewal, encouraging new, clear models of reciprocal contextual collaboration.

I am going to try and explain the spiritual and missiological need for historic churches using three approaches:

- 1. The theological approach** The academic world of Western theology has become so rationalised, to the point that those who study in a European university sometimes end up losing their faith. There is also a need for fresh preaching to believe that God continues to have the same power to transform society and renew his church. Here we have to recognise that knowledge always tends to eat away at faith. This is nothing new, because this spiritual phenomenon began with Thomas Aquinas' good intentions. He wanted to give greater emphasis on the extension of the Christian faith with a more rational theology in his era. The historic churches in this sense seem to need a renewal which arises out of a simple, but evangelically effective, faith that can be proclaimed in collaboration with missionaries from the 'two-thirds world', a term which defines the new focus for what is commonly known as missionaries from the 'third world.'
- 2. Missiological approach.** The historic churches have fulfilled a predominant role in the sending of missionaries in the past. However, now there are not enough candidates and even though they have financial resources, they do not have the spiritual vitality to motivate members to go as missionaries to other latitudes. It could give the impression that the missionary task is a task which is no longer in fashion in the Western mentality. For this reason, there is not the strength that there was a hundred years ago in the deployment of its missionary contribution, despite ongoing efforts. In this sense, it seems that us Latins understand that the greatest opportunity for historic churches has passed and the majority of new opportunities are being experienced by Latin, Asian and African missionaries. I dare say that there is a lack of a more integral missionary interpretation of the new millennium. This is due to the fact that the spiritual, social, political and economical demands are greater than that which the church is doing to make the fulfilment of the double Christological mandate possible. Therefore, the new Latin missionary mentality is to collaborate in the evangelisation of Europe.
- 3. The ecclesiological approach** It is the local churches that are dying in Europe, as well as the missionary organisations that are between life and death. It is registered in the accounts of the Anglican churches, for example, that of the 22,000 premises in the United Kingdom, due to resources and lack of help to the churches, they had to sell 4,000 of them in the 1990s. Also, even though The Assembly of Brothers is not an historic church, their churches have been reduced from 400 to 200. What if we were



to talk about the Reformed Church in Spain or the Lutheran Church in Holland, Germany or Sweden? My belief is that there is a tremendous need for reciprocal contextual collaboration that should be oriented to the work with churches in Europe by Latin American missiology, if we want to see a reciprocal contextual collaboration generating an effective impact in God's Mission. This change has to begin in the life of the local church both in Europe and Latin America.

### **How can we collaborate reciprocally?**

According to Emmanuel Buch (E-mail 2007 January 18), what the churches in Spain hope for from the collaboration of Latin missionaries is 'that they can integrate and commit themselves to the Spanish Churches.' Buch, who is a pastor of the Baptist Church 'Cristo Vive' in Madrid, sees how churches consisting solely of Latins are being formed, bringing their pastors from Latin America. He adds this is justifiable, but it seems to him that this will cause a division of everyone, both Latins and Spanish, if they do not know how to overcome customs or different ways of giving a unique testimony of the people of God. Obviously integration and compromise are two fundamental elements of a Biblical missiology, and for this reason reciprocal collaboration will have to be understood by each active missionary force. In another way, there arises the danger of a missiological polarisation which could thwart the spontaneity of a Latin missionary force, and also develop missionary introversion of the historic churches in Europe to delay the work of reciprocal collaboration with Latin missionaries.

The missionary polarisation has never had positive effects and this phenomenon has already happened in the past. The Scottish missiologist Stuart McIntosh (2007) explains it in the following way: 'This phenomenon isn't new, it happened in the USA, Argentina and Brazil in the century before last with the rise of 'transplant churches' like the Methodists, the Lutherans, the Presbyterians and the Anglicans who lived on the margin of the mission groups of Faith, and the establishment of a new and evangelical church in those countries.' My interpretation is that this polarisation did not help to create conditions for a revival in those countries, and that this risk currently exists when we talk about a reciprocal contextual collaboration.

On the one hand, collaboration of Latin missionaries is directed towards church planting, evangelisation, pastoral care and Biblical teaching. There are also missionaries who are trained to help in social work such as teaching sewing and giving language classes etc. For example, the missionary from Salvador, Gilberto Orellana (via telephone 2007, January 18) established the cultural centre 'The door' where he provides social training and services for needy immigrants, as well as collaborating with the Baptist church 'Betel' in Malaga. On the other hand, the Baptist church in calle General Lacy in Madrid has appointed Argentine pastor Raul Ameri to lead the church. Ameri has previously worked for many years in the church in Alcoy in Alicante.



On the other hand, the Anglican Church has ordained the Bolivian Francisco Bascunan who has been church planting in the city of Santa Cruz. The Reformed Episcopalian Church in Spain, which is part of the Anglican Church, has also ordained the Chilean Juan Zamora who works in Seville. Similarly, the Anglican Church in London some years ago ordained the Peruvian Edilberto Marquez as a pastor of a local church. As regards the Pentecostal experience, the Chilean, Claudio Navarro is the first Latin pastor appointed by the Pentecostal Salemkirken church in Norway in Oslo, and he preaches with translations from Spanish to Norwegian. At the same time, The United Free Church in Scotland has ordained black pastors from Botswana and Southern African (McIntosh: 2007).

These previously mentioned examples give us an idea of the paradigm change in the new forms of co-operation that the Latins are offering churches in Europe. However, the reality is that historic churches still do not manage to recognise their need to risk giving more opportunities to Latin missionaries to develop a more fruitful and stable ministry. I propose, in this context, that open dialogues are encouraged concerning conditions for collaboration in the context of the European reality, where historic churches are more rapidly open to the participation of Latin missionaries.

Consequently, following the new Latin missionary emphasis to have a participatory presence in the mission of churches in Europe, we can interpret that Latin collaboration will be directed to strengthening the following factors in the historic and non historic churches in Europe:

- 1. Personal and large scale evangelisation.** The whole church in Latin America has grown as a result of its emphasis on personal evangelisation and its investment in time and resources in organising massive evangelisation campaigns. This experience will move Latins to also try this in countries in Europe. We have to remember that Latin Christians are used to sharing their faith wherever they go. However, European churches have authorised the presence of Latin evangelists for massive campaigns. Such is the case of the evangelist Carlos Anacondia who has visited many countries in Europe, and although his invitation did not come from the historic churches, his influence did reach them in some way. Also the Argentinean evangelist Luis Palau is innovating his large scale evangelisation work through what we can call a postmodern evangelisation, which his team call 'festivals'. This project has been well received in Spain, especially since his success in Madrid in June 2005, with plans for new festivals in Seville, Valencia and probably Barcelona. For his part, the churches in London have rejected, although not openly, the idea of an 'evangelistic festival' lead by a Latin. However, the Latin churches in London, of which there are 20, are enthusiastic about a 'festival' with Palau.
- 2. A life of relational discipleship.** Personal relationships form part of a Latin culture. Moreover, their family nucleus is stronger to influence. For this reason discipleship is oriented to being more personal than institutional.

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3. **A life of prayer with vigils and fasting.** Prayer and fasting are vital components of a Latin American Christian faith.
4. **A life of freshness and simplicity in the gospel.** The simple style of unostentatious life is a characteristic which gives Latins on mission their freshness and vitality.
5. **Pastoral care oriented to the suffering of the soul.** The pastoral reality of the Latin American church has been centred on the moral and spiritual support for those who live in extreme poverty and in an insecurity of obtaining permanent jobs. This pastoral care encourages people to live a faith of total dependency on the God of the Bible.
6. **A vibrant liturgy.** The vibrant liturgy is related to styles of worship that in the case of Latin America are related to joyous worship where praise, prayer and witness are more participatory by the congregation.
7. **A missiology of diaspora.** The missiology of diaspora is related to what others call a migratory missiology (Gonzales 1994:478) where Protestant immigrants take the gospel wherever they go. According to the Cuban historian Justo Gonzales (:478) throughout the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century, the most progressive governments in Latin America were those who encouraged European and North American immigration. Many of the Protestant immigrants brought their faith, and obtained a special permission to worship because the Catholic religion was the only permitted one in many countries. The first immigrants were largely British, especially Scottish.

All the previously mentioned missiological factors are oriented to the influence of a more relational missiology. It is necessary, at this point, to clarify that the hierarchical structures are present in Latin mentality, but more in an unconscious way, since consciously there is a rejection of anything which is to do with control. Therefore, the collaboration of Latin missionaries will be more effective if the church in Europe understands that the Latins prefer a more personal relationship than hierarchy. In addition, personal warmth is part of the Latin culture. I predict that there will be a great influence of a spontaneous missiology, which has its own structures that are more flexible than Western ones.

Samuel Escobar (1999:28-31) has mentioned in his book "Time for Mission" that there are three kinds of missiological trends in the evangelical field: post-imperial missiology, managerial, and integral missiology. I suggest that these trends need deeper study to find new ways which may help us with the need to forge a missiology of reciprocal contextual collaboration, which establishes references for mutual and reciprocal help, where the participation of Latin missionaries and historic churches may be more spontaneous and natural. This is what I have called spontaneous missiology, which could also be interpreted as a fourth missiological trend.



### **Conclusions**

At the beginning of my presentation, I tried to clarify the need to encourage a new missiological trend of collaboration, which arises from Biblical teaching. Then, we saw the secularisation that has influenced the decline of mission in historic churches. We have assumed that from this evaluation a need arises to receive the collaboration of Latin missionaries by historic churches. Finally we have proposed the direction of missionary factors that Latin missionaries are offering as a way of collaborating.

At the same time, the historic churches in Europe will be increasingly influenced by the growth of churches that before have been receivers of missionaries. This influence will be at a spiritual and social level in the life of local churches. On the other hand, there will be an influence in the extension of redemptive mission, which will create new two-way missionary bridges to make evangelical missionary ecclesiology more effective in Europe. For this reason comprehension is fundamental to a reciprocal contextual collaboration in the life of every missionary church.

I conclude by saying that collaboration is possible and accessible and it generates fresh energy both for the collaborator and for the receiver. It is about looking with hope and gratitude to the new collaboration that God is raising to reinforce and strengthen the missionary spirit of Christ's church in Europe. I wish to end with a missiological question: Will God raise in his church in Europe a presence of a Latin missionary force?

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