

Mission Engagement in Nigeria in an Epoch of Partnership

A Case in the Anabaptist Tradition

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In 1958 a group of congregations in southeastern Nigeria solicited affiliation with the North American Mennonite Board of Missions (MBM), declared themselves Mennonite, and sought missionaries and assistance. MBM responded by sending missionaries and by providing assistance to Mennonite Church Nigeria (MCN) and others in the region. The collaboration between MCN and MBM developed during a period when partnership was becoming a primary paradigm in the Protestant missionary movement as well as in the Anabaptist tradition.

This article highlights five themes in the missiological discourse about partnership during the last half of the twentieth century and uses those themes to explicate aspects of the engagement between MCN and MBM during the same period. The themes are (1) collaboration, (2) context, (3) reconfiguration of mission structures, (4) bilateral and multilateral approaches, and (5) ambiguity.² The first section examines partnership in the Protestant mission movement. The second shows that these themes also arise in Anabaptist mission discourse. The third section presents the case of Mennonite Church Nigeria and Mennonite Board of Missions, showing the partnership paradigm to be a compelling missionary vision while clarifying challenges that may require consideration of additional mission models.

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2 These were the themes I gathered from perusing fifty-one articles that addressed partnership from 1933 to 2000 in the journals *The Review and Expositor*, *The Christian Century*, *International Review of Mission*, *The Reformed Journal*, *Brethren Life and Thought*, *Missiology*, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, *African Ecclesial Review*, *Mission Studies*, *Currents in Theology and Mission*, *Baptist History and Heritage*, *Church & Society*, *Direction*, *Pneuma*, *Mid-Stream*, and *Diaskalia*.

Partnership Discourse in Protestant Missions

During the twentieth century, as churches that grew out of the Protestant missionary movement were gaining strength, partnership emerged as a new approach for a new era. As early as 1928, the International Missionary Council (IMC) suggested partnership as the way that the “younger” and “older” churches should relate.³ During the following decades, many nations in the Southern Hemisphere moved toward shedding colonial chains; southern churches sought self-government, and mission theorists anticipated that mission practice would need to change in the “new day.”⁴ The partnership paradigm gained prominence in the decade after World War II with the IMC statement “Partners in Obedience,” from its 1947 meeting in Whitby, Ontario.⁵ The meeting highlighted a sense of unity, mutuality, and common vision among participants from forty countries.⁶ The IMC envisioned that churches from traditionally mission-sending nations and churches from the Global South would work together to realize common mission initiatives. This was, in measure, a reversal of indigenous church theory in which mission was to come to an end with the establishment of an independent church.⁷

Collaboration

In the decades following the Whitby meeting, a strong motivating factor for those who espoused partnership was accomplishing their goals through collaboration. Mission leaders argued that churches and missions from the Northern and Southern Hemispheres needed to work together so that Christians around the world would consider themselves part of the church universal and share

3 International Missionary Council, *The Relation between the Younger and the Older Churches*, vol. 3, Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, March 24–April 8, 1928 (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), 173, 209–10.

4 Kenneth Scott Latourette, “The Need for Missions in the New Day,” *Review & Expositor*, April 1, 1936, 146–57; M. Theron Rankin, “New and Old in Missions in the Orient,” *Review & Expositor* 40, no. 4 (October 1943): 436–48.

5 International Missionary Council, “Partners in Obedience,” in *The Witness of a Revolutionary Church* (New York: International Missionary Council, 1947), 23–34.

6 International Missionary Council, *The Witness of a Revolutionary Church*; Kenneth Scott Latourette and William Richey Hogg, *Tomorrow Is Here: The Mission and World of the Church as Seen from the Meeting of the International Missionary Council at Whitby, Ontario, July 5–24, 1947* (New York: Friendship, 1948).

7 Edmund Ilogu, “The Biblical Idea of Partnership and the Modern Missionary Task,” *International Review of Mission*, October 1, 1955, 404–6; John Hesselink, “The Future of the Christian World Mission,” *The Reformed Journal*, October 1971, 14–17.

responsibility for the missionary task.⁸ The goal was to empower the whole church for mission and to use resources efficiently.⁹

Context

A second theme in the partnership discourse is the importance of the context in which mission happens. In the postcolonial context, churches from all nations needed to work together as equal and worthy partners.¹⁰ Since cultural, social, and religious contexts complicated collaboration, foreign and local partners needed to understand places vastly different from their home societies.¹¹ The particularities of each church, people, and country had to be considered so that linguistic, cultural, historical, social, economic, and political diversity could enrich instead of hinder partnerships.¹²

Reconfiguring Mission Structures

In a third theme of discourse, partnership advocates argued for the reconfiguration of colonial-era mission structures that often perpetuated inequalities and power differentials.¹³ Mission agencies such as the Paris Mission Society, London Missionary Society, Commonwealth Missionary Society, Basel Mission, United Evangelical Mission, and Caribbean/North American Council for Mission formed new structures in an attempt to share power and resources

8 International Missionary Council, *The Witness of a Revolutionary Church*, 24; Feliciano V. Carino, "Partnership in Obedience," *International Review of Mission* 67, no. 267 (July 1978): 324–26; "Consultation on 'Partnership in Mission—What Structures?'" *International Review of Mission* 81, no. 323 (July 1992): 468–69; Charles Klagba, "Salvador and Relationships in Mission: Partnership in Mission," *International Review of Mission* 86, no. 340 (April 1997): 133–35.

9 International Missionary Council, *The Witness of a Revolutionary Church*, 20–21.

10 "Partnership in Indonesia," *The Christian Century* 68, no. 41 (October 10, 1951): 1151–52; Carino, "Partnership in Obedience"; Maitland Evans, "The Council for World Mission's Partnership in Mission Model," *International Review of Mission* 76, no. 304 (October 1987): 458–72.

11 "Max A. C. Warren, *Partnership: The Study of an Idea* (Chicago, IL: S.C.M. Book Club, 1956), 90–97.

12 Erme R. Camba, "Partnership in Mission: The United Church of Christ in the Philippines," *Church and Society* 84, no. 1 (October 1993): 87.

13 Robin Green, "God Is Doing a New Thing: A Theological Reflection on the Practice of Partnership," *International Review of Mission* 80, no. 318 (April 1991): 219–29; Klagba, "Salvador and Relationships in Mission: Partnership in Mission," 135; John P. Brown, "International Relationships in Mission," *International Review of Mission* 86, no. 342 (July 1997): 245–46.

more equitably, increase transparency, and enable horizontal partnerships.¹⁴ While such initiatives provided new avenues to seek partnership, the inequitable political and economic realities between northern and southern churches sometimes frustrated initiatives that sought equity and mutuality.¹⁵

Bilateral and Multilateral Approaches

Tension between bilateral relationship and a broader multilateral approach is a fourth theme in partnership discourse. A bilateral mission relationship typically involved a Western mission and the church it founded. In 1958 Lesslie Newbigin introduced the concept of “Mission—from six continents to six continents,” suggesting a web of mission relationships, and in 1963 the World Council of Church’s Commission on World Mission and Evangelism met in Mexico under the same theme.¹⁶ Networks sprang up to envision and facilitate partnerships within and between regions. In many cases, however, financial and personnel assistance continued to flow through bilateral channels, often controlled by funders from the Northern Hemisphere.¹⁷ Bilateral relationships remained attractive partly because they facilitated personal contacts and engagement better than did multi-partner networks.¹⁸ Sometimes energy and resources expended in bilateral relationships between northern and southern churches resulted in less attention to multilateral partnerships among churches in southern regions.

Ambiguity

The partnership paradigm provided a vision but remained elusive and did not deliver a fully orbed approach. The communion, equality, and mutuality ev-

14 Evans, “The Council for World Mission’s Partnership in Mission Model”; Brown, “International Relationships in Mission,” 218–21, 226–34.

15 Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, “North-South Partnerships: The Evangelical Presbyterian Church in South Africa and the Département Missionnaire in Lausanne,” *International Review of Mission* 83, no. 328 (January 1994): 93–100.

16 Wilbert R. Shenk, *God’s New Economy: Interdependence and Mission*, 28; Brown, “International Relationships in Mission,” 215–16.

17 Herbert Schekatz, “Learning the Meaning of Partnership: The Story of the Continental Commission for Church and Mission in Indonesia,” *International Review of Mission* 62, no. 248 (October 1973): 415–24; Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, *Partnership For Mission: A View from the Two-Thirds World* (Bangalore, India: Partnership in Mission-Asia, 1983), 12; Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, “Mission Agencies as Multinationals,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 7, no. 4 (October 1983): 152–53; Maluleke, “North-South Partnerships—The Evangelical Presbyterian Church in South Africa and the Département Missionnaire in Lausanne,” 99–100.

18 Joachim Wietzke, “Renewed Communities in Mission and International Mission Structures,” *International Review of Mission* 79, no. 316 (October 1990): 472.

ident at Whitby led Yale church historian Kenneth Scott Latourette and his co-author William Hogg to declare with a certain sense of eschatological fervor that “tomorrow is here.”¹⁹ It seemed that the world Christian community and its mission efforts had reached a significant milestone with a shift from paternalism and dependency to fraternity and shared responsibility. Partnership, however, was open to varying interpretations, was often elusive, and did not provide answers to all mission questions. A decade after Whitby, Max Warren opined that, because domination was still a reality in the world, partnership had “not yet fully come.”²⁰ Partnerships sometimes embodied inequality or left one or more partners without a voice.²¹ Mission agencies varied in their approaches, sharing power to different degrees.²²

As the end of the twentieth century approached, missiologists noted that despite a consensus about the importance of partnership, the mission movement had often failed to embody the partnership vision.²³ Ongoing disparities in wealth, education, and development made mutuality and equity elusive.²⁴ Finally, the partnership paradigm focused on the “how” of doing mission, but did not address the basic questions of who was to be included in partnership and what partners would work together to achieve.²⁵ The “who” and “what” of mission required additional conceptual tools and models.

Partnership Discourse in Anabaptist Missions

Among churches in the Anabaptist tradition, the matter of the relationship between the younger churches—typically in Asia, South America, and Africa—and the older churches that had birthed them became increasingly relevant. North American church leaders sought to deepen connections with the south-

19 Latourette and Hogg, *Tomorrow Is Here*.

20 Warren, *Partnership: The Study of an Idea*, 98.

21 Robbins Strong, “Practical Partnership with Churches Overseas,” *International Review of Mission* 61, no. 243 (July 1972): 281–82.

22 Nicole Fischer, “Towards Reconciled Communities in Mission,” *International Review of Mission* 79, no. 316 (October 1990): 484.

23 Wietzke, “Renewed Communities in Mission and International Mission Structures,” 471.

24 Maluleke, “North-South Partnerships—The Evangelical Presbyterian Church in South Africa and the Département Missionnaire in Lausanne”; Evans, “The Council for World Mission’s Partnership in Mission Model,” 461–62, 468; Wietzke, “Renewed Communities in Mission and International Mission Structures,” 474–76.

25 Justin S. Ukpogon, “Contemporary Theological Models of Mission: Analysis and Critique,” *AFER* 27, no. 3 (June 1, 1985): 166; Stanley H. Skreslet, “The Empty Basket of Presbyterian Mission: Limits and Possibilities of Partnership,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 19, no. 3 (July 1995): 98–104.

ern churches, and partnership became a theme by the mid-1960s.²⁶ “Obedience in Partnership” was the theme of the Mennonite Brethren General Conference in 1963, and two years later, MBM’s annual gathering met under the topic “Partners in World Mission.”²⁷ MBM’s 1965 report on overseas mission noted, “Partnership with the emerging church is key to sound mission strategy.”²⁸ The Council of Mission Board Secretaries and its subsequent form, the Council of International Ministries (CIM), addressed the topic of partnership and its corollary themes of internationalization and interdependence a number of times throughout the 1970s and 1980s.²⁹ Mennonite World Conference gatherings on mission at San Juan, Puerto Rico (1975); Hesston, Kansas (1978); and Strasburg, France (1984) urged mutuality, strengthened solidarity, and led to broader collaboration among Anabaptist mission initiatives.³⁰

The themes prevalent in the larger Protestant mission movement are evident in Anabaptist mission discourse as well. Anabaptist missiologists argued that collaboration among international partners would benefit all involved and would contribute to the growth of the kingdom of God.³¹ In 1980 Robert Ramseyer suggested that working with people of other cultures and traditions helped missionaries broaden their understanding of the gospel and of mission engagement, and in 1994 Mennonite Brethren missiologists proposed international mission teams.³²

Contextual factors were also of concern. In the 1960s missiologists worried that the schools and health institutions that missionaries had established

26 John H. Yoder to J. D. Graber, “Memo on Definition of ‘Partnership’ Relationship,” September 15, 1964, and A. J. Metzler to P. J. Malagar and Joseph M. Bhelwa, October 8, 1964, IV-18-13-02, Box 11, Partnership 1964. All primary sources, unless otherwise noted, are from Mennonite Church USA Archives, Elkhart, IN.

27 Shenk, *God’s New Economy*, 2; “Executive Report,” in *Partners in World Mission 1965: General Mission Handbook Including Annual Reports* (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Board of Missions & Charities, 1965), 9–19.

28 *Partners in World Mission 1965: General Mission Handbook Including Annual Reports* (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Board of Missions & Charities, 1965), 76.

29 Shenk, *God’s New Economy*, 3, 37.

30 “San Juan Statement,” “Hesston Statement,” and “Strasbourg Statement,” in *God’s New Economy: Interdependence and Mission* (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Board of Missions, 1988), 52–61.

31 *Partners in World Mission 1965: General Mission Handbook Including Annual Reports*, 248–49; Valdemar Kröker, “Can Mission Agencies Be Partners? A Response,” *Direction* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 87.

32 Robert L. Ramseyer, “Partnership and Interdependence,” *International Review of Mission* 69, no. 273 (January 1980): 34; Harold Ens, “Internationalization: Where Are Those ‘Ends of The Earth?’” *Direction* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 85; Kröker, “Can Mission Agencies Be Partners? A Response,” 87.

were based on the needs and robust economies of mission-sending nations and were neither appropriate nor sustainable in newly postcolonial nations.³³ In the decades that followed, missiologists noted that different worldviews and value systems among worldwide Anabaptist churches required sharing and discussion in order to find common ground.³⁴ In the 1960s, mission agency administrators highlighted the need to modify structures in order to facilitate better partnership, as did participants at the 1975 MWC San Juan meeting.³⁵ MBM sought to encourage multilateral relationships, linking the North American Mennonite Church and the churches MBM had established in the Southern Hemisphere in order to extend connections beyond the mission agency.³⁶ Within the broader purview of interagency collaboration, CIM called for cooperation among North American agencies and their international partners, for stronger regional bodies, and for MWC leadership to bring about such relationships.³⁷

Anabaptist discourse demonstrates a certain tension between partnership vision and reality. For MBM in the 1960s, partnership signaled a move from a strong leadership role to one of supporting the initiatives of the churches it had helped to create.³⁸ MBM committed itself to strive for equality and dialogue and to trust the leadership of its partners. The 1975 MWC San Juan meeting noted, however, the continuing cultural hegemony of Northern Hemisphere churches.³⁹ Twelve years after San Juan, CIM reiterated the continuing challenge of achieving mutuality and partnership and looked to MWC to “develop appropriate structures for global mission, including the discernment of priorities and sharing of resources.”⁴⁰

33 John H. Yoder to J. D. Graber, Memo on Definition of ‘Partnership’ Relationship.

34 Shenk, *God’s New Economy*, 30; Takashi Manabe, “Internationalization Must Replace Paternalism: A Response,” *Direction* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 89–90.

35 Vernon J. Sprunger to Mission Secretaries, June 13, 1960, IV-18-03-02, Box 9, Mennonite World Conference 1962; Vernon J. Sprunger to Mission Secretaries, July 18, 1960, IV-18-03-02, Box 9, Mennonite World Conference 1962; “1962 World Conference Missions Section Program Proposals”; Charles R. Taber, “Structures and Strategies for Interdependence in World Mission,” *Mission Focus* 6, no. 6 (September 1978): 3–10; “San Juan Statement.”

36 A. J. Metzler to P. J. Malagar and Joseph M. Bhelwa.

37 “Minneapolis Statement,” in *God’s New Economy: Interdependence and Mission* (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Board of Missions, 1988), 62–64.

38 *Partners in World Mission 1965*, 76–79, 218–19.

39 “San Juan Statement.”

40 “Minneapolis Statement,” 64.

Mennonite Church Nigeria in the Partnership Era

The congregations that became Mennonite Church Nigeria (MCN) were located in the area that today corresponds roughly to the northern half of Akwa Ibom State in Nigeria and were part of the Ibibio people, large numbers of whom came to affiliate with the Christian faith during the first half of the twentieth century. It was the Qua Iboe Mission (QIM), an interdenominational, evangelical Irish mission, that, according to agreements between Protestant missions in the region, held responsibility to evangelize much of Ibibioland and from which many of the MCN congregations had seceded.⁴¹ The QIM entered the region in 1887 and by 1902 had admitted “about 700” people into membership.⁴² The 1921 Nigerian census estimated that in Calabar province, which included all of Ibibioland and parts of the neighboring Igboland, there were 165,202 Christians—17 percent of the population.⁴³ From 1937 to 1939, QIM missionaries reported so many seeking to join the church that they could not cope with the situation.⁴⁴ By 1953 the census put the number of Christians in the province at 1,186,653—77 percent of the population.⁴⁵ It identified the Abak, Enyong, Ikot Ekpene, and Uyo divisions—where MCN congregations were located—as 59.3 percent, 75.1 percent, 63.7 percent, and 91.3 percent Christian respectively.⁴⁶

Ibibioland was a hotbed of independent churches that worked outside the authority of the QIM and other foreign missions.⁴⁷ Such independency was

41 E. A. Udo, “The Missionary Scramble for Spheres of Influence in South-Eastern Nigeria 1900–52,” in *The History of Christianity in West Africa*, ed. O. U. Kalu (London: Longman, 1980), 159–81; Edwin and Irene Weaver to John H. Yoder, December 24, 1959, IV-18-13-02, Box 11, Nigeria—Edwin Weaver 1959.

42 Robert L. M’Keown, *In the Land of the Oil Rivers: The Story of the Qua Iboe Mission* (London: Marshal Brothers, 1902), 153.

43 Percy Amaury Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria: A Sketch of Their History, Ethnology and Languages, with an Abstract of the 1921 Census*, vol. 4 (London: F. Cass, 1969), 104.

44 Richard J. Graham, “The Qua Iboe Mission: 1887–1945” (PhD dissertation, University of Aberdeen, 1984), 285, 495.

45 Nigeria, Department of Statistics, *Population Census of the Eastern Region of Nigeria, 1953* (Lagos: Census Superintendent, 1955), 42.

46 Nigeria, Department of Statistics, 42.

47 Independency was a characteristic of the wider African Christian movement and not unique to Ibibioland. See Afe Adogame and Lazio Jafta, “Zionists, Aladura and Roho: African Instituted Churches,” in *African Christianity: An African Story*, ed. Ogbu U. Kalu (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2007), 271–87 and Kevin Ward, “Africa,” in *A World History of Christianity*, ed. Adrian Hastings (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 221–23.

bolstered in 1927 by a spiritual revival, which spread from its beginnings in the QIM and resulted in new autonomous Christian movements.⁴⁸ By 1966, when MBM missionaries Edwin and Irene Weaver—the first resident MBM missionaries in Nigeria—organized a survey of the town of Abak, there were two hundred and fifty-one congregations within a five-mile radius of the town.⁴⁹ Eighty-nine were independent.⁵⁰ One hundred twenty-four congregations were affiliated with eight denominations that had arrived to the region during the middle decades of the century from North America, Europe, or other regions in Nigeria.⁵¹ The remaining thirty-eight congregations belonged to the QIM, in whose comity area Abak fell.⁵² Highlighting this steam of autonomous African Christianity, David Barrett's 1968 study identified the Ibibio as having "probably the densest concentration of independency in all Africa."⁵³

It was from this region of relatively high association with Christianity and independency that a group of independent congregations wrote to MBM asking for affiliation. That MCN would emerge from such an invitation was a characteristic of southeastern Nigeria.⁵⁴ The Qua Iboe Mission arrived in 1887 in response to an invitation from the chiefs near the mouth of the Qua Iboe River.⁵⁵ The Primitive Methodists arrived in 1899 at the invitation of King James Egbo Bassy, who had started a school for which he sought missionary assistance.⁵⁶ Once the Christian movement took root, existing churches

48 Monday B. Abasiattai, "The Oberi Okaike Christian Mission: Towards a History of an Ibibio Independent Church," *Africa* 59 (1989): 500–503.

49 I. U. Nsasak et al., "The Abak Story," Research Report (Inter Church Study Team, February 1967), HM-696, Box 6, Folder 3, The Abak Story.

50 I. U. Nsasak et al., 1–28.

51 I. U. Nsasak et al., 35–36.

52 I. U. Nsasak et al., 35.

53 David B. Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary Religious Movements* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968), 291.

54 Affiliation and exchanges between African independents and foreign missions was a characteristic of Ibibioland but not unique to it. See Adam Mohr, "Faith Tabernacle Congregation and the Emergence of Pentecostalism in Colonial Nigeria, 1910s–1941," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 43 (2013): 71–97; Allan Heaton Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 181–91; Deidre Helen Crumbley, *Spirit, Structure, and Flesh: Gendered Experiences in African Initiated Churches among the Yoruba of Nigeria* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 17–18, 28–32.

55 Graham, "The Qua Iboe Mission," 30–37; Eva Stuart Watt, *The Quest for Souls in Qua Iboe* (London: Marshal, Morgan and Scott, 1951), 1–19.

56 S. K. Okpo, *A Brief History of the Methodist Church in Eastern Nigeria* (Oron, Nigeria: Manson, 1985), 1–13; Edet Akpan Udo, "The Methodist Contribution to Ed-

would invite foreign missions or denominations. The Apostolic Church (1931), Lutheran Church (1936), Assemblies of God (1939), Church of Christ (1952), and Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints (1960s) were churches in south-eastern Nigeria that took on the confessional identity of foreign churches and missions that responded, sometimes hesitantly, to requests for assistance and/or affiliation.⁵⁷

In July 1958 Matthew Ekereke, secretary of the independent Saint John's Baptist Church in Ikot Ada Idem, Ibiono, wrote to MBM missionary Paul Peachy in Japan, asking if his church's sixty congregations could affiliate with MBM and adopt its name and teachings.⁵⁸ Members of Ekereke's church had obtained Peachy's address from M. D. Akpan of the Universal Pentecostal Church, information that had been on a tract, and they had learned of the Mennonites from MBM's *Way to Life* broadcasts from the ELWA (Eternal Love Winning Africa) radio station in Liberia.⁵⁹ Peachy sent Ekereke's request to S. J. Hostetler, an MBM missionary in Ghana, who in turn forwarded literature about the Mennonites to Ekereke.⁶⁰ By the time Hostetler visited the church in November, it had taken on the name The Mennonite Church.⁶¹ In

ucation in Eastern Nigeria, 1893–1960” (PhD dissertation, Boston University, 1965), 65–70.

57 Mohr, “Faith Tabernacle Congregation,” 210–11; Edet William Amamkpa, *A Short History of Ibesikpo* ([Place of publication not identified]: [Amamkpa:], 1979), 33–39; Henry Nau, *We Move into Africa: First Lutheran Mission in Nigeria, Africa* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1945); Reba C. Goff, *The Great Nigeria Mission* (Nashville: Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ, 1964); D. Dmitri Hurlbut, “The LDS Church and the Problem of Race: Mormonism in Nigeria 1946–1978,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 51, no. 1 (2018):1–16. The LDS church in Nigeria was “unofficial” until church authorities in the United States gave church members with black skin the ability to hold the Priesthood in 1978.

58 Matthew Ekereke to Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, July 25, 1958; and Paul Peachy to Matthew Ekereke, August 22, 1958, HM 1-563, Box 3, Folder 21, Nigeria Church, 1958–1960.

59 Matthew Ekereke to Paul Peachy, September 2, 1958, HM 1-563, Box 3, Folder 21, Nigeria Church, 1958–1960; S. J. Hostetler, “Report of Visit of S. J. and Ida Hostetler to the Church in Calabar Province,” November 28, 1958, IV-18-13, Box 10, Nigeria 1956-1959; I. U. Nsagak, *Africa in Three Dimensions*, DVD (converted from 16mm film), written and directed by Ken Anderson (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, 1967).

60 S. J. Hostetler to Matthew Ekereke, October 21, 1958, HM 1-563, Box 3, Folder 21, Nigeria Church, 1958–1960.

61 S. J. Hostetler, “Report of Visit of S. J. and Ida Hostetler to the Church in the Calabar Province.”

December, MBM authorized Hostetler to receive the Nigerian congregations into the Mennonite fold.⁶²

Collaboration

In the relationship that developed between MCN and MBM, each party hoped to better attain its goals by working together. For example, schooling and healthcare were important components of Christian missionary activity. MCN had neither schools nor health institutions and in its conference proceedings and communications repeatedly solicited help from MBM to fill the void.⁶³ MBM provided scholarships for church members to study at secondary, vocational, and Bible schools.⁶⁴ MBM doctors and nurses implemented short-term health clinics in some of the communities where there were MCN congregations.⁶⁵ MCN also sought to solidify its confessional identity and capitalized on its relationship with the mission agency to integrate into the Mennonite movement beyond Nigeria.⁶⁶ MBM facilitated attendance at international Mennonite events and organized visits of representatives of North American Mennonite institutions to Nigeria.

For its part, MBM had mission goals that it furthered via the relationship with MCN. The mission agency had sought an African field since the late

62 J. D. Graber to S. J. Hostetler, December 17, 1958, IV-18-13-02, Box 4, Ghana 1958.

63 “Convention of Mennonite Church of Jesus Christ Inc. Nigeria,” Meeting Report (Ikot Ada Idem, Ibiono: Mennonite Church Nigeria, February 12, 1959) and Matthew Ekereke et al., “Welcome Address from the People of Ibiono to Mr. and Mrs. Hostetler,” February 15, 1959, HM 1-563, Box 3, Folder 21, Nigeria Church, 1958-1960; P. E. Udo et al., “Welcome Address Presented by the People of Ibiono to Bishop J. D. Graber,” March 29, 1959, IV-18-13-02, Box 10, Nigeria 1956-59.

64 I. U. Nsagak, “Minutes of the Third General Conference (Nigeria),” (Ikot Ada Idem, Ibiono: Mennonite Church Nigeria, April 10, 1961), IV-18-13-02, Box 11, Nigeria National Correspondence 1961 Confidential; Edwin Weaver to J. D. Graber, January 29, 1962, IV-18-13-02, Box 10, Nigeria 1962.

65 John Grasse to J. D. Graber, September 24, 1962, and John Grasse to John H. Yoder, October 26, 1962, IV-18-03-02, Box 10, Nigeria—Abiriba Hospital, 1962.

66 Matthew Ekereke Umanah et al., “Presentation from Mennonite Church, Nigeria to J. D. Graber,” December 1960, IV-18-13-02, Box 10, Nigeria June–Dec 1960; Bassey O. Udoh to Wilbert R. Shenk, May 3, 1971, IV-18-13-04, Box 3, Nigeria—Mennonite Church 1969–74; I. U. Nsagak to J. D. Graber, April 11, 1962, IV-18-13-02, Box 11, Nigeria National Correspondence 1961–1962; Donald Jacobs to Africa Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Fellowship, May 26, 1969, HM 1-696, Box 2, Folder 28, Jacobs, Donald R.; Wilbert R. Shenk to I. U. Nsagak and Standard Bank of West Africa, Calabar, July 9, 1969, IV-18-13-03, Box 6, Nigeria-Biafra—June 1 to Dec 31, 1969.

1920s but only in 1957 entered Ghana.⁶⁷ Collaboration with MCN helped fulfill the goal of work in Africa and added to the global Anabaptist movement. S. J. Hostetler, the first MBM representative to visit MCN, reported excitedly that the group of Nigerian congregations would be the mission agency's largest church to date.⁶⁸

MBM missionaries also came to believe that aspects of their wider ministry engagement in the region depended on their relationship with MCN. For example, missionaries found there was deep distrust and resentment among churches, so they developed a ministry of interchurch reconciliation. Mission churches such as the Qua Iboe accused the independents of promoting a sub-par Christian faith, said that they should return to the mission churches, and discouraged MBM from working with them.⁶⁹ Independents valued their autonomy and resented colonial attitudes among foreign missionaries. MCN expressed this view sharply during one of Hostetler's visits in February 1959:

Nigeria today is not like Nigeria of yesterday. We are at present struggling to take our stand among the Nations of the world as an independent country; and of course, naturally, we must be beset with difficulties. At this transitional period of ours, which you come to meet us, we have to advise you not to look on us from the angle you look upon the people of America or England, but to look on us from the perspective of a child beginning to tread about the house. It will be difficult for you to work in our midst if you will not be able to appreciate our efforts and difficulties, and be prepared to stand firm by us, and support us in every way possible, to retain our independence on a balance as we have already marched to its threshold. . . . Beware of the dogs that bark and bite around Christian

67 I. E. Burkhardt, "The Call of Africa, (A) The Unoccupied Territory" and D. D. Miller, "The Call of Africa, (B) Our Obligations and Limitations," in *Twenty-Third Annual Report of the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities* (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, 1929), 65–73; J. D. Graber to Orrie O. Miller, October 13, 1955, IV-18-10, Box 4, Orrie O. 1954–1955; S. Jay Hostetler, "First Missionaries Arrive in Ghana," in *The Living Church in Action: The 52nd Annual Meeting of the MBMC* (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, 1958), 29–31.

68 S. J. Hostetler to J. D. Graber, November 28, 1958, IV-18-13-02, Box 10, Nigeria 1956–59.

69 Edwin and Irene Weaver to John H. Yoder, December 24, 1959, IV-18-13-02, Box 11, Nigeria—Edwin Weaver 1959; Edwin and Irene Weaver to John H. Yoder, February 11, 1960, IV-18-13-02, Box 10, Nigeria, Jan–May 1960. Resistance by foreign missions to moves for autonomy by African churches and African anti-missionary sentiments during decolonization was not unique to the QIM and Ibibioland. See Ogbu U. Kalu, "Passive Revolution and Its Saboteurs: African Christian Initiative in the Era of Decolonization, 1955–1975," in *Missions, Nationalism, and the End of Empire*, ed. Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 255–67.

institutions in this country. By dogs we mean certain missionaries from other denominations. . . . These are the brand of imperialist [sic] and their stooges who find it impossible to adapt themselves to the changing conditions of Nigeria.⁷⁰

Hoping to encourage reconciliation, missionaries sought to gain the trust of churches of all stripes. They noted that work with MCN allowed them to show their commitment to Christian faith and demonstrate their integrity, thus building trust with leaders in the wider church community for their ministry of interchurch reconciliation.⁷¹

Political Context, Schools, and Indigenization

MCN's strong anticolonial rhetoric highlights the political context in which the relationship between the church and MBM developed. Nigerians voted for the representatives in their first independent government just weeks after Edwin and Irene Weaver arrived in November of 1959, although the formal transfer of power would not happen until ten months later.⁷² As part of a society moving toward independence, MCN would not accept colonial attitudes and, furthermore, communicated its displeasure clearly when it disagreed with MBM. For example, from its first contacts with the mission agency, MCN asked MBM to help create schools for the church.⁷³ When MBM instead provided scholarships for members to attend existing schools in the area, MCN expressed gratitude but repeatedly called on MBM to change its approach in favor of establishing Mennonite schools.⁷⁴

70 Ekereke et al., "Welcome Address from the People of Ibiono to Mr. and Mrs. Hostetler."

71 Edwin Weaver to Wilbert R. Shenk, November 29, 1966, IV-18-13-03, Box 6, Nigeria—Edwin I. Weaver 1966; Wilbert R. Shenk to Verney Unruh, October 27, 1966, IV-18-13-03, Box 2, General Conference Mennonite Board of Missions 1966–69; Edwin Weaver, "Files on the United Independent Churches Fellowship, Transcript," 1968, 6–7, HM 1-696, Box 4, Folder 27, United Independent Churches Fellowship.

72 Edwin and Irene Weaver to J. D. Graber, December 13, 1959, IV-18-13-02, Box 11, Nigeria—Edwin Weaver, 1959; Toyin Falola and Matthew Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 156.

73 "Convention of Mennonite Church of Jesus Christ, Nigeria," Meeting Report (Ikot Ada Idem, Nigeria: Mennonite Church Nigeria, February 12, 1959) and Welcome Address from the People of Ibiono to Mr. and Mrs. Hostetler, February 15, 1959, HM 1563, Box 3, Folder 21, Nigeria Church, 1958–1960; Welcome Address Presented by the People of Ibiono to Bishop J. D. Graber, March 29, 1959, IV-18-13-02, Box 10, Nigeria 1956–1959.

74 Edwin Weaver, "A Statement on Mission Policy, Nigeria," February 6, 1961, IV-18-13-02, Box 2, Annual Mission Board Meeting 1961; List of Scholarship Students 1964, HM 1-696, Box 4, Folder 1, Schools and Scholarships; Edwin Weaver to John

In 1967 the Nigerian civil war forced most MBM missionaries to evacuate and intensified MCN's resolve. Joint Church Aid, a project of thirty-five aid agencies, reacted to the starvation and disease that the war caused by flying in some forty million pounds of food and medical assistance.⁷⁵ This support allowed the secessionist Biafra to hold out in the face of Federal government advances longer than would have been possible otherwise.⁷⁶ The government blamed the aid for prolonging suffering from the war and subsequently sought to counter such foreign intervention, in the process deporting missionaries who had participated with, or voiced support for, the Biafra cause, and refusing visas to new missionaries whose assistance did not fit within its postwar reconstruction priorities.⁷⁷

MCN flexed its muscles in a similar way. Church members identified with the Federalist narrative against the Biafra project and insisted that MBM would have to prioritize MCN's desire for proprietary institutions.⁷⁸ I. U. Nsajak, general secretary of MCN during much of the 1960s and 1970s and a close collaborator of MBM missionaries, described Federalist forces as liberators, lamented MBM's lack of institution-building before the war, and asserted that if the mission agency wanted to work in southeastern Nigeria, it would have to

H. Yoder, March 18, 1961, IV-18-13-02, Box 10, Nigeria 1961; Nsajak, "Minutes of the Third General Conference (Nigeria)"; Nsajak, I. U., "Minutes, 10th Annual Conference of the Mennonite Church Nigeria," April 25–27, 1969, IV-18-13-03, Box 6, Nigeria-Biafra—Jan 1 to May 31, 1969.

75 Ken Waters, "Influencing the Message: The Role of Catholic Missionaries in Media Coverage of the Nigerian Civil War," *The Catholic Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (October 2004): 697–718.

76 Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 175–78.

77 Waters, "Influencing the Message"; I. U. Nsajak to Edwin Weaver, August 31, 1968, IV-18-13-03, Nigeria-Biafra—Sept to Dec 1968; C. A. Ekere to The Divisional Officer, Uyo, January 4, 1969, IV-18-13-03, Box 6, Nigeria-Biafra—Jan 1 to May 31, 1969; Wilbert R. Shenk, "Administrative Visit Report–Nigeria, February 25–March 8, 1970, IV-18-13-04, Box 1, Administrative Trip Resources 1970–1974.

78 E. J. Akam to Edwin Weaver, April 15, 1968, IV-18-13-03, Box 7, Weaver, Edwin and Irene 1966–1968 Confidential; I. U. Nsajak to Edwin and Irene Weaver, September 6, 1968, HM 1-696, Box 3, Folder 29, Nsajak, I. U.; O. P. Ibok to Edwin Weaver and Irene Weaver, July 19, 1969, IV-18-13-03, Box 6, Nigeria-Biafra—Jan to Aug 1968. Identification with the Federalist narrative against Biafra was common among the Ibibio and other minority peoples in the region. See Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 175–76 and Egodi Uchendu, "Recollections of Childhood Experiences during the Nigerian Civil War," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 77, no. 3 (2007): 393–418.

provide material assistance such as schools, a hospital, or agricultural support.⁷⁹ MCN leader Peter Ibok wrote to Edwin and Irene Weaver that if MBM would not establish institutions such as schools and hospitals, there was no need to send missionaries.⁸⁰ He asked, “As a friend I would like to know from you why our mission board is not prepared to build anything which will be permanent in this our state like any other long standing mission in Nigeria.”⁸¹

MCN’s request for schools and MBM’s hesitancy to provide such educational infrastructure highlights the complexities that can arise in partnership relationships. In this case, each partner acted out of its context and background. Since the establishment of schools had been an important part of the work of foreign missions in southeastern Nigeria in the past, MCN logically expected such would be included in MBM’s ministry.⁸² MBM was hesitant, however, because of its mission history and its adherence to indigenous church principles, which stipulated that missionaries should establish churches that would be self-financing, self-administering, and self-propagating. In India, when MBM had established institutions such as schools and hospitals, the administration and financing of these institutions appeared to burden the church.⁸³ As a result, MBM and church leaders restructured them as independent entities.⁸⁴ As veterans of the India work, the Weavers were adamant that they would avoid saddling MCN with institutions that would encumber the church with excessive needs of finances, personnel, time, and energy, especially since

79 O. E. Essiet and I. U. Nsasak to Mennonite Board of Missions, November 11, 1968, IV-18-13-03, Box 6, Nigeria-Biafra—Jan 1 to May 31, 1969; I. U. Nsasak to Edwin Weaver, August 31, 1968; I. U. Nsasak to Mennonite Board of Missions, October 20, 1969, IV-18-13-03, Box 6, Nigeria-Biafra—June 1 to Dec 31, 1969; I. U. Nsasak to Edwin Weaver, October 20, 1969, HM 1-696, Box 3, Folder 29, Nsasak, I. U.

80 O. P. Ibok to Edwin and Irene Weaver, July 19, 1969.

81 O. P. Ibok to Edwin and Irene Weaver, July 19, 1969.

82 William H. Taylor, “The Presbyterian Educational Impact in Eastern Nigeria,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 14, no. 3 (1983): 223–45; P. B. Clarke, “The Methods and Ideology of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Eastern Nigeria 1885–1905,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 6, no. 2 (1974): 81–108; Edet Akpan Udo, “The Methodist Contribution to Education in Eastern Nigeria, 1893–1960” (PhD dissertation, Boston University, 1965); Magnus O. Basse, “Missionary Rivalry and Educational Expansion in Southern Nigeria, 1885–1932,” *Journal of Negro Education* 60, no. 1 (1991): 36–46.

83 Edwin and Irene Weaver to J. D. Graber, April 25, 1951, IV-18-10, Box 5, Weaver, Edwin and Irene 1951–1955; Edwin Weaver, “Some Principles to Be Considered in Charting the Future Course of the Church,” April 25, 1951, IV-18-10, Box 3, India-Unification Commission 1950–1953.

84 J. D. Graber to Ernest Bennett and John H. Yoder, January 29, 1960, IV-18-13-02, Box 1 Administrative Travel—JD Graber 1959–60; John H. Yoder to David Shank et al., March 22, 1960, HM 1-48, Box 116, European Missions 1959–1960.

there were already many schools and healthcare institutions in southeastern Nigeria.⁸⁵ Instead, MBM provided scholarships for students to study at existing schools.⁸⁶ Scholarship assistance was a way to respond to MCN's need for schooling while protecting MBM's concern for the financial and administrative integrity of the indigenous church.

After the Nigerian civil war, the relationship between MBM and MCN continued without resident missionaries.⁸⁷ Left on their own, church leaders established the Mennonite Theological Seminary, which was a secondary school with the option of a Bible-school curriculum.⁸⁸ With the dual programs for secular study and leadership training for the church, MCN leaders sought to fulfill the church's desire for schools in a structure that was likely to draw mission agency backing. For a decade, MBM provided financial assistance to the seminary in order to contribute to the theological training of MCN leaders.⁸⁹

Economic realities created power differentials in this case and resulted in a certain ambiguity in the search for mutuality and equity. While MBM's resources were limited, the wealth of the North American economy allowed the mission agency to assist partners like MCN. The church, on the other hand, existed in a context in which there were fewer financial resources. An implicit power differential existed in that MCN sought financial assistance and MBM was able to decide which initiatives it would fund. The church would have preferred that MBM help it establish schools but had little choice when the mission agency provided scholarships instead. In the post-civil war context, MCN voiced its protest more resolutely than it had earlier.

MBM was not blind to the power differentials and sought to mitigate them in some measure. After the civil war, MBM shifted some decision-making power to MCN, designating its assistance as a block grant to allow the church

85 Edwin and Irene Weaver to John H. Yoder, December 24, 1959, IV-18-13-02, Box 11, Nigeria—Edwin Weaver 1959.

86 Edwin Weaver, "A Mission Strategy for Uyo," March 25, 1966, IV-18-16, Folder 3 West Africa Program Docs, 1957–1973.

87 Wilbert R. Shenk, "Administrative Visit Report—Nigeria."

88 Warren L. Grasse, "Report of Visitation of Nigerian Mennonite Areas," March 6, 1969, IV-18-13-03, Box 6, Nigeria—Biafra—Jan 1 to May 31, 1969; J. Stanley Friesen to Wilbert R. Shenk and Edwin Weaver, July 20, 1970, HM 1-696, Box 1, Folder 41, Stan and Dee Friesen.

89 Wilbert R. Shenk to D. A. Ekerete, October 20, 1970, HM 1-696, Box 5, Shenk, Wilbert, 1970; Wilbert R. Shenk to Basse O. Obong, August 25, 1972, IV-18-13-04, Box 3, Nigeria Scholarships 1970–72; "Analysis of Budget Funds for Nigeria Support and Program," July 29, 1980, IV-18-13-06, Box 8, Nigeria Mennonite Church 1980–1984.

the freedom to decide how to invest it.⁹⁰ Yielding to MCN, MBM funded the construction of buildings for the Mennonite Theological Seminary, despite the mission agency's conviction that infrastructure-heavy institutions were costly to maintain and not in the best interest of the church.⁹¹

Mission Structures

In Nigeria, MBM sought to avoid colonial-era structures that inhibited mutuality. It rejected, for example, the "mission station" approach in which missionary residences and mission institutions were located together in large compounds.⁹² MBM scattered smaller groups of missionaries among different places and ministries where they lived in housing comparable to that of their Nigerian co-workers. They sought to identify with the people with whom they worked, rather than set themselves apart. Missionaries wanted to be active members of MCN but not create a mission organization whose authority structures would parallel or supersede that of the church.⁹³ Four years after arriving in Nigeria, MBM did create a Field Coordinating Committee that it tasked with managing information, advising MBM, and problem-solving, but it did not have the infrastructure traditionally associated with mission agencies.⁹⁴

For its part, MCN critiqued the way MBM's approach resulted in less investment in infrastructure that might have added to the church's patrimony. Missionaries rented residences as well as the site where they initiated an interdenominational Bible school, rather than invest in properties that could have become assets of MCN. The church called on MBM to invest in proprietary, permanent missionary housing and Bible school facilities rather than renting.⁹⁵ Nsagak and MCN executive committee chairman, O. E. Essiet, wrote, "In

90 Wilbert R. Shenk to Bassey O. Obong, June 7, 1972, IV-18-13-04, Box 3, Nigeria-Mennonite Church 1969-1974.

91 "Analysis of Budget Funds for Nigeria Support and Program."

92 J. D. Graber, *The Church Apostolic: A Discussion of Modern Missions* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1960), 41-43; Irene Weaver to Esther Graber, February 9, 1965, IV-18-13-02, Box 10, Nigeria 1960-1965 Confidential; Edwin Weaver to J. D. Graber, May 17, 1965, IV-18-13-02, Box 11, Nigeria-Edwin Weaver 1964-1965; Edwin Weaver and Irene Weaver, *The Uyo Story* (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, 1970), 81-83; Irene Weaver, *Irene Weaver, Reminiscing for MBM*, Transcript (Elkhart, IN, 1983), 44, Mennonite Mission Network.

93 Weaver, "A Mission Strategy for Uyo."

94 John H. Yoder to Nigeria Field Coordinating Committee, January 9, 1964, HM 1-696, Box 4, Folder 42, John Howard Yoder, 1963-1964; Lloyd Fisher, "Field Coordinating Committee Meeting," (Ikot Inyang, Nigeria: Field Coordinating Committee, MBMC Nigeria, January 24, 1964), IV-18-13-02, Box 10, Nigeria-Lloyd Fisher 1964.

95 "Mennonite Church Nigeria Annual Conference 1966," January 20, 1966, 9-11, 27-28, IV-18-13-03, Box 6, Nigeria 1966, 27; O. E. Essiet and I. U. Nsagak to Men-

our culture we interpret the continual renting of residences by missionaries as signs of temporary concerns in the area where they engage in work. We look forward to a permanency of Mission Board's witness in Nigeria."⁹⁶ Nigerian Mennonites certainly wanted to set aside colonial attitudes in favor of increased mutuality but also saw the disadvantage of decreased institutional investment that accompanied the eclipse of the mission station.⁹⁷

Bilateral Versus Multilateral Partnerships

MCN invited MBM to Nigeria to establish a bilateral relationship, but missionaries and church leaders developed broader affiliations. Edwin Weaver spent much time developing opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and reconciliation among independent churches and between independents and mission churches.⁹⁸ Weaver came to believe that relationship and discernment with other churches in the region were more important for MCN than was its relationship with MBM or the North American church.⁹⁹ Churches that shared similar cultural and religious contexts would be better able to assist each other in deliberations about belief and practice, he thought. Weaver even suggested that the church drop the term "Mennonite" from its name.¹⁰⁰ Given the deep distrust between mission churches and independent churches in the region, Weaver proposed that MCN would be better able to build trust with independents if it did not have an explicitly Western denominational identity.

MCN participated in MBM's initiatives to build trust and collaboration among churches in southeastern Nigeria but resisted the suggestion that such engagement should characterize its relationship with the mission agency. It

nonite Board of Missions and Charities, November 11, 1968, IV-18-13-03, Box 6, Nigeria-Biafra-Jan 1 to May 31, 1969.

96 O. E. Essiet and I. U. Nsagak, "Address of Welcome from the Mennonite Church of Nigeria to Wilbert R. Shenk and Vern Preheim," March 2, 1970, IV-18-13-04, Box 3, Nigeria-Mennonite Church 1969-1974.

97 African churches have sometimes found it useful to perpetuate mission agency structures even after decolonization; e.g., Maia Green, *Priests, Witches and Power: Popular Christianity after Mission in Southern Tanzania* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 46-59.

98 Weaver and Weaver, *The Uyo Story*, 89-93, 105-15.

99 Edwin Weaver, "A Report to the Eastern Region Council," September 19, 1961, HM 1-696, Box 1, Folder 20, Christian Council of Nigeria; Edwin Weaver to Alan Griffiths, April 15, 1964, HM 1-696, Box 1, Folder 42, Misc.; "Mennonite Church Nigeria Annual Conference 1966," January 20, 1966, 9-11, 27-28, IV-18-13-03, Box 6, Nigeria 1966.

100 "Mennonite Church Nigeria Annual Conference 1966," 9-11, 27-28; Delores Friesen to Wilbert R. Shenk, February 7, 1966, IV-18-13-03, Box 6, Nigeria-Stan and Delores Friesen 1965-1967.

sought to reinforce its bilateral connection to MBM and its Mennonite identity. MCN did not accept Weaver's proposal that it drop "Mennonite" from its name.¹⁰¹ The church emphasized the role of MBM in its founding and communicated forcefully that, due to the church's Mennonite identity, MBM should give it priority among the mission agency's many inter-confessional initiatives in the region.¹⁰² The bilateral connection provided MCN with relationships with resident missionaries and international partners as well as with agricultural and scholarship assistance, which the church valued. The multilateral approach via MBM's collaboration with a wide array of partners appeared less beneficial to MCN and raised questions about the partnership's priorities and about who should be involved.

The story of Nigerian and North American Mennonites working together during the last half of the twentieth century highlights some of the same issues that missiologists outlined in the wider Protestant mission movement and in Anabaptist circles. The political context in Nigeria and the background of each partner complicated the relationship, as did differing criteria with respect to mission structures and multilateral relations. The conviction that both partners could advance their objectives through collaboration, however, was strong and sustained the relationship, despite the ambiguity of power differentials and differing opinions about priorities and approaches.¹⁰³ Today MCN is a member of Mennonite World Conference and continues to partner with MBM's successor agency, Mennonite Mission Network.

This case suggests that practitioners of partnership will face challenges on the road to fulfilling their goals of mutuality, equity, and shared ministry, indicating that their initiatives might well benefit from additional mission models. It also suggests, however, that in spite of its challenges, the partnership par-

101 Delores Friesen to Wilbert R. Shenk.

102 Umanah et al., "Presentation from Mennonite Church, Nigeria, to J. D. Graber"; Nsagak, "Minutes of the Third General Conference (Nigeria)"; Delores Friesen to Wilbert R. Shenk; O. E. Essiet and Bassey O. Udoh, "Address of Welcome to Willard Roth," August 24, 1971, HM 1-696, Box 3, Folder 40, Roth, Willard E.; Stanley Friesen, "A Visit to the Mennonite Churches in S. E. State by Stan and Delores Friesen and B. Charles and Grace Hostetter and Sons," May 1971, HM 1-696, Box 1, Folder 41, Stan and Dee Friesen; Bassey O. Udoh to Wilbert R. Shenk.

103 For twelve years, starting in 1983, the MCN/MBM partnership was put on hold because of disagreements among the various regions that make up MCN. See documentation relating to MCN in IV-18-13-06 Box 8, IV-18-13-07 Box 4, IV-18-13-08 Box 3, and James R. Krabill to Alice Roth, December 13, 1994, Mennonite Mission Network, Elkhart, IN.

adigm provides a compelling missionary vision that can motivate and sustain collaboration among members of the world Christian movement.¹⁰⁴

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