

## Roland Allen and the Moratorium on Missionaries

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In 1971, John Gatu, General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, issued a call for a moratorium on foreign missionaries and foreign funds (Wagner 1975:166). This call was repeated at Lusaka, Zambia at the All-Africa Conference of Churches in 1974 (Hastings 1976:22). Reaction to the moratorium was intense in the 1970s. Correspondence between Johannes Verkuyl and Emilio Castro shows how interpretations differed (Verkuyl and Castro 1975). Verkuyl had served as a missionary in Indonesia, as General Secretary of the Dutch Missionary Council, and as professor of missiology at the Free Reformed University of Amsterdam, while Castro was director of the World Council of Churches' Commission on World Mission and Evangelism.

Verkuyl wrote two letters to Castro to express his concerns about the moratorium, which he viewed as a "*very ill chosen*" word (1975:310; italics in this paragraph are Verkuyl's). He found that deliberations about the moratorium were an unfortunate distraction to what he considered the real work of mission, "namely the vocation to communicate the *whole* Gospel in and to the *whole* world" (1975:307). He said that the moratorium debate had "already produced disastrous effects in West Germany," and quite likely would affect the Netherlands in the same way (1975:307). The disaster he referred to was that young people in the West who had been considering missionary service "now feel—and *rightly so*—that they are being asked not to consider any longer the possibility of taking up the task in other continents" (1975:310). In addition, "the élan for the gathering of funds [for use in world mission] is being *completely and utterly destroyed*" among people in the West (1975:310).

In his response, Castro, who was from Uruguay, saw the moratorium in a different light. He cited an example of a Western missionary who confessed that his methods had made an African church "heavily dependent on foreign funds and personnel" (Verkuyl and Castro 1975:309). Castro asked, "To what degree are we suffocating the gifts which God wants to give to that church? And are we—by keeping relations of dependency with that particular church—not daring to dream of other areas of the world where new challenges and missionary opportunities are waiting for us?" (1975:309). He wondered whether debates on the moratorium in Germany and Holland served merely as "an alibi" or were "a symptom of the lack of serious missionary conviction on the part of the churches in Europe" (1975:308). For his part, he recognized the moratorium as an indication "that a new period of missionary history is at our doors" (1975:308).

The tendency was to see the moratorium as either a threat to world mission or the dawn of a new and better era. The moratorium ignited reactions that accompanied the shift from colonial to postcolonial mission. Those who were more evangelical were upset by the call to withdraw missionaries, while those who were less evangelical could take the moratorium as a reason to terminate traditional mission programs. Many Western Christians worried about their future role

in world missions, while some non-Western Christians saw an opportunity for new mission paradigms. Some saw the moratorium as a desire for isolationism on the part of younger churches and a threat to interdependence in the body of Christ worldwide, while others saw it as a means of achieving interdependence for the first time. This paper investigates these varied reactions and, in particular, the meaning that John Gatu attached to the moratorium.

In honor of the centennial of Roland Allen's famous book, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*, this paper also explores the connection between some of Allen's key themes and the moratorium. Although there is probably not a direct link between Allen and Gatu, in some sense Allen wrote *Missionary Methods* while looking forward to a postcolonial period when his ideas would be taken seriously. In the foreword of an edition of *Missionary Methods*, Lesslie Newbigin wrote, "Allen himself told his son that his writings would come into their own about the year 1960" (Allen 1962:i). This paper primarily uses Allen's Chapter 12 entitled "Principles and Spirit" (1962:141-50) for his themes that link up to the moratorium. The intention is to show that Gatu put into practice Allen's themes and in so doing ushered in a symbolic beginning to postcolonial missions. For some context to show the marked difference between colonial and postcolonial missions, we briefly describe the period of high imperialism during which Allen wrote *Missionary Methods*.

### High Imperialism

Historian Eric Hobsbawm called the period from 1875-1914 "The Age of Empire" (1989). He described it as a period "with two sectors combined together into one global system: the developed and the lagging, the dominant and the dependent, the rich and the poor" (1989:16). He said that the word "imperialism" only came into common use in journalism and politics at this time: "Emperors and empires were old, but imperialism was quite new. . . . It was a novel term devised to describe a novel phenomenon" (1989:60). He explained, "The new imperialism had economic roots in a specific new phase of capitalism, which, among other things, led to 'the territorial division of the world among the great capitalist powers'" (1989:60).

Along with the economic aspect of imperialism, there was also a strong element of racial superiority. Ideas about the capability of colonized peoples to govern themselves gave way to theories of "trusteeship," where "the superior races were duty-bound to come to the aid of the inferior peoples" (Shenk 1983:107). Such attitudes issued in a program of westernization of conquered peoples (Hobsbawm 1989:77). Hobsbawm added, "The idea of superiority to, and domination over, a world of dark skins in remote places was genuinely popular, and thus benefited the politics of imperialism" (1989:70). Colonial subjects were therefore viewed as "inferior, undesirable, feeble and backward, even infantile" (Hobsbawm 1989:79).

Roland Allen reacted against such treatment of people, especially in mission work. He expressed these themes forcefully in Chapter 12 of *Missionary Methods* as he began to summarize his findings in the comparison between colonial mission methods and the Apostle Paul's. In two

closely-related areas, he critiqued colonial missions for failing to release converts to make mistakes and for failing to trust the power of the Holy Spirit to direct them into God's service.

### Roland Allen's Critique of Colonial Missions

While Allen noted that Christian missions in his day had made great strides, he was not satisfied with the results as he observed them. He spoke of "three very disquieting symptoms: (1) Everywhere Christianity is still an exotic [plant]. . . . (2) Everywhere our missions are dependent. . . . (3) Everywhere we see the same types" (1962:141-2). In absorbing the spirit of the age, missions had uniformly imposed Western forms of Christianity in the mission fields of Africa and Asia. Not only were these forms foreign but they also created dependency on missionaries. The reason came directly from colonial mentality: "We have approached them as superior beings, moved by charity to impart of our wealth to destitute and perishing souls" (1962:142).

Paternalism as a mission method perturbed Allen. "We have done everything for them except acknowledge any equality. . . . We have treated them as 'dear children,' but not as 'brethren'" (1962:143). But worst of all, Allen said, "We have educated our converts to put us in the place of Christ" (1962:143). This type of idolatry spilled over into training methods, where missionaries taught their converts but would not allow them to make mistakes. This omission allowed local Christians to carry no responsibility. For Allen, "It would be better, far better, that our converts should make many mistakes, . . . than that their sense of responsibility should be undermined" (1962:145).

Referring to the Apostle Paul's methods, Allen found a universality to them that superseded the passage of time and difference of cultures. Indeed, "the Apostle's methods succeeded exactly where ours have failed" (1962:147). Two of Paul's principles stood out to Allen: "(1) that he was a preacher of Gospel, not of law, and (2) that he must retire from his converts to give place for Christ" (1962:148). Regarding the first principle, Allen explained that Paul did not rely on commands but on example and persuasion to motivate his converts (1962:149). "He was persuaded that the Spirit of Christ in them would teach them to approve that example and inspire them to follow it" (1962:149). Concerning the second principle, Allen understood that Paul gave room for the Holy Spirit to operate in his converts. "He was always glad when his converts could make progress without his aid. . . . To do this required great faith. . . . He believed in the Holy Ghost. . . . He believed therefore in his converts" (1962:149). Allen believed that a missionary who trusted the Holy Spirit as Paul did could lead converts to early leadership in their own churches.

Because of prevailing colonial attitudes in 1912, Allen's voice was not much heard. Although he advocated that a Western missionary should "live his life amongst his people and deal with them *as though he would have no successor*" (1962:153; italics are Allen's), most missionaries could not conceive of handing over the reins of leadership to their converts at the time. Today, Allen is much more honored long after his death because he had foreseen a time when Western

missionaries would no longer be in charge of mission-established churches. But the transition from colonial to postcolonial missions has not been easy. John Gatu's moratorium underlines just how hard it was.

### The Moratorium

In 1971, "Gatu caused a major stir when he brought up this moratorium proposal in a gathering called 'Mission Festival '71' sponsored by the Reformed Church of America" (Wagner 1975:166). The content of Gatu's proposal was: "Our present problems . . . can only be solved if all missionaries can be withdrawn in order to allow a period of not less than five years for each side to rethink and formulate what is going to be their future relationship. . . . The churches of the Third World must be allowed to find their own identity, and the continuation of the present missionary movement is a hindrance to this selfhood of the church" (Anderson 1974:43).

Gatu was not the only voice protesting colonial mission patterns from what were perceived as "receiving" nations. In the same year in the Philippines, Emerito P. Nacpil, president of Union Theological Seminary near Manila, stated that partnership between Asian and Western churches "can only be a partnership between the weak and the strong. And that means the continued dependence of the weak upon the strong" (Anderson 1974:43). He went so far as to call missionaries "a symbol of the universality of Western imperialism" (Anderson 1974:43). Gerald Anderson cited several other church leaders from the developing world who had similar views (1974:43). Apparently, Gatu was voicing a common complaint on behalf of churches planted by missionaries in various parts of the globe.

Once Gatu issued his moratorium, it took on a life of its own because it struck numerous cords relating to the collapse of colonialism. The postcolonial period created aspirations and expectations that were difficult to contain. All sectors of previously colonial societies sought greater autonomy. Nigerian E. Bolaji Idowu explained, "The inherent urge to freedom and self-expression which resides in a man will bring about rebellion against any form of bondage" (1965:41). Freedom was in the air that newly independent peoples breathed.

This included churches established by missions. Idowu questioned "whether what we have in Nigeria today is in fact Christianity, and not in fact only transplantations from a European cult (1965:1). Postcolonial reactions included a backlash against westernization and anything that smacked of imperialism, including missionaries (Scherer 1964). Churches planted by missionaries now expected to achieve selfhood by overcoming longstanding dependency on Western personnel, funds, and ideas. But dependency was also difficult to stamp out. And some took the moratorium to mean an end to Christian mission altogether, especially those groups that had already lost interest in direct evangelism.

In an article in *Christianity Today*, Wade Coggins reported on the moratorium and its impact. The resolution that came out of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) in Lusaka, Zambia in 1974 was quite radical, relating the moratorium to political and social liberation:

To enable the African Church to achieve the power of becoming a true instrument of liberating and reconciling the African people, as well as finding solutions to economic and social dependency, our option as a matter of policy has to be a moratorium on external assistance in money and personnel. (1974:8)

Coggins noted that “this call has proved very attractive to some large denominational missions that are already in trouble because lay revolt against their radical political adventures has dried up a large part of their missionary resources” (1974:8).

Peter Wagner emphasized that the AACC’s stand against foreign input was “the proverbial bulldog with rubber teeth,” because the AACC received 80 percent of its budget from overseas (1975:167). Wagner noted that AACC General Secretary Burgess Carr actually modified the proposal for a break in funding, saying rather that the moratorium was “a demand to transfer the massive expenditure on expatriate personnel in the church in Africa to programme activities manned by Africans themselves” (1975:167). In other words, Carr saw the moratorium as a way to divert foreign funds from obsolete missionaries to African churches. Wagner also accused mainline denominations of using the moratorium as “a smoke screen to hide some much more fundamental problems in their missionary programmes” (1975:170). By this he meant that the mission boards of these denominations were already shifting their policies “to decrease involvement in evangelization and church planting and increase involvement in worldwide social and political action” (1975:170).

One might have concluded that Christians who had already lost interest in traditional missions tended to welcome the moratorium for various reasons, but the truth was that some key evangelical leaders were also persuaded about its merits. At the famous Lausanne International Congress on World Evangelization in 1974, Billy Graham denounced the moratorium in his opening address (Wagner 1975:168), but that was before he met John Gatu. Gatu attended the congress and Wagner reported, “It was evident that his own motivation arose from a desire to settle internal African church problems presently being caused by missionaries, and he felt that the moratorium would ultimately help the cause of world evangelization” (1975:168). Gatu dissociated himself from Carr’s rhetoric about the moratorium and was able to persuade evangelicals to include his ideas about the moratorium in the Lausanne Covenant. The relevant paragraph did not mention the word “moratorium,” but stated:

A reduction of foreign missionaries and money in an evangelized country may sometimes be necessary to facilitate the national church’s growth in self-reliance and to release resources for unevangelized areas. Missionaries should flow even more freely from and to all six continents in a spirit of humble service. (Wagner 1975:168)

The Lausanne Covenant showed that evangelical leaders recognized the damaging nature of dependency in mission churches and they phrased their concern in terms of how dependency impedes world evangelization. Only healthy indigenous churches could possibly take part in

obedience to the Great Commission. The current flow of missionaries from and to all six continents indicates how world mission has changed in the postcolonial period.

But not all evangelicals accepted Gatu's proposals for a moratorium. Numerous African church leaders came out against him. Zimbabwean Pius Wakatama agreed with Gatu about the damage of missionary paternalism, saying that in Zimbabwe "there is a marked employer/employee relationship between the missionary and the pastor (1976:31). He added, "American dollars crippled indigenous initiative and saddled churches with expensive programs which they can never dream of financing themselves" (1976:36-7).

On the subject of the moratorium, however, Wakatama differed with Gatu, calling only for a "selective moratorium" (1976:11). By this he meant that African churches should still invite qualified Western missionaries "to meet specific needs, especially in the area of training nationals at a higher level" (1976:11). And because the moratorium had been taken as an end to missions, Wakatama criticized it on that ground: "Matthew 28:19-20 gives only one limitation to the Great Commission. We should go until the end of the age" (1976:20).

In general, African evangelicals were not in favor of severing long-held ties with parent bodies overseas. Wakatama said that Nigerian S. O. Odunaike, then president of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar, rejected the moratorium outright, stating, "We completely resist the idea of a moratorium on missionaries in Africa. How can we talk like this when our governments are actively soliciting economic, technical, and educational aid from overseas?" (1990:128). It appeared that mere political independence did not signal a real end to dependency either at the national level or at the local church level.

Mutombo Mpanya, a Congolese church leader, recognized dependency as a core problem among churches in Central Africa, categorizing the many expressions of dependency he had witnessed. In church leadership, people were campaigning for office rather than using the African ideal of consensus; in finances, people sought top offices in order to gain access to foreign funds; in personnel, Africans accepted foreign oversight; in programs, churches merely maintained what missionaries had introduced; and in theology, the foreign nature of missionary theology left Africans unable to relate effectively to their traditional cultures (1978:117-22). Despite these revealing admissions, Mpanya nevertheless rejected the moratorium, saying, "The solution is not independence as it may be possible to think, but interdependence" (1978:117).

Western mission leaders agreed with Mpanya that the concept of a moratorium threatened global interdependence of Christians. George Hood conducted a study for the Conference of British Missionary Societies that concluded that "the clearest expression of interdependence across the whole spectrum of the church's life is found in giving and receiving. . . . The greatest threat to interdependence is self-sufficiency" (Anderson 1974:44). Gerald Anderson agreed with Hood's assessment, saying, "We cannot responsibly solve the accumulated problems of nearly 200 years of missionary relationships by suddenly going into isolation" (1974:44).

Thus the moratorium ignited debates that continue today. Some Christians still see a stigma attached to the words “mission” or “missionary” as products of Western imperialism. Conservative Christians are still divided over how to conduct postcolonial missions, whether through tackling dependency or through a “Marshall Plan” from Western churches to those with fewer resources (Schwartz 2007 and Rowell 2006). The words “dependency,” “independence,” and “interdependence” are still relevant (Reese 2010:91-5). Nevertheless, most missiologists conclude that missions have passed on from a Western dominated phase to a multilateral postcolonial phase. Lesslie Newbigin stated:

We are forced to do something that Western churches have never had to do since the days of their own birth—to discover the form and substance of a missionary church in terms that are valid in a world that has rejected the power and influence of the Western nations. Missions will no longer work along the stream of expanding Western power. (1995:5)

Wagner concluded his analysis of the moratorium by saying that although he initially rejected it, he came to see that a new type of missionary was now needed: “We need a moratorium on missionaries who continue to extend Western cultural chauvinism” and who “indulge in theological and ethical imperialism,” . . . and “are dedicated to paternalistic interchurch aid” (1975:171-4). In response to the moratorium and the issues it raised, Wagner saw a need for reassessing the qualities Western missionaries would need in the postcolonial period.

Similarly, David Bosch suggested that current missions are in transition from what he called “modern” to “postmodern” missions (1991:349). He cautioned:

New paradigms do not establish themselves overnight. They take decades, sometimes even centuries, to develop distinctive contours. The new paradigm is therefore emerging and it is, as yet, not clear which shape it will eventually adopt. For the most part we are, at the moment, thinking and working in terms of two paradigms. (1991:349)

David Howard divided modern mission history into three phases: the era of dependence during colonialism (1793-1945); the era of independence from the end of colonialism until the calls for a missionary moratorium (1945-1974); and the current era of interdependence (1974-present), dating from the Lausanne Congress when Christians from all six continents pledged to plant churches among the unreached peoples of the earth (1997:27-8).

Some students of mission history, then, would agree that the moratorium created a symbolic turning point in mission paradigms. But as we have seen, church and mission leaders at the time of the moratorium understood it in radically different ways. The question is, How did John Gatu himself view the moratorium?

John Gatu’s Motivation

First, Gatu recognized that not many other African church leaders accepted his proposal for a moratorium (Anderson 1974:45). Second, his call for a moratorium was frequently misunderstood; he called only for a temporary moratorium to give time for a reassessment of the working relationship between missionary organizations and the churches they had planted (Anderson 1974:43). Third, he did not envision an end to mission work; rather he realized that the existing system prohibited the possibility of Kenyan churches participating in global missions in any meaningful way (Gatu 1996). Fourth, his aim was not isolation from the global body of Christ, but a reorientation of the relationship between Western missions and African churches in order to achieve true interdependence. He still wanted Kenyan churches to take part in global missions, but now as equal partners.

Concerning the frequent rejection of his proposal for a moratorium by both African and Western Christians, Gatu felt that people wrongly took him for an anti-Western, anti-colonial zealot. In an interview with Richard Reeve, he acknowledged the harsh criticism he had received: “Many have said, ‘This man, John Gatu, grew up out of a colonial background, and he is still very bitter about missionaries, . . . about the white man’” (2008). Some had even referred to him as an “ecclesiastical Idi Amin,” referring to the Ugandan dictator’s hatred of Asians which caused him to drive them out of Uganda (Gatu 2008). His reply to those accusations was that he had indeed been anti-colonial and anti-white in his youth, but after 1950, “as a result of the Lord Jesus Christ appearing to me, and convicting me of my personal sin, . . . then the concept I had about the white man disappeared” (2008). He added, “It is not out of bitterness that I am saying what I am saying. In fact, it is out of love. The love I have for Christ concentrates [*sic*] me—as Paul says—to the point that I have to love even the person I used to call my enemy” (2008).

Concerning Gatu’s call for a moratorium on missionaries being misunderstood, he stated:

There were people who deliberately did not want to understand it . . . because it was a threat. Some people on mission boards did not want to understand it, because it meant they were losing jobs, you know? So, instead of transforming themselves into something else, it was a threat, they were going to lose jobs. (2008)

In addition, the moratorium caused evangelical Christians to assume Gatu was not evangelical. At the Lausanne Congress in 1974, Gatu said the delegates “found it very strange that I was there, because they didn’t consider me to be an evangelical pastor anymore. . . . For them, I was far, far too liberal for them to accept” (2008). He heard Billy Graham reject the moratorium in his opening keynote address and was asked for his reaction; he replied, “He is entitled to his view. . . . But I am only sorry that he is making remarks on a problem he knows very little about” (2008). Gatu soon had a meeting with Graham, John Stott, Michael Green, and others where his views became better understood. By the end of the meeting, “Billy Graham agreed that there can be situations where it would be necessary to remove missionaries” (Gatu 2008), but not that all missionaries should be removed. For his part, Gatu emphasized, “Neither did I want to suggest



that [missionaries] should be removed from everywhere,” as that depended on the local situation (2008). As noted above, Gatu’s ideas were eventually incorporated in the Lausanne Covenant.

Regarding Gatu’s commitment to world evangelization, he remarked that his Presbyterian Church of East Africa was 105 years old and asked, “How much longer can we continue to ask our friends to come to evangelize our northern frontier? . . . Is it not time that we should be thinking of organizing ourselves—with our own money and personnel—to reach the frontiers of Europe and America, where church membership is declining?” (1996). Gatu maintained that the moratorium was intended to create a positive attitude in younger churches toward God’s global mission: “It was an attempt, for the churches . . . in the developing world . . . to feel a part of God’s mission. Not only to themselves, but to other people. . . . It was a challenge to ourselves to engage in God’s mission” (2008).

Regarding the issue of interdependence, Gatu had this to say:

You will tell me that we are now living in the era of “interdependence” or “partnership”! English is not my mother tongue, so I may be excused if I misunderstand certain concepts in the way I do. For me interdependence means “we are equally depending on each other.” . . . We are very good at changing words and continuing just as we did in the past. If we are talking about interdependence when all the money and personnel come from overseas, what is it that we in Africa are contributing to make our interdependence a reality? (1996)

All this direct testimony indicates that Gatu was more conservative than assumed. Why then did he even advocate a moratorium in the first place? He explained:

As long as money came when we requested it, there was no reason to ask (a) whether the structures we inherited were still relevant, (b) whether it would be possible for us to maintain a differently restructured edifice or (c) whether or not we could find local people to manage those structures? Just as African governments did not feel embarrassed to keep begging year in and year out, the dependence syndrome became something to live with. Our outreach work depended solely on whether funds were available from overseas and if not, this was justifiable reason to stop worrying about our mission for the time being. (1996)

And what was the result of cessation of direct missionary funding and personnel for the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA)? Glenn Schwartz reported, “The PCEA very quickly began to pay their own pastors, build their own buildings, and buy their own vehicles” (2007:12). Beyond that, they began church planting and raised funds to pay pensions for their retired pastors; Schwartz said the PCEA even donated the equivalent of US\$30,000 to homeless children in Scotland, the homeland of the missionaries who helped launch the Kenyan denomination (2007:12). Richard McMaster and Donald Jacobs likewise noted a dramatic change in the PCEA after the moratorium. They estimated that over the two decades following

the moratorium, the PCEA went from receiving 85 percent of church funds from overseas to receiving 85 percent locally (2006:258).

For his part, Gatu said that when Kenyan Christians began to pay their own way, they also began to realize that “the church belongs to them and not the missionaries” (2008). He insisted that Africans were not too poor to give; however, they had not been taught to give. He said from the time he ceased to be General Secretary of the PCEA in 1979 and up to about 1985, the denomination “was paying every single pastor . . . without assistance from Scotland or America” (2008). He added that the PCEA constructed a headquarters for the denomination at a cost of a million Kenya shillings, but “not a penny came from America or Scotland,” other than a few unsolicited gifts (2008). He concluded, “So it is not true that people cannot sustain their own churches. . . There is money, if they want to give” (2008).

When asked about John Rowell’s idea of implementing a “Marshall Plan” from Western churches to non-Western in the postcolonial era (2006:141-5), Gatu replied that if this Marshall Plan was to be done without African participation, “for me it is another imperialism. . . . If there was going to be a Marshall Plan let African churches also take part. But it should not be done for them. . . . All poor churches are not in Africa alone, or Asia. . . . And for me, again, it is the same imperialistic spirit that continues” (2008).

Perhaps part of Gatu’s strong reaction against Rowell’s proposal had to do with his theological understanding of the moratorium. He said he discovered that “the word moratorium had a concept of dying. The word has something to do with death, something should die. . . We want that old relationship to die in order that something new will be formed. . . . This is very good New Testament theology. That the seed is going to die before it can grow” (2008). He was determined to put to death the paternalistic relationship that prevailed in the colonial period and introduce a healthier interdependent spirit.

In order to achieve that interdependence, Gatu likened the role of Africans in the process to that of Peter after the resurrection when he encountered Jesus at the Sea of Galilee in John 21:

Do you remember what Peter himself did? He stripped himself naked and went to the Lord. To be able to achieve self-reliance, not only will church leaders in Africa have “to strip themselves naked” before the Lord in terms of allowing Jesus to deal with their spirituality, but they will have to strip themselves of the comfort of salaries and benefits received from their relationships with overseas donors, and allow Jesus to do the operation instead. (1996)

This accent on spirituality to overcome dependency was part of Gatu’s heritage as a Christian. According to MacMaster and Jacobs, Gatu was deeply influenced by the East African Revival that sprang up in 1929 and continued for decades. Self-reliance in financial matters was part of the ethos of the revival:

The East African Revival had been financially self-reliant. When “the saved ones” felt that God was calling them to do something locally or on a broader scale, they simply announced the need and received funds from the local fellowships. What they could not afford they did not undertake. (2006:257)

Thus when Gatu became General Secretary of the PCEA in 1964, he already knew that there was an alternative to dependency on outside resources. In fact, breaking dependency went hand in hand with spiritual renewal. MacMaster and Jacobs made it clear that behind the call for a moratorium on outside help lay the assurance that spiritual renewal releases funding from local sources:

Gatu defended the idea [of the moratorium] as consistent with the ethos of the revival fellowships, which knew the freedom that comes from raising and using their own money. . . . The revival fellowships loved their friends overseas, but they never wanted to be beholden to them for financial support. They had to believe that God would supply the money to do the things he wanted them to do. (2006:259)

Roland Allen and John Gatu

Roland Allen anticipated the postcolonial period and urged Western missionaries to prepare for it. John Gatu’s moratorium signaled that the postcolonial period demanded a new approach to mission, creating a symbolic milestone to mark the new era. Although the two men were separated by about half a century, they shared some common concerns.

Both Allen and Gatu wished to end paternalism in missions. The paternalism came from Western missionaries who had adopted methods originating in the period of high imperialism. The assumption was that converts in underdeveloped regions could not be trusted to lead churches or missions without strict supervision. Allen said, “In everything we have taught our converts to turn to us. . . . We have educated our converts to put us in the place of Christ” (1962:143). He added, “The consequence is that we view any independent action on the part of our new converts with anxiety and fear” (1962:144). Gatu’s moratorium was just such an independent action that alarmed many Western missionaries; Gatu explained his abrupt action in this way: “My view of the moratorium is not cutting a relationship. It is only cutting a relationship in terms of paternalism” (2008). That was precisely Allen’s goal.

Both Allen and Gatu desired that old unhealthy patterns of mission should die in order that newer productive patterns could emerge. Allen understood that Paul’s missionary principles provided the productive model as contrasted with mission models of his time. Paul “gave place for Christ. He was always glad when his converts could progress without his aid” (1962:149). To accomplish this, Paul moved on to leave his converts under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit: “He must retire from his converts to give place for Christ” (1962:148). Allen thus advised Western missionaries not to stay too long in charge of new converts, but his advice often went unheeded. Gatu’s strong reaction embodied in the moratorium helped bring Allen’s emphasis

back into the spotlight. Gatu stated, “It is important for the old relationships to die, for new relationships to be born. In other words, I foresaw some future relationships, but very different from what was going on in terms of that continuation of imperial tendencies” (2008).

In order for new and better relationships between missionaries and their converts to materialize, nothing short of spiritual renewal was required for both sides. Allen referred to Paul’s deep faith in the Holy Spirit to guide his new converts after he retired from direct supervision. “He retired from them that they might learn to exercise the powers which they possessed in Christ. . . . He believed in the Holy Ghost in them” (1962:149). Gatu cited the example of the Macedonian churches which Paul described as in deep poverty in 2 Cor. 8:2. Yet they were able to give themselves to God to the extent of making a significant contribution to the Jerusalem church in its time of need. Gatu charged that African church leaders had “failed to give the kind of leadership that the Apostle Paul talks about regarding the church in Macedonia. Here is a question of spirituality and management, which we cannot run away from as churches in Africa today” (1996).

This change from old paradigms to new meant a spiritual renewal for both parties. For Africans, renewal meant the acceptance of responsibility in order to implement appropriate changes in programs they had received from missionaries. Taking ownership of church projects should usher in a new era of equality for people who once were told they could not manage their own affairs. Gatu said:

The old must die, so we have a new kind of relationship where we treat one another equally. I also learned that because of that the local people need the right structures. What structures did the . . . missionaries leave with them? Are they the best, are all the projects that were probably introduced by missionaries actually necessary? (2008)

Operating in this new paradigm would allow the local people no longer to feel threatened by foreign church workers, but to see themselves as equals. Inferiority complexes should die, but superiority complexes must also cease. For Western missionaries, the renewal meant releasing converts to operate under the direction of God’s Spirit. Allen said, “Only by retirement can he [a Western missionary] prepare the way for real independence” (1962:159). This would allow a contextualized Christianity to emerge led by local people.

Finally, both Allen and Gatu recognized that independence was the way to true interdependence. In some memorable phrases, Allen reminded his readers, “Slavery is not the best training for liberty. It is only by exercise that powers grow” (1962:145), and “It is impossible to skip stages of growth” (1962:147). Allen felt it a tragedy that converts were not allowed to take responsibility, as that would consign them to perpetual dependency on outsiders. Releasing them to make mistakes was how learning occurred and it required faith that the Holy Spirit would lead these new leaders. Gatu similarly saw the moratorium as allowing space for African leaders to take the reins of leadership without oversight. This was not, as some feared, an escape into

isolationism, but a means of creating true interdependence. Gatu summed up the importance of the moratorium with an African proverb: “As long as you sleep on someone else’s mat, you will never sleep easy” (1996).

Since interdependence is a two-sided relationship among equals, it requires an end to feelings of superiority and inferiority. For Western missionaries it requires a postcolonial spirit, while for their non-Western converts it requires a confidence inspired by God’s Spirit that they have something valuable to offer. And sometimes it may require those converts to issue a moratorium to achieve interdependence. John Gatu certainly thought so.

### Conclusion

John Gatu’s moratorium served notice that what Roland Allen had anticipated had come to pass. The converts of Western missionaries were taking responsibility for their part in God’s mission. The age of colonial dependency was passing, but not yet gone, so forceful action was required to put an end to it. While Allen aimed his writing at Western missionaries, Gatu emphasized that non-Western Christians should take charge of their own work. Thus Gatu’s action signals the new era of postcolonial mission. While Western missionaries can and should adapt to the new situation, according to Allen’s century-old wisdom modeled on Paul’s mission methods, non-Western Christians also have to respond positively to claim their role in world missions. Once these two sides, whose origin is in the outdated Christendom mission model (Smith 2003), come to terms with postcolonialism, a more productive mission model can take effect where no side is considered to be in charge of the other. Perhaps then Paul’s mission models can be resumed by all Christians.

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