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# The Call to Moratorium (Perspective on an Identity Crisis)

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THE FIRST THING to say about the Moratorium issue is that it is complex, and the temptation to resolve it simplistically is to be resisted at all costs. Neither unqualified approval nor uncritical disapproval will do, and anyone resolving the issue along either of those lines is, to this writer, on the wrong track. Our second preliminary comment is to note that we dare not deny that the moratorium call has both manifested and created an identity crisis, not only for sending agencies and the missionaries they send, but also for receiving agencies, local churches, and 'nationals', so called, who man them. At stake in the debate is the true nature, calling, and mission of the church of Jesus Christ in our time. The subject therefore deserves our careful and rational attention, especially as pride, prejudice and emotion have already begun to bedevil the discussion.

## 1. *Moratorium—its nature and identity*

THE nature and identity of the call to moratorium is already confused because communication on the subject has been poor, suspicions regarding its motivation have been unthinkingly swift, and terms have not been understood or defined. We must see therefore what moratorium is not and what it is.

### (a) WHAT IT IS NOT

First of all, moratorium is not a call that mission and evangelism should cease. Etymologically, the word is rooted in the Latin *moror* (I delay) and not the Latin *morior* (I die). This is important, because the popular mind tends inevitably to assume that *moratorium* is etymologically derived from the Latin for death, and in thus confusing *moratorius* (adj. = delaying) with *mortuus* (adj. = dead), the mistaken conclusion is that *moratorium* calls for a death or cessation of mission

and evangelism. The conclusion is then quickly reached, for example in certain Evangelical circles, that moratorium and all its ways is a wicked renunciation of the imperatives of the Great Commission, and therefore to be resisted at all costs. The confusion of terms thus breeds hasty and emotional reactions, communication breaks down and the problem is further aggravated. What then is moratorium?

#### (b) WHAT IT IS

The call to moratorium is basically a call for a temporary delay in sending missionaries from Western churches to Third World situations. Describing moratorium as 'a strategy for self-reliance', an All Africa Conference of Churches leaflet says 'The suggestion is that the churches of Africa should consider calling a halt to the flow of missionary personnel and funds from other countries—at least for a period. The moratorium would be a strategy to allow the churches of Africa to make sure of their own identity and integrity as responsible communions of Christians. For African Christians, moratorium would mean taking full responsibility for the work of the church in their own country and continent and a self-giving commitment to support it and its mission'.

Rev. John Gatu, General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, whose name has been most closely linked with the call to moratorium, argued at the Mission Festival '71' of the Reformed Church of America in Milwaukee in 1971 'that the time has come for the withdrawal of foreign missionaries from many parts of the Third World; that the churches of the Third World must be allowed to find their own identity; and that the continuation of the present missionary movement is a hindrance to the self-hood of the church'.<sup>1</sup>

Gatu also quoted the Catholic priest, Father Daniel Berrigan, who suggested for Latin America that 'we stop sending anyone or anything for three years and dig in and face our mistakes and find out how not to canonise them'.<sup>2</sup> Later in that same address Gatu went further and said missionaries should not simply be withdrawn for a five year period, but 'should be withdrawn, period'.<sup>3</sup>

The Bangkok '73 conference of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism picked this up and gave it new impetus, acknowledging at the same time that 'it is not proposed that the moratorium be applied in every country. Missionary policy should be adapted to the circumstances in each area'.<sup>4</sup>

A more strident note was sounded at the AACC Lusaka Assembly in May 1974 which stated: 'Should the moratorium cause missionary-sending agencies to crumble, the African church would have performed a service in redeeming God's people in the northern hemisphere from a distorted view of the Mission of the church in the world.'

The Assembly went on to affirm that a 'moratorium on the receiving of money and personnel' would be 'the most viable means of giving the

African church the power to perform its mission in the African context, as well as lead our governments and peoples in finding solutions to economic and social dependency'.<sup>3</sup>

Following the Lusaka AACC Assembly came the International Congress on World Evangelisation at Lausanne in July 1974 where the relationship between the sending and the receiving church again surfaced, not so much in major papers, as via a press conference in which five East African church leaders, including John Gatu, discussed the idea of a moratorium. In the press conference, Gatu noted that four problems need to be confronted: (1) the uncertain relationship that exists between the sending and receiving churches; (2) the need for selfhood and self-reliance of the church that has emerged on the mission field; (3) the need for the national church to take the responsibility for mission with its own resources and its own people; and (4) the problem of institutions on the mission field—those that may or may not be desired by the church, the supervision of such institutions, and resources to sustain them. Gatu then said: 'The presence of missionaries and money has played a great part in shaping these relationships. . . . Some of us feel a temporary withdrawal of missionaries and personnel will help the two parties—that is, the receiving church to be able to criticise or evaluate what they have been doing in light of the four items I have mentioned, and also the sending churches to be able to evaluate what they have been doing so that we can adapt ourselves honestly to the demands of mission in the 1970's'.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. *Moratorium—its basis and motives*

IN reading of and speaking with advocates of moratorium, I sense a range of motives which constitute its basis and inspiration. Many of them are admirable, some less so, which complicates matters further. We take the positive dimensions first.

### (a) ADMIRABLE MOTIVES FOR MORATORIUM

#### (i) *The concern for self-reliance and self-discovery*

The AACC bulletin on moratorium, referred to earlier, is subtitled 'A strategy for self-reliance'. It lists four reasons why moratorium may be necessary:

- (a) To discover an authentic African form of Christianity which can in turn enrich all the Christian churches of the world.
- (b) To encourage African churches to leave the dependent attitudes many of us have adopted.
- (c) To help African churches establish their own priorities in their work for Christ and to become fully missionary churches themselves.

- (d) To enable the traditionally missionary sending churches in other lands to re-examine the nature of their mission and their future partnership with other churches.

Few would quarrel with the basic concerns reflected there, nor with the AACC Lusaka Conference's desire to see African churches 'consciously develop authentic structures, order and programmes based upon African values and priorities'. Says Canon Burgess Carr: 'Leave us alone for a while, so that we may be able to discover ourselves, and you, in Jesus Christ.' He goes on: 'When this has happened you will be able to come to Africa and see:

- (a) Churches renewed and empowered by the Holy Spirit to a new consciousness of what Christ means to them and their mission to others.
- (b) Genuinely self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating churches making their full contribution to the whole church of the world.
- (c) Churches that have found a new freedom to seek unity among themselves.
- (d) Churches whose relationships with other churches are based upon equality under the lordship of Jesus Christ.'

Professor John Mbiti in his *Crisis of Mission in Africa* sounds the same sort of note. Affirming 'that the age of foreign missions in Africa is now over', he goes on: 'We all agree that for too long the church here has depended on Canterbury, Rome, Athens and now Geneva, not just in financial matters but in its structures, its decisions, its outreach and the profession of the faith in Africa. This tenacious dependence on the traditional centres of Christianity means, in effect, that our church has failed to use and develop its own resources of manpower, wealth and vision in looking to the future etc. The church here has become like a toothless child which eats pre-chewed food from its mother's mouth: this will not do—we must chew the food ourselves, with our own teeth. Pre-chewed food loses its real taste! . . . Christianity in Africa over the next thirty to fifty years will be faced with three major challenges. Christianity must be made relevant to the life and affairs of our continent. We cannot afford to keep a foreign institution in Africa—if indeed Christianity continues to look foreign. Christianity has to lose its foreignness and become relevant, indigenous and deeply involved in the affairs of our continent, as a participant and not as a spectator.'

(ii) *Impatience with stultifying missionary power and paternalism*

Related to the concern for self-reliance and self-discovery is the very natural Third World impatience with the kind of missionary who by his interminable presence and paternalism keeps the lid of indigenous church growth and development well screwed down.

'They aren't yet ready to take over' is the entrenched mentality which co-exists with an extraordinary blindness to the fact that it is this very mentality which maintains and perpetuates the so-called 'unreadiness' to take over. In the event, it is hardly surprising if national Christians feel spiritually exploited and emasculated by such racial and spiritual arrogance, based as it often is on the view that the transplant of Western culture is almost as important as the transplant of the Christian Gospel.

Sensing the growth of this debilitating mentality, Dr. Dale Bruner, the well-known Evangelical missionary to the Philippines, has commented: 'The problem is that American missionaries are inhibiting and impeding the wholesome, natural growth of an indigenous and responsible Philippine Christianity . . . I hold therefore that a considerable number of us American missionaries ought to leave the islands. . . . One day perhaps we shall return as wiser men, members of the Catholic body of Christ.'<sup>10</sup>

### (iii) *Concern for church growth and evangelism*

Many evangelistically concerned people have concluded over hastily that anyone calling for moratorium must automatically be uninterested in church growth and evangelism. This is not so. Interviewing John Gatu in Lausanne, Peter Wagner of Fuller Seminary concluded that the Kenyan was concerned to 'help the cause of world evangelisation'<sup>11</sup> rather than the reverse.

Professor Orlando Costas of Costa Rica likewise sees the church-mission tension as 'not only historical, socio-political, and theological in nature', . . . but 'also a matter of missionary strategy. To a certain extent it boils down to this: Can an un-evangelised world, caught up in a process of political, economic and cultural awakening, be effectively evangelised by a church that is not indigenous?'<sup>12</sup> Costas goes on to quote Horace L. Fenton, Director of the Latin American mission: 'Foreignness is an increasing liability in the work of the Lord and our allegiance to the Great Commission may prove to be only lip service unless missions learn how to become more thoroughly rooted in the culture they seek to serve.'<sup>13</sup>

### (iv) *Concern for culturally relevant leadership*

The sending agency-receiving agency or mission-church issue is also related to the matter of leadership. All over the world, missionary societies and mission-minded churches in the western world are finding themselves face to face with an increasingly articulate and discerning indigenous leadership which not only understands its own socio-political context, but also that of the missionary agency. This new leadership is often theologically sophisticated and sufficiently sensitive culturally to discern what

is part of the Gospel and what is not. Often they trust their own insights more than those of their missionary mentors and they accordingly feel deeply the ever-increasing appropriateness and importance of taking over the reins of local leadership.

(b) QUESTIONABLE ELEMENTS IN MORATORIUM MOTIVES

Having seen that the Moratorium call, when presented in integrity and Christian concern has many positive aspects to it, we now turn to the less positive. One naturally hesitates to call in question the motives people have for doing certain things, but being fallen creatures with feet of clay, we need to acknowledge the ease with which even our noblest intentions and actions can be tainted by mixed motives, theological shallowness and elements of lovelessness. It is therefore a salutary exercise to consider the unworthy elements to be guarded against by Moratorium proponents.

(i) *Indifference to evangelism*

We must be honest and say that some calling for Moratorium have not given the impression of having a deep commitment to evangelism. This has led others to suspect that the Moratorium call is a convenient fig-leaf to hide the nakedness of a disobedience to the imperatives of the Great Commission. In fact there are many around the world who feel that the World Council of Churches, which is so prominent in the Moratorium call, has increasingly retreated from the missionary mandate of the church and become politically pre-occupied instead. After exploring the proposed programme for the WCC Assembly in Nairobi (Nov. 1975), even such an open-minded observer as Canon Max Warren has noted the 'tragic' fact that 'the witness in the Lausanne Conference has borne, so far, no fruit in WCC circles'.<sup>14</sup> Comments Dr. Donald McGavran of the Fuller Seminary School of World Mission: 'The Nairobi meeting of the World Council seemingly plans to say nothing about world evangelisation or the propagation of the Gospel among the three billion who have yet to hear and yet to believe. . . . The evangelisation of the world has indeed been swallowed and has disappeared almost without trace.'<sup>15</sup> In the event, it is only fair to add that evangelistic concerns did surface in a modest way at Nairobi, though this was generally more via the membership of the Assembly than via the platform presentations, which apart from that by Bishop Mortimer Arias of Bolivia, seemed to be more preoccupied with the horizontal than the vertical concerns of the Gospel. Nairobi made headway on the evangelistic front, but it was not nearly enough in the view of this writer. All this lends substance to the view that some moratorium proponents in the ecumenical world are indifferent to evangelism.

The trouble is, McGavran feels, that the ontological reality to

salvation through belief in Jesus Christ is being brushed off in WCC circles and this partially explains, he feels, the apparent disinterest in evangelisation. Of course if salvation is largely reinterpreted in terms of emancipation from alien rule and if liberation from oppressive structures is elevated to number one priority, then one can easily see how the Moratorium call can be made to fit conveniently into the presuppositional world of such a theology. But, as Bishop Stephen Neill has noted: 'We all need liberation, but what we need is liberation from sin. Such doctrine is of course highly unpopular, especially among those who have accepted a good dose of the Marxist mythology. The sins of the rich are not the same as the sins of the poor: the sins of the Christian may be different from those of the Hindu or the Buddhist. But the needs are essentially the same: and unless we say so plainly, we are simply betraying the truth of the Gospel.'<sup>16</sup>

In his concern to see the evangelistic priority maintained, Bishop Neill adds, 'We hear rather often the saying that humanisation must precede evangelisation, sometimes indeed that in the present day world humanisation *is* evangelisation. To this we may agree — on one condition. The primary factor in humanisation is the knowledge of God revealed in Jesus Christ. No man is fully human until he has come to know God and himself in the searchlight of Jesus Christ. If we suppose otherwise, we have not begun to understand what humanisation is'.<sup>17</sup>

If therefore the Moratorium discussion is to be entered creatively, particularly by those who espouse a more conservative theology, then the cause and necessity of world evangelisation must be held high. If Moratorium proponents present their case hand-in-glove with a universalistic theology, with a doctrine of salvation and liberation reinterpreted in purely temporal and political terms, and with an apparent indifference to the unreached three billion, they will defeat their own cause by engendering, especially within evangelicalism, a stubborn and visceral resistance which in its turn will be blind to the positive aspects of the Moratorium call. Not only that, but they will further contribute to what even WCC spokesman, Dr. Lukas Vischer, has to acknowledge and recognise as the 'spiritual emigration from the ecumenical movement'.<sup>18</sup>

#### (ii) *Confusion of nationalistic and Christian impulses*

The development of what some have called 'ethno-theology' has both its positives and its perils. Ethno-theology describes those theologies produced by different ethnic groupings who have put to Scripture certain important questions relating to themselves and their own socio-political contexts. From this kind of exercise has emerged much of the so-called Black Theology along with the



Theology of Liberation. Likewise some speak of a Latin-American theology. And so on. Much of this is healthy and is part and parcel of the proper contextualising of theology for the sake of greater relevance and improved communication through theologising in indigenous categories. All this is fine and good, provided what emerges remains a Biblical theology.

However, in my own judgment, the hazard here, especially where there is no clear grasp of hermeneutical principles, is that what emerges is more nationalistic than biblical, with the consequence of serious theological distortion. Thus, for example, national church councils, unwittingly perhaps, can become the theological arm of political movements. The consequent identification results in the church losing its capacity both to speak prophetically to the total society and to manifest in itself the Alternative Society it desires to see in the body politic. This is particularly dangerous in Latin America and Africa where political movements to overthrow or reverse certain political orders and systems are so numerous and compelling.

The danger is well illustrated here in our African context. The AACC, for example, has rightly or wrongly in many minds become uncritically identified with the so-called Liberation Movements, the African counterpart to the Zealot movement of our Lord's day. In so doing the AACC seems to be falling into the same trap into which the Dutch Reformed Church and many English-speaking South African Christians (especially Conservative Evangelicals) have also fallen—namely unprophetic theological identification, like the Sadducees of old, with the political status-quo enshrined in a discriminatory and often oppressive system. Thus on both left and right ends of the political spectrum, Christians find themselves nationalistically allied with different Caesars, instead of all linking hands to show the competing Caesars the truly revolutionary alternatives of a messianic community transcending colour, race, class and tribe.

These nationalistic identifications, which have penetrated the Moratorium debate, are particularly hazardous to the cause of the Gospel here in Africa, simply because the emotional and political temperature between white and black is running high, and people are therefore that much more desperate and determined to enlist the name of Christ on their side of the struggle, and thus unleash with the masses a powerful political ally deceptively dressed in theological garb. Black Moratorium proponents therefore have to examine their motives to ensure that they are not using Moratorium crudely as a cloak for hidden political agendas, whether inspired by noble liberation ideals, inverted racism or even by unconsciously swallowed Marxist social theory. The Moratorium issue must be lifted above the political arena. Likewise white Moratorium antagonists, who will often be the actual missionaries themselves, have to guard against resisting the concept

simply because it is suggested by socially concerned and politically involved blacks. Unless truly godly, humble, loving and Biblical perspectives are maintained in this regard by all God's people, we risk tragically fragmenting the Gospel and the church of Christ, with a white conservative theology producing a radical black theology, and the theology of liberation in Lusaka and Nairobi producing a border theology in Rhodesia and South Africa, while the Biblical theology of our God and His Christ, which puts all political movements under judgment and scrutiny, is lost somewhere beneath the rubble of conflicting political agendas.

While the Gospel may and should be culturally related and dressed in national garb in each country, we must also note, before leaving this point, that the valid search for national church identity, which is so often adduced by Moratorium proponents, must also be set against the back-drop of a wider supra-national identity which we invisibly possess in Christ and must visibly seek to demonstrate in his church. As Christians, 'our commonwealth is in heaven' (Phil. 3: 20) and 'here we have no continuing city' (Heb. 13: 14). There will therefore always be a pilgrim quality and 'strangerness' about us and we can never therefore totally and uncritically embrace any limited earthly identities. By extension, it is also only in proportion as we are rooted in Christ that we can reach out to find one another in him where all foreignness disappears and where diversity becomes not divisive but enriching. If indeed in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek (Gal. 3: 27-28), then it is both sound theology and good evangelistic strategy when an African bishop of the Anglican church in Kenya writes: 'Our church will never accept the idea of a purely African church. This would go directly contrary to the ideal of the Catholic church into which we have been trying to help our province to grow.'

If Jesus sought to present us with the model of a messianic community of love, it is at once evident that the appropriateness or inappropriateness of Moratorium in any area must be decided by factors other than racial and nationalistic ones. No national church dare be too self-conscious, too concerned for its own identity, lest self-consciousness become self-centredness and the black Moratorium on white, or vice versa, becomes a deadly undermining of the nature of the church, and of that new identity and new humanity which is uniquely offered through and in our Lord Jesus.

#### (c) SOME GENTLE COUNSEL TO MORATORIUM PROPONENTS

In the light of all the above, one's gently proffered counsel to Third World proponents of Moratorium might run as follows:

- (i) Do not in the discussion forsake a Biblical theology of the Body of Christ whose members are mutually interdependent.
- (ii) Do not in the discussion forsake a firm commitment to *agape* love—even with your tiresome white brothers! Control your

impatience.

- (iii) Try to think of things from his side too. Does he have a genuine call from God or not? If so, beware of pushing him out, lest you start usurping divine prerogatives.
- (iv) Examine your own Moratorium motives before God. Are they really inspired by the Holy Spirit? Or has the flesh come in?
- (v) Check and counter-check your theology of evangelism and salvation against that of the Scriptures. Moratorium can either be an important call to cultural relevance and self-reliance or a cop-out from the evangelistic and salvation imperatives of the Great Commission.
- (vi) Keep the Moratorium debate firmly anchored within the context of the world's spiritual need. This surely is a major priority. As such it deserves fuller treatment. To this therefore we turn.

### 3. *Moratorium—factors to face*

WE cannot and must not divorce the call to Moratorium from the context of the world's spiritual needs.

#### (a) THE WORLD'S SPIRITUAL NEEDS

We referred earlier to Dr. Donald McGavran's concern for the unreached three billion in the world today. This is a very proper and Biblical concern. It should rest heavy on the church of Jesus Christ everywhere.

Non-Christians comprise some 70% of the world's population. In fact there are more than two dozen nations, with 24% of the world's people, which are less than 1% Christian, by even the broadest and most inclusive understanding of that term. Most of these non-Christian people are found in the nations of North Africa, the Middle East, and South and East Asia. It has been said that the number of people yet to be won to Christ in Africa and Asia alone has more than doubled since 1900 and will be more than tripled by the turn of the century. One recent study of 860 tribes throughout Africa revealed that 213 were completely or heavily Moslem with virtually no Christian influence, while 236 others representing some 13% of the continent, were still largely unevangelised. The story could be repeated in many other parts of the world. Then there are over 200 million people of many nations who practice animism, spiritism and traditional religions, not to mention the many other millions in Western countries who have embraced secularism or shallow Christian nominalism.

Against this backdrop there are some 1.1 billion Christians of any and every description, comprising some 28% of the total world population. Although socially and geographically, if not numerically, Christianity has become a 'universal' faith, yet there remains an

immense evangelistic task before the people of God. Anyone calling for Moratorium must do so within the context of a serious reckoning with this task. Not only that, but it has been convincingly demonstrated by Dr. Ralph Winter, of the Fuller Seminary School of World Mission, that four out of five non-Christians in the world today are beyond the reach of near-neighbour, national church evangelism. This startling fact dictates that most of the world can only be won to Christ by 'cross-cultural' evangelism—i.e. by 'missionaries' whether from the West or the Third World.

Facing the differing cultural distances which evangelistic endeavour must travel in its task, Winter speaks of E-0, E-1, E-2 and E-3 evangelism. E-0 evangelism, focusing within the Christian community of one's own church, aims to bring nominal Christians to faith and commitment, but there is no cultural distance involved in the task, hence the zero. E-1 evangelism goes out into the culture in which the church is at home, having only the 'stained-glass barrier' to break. E-2 evangelism reaches outside this culture into a similar culture that is nevertheless sufficiently different to make the founding of separate congregations desirable to act as a base for effective outreach to others in that same culture. E-3 evangelism involves similar church-planting initiatives, but reaches out to a totally strange and different culture. In his paper at Lausanne, Winter demonstrated statistically that in country after country, as for example in India and Nigeria, most of the people are located at a cross-cultural distance from any Christian congregation whatsoever. Therefore, however powerful, effective or desirable E-1 evangelism is, it is nevertheless impossible to use that sort of evangelism where there are no witnesses within a given language or cultural group. Sending agencies therefore cannot and must not conclude that E-3 evangelism is out of date due to the fact that there are Christians 'over there already'. If four out of five non-Christians in the world today are isolated by ethnic and cultural divisions from E-1 contact by existing Christians, more missionaries, not fewer are needed. Indeed in Africa and Asia alone it is calculated that 1,993 million people are virtually without any Christian witness. Do we really want to send all the missionaries packing?

In the light of all this Winter concludes: 'The master pattern of the expansion of the Christian movement is first for special E-2 and E-3 efforts to cross cultural barriers into new communities and to establish strong, on-going, vigorously evangelising denominations, and then for that national church to carry the work forward on the really high-powered E-1 level. We are thus forced to believe that until every tribe and tongue has a strong, powerfully evangelising church in it, and thus an E-1 witness within it, E-2 and E-3 efforts coming from outside are still essential and highly urgent.'<sup>10</sup>

The implications of the above must not be lost within the Moratorium debate.

**(b) AFRICA'S SPIRITUAL OPENNESS**

Those of us who live in Africa, plus others who love this continent, must reckon with yet another factor as we debate Moratorium. Not only is there spiritual need in Africa today, there is extraordinary receptivity and openness to the Christian Gospel. This further underlines that the Moratorium issue must be considered not nationalistically or politically, but strategically.

In his book *The Discipling of Africa in this Generation*, Dr. David Barrett, the well-known Nairobi-based researcher, describes what has been called one of the greatest opportunities placed before the Christian church in the last 2,000 years. He notes that, 'in Africa, the nominal fringe of 32 million in 1972 (who will become 95 million in AD 2000) consists of people, young and old, who are crowding around the doors of the churches seeking to enter. Despite determined and sometimes desperate efforts, only a fraction each year manage to push their way to the front and get in. Meanwhile the millions waiting outside get larger in number, and the waiting periods correspondingly longer. . . . This is an intolerable situation. It calls for a total overhauling and speeding up of the entire machinery of Christian initiation. The nominal fringe represents an unprecedented phenomenon in the history of the Christian mission. It consists of 32 (in 1974, 36) million persons receptive to the Christian presentation, who have a high regard to the Christian faith, for the person of Christ, for the churches and their members, who want to find the Bread of Life, who have already passed the point of decision and call themselves Christian, who know that this is only the beginning of the Christian pilgrimage, who want therefore to enter the fellowship of the church to serve Him as their King as soon as possible, and who are prepared to go to considerable lengths for a certain period of time in order to achieve that end'.<sup>10</sup>

National church and mission leaders should face this amazing challenge and devise the massive measures needed to capitalise fully on such an opportunity. Will Moratorium hasten or hinder the completion of this task? The question must be answered.

As far as South Africa is concerned, although we are 87% nominally evangelised, a huge evangelistic opportunity remains which is based not only on spiritual openness everywhere, but on the urgent needs of the unevangelised 13% and the nominality of many, if not most, within the 87%. Whether missionaries are able to help in this task is at this moment uncertain in so far as many have locked themselves into administrative and church-centred activities, rather than direct evangelism. Again sending agencies and national church leaders involved in the Moratorium debate need to weigh up the nature and comparative usefulness of the missionaries' current activities in the light of task in hand and the socio-political givens of the situation.

This brings us to a key question to be faced frankly by all parties involved in each situation:

## (c) WILL MORATORIUM HELP OR HINDER MISSION AND EVANGELISM?

By now it should be clear that there can only be one criterion applied in this Moratorium debate, and that is: 'Will Moratorium in any given area help or hinder mission and evangelism?' Strategy, not politics or race, must be the key factor. As Dr. Emilio Castro, director of CWME has noted: 'Moratorium should never be the expression of a desire to break off relationships or to reject the call to mission. Moratorium must be *for* better mission: this is its only justification.'<sup>11</sup> Correct. Moratorium cannot be *from* mission, but only *for* mission.

Asked at the Lausanne Congress whether Moratorium could be considered Biblically permissible, Rev. John Stott, probably the key figure in drafting the Lausanne Covenant, commented: 'If a church desires a reduction in the number of missionaries from abroad working in its area (a) for the sake of its own growth and self-reliance or (b) in order that resources may be redeployed to unevangelised areas, a Moratorium would not only be justified but would be very healthy. But the point . . . is that *such action could be taken only in order to increase the free flow of missionaries*. A Moratorium that dries up missionary effort is totally unacceptable.'<sup>12</sup>

The Lausanne Covenant, for its part, put it this way: 'A reduction of foreign missionaries and money in an evangelised country may sometimes be necessary to facilitate the national church's growth in self-reliance and to release resources for unevangelised areas. Missionaries should flow ever more freely from and to all six continents in a spirit of humble service' (Article 9).

The Covenant thus stresses two positive criteria which are to be applied in the Moratorium issue. First, will it strengthen the national church? Secondly, will it aid in the evangelisation of the unreached?

This brings us to two necessities—the one positive and the other negative (though with potentially positive consequences). *Necessity one* is the redeployment not retrenchment of the right sort of missionaries. *Necessity two* is the hopefully voluntary withdrawal of the wrong sort of missionaries.

(i) *Redeployment not retrenchment of the right sort of missionaries.*

Redeployment can only apply to the right sort of missionary who, in the humble give and take of fellowship and dialogue, is willing, if circumstances thus dictate and allow, for the redeployment from institutional, administrative and teaching positions into frontier situations of evangelism and church planting. For the sake of the development and maturing of the national church, the missionary, who after all is part of the church of Jesus Christ in his locale of service, should be willing to rediscover his identity in moving with the church's blessing and even guidance to the evangelistic cutting edge of Christian advance and growth. Missionaries who find themselves unqualified for such a role or unwilling to accept even its possibility, who cannot resolve their identity crisis except by

sitting tight, need to pause and ask whether they are not perilously close to qualifying for the second necessity.

(ii) *The withdrawal of the wrong sort of missionaries.*

The wrong sort of missionary is firstly the one who has become part of what Peter Wagner calls 'the church development syndrome'.<sup>23</sup> This begins, says Wagner, when a mission has succeeded in planting a new church. The concern for spiritual nurture finally becomes excessively paternalistic with the consequent retardation of authentic selfhood in the new church and the reduction of the active evangelistic force consequent upon the tying up of missionary personnel. When mission societies find that church development and not church planting has become their major goal, they have already fallen into the syndrome.

Here then are some questions for all of us who claim to be in the business of evangelising the world.

- (1) Is the agency *increasing* or *decreasing* the amount of outreach to unreached people?
- (2) If it is decreasing, should it change its programme?
- (3) If it sees itself with a strategy of evangelism that in practice boils down to developing the local church, is this scripturally valid and politically sound?
- (4) If such a self-analysis shows that this agency is *not* doing evangelism with the unreached, who should?
- (5) Should the agency withdraw to regroup and replan?

If the first mark of the wrong sort of missionary is an irrevocable lock into the church development syndrome, the second mark is that of an uncritical identification with power structures and political systems unacceptable to the nationals among whom he is supposedly labouring for Christ. This kind of problem is particularly evident here in South Africa where Conservative Evangelical missionaries are sometimes in the theological forefront of championing the current political *status quo*, which for blacks is a discriminatory and oppressive system quite incompatible with the New Testament ethic. This generates a massive credibility problem for blacks receiving the Gospel from whites who to them are politically tainted and therefore unacceptable. The trouble is, as John Stott once remarked to me personally, that many so-called Conservative Evangelicals feel that to be conservative in theology necessitates being conservative in everything else, whereas in his view one should be conservative in theology but radical in everything else!

It is this sort of problem which has led one young black Baptist minister to ask the following five pertinent questions:

- (a) Why are so many Evangelical missionary societies in South Africa racially constituted?
- (b) Why are national pastors still subservient to white superintendents?
- (c) Why are they paid R35-R45 a month while the missionary has

all the luxuries of life plus a good wage?

- (d) Why are so many resolutions passed and then filed away and never acted on?
- (e) Why have the fundamental Evangelical missionary societies never produced a national theologian of renown, when missions have been in South Africa for nearly 300 years?<sup>11</sup>

These are pretty devastating questions, not all easily answered, and they imply in the mind of the questioner that at least some missionaries in our land are of the wrong sort, unless they are capable of changing and stepping from the shelters of a socially uninvolved stance into the more exacting arena of preaching the whole Gospel to the whole man.

The third mark of the wrong sort of missionary is lack of productivity. This is the missionary who is simply spinning wheels and getting nowhere—either due to age, incompetence, job fatigue or loss of motivation. One would like to imagine that such missionaries are few and far between—but it is probably sadly true that at least some exist. Bless their hearts—but for the sake of the Kingdom they should humbly apply the Moratorium axe to themselves, and quietly withdraw, before the national church does it for them!

What we are saying then is that a Moratorium on certain kinds of missionaries and agencies may be both necessary and desirable, but it would be tragic if anyone anywhere applied a sweeping Moratorium, perhaps with racial overtones, on those missionaries who are culturally sensitive, politically aware, spiritually productive, theologically contextual and biblically faithful. Such missionaries should either be left where they are, or else redeployed to frontier situations of evangelism and church planting so that the Kingdom of God and his Christ should be extended to the ends of the earth.

<sup>1</sup> 'Missionary Go Home'—Article in *The Church Herald*, November 5th, 1971, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> *Bangkok Report*, Section III, Subsection iii:14.

<sup>5</sup> Lusaka—Working Group III Report—'Ministry for Social Justice'.

<sup>6</sup> Taken from 'Lausanne—A Catalyst for World Evangelisation', H. Works, *Church Growth Bulletin*, Vol. XI, No. 1, September, 1974, pp. 391ff.

<sup>7</sup> 'The Mission of Moratorium', Burgess Carr, *AACC Bulletin*, Vol. 8, No. 1, January-February, 1975, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> *The Crisis of Mission in Africa*, John Mbiti, Uganda Church Press, 1971, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted from *The Moratorium Muddle*, Paul S. Rees, *World Vision Magazine*, March, 1974, p. 23.

<sup>11</sup> 'Colour the Moratorium Grey', Peter Wagner, *Int. Review of Mission*, April, 1975, p. 168.

<sup>12</sup> *The Church and its Mission: A shattering Critique from the Third World*, Orlando Costas, Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois, 1974, p. 162.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>14</sup> *The Warren-McGavran Letters on World Evangelisation*—quoted in *Church Growth Bulletin*, Vol. XI, No. 6, July 1975, p. 468.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 466f.

<sup>16</sup> 'The Nature of Salvation', Stephen Neill, *The Churchman*, Vol. 89, No. 3, July-September, 1975, p. 230.



<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>18</sup> 'Report of the Secretary of Faith and Order', *Accra: 1974 Unity in Hope: Reports and documents from the meeting of the Faith and Order Commission*, WCC, Geneva, 1975, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> *The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism*, R. Winter from ICOWE, Volume, p. 220.

<sup>20</sup> *God, Man and Church Growth*, D. Barrett, Church Growth Book Club, Pasadena 1974, pp. 410f.

<sup>21</sup> Emilio Castro, *International Review of Mission*, 1973, p. 397.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted by H. Works, *art. cit.*

<sup>23</sup> P. Wagner, *art. cit.*, p. 173.

<sup>24</sup> 'What is Expected of Missionaries in South Africa', G. Cyster, Unpublished article, p. 6.