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Either patronage or partnership in Christian mission: moderator John G. Gatu's proposal for moratorium on Western missionary funds and personnel

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**Either Patronage or Partnership in Christian Mission:
Moderator John G. Gatu's Proposal for Moratorium on
Western Missionary Funds and Personnel**

by
Jesse N. K. Mugambi

John Gatu (1925 -)

John S. Pobee's brief entry on John [Gachango] Gatu in the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (Wm. B. Eerdmans and WCC, 1991) says he was born in Kiambu, Kenya on March 3, 1925. Biographical detail about his early life was not easily accessible until the publication of his recent autobiography, *Fan Into Flame: An Autobiography* (Nairobi: Moran Publishers, December 2016). However, a few salient details will suffice to frame the context of this article on what was arguably his controversial but prescient call for moratorium on Western missionaries and finances on the continent of Africa.

After serving as a sergeant in the colonial army during World War II, Gatu received his initial theological education at St. Paul's United Theological College in Limuru, Kenya (1951–1955). He subsequently studied at New College at the University of Edinburgh, UK (1958), at Pittsburgh Theological College, USA (1963), and at Princeton Theological Seminary, USA (1970–1971). Following his ordination in the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Africa, he soon rose to become the first African general secretary of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) from 1964 to 1979, and then moderator of the Church from 1979 to 1985. Along the way, he served as chairperson of the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK), and was involved extensively with the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC). An international churchman, Gatu served on the World Council of Churches (WCC) in its Faith and Order Commission between 1961 and 1975. Among his better-known publications are *Joyfully Christian, Truly African* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2006) and a volume of Gikuyu poetry, *He Gatu Nguhe Kanua [Listen to Me, I Tell You All]* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 2006).

The two-decade span (1964–1985) of Gatu's church leadership coincided with the most transformative period in the recent history of the African continent. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) had just been formed on May 23, 1963. African nations were struggling to find their bearings in the international arena. Gatu became an exemplary churchman, statesman, and role model in his church, in the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK); in the Kenya Christian Churches Educational Association (CCEA); in the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC); in the World Council of Churches (WCC); in the East African Revival Movement (EARM); in the International Congress for World Evangelization (ICWE); and in the Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly (PACLA).

Gatu's 1971 proposal for a "moratorium" on missionary funds and personnel from Europe and North America to Africa was intended as a means to an end. As general secretary of his Church (PCEA), he recognized that the withdrawal of missionary funds and personnel from Africa would help both the "donors" and the "recipients" to take stock of their past relationship, so that both sides could relate more efficiently and effectively for the good of the Church as a whole.

Although Gatu is best known internationally as the proponent of the moratorium, in Kenya he is famous for the pithy maxim that he proposed for his Church: *Jitegemea* (Self-Reliance). This motto would become a national catchword in Kenya, going well beyond the ecclesiastical domain to encapsulate a national ideal. The national emblem of Kenya contains the motto *Harambee* (Let us work together for a common goal). Perhaps the cultural root of Gatu's moratorium proposal is this motto, which is expressed variously in many African languages, as the core of African wisdom.

As a tangible outcome of his persistent advocacy of *Jitegemea*, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa is today one of the most self-reliant Protestant churches on the continent. In his autobiography, *Fan into Flame*, Gatu narrates his own recollection of the most significant experiences of his life: as a soldier in the King's African Rifles; a staunch Kenyan nationalist; an astute churchman; an ecumenist; an evangelical revivalist; a Pan Africanist; a statesman; a peacemaker; a family head; a cultural reformist, and, above all, a mentor to many people, all over the world. It is a book well worth reading.

Gatu was, and continues to be, one of the most influential and highly respected Kenyan churchmen of his generation, and the *Journal of African Christian Biography* is honored to feature this retrospective analysis of the key role he played in the moratorium debate.

Gatu's Proposal for a Moratorium on Missionary Funding and Personnel

In October 1971, Kenyan Presbyterian pastor, Rev. Dr. John Gatu shocked the audience in his famous address to a conference organized by the Reformed Church of America in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA. He was, at that time, the elected general secretary of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa.³

³ The earliest missionaries from the Church of Scotland reached Kenya in October 1891. It was not until 1958-1959 that the first Kenyan, John G. Gatu (born March 3, 1925) was sent abroad, to Scotland, for training. It took another five years for him to become the first Kenyan secretary general of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, a post he held for fifteen years (1964-79). He then was elected moderator of the PCEA for six years until retirement (1979-85). During the two decades in the top leadership of his Church, Gatu was exemplary as a reconciler between religious and political leadership, and also as an ecumenist of exceptional influence. It was during his leadership that Nairobi hosted the World Council of Churches (WCC) Fifth Assembly (November 1975); the Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly (December 1976);

Concisely, Gatu's proposal at the time was long overdue for the withdrawal of North American and European funds and missionaries from the churches they had started and patronized in Africa and elsewhere. Patronage—through disbursement of money and the deployment of personnel—had incapacitated the beneficiary churches, instead of enabling them to stand on their own feet, both ecclesiastically and economically.

While boosting the ego of the benefactors, patronage has the unintended effect of dehumanizing the beneficiaries to the point of desperation. Consequently, this patronage had muffled the voice of the beneficiaries and crippled their capacity to expand their own internal resources, both human and material. This decreased ability was reflected in their insignificant influence in the decision-making organs denominationally and ecumenically—at local, national, regional, continental, and global levels. The purpose of the proposed withdrawal of funds and personnel was so that the “younger churches” could grow to maturity—fend for themselves and cultivate their own identity, integrity, and self-confidence. Only by so doing would they have the boldness to relate to their older denominational “relatives” more equitably.⁴

The moratorium proposal caused a stir across the entire polity spectrum of Christian denominations. Within the ecumenical movement, the moratorium proposal entered the agenda for discussion at all levels. It was one of the issues widely debated at the World Council of Churches' Fifth Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya, in November 1975. Earlier, it had already been on the agenda of the Third Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches in Lusaka, Zambia, in May 1974. The Lausanne Congress for World Evangelization had rejected the moratorium proposal during its meeting in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974. The Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly in 1976 also rejected the moratorium, and instead claimed that more rather than less patronage was needed. It is important to emphasize that the Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly brought together evangelical, charismatic and Pentecostal leaders, mainly from North America, whose ecclesiastical influence in Africa was, at that time, marginal in terms of demographic strength. The Roman Catholic Church was categorical in its rejection of the moratorium proposal. Instead, more

and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) Fourth Assembly (August 1981). From 1975 until his retirement he was a member of the WCC Central Committee and for much longer he was a trustee of the AACC. Some of his addresses are published in *Joyfully Christian, Truly African* (Nairobi: Acton, 1985). More details of his unique life are summarized in his autobiography, *Fan into Flame*.

⁴ John G. Gatu, “The Time Has Come,” address to the meeting convened by the Reformed Church of America, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, October 1971. For a more detailed report of Gatu's address see Marvin D. Hoff, *The Reformed Church in America: Structures for Mission, Issues 14-16*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1985, pp. 167ff.

investment was encouraged, especially in Kenya. More than thirty congregations established their headquarters in Nairobi, with retreat centers open for use by non-Catholics at modest charges. The Catholic Higher Institute of Eastern Africa was launched, which later evolved into the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, sponsored by the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern and Central Africa (AMECEA). There were other voices, outside Africa, in both Asia and Latin America.⁵ Among the African ecumenists who supported the proposal was Canon Burgess Carr from Liberia, then general secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches, based in Nairobi.⁶

One of the most articulate critics of the moratorium proposal was Michael Cassidy, from South Africa, a founder of the Africa Evangelistic Enterprise (AEE).⁷ In his critique titled “The Call to Moratorium: Perspective on an Identity Crisis,” Cassidy referred to a press conference at which Gatu spoke during the International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne, Switzerland, in July 1974, outlining four problems that required attention:

- (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

⁵ Robert Reese in his article titled “John Gatu and the moratorium on missionaries” (*Missiology: An International Review*, Vol 43, Issue 2, 2014) documents a wide range of responses to John Gatu’s proposal, within Africa, and also in Asia, Europe, North America and South America. Reese also compares Gatu with Roland Allen. http://www.edsmither.com/uploads/5/6/4/6/564614/reese_ems_2012.pdf
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0091829613502143>

⁶ Canon Burgess Carr (1936-2012) was AACC general secretary, 1971-77. See his article “The Moratorium: The Search for Self-Reliance and Authenticity,” in *AACC Bulletin*, 1974; also, “The Mission of the Moratorium,” in the *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 64 No. 254, April 1975. For more on this point see Gwinyai Muzorewa, *The Origins and Development of African Theology*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1987).

⁷ Michael Cassidy (born November 30, 1935) in South Africa, founder of Africa Enterprise and the National Initiative for Reconciliation. Commentator on the Christian commentary radio program called “Daywatch,” he was one of the leaders of the historic National Conference of Church Leaders at Rustenburg in 1990. In 1993 he chaired a Consultation on Human Rights and Religious Freedom in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. G.N. Uzoigwe, “European Partition and Conquest of Africa: an Overview,” in *UNESCO History of Africa, Vol. VII*, Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 19-44.

- (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 had concluded his press statement with the following recommendation:

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 criticize 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 1970s.⁸

In response to Gatu's proposal, Cassidy preferred the status quo—for the church leadership to do and say nothing, lest they lean on either side of the ideological divide—at a time when liberation struggles were raging in southern Africa. Such ideological “neutrality” at that time would amount to support of the status quo and Gatu's view was categorical regarding both liberation as a socio-political necessity, and salvation as a spiritual yearning.

Some churches in Africa rejected the proposal in its entirety. For example, in Ethiopia the leadership of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus maintained that “even with the continued presence of foreign personnel and funds, [the church] can assert its freedom from any and every kind of foreign dominance.”⁹ The moratorium debate filtered into academic discourse, especially at the University of Nairobi during the 1970s where the policy was already in place, to train and recruit African personnel without compromise on the quality of scholarship and institutional management. In his memoirs, the Dutch Catholic missionary, Prof. Joseph G. Donders, hints at this moratorium debate among both Africans and foreigners in academia.¹⁰

Response from Gerald H. Anderson

⁸ Michael Cassidy, “The Call to Moratorium: Perspectives on an Identity Crisis”, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/churchman/090-04_265.pdf.

⁹ Bengt Sundkler (1909–1995) and C. Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 1029.

¹⁰ Joseph G. Donders, (1929–2013) “My Pilgrimage in Mission,” in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 36 No. 2, pp. 96–99.

Gerald H. Anderson, who was then director of the Overseas Mission Study Center (OMSC) in New Haven, Connecticut, USA, was conversant with the goings-on in both ecumenical and evangelical circles. In January 1974 he published an article in the *Christian Century* rhetorically titled: “A Moratorium on Missionaries?”¹¹ Anderson’s article clearly indicated that Gatu’s proposal did not come from a lone voice crying in the wilderness. Rather it reverberated across all the colonized regions—Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Oceania. In Asia, it found resonance in the views of several leaders, among them Emerito P. Nacpil, president of Union Theological Seminary near Manila, Philippines. Nacpil observed that the prevailing relationship between the “older churches” and the “younger churches” (as the distinction indicated) made it impossible for the two categories to relate equitably. Likewise, Paul Verghese, a former associate general secretary of the World Council of Churches who later became principal of an Orthodox theological seminary in India, observed: “Foreign finances, ideas, and personnel still dominate the younger churches and stifle their spontaneous growth.”¹²

In Latin America, Dr. Miguez Bonino, then Dean of Union Theological Seminary in Buenos Aires, Argentina, proposed: “We cannot for the love of our brethren or for the love of God let anybody or anything stand in the way of our taking on our own shoulders our responsibility. If, in order to do that, we must say to you, our friends, ‘Stay home,’ we will do so because, before God, we have this grave responsibility of our integrity.”¹³

Thus Gatu’s proposal for a moratorium on funds and personnel was timely and relevant in view of prevailing relationships between the “First” and the “Third” worlds, especially during the Cold War, which poised the “Second” world between the “First” and the “Third.” In diplomatic, economic, and missionary circles, these labels were taken for granted and were not open to questioning. Their intended meaning was self-explanatory: the rich and powerful would call the tune, and the rest would have to dance and sing, accordingly, or suffer the consequences of non-compliance. In conformity with this divisive and paternalistic discourse, the inaugural meeting of the Ecumenical Association of Third-World Theologians (EATWOT) was convened in August 1976 at Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, bringing together some “Third World Theologians” from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Ironically, the funding for this inaugural conference, and subsequent ones,

¹¹Gerald H. Anderson, (1941-2015) “A Moratorium on Missionaries?” in *Christian Century*, January 1974, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1574>. Gerald H. Anderson was Director of the Overseas Ministries Study Centre (OMSC) 1976-2000.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

was sourced from First World sponsorship, and many of the participants operated in the First World.¹⁴

To exemplify an alternative to missionary patronage and condescension, Gatu launched a strategy for self-reliance in the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. Despite skepticism on the part of some church leaders both within and outside his denomination, Gatu persisted, and the headquarters of his Church was built, within a short time, with funds raised locally. In Kenya the decade of the 1970s was imbued with the euphoria of nationalistic self-consciousness, following the achievement of national sovereignty in 1963 after a decade of extreme colonial repression. Kenya, perhaps more than any other nation in Tropical Africa, was poised for such a proposal as the one Gatu presented in Milwaukee. The funds for the construction of the PCEA headquarters were raised through public appeals in the news media. Many people contributed, confirming that indeed the time had come for Africa to rely on its own resources to chart its own destiny—without denigrating the contributions from elsewhere, if offered in good faith.

Reflections from Jonathan Bonk

Professor Jonathan Bonk published his book *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Missionary Problem* in 1991, two decades after Gatu's moratorium proposal.¹⁵ In the book, Bonk lucidly illustrated ways and means by which funds and personnel from the imperial metropolises have hampered the blossoming of Christianity in former colonies. In a revised edition of the book published in 2006, Bonk reiterated his earlier observations, and expressed concern that the situation was deteriorating rather than improving. This deterioration was exacerbated by the professionalization of aid agencies, and the incorporation of mission agencies into the foreign aid agenda of the so-called developed countries.

From the perspective of the target populations, it is impossible to distinguish between missionaries and other expatriates deployed from one European or North American country into a country in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean or the Pacific. Broadly, missionaries and their colleagues in secular "aid agencies" belong to the same class, the same culture, the same race, and the same mission. Those who serve in church-related organizations are a small part of a bigger team, in one institutional structure. The discourse about "aid" is that structure is determined more by the foreign policy of the source government, than by the Gospel. The *process*

¹⁴ Sergio Torres and Virginia Fabella, editors, *The Emergent Gospel: Theology from the underside of history: papers from the Ecumenical Dialogue of Third World Theologians*, Dar es Salaam, August 5-12, 1976, Hardcover – 1978.

¹⁵ Jonathan Bonk, *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Missionary Problem*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1991. Bonk was the Executive Director of OMSC from 2000-2013.

of secularization has become subservient to the ideology of secularism. Consequently, Western Christianity has become increasingly alienated from African Christianity.¹⁶ Introducing the second edition of his book *Missions and Money*, Bonk reiterates the necessity for a review of relations between the churches of Europe and North America on the one hand, and those of the rest of the world, on the other.

Bonk's commentary on the Western missionary enterprise in its relationship with the target populations in Africa and elsewhere, resonates with that of Gatu in his autobiography, *Fan Into Flame*. Gatu refers to an apt description of Gikuyuland by Marion Scott Stevenson— one of the early missionary educators under the Scotland Mission, who described the land that the British occupied in Central Kenya as the best on earth. She wrote, in the Gikuyu language: “God has bestowed upon the Gikuyu a good land that does not lack food, water or pasture. Therefore, the Gikuyu ought to thank God, because He has been very generous to them.” Reflecting on the colonial injustice of the British occupation of the land, Gatu writes:

Due to the agreeable climate and fertile soil in the Gikuyu highlands, the early Europeans who came into Kenya chose to settle in the Gikuyu region. When the colonialists began to take over the area they named it, together with other parts of Kenya that they occupied, the “White Highlands” and introduced legislation to maintain it for the exclusive use of white settlers as well as to legitimize its alienation from the indigenous owners, the Africans . . . Unfortunately, the blessings bestowed on the Gikuyu attracted, overwhelmingly, the European greed that led to the subsequent occupation of the land and the eviction of the Gikuyu from the same. This triggered protests over land policies and politics in Central Kenya, from 1892 to the end of World War II. Resistance to European occupation of these lands culminated in the Mau Mau rebellion of the 1950s, which saw the region placed under a state of emergency in 1952. This led to the arrest and incarceration of many prominent African leaders and thousands of ordinary people. I became increasingly aware of these political and social injustices in my early teenage years.¹⁷

¹⁶ For a critique of church agencies as aid organizations, see Dan Heist and Ram A, Cnaan, “Faith-Based International Development Work: A Review,” in *Religions*, Vol. 7 Issue 19, MDPI, 2016, file:///Users/mugambi/Downloads/religions-07-00019.pdf

¹⁷ John G. Gatu, *Fan into Flame: An Autobiography* (Nairobi: Moran, 2017), 2-3.

This close collaboration between the colonial administrators, the settlers, and the missionaries remains the most glaring indictment of the Christian missionary enterprise in Africa and elsewhere. What meaning did the missionaries attach to such biblical concepts as St. Paul's trilogy of "faith, hope, and love"? This question remains pertinent in the twenty-first century. Gatu's proposal for a moratorium on mission funds and personnel had its background in the colonial and post-colonial history of Kenya. Quite clearly, there was hardly any evident interest on the part of the benefactors—in both missionary and secular circles—to change the dynamics of relationship between the European and North American "benefactors" on the one hand, and on the other, the African "beneficiaries." Gatu wanted a radical change of relationship, from patronage to genuine partnership. Bonk's book *Missions and Money Revisited* is not about economic theory, but about the challenge of living equitably in contexts of dire economic deprivation and destitution.

Reconstructive Responses by African Churches

Within four decades of Gatu's challenging address in Milwaukee in October 1971, some African churches and church-related organizations implemented strategies for self-reliance with remarkable and commendable success. The following are examples: a) the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania, Northern Diocese; b) the Anglican Church of Kenya; c) the Methodist Church of Kenya; d) the Presbyterian Church of Kenya; and e) the Anglican Church of Uganda. Dennis Tongoi, in the research he conducted for a doctoral thesis in missiology at the University of South Africa (UNISA), has documented some initiatives in these churches. One of his findings is that Gatu's moratorium proposal was practicable and cost-effective. The African churches and church-related organizations that emulated Gatu's proposal are now thriving, while those that continued their dependence on foreign personnel and funding have floundered.¹⁸ In a similar vein, Bright Mawudor, as an accounting consultant, wrote a doctoral thesis at the Open University of Tanzania, arriving at the conclusion that those church-related organizations that rely on their own internal resources tend to thrive, while those dependent on donations from abroad suffer inevitable decline.¹⁹

Demographic statistics on Christianity in Europe and North America indicate a decline in church membership, consistent with the aging population, a rise in secularism, and an emphasis on materialistic lifestyles. Nominal Christianity has become the most dominant religion in Tropical

¹⁸ Dennis O. Tongoi, "Business as Mission and Mission as Business: Case Studies of Financially Sustainable Christian Mission Ventures with a Focus on Anglican Dioceses in East Africa," D. Th. Thesis, University of South Africa, 2017.

¹⁹ Bright Mawudor, "Financial Sustainability of Church Related Organizations: An Empirical Study On Kenya," Ph.D. Thesis, Open University of Tanzania, 2014.

Africa, with the most diverse denominational profile worldwide. Most of the denominations are exports from Europe and North America. In protest against, or emulation of, Western denominational plurality, the increase in the number of African Instituted Churches is apparently limitless. In 1968 David B. Barrett published his study of this phenomenon using the label “Schism and Renewal” to describe African Church independency.²⁰ Allan Anderson followed up with more research, which extended the scope to include Pentecostal and Charismatic movements introduced from North America and Europe, then contextualized into characteristically African initiatives. This trend continues, as evidence of African insistence on expressing Christian religiosity in their respective contexts, and according to their own ways and means.²¹

The paternalism evident in the conduct of missionary ventures from Europe and North America to Africa has paid negative dividends. African Christianity is increasingly fragmented and competitive, often very confrontational. These manifestations of competition, fragmentation and confrontation are much more a liability than an asset against proclamation of the Gospel. They are contributions toward social disintegration rather than social cohesion. The prayer of Jesus “that all may be one” is honored more in breach than compliance. The missionary ventures from Europe and North America, as an integral part of the cultural and religious invasions of Africa, have been scandalous, and there seems to be no end of them in sight. Patronage continues unabated, while the partnership that Gatu hoped for remains an aspiration rather than a reality.

St. Paul challenges Christians to avoid the temptation of being conformed to the norms of this world, and instead, through the renewal of their minds, to become agents of transformation (Romans 12:1-2). In the African context, such transformation is possible only through contextually appropriate and relevant education and training of local personnel, for all aspects of church ministry. Dickson Nkonge Kagema, in his research on the Anglican Church of Kenya with reference to this concern, found that although this church has been growing numerically, its personnel could not match the growth.²² Research in other denominations would confirm the same shortcoming. The temptation to send African personnel for training abroad is a shortcut likely to cause more damage than repair. Contextualized

²⁰ David B. Barrett, (1927-2011) *Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary Religious Movements* (Oxford University Press, 1968).

²¹ Allan Anderson, *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century* (Trenton, NJ., Africa World Press, 2001).

²² Dickson Nkonge Kagema, “Leadership Training for Mission in the Anglican Church of Kenya,” Ph.D. Thesis, UNISA, 2010.

local training is, in the long term, more cost-effective and more productive, with lower risk of patronage, and more potential for partnership.

Conclusion

The use, abuse, and misuse of Christianity as a tool for conquest is, apparently, normative in history. Africa is no exception. Confirmation of this fact is evident in the scramble and partition of Africa at the Berlin Conference, 1884-1885. Its outcome was the fragmentation of African societies across colonial borders and across ideologies; across linguistic territories separated by their primary language—English, French, Portuguese, German, Spanish, Afrikaans, Arabic; across denominations—Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran, etc. In response to, and in addition to, this confusion, African converts chose to form their own denominations. Consequently, Africa has the largest number of independent churches anywhere in the world, compared with any other period in history. What a mess!²³

The teachings of Christianity contain the virtues, values, norms, and principles that condemn injustice, while promoting the ideals of faith, hope, and love. Africa in the twentieth century has been the scene of competition between empires, at the expense of the colonized peoples and the natural resources on their lands. Christian missions in Africa, as institutions, have been an integral part of this invasion. At the same time, there have been individuals, some categorized as missionaries and others in other capacities, who remained faithful to the ideal of the Gospel. These exceptional personalities set examples emulated by African converts. Africans appreciated their witness to the heart of the Gospel. It is from these exceptions that the Christian faith has blossomed in Africa. Every African Christian in Gatu's generation will remember such exceptional missionaries. The same situation prevails today. Christian mission in Tropical Africa is no longer about winning converts because Christianity has, in fact, already permeated most areas, both rural and urban. Yet missionaries continue to come, most of them located in the same areas where Christianity is already established and thriving. This is the concern that underlies Gatu's call for a moratorium on sending missionary funds and personnel abroad. It remains valid, decades after Gatu first expressed it.

Immigration restrictions against African travel to Europe and North America, without reciprocal restrictions in Africa, reduce the principle of "Partnership in Mission" to a mockery of both "Partnership" and "Mission." Could the numerical decline of Christianity in Europe and North America not justify the re-evangelization of Europe and North America by

²³ G.N. Uzoigwe, "European Partition and Conquest of Africa: an Overview, in *UNESCO History of Africa, Vol. VII* (Oxford University Press, 1985), 19-44

African Christians, as a matter of necessity? If the answer is positive, what institutional arrangements would facilitate it? What immigration exemptions would be needed, even if Africans could afford such a re-evangelization effort? On the other hand, if the answer is negative, what justification remains for the continued flow of missionaries to Africa, a continent that is increasingly becoming more Christian than Europe and North America?

The apparent impossibility of a reverse flow of missionary funds and personnel from Africa to Europe and North America, at the present time, is indicative of the insight that the end of patronage, and the advent of partnership, is yet to come. The funding of missionary agencies and other aid programs does not come from surplus capital. It is budgeted as a matter of necessity in foreign policy. If similar budgeting were to be done by an African nation, would African missionaries be welcome in Europe and North America? The challenge posed by John Gatu in 1971 will remain until patronage gives way to partnership.

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