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Mission and Moratorium in Africa

M.Phil, Eugeniah Ombwayo Adoyo

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Mission and Moratorium in Africa

The issues underlying the proposal for a missionary moratorium, and the implications of its failure for the future of mission/church relationships in Africa. (With special reference to English—Speaking Africa.)

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Abstract

In 1974 at the "All African Conference of Churches" (AACCC) conference held in Lusaka, Zambia, a call was issued for a missionary "moratorium". It was unanimously agreed that no more missionaries or funds should be sent to African churches from abroad for several years. However, the proposal was never implemented.

This thesis examines some of the problems which led to the moratorium being proposed, and some of the issues which underlay its failure. This is not simply a historical study, but aims to show that the problems and issues surrounding the moratorium proposal still remain dangerously unresolved, and have enormous implications for the worldwide church and for mission.

The major unresolved problem is the extent to which African churches remain dependent on the "sending" churches and missionary organisations of the Western World (mainly Western Europe and USA), for finance, trained personnel and material resources. The unhealthy relationship between African dependence and Western dominance is examined in the wider context of relationships between the local, worldwide and cosmic dimensions of God's Church. The analogy of family and kinship patterns is put forward as a means of understanding and improving these relationships.

It is suggested that if the concept of Christian stewardship were to be properly understood and applied by both African and Western churches, it could transform many of the current problems in mission. The need for African churches to grow in self-determination, self-reliance and sense of identity is discussed. The way in which God frequently chooses the poor and powerless to be his messengers, points forward to African churches increasingly becoming senders, not merely receivers in mission.

A considerable body of Western literature has tackled the issues surrounding the moratorium proposal, but there is virtually nothing written by Africans from an African perspective. This thesis is a small contribution towards redressing the imbalance.