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Missiology of Roland Allen

J.D. Payne

Roland Allen was a prolific writer. During his lifetime, he authored numerous books, pamphlets, and articles. Upon examination of Allen's writings regarding the Church,¹ the researcher encounters certain themes over and over again. Allen was a master of redundancy. His repetition was necessary; in fact, it was strategic. The contemporary scholar must remember that Allen was arguing against a long-standing missionary tradition.

The mission station approach to international missions was still in vogue.² The tenacity of the mission boards and missionaries was great and a single writing against the problems of the day would not result in the needed paradigm shift. Though Allen continued to rehash many of the same arguments throughout his writings, he composed different variations on those repeated themes. It is not an understatement to say that Allen's missiology was, and in some contemporary situations still is, a radical missiology.

Allen himself was very much aware of his unusual views. His grandson, Hubert J. B. Allen, illustrated this awareness when he recalled, "When I was about twelve years old, asking my 'Grandfer' whether I could read his books, and receiving from him the reply: *Oh, yes, you can read them by all means—but you won't understand them; I don't think anyone is going to understand them until I've been dead ten years.*"³ A misunderstood prophet is probably the best description of Allen during his lifetime.

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Biblical and Theological Foundations

Prior to addressing Allen's missiology, the foundation on which his missiology was constructed must be understood. So integral was Allen's biblical and theological foundation to his missiology that it demanded to be included in this section concerning his missiology. Harry R. Boer noted that "the methods which Allen advocated become quite meaningless apart from the theology out of which they arose."⁴ In his article entitled, "Roland Allen: Pioneer in a Spirit-Centered Theology of Mission," John E. Branner wrote: "It is my thesis that his methodology must not be divorced from his theology; to do so is an affront to the intentions of this man. His theology, particularly the emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit, permeates his methodology and lays an indispensable foundation for it."⁵

Because much of Allen's theology and missiology was integrated, there will be times when the following biblical and theological concepts will be deferred to fuller discussion under other headings related directly to the discussion of spontaneous expansion.

There were four main components of Allen's missiological foundation. The first was Allen's understanding of the way of Christ. Though the majority of Allen's writings tended to focus on Acts and the Pauline corpus, nevertheless, Allen understood that the Lord's teachings were behind the expansion of the Apostolic Church. The second component was the apostolic approach. It was his examination of the life and ministry of the apostle Paul that gained Allen much notoriety. Allen focused on the New Testament for his theology. In fact, Branner observed that in all of Allen's major works, there are only two brief Old Testament references.⁶

Derived from these two biblical aspects are the more theological components of Allen's missiology. The third component was Allen's ecclesiology. Allen came from an Anglican background and lived and died as an Anglican. Though his ecclesiology obviously differed from others within his Church, nevertheless, the Anglican influence permeated his thoughts. The final component of his missiological foundation was his pneumatology. It was his Spirit-centered theology of mission that resulted in much controversy and branded him a radical until the end of the age.

Though I have attempted to compartmentalize what I be-

lieve to be the four foundations on which Allen's theology resided, the reader must understand that these four components permeated all of Allen's thought. They wove themselves throughout his missiology like the threads of a tapestry. Boer was correct when he noted:

When I speak of Allen's theology I do not refer to it in the sense in which we speak of Calvin's theology or Barth's theology. These latter are complete, systematic expositions of scripture and take fulsome note of the history of theology. Allen was not a theologian in this sense of the word. It is perhaps better not to refer to Allen as a theologian at all. I prefer to think of him as a keen student of the scriptures and as a missionary thinker. It is therefore probably better to speak of the theological element in his thinking than of his theology.⁷

Despite Boer's latter statement, for the sake of ease and clarity, I will still refer to Allen's "theology." Of course, Allen did not leave behind a concise theology of mission; any theology discerned must be gleaned from his plethora of writings.⁸

Way of Christ

In a brief article entitled "New Testament Missionary Methods," Allen examined some of the New Testament teachings in relation to the work of the missionary and the church. According to Allen, the first sending of missionaries as done by Christ revealed some important facts to consider.⁹ For Allen, these facts were to be contrasted to the contemporary practices of his day.

First, Allen noted that Christ taught the apostles by both word and deed. According to Allen, Christ's training was not theoretical and in the confines of an institution separated from the missionary task. "He trained them *in* the work, not outside it; in the world, not in a hothouse."¹⁰

A second fact regarding Christ's approach to the missionary and his or her work is bound up in the charge: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and (1) to go preaching, (2) to go healing, raising the dead, casting out demons, (3) to go without provision, (4) to accept hospitality, (5) to turn away openly from those who refuse to hear.¹¹ Commenting on this charge, Allen stated:

We must observe that the direction not to go to Gentiles or Samaritans was obviously only for that time; the direction to heal was not to use the art of a physician but the faith of an exorcist; the direction to go without provision was only for that time, because it was later definitely withdrawn (Luke 22:35); the direction to accept hospitality is connected closely with the acceptance of their peace, as the direction to turn away from those who refused hospitality is connected with the refusal to hear them. Where the message of Christ is refused a moral hearing, there it is a moral duty to refuse to continue to repeat it. We see this in the practice of St. Paul (Acts 18:6).¹²

Though Allen never referred to the principle of receptivity by name, it is evident that he was aware of the principle behind this fact.

A final fact about Christ and the missionary is related to the statement, "The laborer is worthy of his hire," as given before the sending out of the seventy. Allen interpreted this biblical practice to be quite a different practice than the contemporary practice of missionary financial compensation. According to Allen: "That applies to wandering messengers, bidding them accept hospitality, and is quite different from a direction that missionaries should be paid a salary—a thing abhorrent in the eyes of early Christians (cf. The denunciation of a salary by Apollonius quoted in Eusebius H. E. V. 18.2)."¹³

Allen viewed Christ as being greatly concerned that believers were to be incorporated into an earthly society, the church. According to Allen: "That Christ did not contemplate only the conversion of a number of men and women who believed in Him, but also their establishment as a society upon earth, is seen both in his references to the Church in His speech, and even more clearly in His ordinance of baptism, a rite of admission to a society, and of the Lord's Supper, a rite of communion in the society."¹⁴

Summary

For Allen, the way of Christ was the archetype of mission for the Apostolic Church. Regarding His approach, Allen stated:

The Apostles followed Christ in this; they established a society, a spiritual society on earth. The establishment of

this society is most clearly seen in the work and writing of the Apostle Paul. He recognized a Church; he established churches.¹⁵

It is easy to understand how one could look at Allen's work and focus on the Pauline elements influencing his missiology. Allen time and again supported his arguments with evidence from the apostle Paul; he rarely discussed the way of Christ. Despite the small quantity of Allen's material centered on the Christological approach, the researcher must not forget that Allen knew the background of the Apostolic Church.¹⁶ In his work *Pentecost and the World*, he stated:

The same Holy Spirit which descended upon Christ was to descend upon them [the apostles]. The same Spirit which in Jesus fulfilled the commandment of the Father to come into the world was in the apostles to fulfill the commandment to "Go into all the world." Thus the work of the apostles with which this book is concerned is linked with the work of Jesus Christ as the carrying on of that which He began on earth under the impulse of the same Spirit through whom He acted and spoke.¹⁷

The apostles observed, interacted with, and were equipped by Jesus Himself. What the apostle Paul was not able to experience first hand because he was "one untimely born" (1 Cor 15:8), he was able to gain through his encounters with the Twelve and others who had been influenced by the Jerusalem church in some fashion.¹⁸ It must be remembered that long before Paul and his team ventured out into the world establishing churches, unknown believers already had established many churches; and some of these churches could somehow trace their origins back to the Jerusalem church, which thus could return to Jesus Himself.¹⁹

The Apostolic Approach

Time and again, Allen referred to the apostolic approach to mission practice. His hero was no doubt the apostle Paul. The title of Allen's most famous work, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*, revealed the level of esteem to which he held the apostle's practice. The following are various quotations showing the importance of the apostolic approach to Allen's overall missiology.

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In a work entitled *Mission Activities Considered in Relation to the Manifestation of the Spirit*, Allen reminded his readers of the vast difference between modern mission practices and the apostolic approach. He wrote:

That missionaries should set out to inaugurate and conduct social reforms is so familiar to us that we scarcely question it; *but if we look at the New Testament account of the work of the Apostles* [emphasis mine], we see at once how strange it appears. If we try to imagine St. Paul, for instance, setting out to serve the people of Macedonia in the sense in which we set out to serve the peoples of China or of Africa . . . we find that we cannot imagine any such thing. And the reason? . . . [I]t is because there is a great gulf between our idea of direct social service as the work of a missionary of the Gospel and his conception of his work as a missionary of the Gospel.²⁰

Allen also challenged his readers to critique the contemporary methodologies with the apostolic approach. In his writing, *Discussion on Mission Education*, Allen noted:

We are carrying on this educational work because it is one of the policies of our board. But boards are not infallible. It is one of the most difficult things in the world to change the outlook of a group of people who have got into a rut, or whose policy is heavily involved in property considerations. But let us face this thing openly and honestly. *Are we following the Apostolic way* [emphasis mine], the most successful way, of extending the Church, or are we employing a method which experience has proved to many people to be a conspicuous failure?²¹

Allen was not ashamed to confess that he believed the apostolic way held the key to unlocking many modern missiological problems. In the preface to the second (1927) edition of *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*, he wrote:

It is now fifteen years since this book was first published, and it is thought that a new and cheaper edition may be useful. In these fifteen years I have seen, and I have heard from others, that action in many parts of the world has been influenced by the study of St. Paul's mis-

sionary methods; and I myself am more convinced than ever that in the careful examination of his work, above all in the understanding and appreciation of his *principles*, we shall find the solution of most of our present difficulties.²²

Within the same text, Allen made a poignant statement revealing his bias toward the apostolic approach. Regarding the establishment of churches, he noted that

we must allow to his methods a certain character of universality, and now I venture to urge that, since the Apostle, no other has discovered or practised methods for the propagation of the Gospel better than his or more suitable to the circumstances of our day. *It would be difficult to find any better model than the Apostle* [emphasis mine] in the work of establishing new churches. At any rate this much is certain, that the Apostle's methods succeeded exactly where ours have failed.²³

This apostolic approach of establishing a church could be summarized in the following lengthy quotation:

Four things, then we see St. Paul deemed necessary for the establishment of his churches, and only four. A tradition or elementary Creed, the Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Communion, Orders, and the Holy Scriptures. He trained his converts in the simplest and most practical form. He delivered these to them. He exercised them as a body in the understanding and practice of them, and he left them to work them out for themselves as a body whilst he himself went on with his own special work. He was ready at any moment to encourage or direct them by messengers, by letters, or by personal visits, as they needed direction or encouragement; but he neither desired, nor attempted, to stay with them, or to establish his ministers amongst them to do for them what he was determined that they must learn to do for themselves. He knew the essential elements, and he trained his converts in those and in those alone, and he trained them by teaching them to use what he gave them.²⁴

These four necessities will be discussed more fully under the section entitled the "Place of the Missionary."

For Paul, these four necessities were guided by two principles. First, he was a preacher of the gospel and not of any system of law. Paul came to “administer a spirit” and “He did not establish a constitution, he inculcated principles. He did not introduce any practice to be received on his own or any human authority, he strove to make his converts realize and understand its relation to Christ.”²⁵ Paul realized that the power of Christ that was within himself was the same power in the lives of the infant churches. The apostle was convinced that they had been blessed with “every spiritual blessing” and were complete in Christ.²⁶ The same Spirit who guided Paul was the same Spirit who was able to guide the infant congregations to follow the same example that Paul had modeled.²⁷ It was the apostle who said, “be imitators of me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church” (Eph 4:16-17).

The second principle that seemed to underlie the apostolic pattern was that Paul practiced “retirement.”²⁸ In other words, Paul established the church and willfully moved on to repeat the process. From the very beginning, the apostle understood any local congregation to be just as legitimate of a congregation as any other local church. Paul’s retirement was done to help the church exercise “the powers which they possessed in Christ. He warned them of dangers, but he did not provide an elaborate machinery to prevent them from succumbing to the dangers.”²⁹ Paul had confidence in the Holy Spirit who had baptized the infant believers.

Summary

Michael Don Thompson was absolutely correct when he noted, “Allen found in Paul the perfect prototype of the missionary who believed wholeheartedly in the power of Christ, and then lived and ministered in a way which clearly reflected that belief.”³⁰ Branner observed that in the years following the publication of *Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?* (1912), Allen’s primary emphasis in his writings became, “How did Paul do it?”³¹ It was Allen’s quest to find the answer to this question that resulted in much opposition and misunderstanding from his readers.

Branner observed that Allen was not one who developed nice theories, but rather was concerned with the practice of

Pauline principles. Allen's development of Pauline methods was derived from the Pauline principles.³² In fact, Branner stated that Allen was probably a "Pauline pragmatist" who felt that Paul's "principles were the ideal and because of that they were practical."³³ To establish indigenous churches, one must follow Pauline principles.³⁴ More will be discussed regarding the apostolic approach under the section entitled the "Place of the Missionary."

Ecclesiology

Branner was correct when he observed, "One might think that the ecclesiology of such a man would be easy to identify. But this is certainly not the case."³⁵ In the process of discerning Allen's ecclesiology, two reoccurring streams of thought that relate to his missiology continue to flow. First, he held the Eucharist and the other rites in high esteem and second, he emphasized the indigenous concept. Both of these strains of thought were bound up into Allen's understanding of Church. For a congregation to be a church, they had to be able to participate in the divine rites of the Church while simultaneously, existing in an indigenous state of being.

It was his Anglican upbringing that shaped his understanding of the Eucharist. Concerning Allen's early days, David M. Paton noted:

Allen started life, as we have seen, as a High Churchman in the Tractarian tradition. It was the now old-fashioned Anglican Catholicism--sober, restrained, scholarly, immensely disciplined. There is no trace anywhere in him of the preoccupation with secondary matters of ceremony into which the high Tractarian position sometimes degenerated. He went to the North China Mission of the SPG at Peking. There is no trace in the records of any disagreement, while he was a member of the Mission, with its sober and courteous but firmly felt and taught High Churchmanship.³⁶

Paton continued on to state that, "He never loses his profound belief that the Eucharist is utterly necessary to any group of Christians, large or small, as the essential centre of their common life."³⁷ Allen himself proclaimed:

A body which cannot perform its own proper rites is not

a Church. To call it by that name is unreal: it is spiritually false. To pretend that men for whom a "Chaplain" turns up at intervals to hold a service enjoy Church life is self-deception.³⁸

The controversy regarding the necessity of voluntary clergy, which will be addressed later in this article, was founded on this belief in the necessity of the Eucharist. In the Anglican tradition, a minister was needed for the proper administration of the Eucharist. If the Anglican Church did not have enough money to provide a minister for a group of believers located in some remote part of a country or if no minister could be found, then those believers could not participate in the Eucharist. For Allen, to prevent a body of believers from participating in this rite was tantamount to heresy. For, in the words of Paton, "It is in the doing of the Eucharist that they are the Church."³⁹

Drawing from the night before the Passion event, Allen reminded his readers of the ordinance of Christ:

When we are told that Christ ordained his Last Supper as a rite to be observed by all his people, when we are told that two Sacraments are generally necessary to Salvation, but are also told by the same teachers that Christians must not observe the Lord's Supper, that they must not offer their Eucharist, unless they can secure the services of one of that small body of professional clerics. . . . The observance of the Lord's Supper appears not the proper rite of Christian men, but a spiritual luxury appreciated by individuals.⁴⁰

For Allen, all churches, from their inception, must be able to observe the ordinances.⁴¹

A priest was not necessary because Christ is the Priest. "Is it true?" Allen asked, "[T]hat in the Eucharist Christ is the Priest, and that God alone can consecrate the elements of bread and wine, that the faithful who partake of them may be united to Christ, feeding upon him?"⁴² Elsewhere Allen noted:

The Christian Eucharist is a great bond of fellowship. No Christian ought to be deprived of that fellowship.
The Christian Eucharist is a great song of Redemption. No Christian should be forbidden to sing it.
The Christian Eucharist is a great witness to the world, a proclamation of the Gospel. No Christian ought to be

hindered from bearing that witness and proclaiming that Gospel by his observance of it.

And I say that this is in accordance with the mind of Christ, and the will of God revealed to us in Christ.⁴³

The second important element to Allen's ecclesiology was his understanding of the indigenous nature of the local church. As Paton observed: "The heart of Allen's understanding is that the Church lives by faith in Christ, whose gifts are sufficient for its life. At every level the Church is empowered by Christ to be itself, from the almost illiterate little congregation in a village to the Vatican Council itself; and the deepest considerations apply as much to the one as to the other, and to all other levels between."⁴⁴

Once again, Allen's thoughts in this area were derived from the apostolic approach. He wrote:

Now if we look at the work of St. Paul, I think it must be perfectly clear that the local Churches of his foundation were essentially what we call native Churches. The little groups of Christians that he established in towns like Lystra or Derbe, Thessalonica or Beroea, were wholly composed of permanent residents in the country. They managed their own internal affairs under the leadership of their own officers, they administered their own sacraments, they controlled their own finance, and they propagated themselves, establishing in neighbouring towns or villages Churches like themselves. They were, in fact, Churches; and if Churches of that character which I have described are not what we mean by native Churches, then I do not know what meaning that term can possibly have. As these Churches multiplied provincial organization grew up, and that was native because the elements out of which it grew were native.⁴⁵

Nothing foreign, and in Allen's case, Western, must be projected onto the native church for it to be indigenous.

The term indigenous as applied to a church referred to three concepts. First, that the Church is "spiritually and eternally proper to all countries and peoples in the world." Second, that the Church's "spiritual fitness for this or that particular country or people appears in time." Finally, that the Church "makes itself at home, that it grows and expands on the soil without any ex-

ternal aid, spontaneously."⁴⁶ More will be said regarding these three concepts under the indigenous church heading.

Though the details behind Allen's understanding of the indigenous concept will be address later in this article, it was in the understanding of spontaneous expansion that Allen primarily saw the local church being indigenous. He wrote that "this is what I understand by an indigenous Church: I understand a Church which possesses as inherent in itself everything which is essential to the existence of a Church, and is able to multiply itself without any necessary reference to any external authority."⁴⁷

This unaided replication process was grounded in Allen's understanding of the simple nature of the Church:

In the New Testament the idea of a Church is simple. It is an organized body of Christians in a place with its [leaders]. The Christians with their officers are the Church in the place, and they are addressed as such. This is simple and intelligible. That Church is the visible Body of Christ in the place, and it has all the rights and privileges and duties of the Body of Christ. Above it is the Universal Church, composed of all the Churches in the world, and of all the redeemed in heaven and on earth. The Apostolic idea of the Church is wonderfully intelligible to men everywhere. . . . The Apostolic system is so simple, that it can be apprehended by men in every stage of education, and civilization.⁴⁸

Allen exposed the myth that the sign of an indigenous church is one that manifests a particular cultural practice that is found among the people of the particular church.

To jump to the conclusion that a Church is indigenous because it practises some local custom or expresses its faith in some purely local form, is simply an example of the proneness of men to judge by externals, and often by trivial externals. No Church can be indigenous which is not propagating itself on the soil. To ignore that, and to imagine that local variation is a proof of indigenous character, is fatal. The variation must come out of the persistent and vigorous propagation of itself on the soil; then, and then only, is it a symptom of indigenous character.⁴⁹

Just because a church worshipped in a certain style, sang to a

certain genre of music, dressed in a particular manner, or had a certain order of service did not make that church indigenous.

Pneumatology

Though Allen's development of the indigenous concept continued on from where Henry Venn, Rufus Anderson, and John Nevius left off, it was Allen who rediscovered the approach to looking at missions in light of the Spirit.⁵⁰ Charles Chaney stated that Allen's understanding of the Spirit "was probably Allen's most important contribution to missiological theory and the most distinctive thrust of his thought."⁵¹ Branner observed that "The gift of the Holy Spirit to believers was something which was to govern Allen's entire concept of mission, particularly that of the indigenous church."⁵²

For Allen, the Spirit was the one who led the Church to do mission. So vital was the role of the Spirit in Allen's thinking that he wrote a small book entitled: *Pentecost and the World: The Revelation of the Holy Spirit in the "Acts of the Apostles"* (1917). It was in this book that Allen delineated his understanding of the role of the Spirit in missionary practice. In the first chapter of the work, Allen expressed his understanding of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts:

The Holy Spirit is first given, then all the acts are described as consequences of His descent upon human beings. If we read the book in this way, then we see not the consequences of familiar human instincts and qualities, but the consequences which follow the giving of the Holy Spirit to men already possessed of these instincts and qualities. We see what happens when the Holy Spirit descends upon men of like passions with ourselves. Loyalty to Christ did not drive the apostles to abandon the religious privileges of their race and the traditions of their fathers in order to embrace heathen Gentiles within the fold of the Church. Zeal for Christ's honour did not teach them how to approach those heathen and to establish the Church. It was the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Redeemer, which did this. From this point of view their words and acts become a wonderful revelation of the Holy Spirit.⁵³

It is our grasping of the vital truth about this missionary Spirit that is necessary for a proper understanding of life in the

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Church. Referring to Acts 1:8, Allen mentioned that Luke focused the reader's attention on the internal Spirit, rather than an external command to bear witness to the Christ. Allen made note of the fact that Luke speaks "not of men who, being what they were, strove to obey the last orders of a beloved Master, but of men who, receiving a Spirit, were driven by that Spirit to act in accordance with the nature of that Spirit."⁵⁴

Though Christ gave the Great Commission, Allen believed that had the words never been spoken, the Church would have continued to go and preach. He wrote:

It would be far more true to say that had the Lord not given any such command, had the Scriptures never contained such a form of words, or could Christians blot it out from their Bibles and from their memories, the obligation to preach the Gospel to all nations would not have been diminished by a single iota. For the obligation depends not upon the letter, but upon the Spirit of Christ; not upon what He orders, but upon what He is, and the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of Divine love and compassion and desire for souls astray from God.⁵⁵

For Allen, the Spirit who was given to the apostles "created in them an internal necessity to preach the Gospel. 'We cannot but speak,' they say."⁵⁶

The Spirit was not given for the believer to enjoy alone. The reception of the Spirit was the reception of one who would motivate and move the Church to action. He wrote:

When once a man has admitted the all-embracing Spirit of Redeeming Love he can no longer look upon the Church as an institution designed to supply certain spiritual and social needs of the people here. . . . The moment that we recognize the Spirit in us as a Spirit of missions, we know that we are not partakers of Christ for ourselves alone, we know that the Church which does not conquer the world dies. . . . But the apprehension of the Spirit of Christ as a missionary Spirit . . . also drives us to look beyond the bounds of our own Communion.⁵⁷

Leadership Development

Not only was Allen focused on the Spirit as the one who

moved the Church to mission, but Allen was very concerned about the influence of the missionary on the inhabitants of any given country. Leadership development was hindered. In light of the missionary practices of Allen's day, he believed that Western missionaries interfered with the work of the Spirit. The contemporary methodologies erected unnecessary barriers between the converts and the Spirit's work, thus hindering the expansion of the Church. Concerning leadership development, Allen noted:

Do we not talk of creating leaders *by* training? What are we saying? We are saying that the means employed produce the effect. We say that our training makes leaders, our education enlightens the intellect, our social work ameliorates conditions of life. Well, suppose they do: these are not the ends which we set before ourselves: the end which we set before ourselves was a revelation of the power of the Holy Ghost. We have either lost sight of the end or we have put the means, our "activities," into His place. When the activities usurp the place of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit is obscured and hidden, because He is in fact deposed from His rightful place. It is He who creates leaders, it is He who enlightens, it is He who uplifts, it is He who teaches men to "live," whatever the conditions in which they live. We cannot have it both ways.⁵⁸

The infatuation of the missionaries with an anthropocentric methodology for leadership development was a concern that consumed much of Allen's thought. According to Thompson, "He saw the Spirit as empowering the entire mission of the Church, converting sinners and establishing them in their new faith, calling forth leaders from among the new converts, and guiding infant churches to maturity."⁵⁹ More will be said regarding the role of the Holy Spirit later in this article.

Summary

Before developing Allen's missiology, a summary of his missionary theology needs to be offered. It must be stated once again that Allen's missiology could not be divorced from his theology. Just as he saw the beliefs of Jesus and the apostles affecting their practice, likewise there was no separating his belief and practice. The foundation for Allen's missiology was the way of Christ and the apostolic approach. All that could be known

about these two points of interest had to be derived from the Scriptures. Allen was a Biblicist. He directed his attention to the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, for both faith and practice. He was very literal in his interpretation. The two columns arising out of the foundation are his ecclesiology and pneumatology. They are both intertwined, woven together like the threads in a tapestry (see Figure 1). It is upon these intertwined columns that Allen's missiology of the spontaneous expansion of the Church was established.

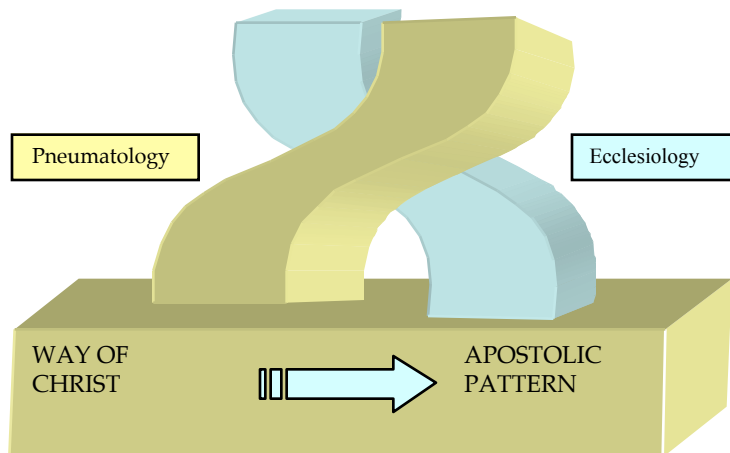


Figure 1. Roland Allen's biblical and theological foundations for the spontaneous expansion of the Church

Spontaneous Expansion of the Church

By far, the most important concept that dominated Allen's missiology was his understanding of the spontaneous expansion of the Church. One would not be hard pressed to find evidence of this concept in almost all of Allen's publications. Just as the elements that made up Allen's biblical and theological perspective were intimately connected, likewise, his understanding of spontaneous expansion contained a variety of interlocking elements.

How did Allen understand the spontaneous expansion of the Church? In his work *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church: And the Causes Which Hinder It*, Allen offered his definition of the concept spontaneous expansion:

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This then is what I mean by spontaneous expansion. I mean the expansion which follows the unexhorted and unorganized activity of individual members of the Church explaining to others the Gospel which they have found for themselves; I mean the expansion which follows the irresistible attraction of the Christian Church for men who see its ordered life, and are drawn to it by desire to discover the secret of a life which they instinctively desire to share; I mean also the expansion of the Church by the addition of new churches.⁶⁰

To gain a proper understanding of spontaneous expansion, I have attempted something in this chapter which Allen himself probably would have disagreed. For pedagogical reasons, I have attempted to systematize his missiology. A disclaimer is needed for clarification.

As I read several secondary source materials, dissertations, theses, book chapters, and articles, the majority of them had at least one characteristic in common: As they discussed Allen's missiology, they compartmentalized various elements thereof for the ease of discussion. This organization is a necessary process in which I have followed after the examples of my predecessors and for whom I am very thankful.

When I attempt to systematize Allen's missiology, however, I am demonstrating the impossibility of isolating the various components of spontaneous expansion and examining them independently of one another as if the other components never existed. As will be noted in this process, my attempt will prove to be self-defeating. The isolation of the various elements of spontaneous expansion cannot be done without discussing other connected elements; this impossible task is a point I am specifically trying to make.

For emphasis, and at the risk of the accusation of redundancy, I must state again that Allen's missiological views were tightly interwoven. For someone to have removed one concept from Allen's understanding of spontaneous expansion, the result would have been a collapse of his ideology and thus, no spontaneous expansion of the Church. All of the components had to be present and were interdependent, never independent. Independence results in stymied spontaneous expansion.

Despite the interdependence, Allen's missiology was very simple. Part of the difficulty many people have had with accept-

ing Allen's missiology is because of its simplicity. Allen was one who attempted to strip away the cultural hindrances to church growth to return to a missiology that would be translatable into any given context. It is in this section of this article that I will address the three primary components necessary for spontaneous expansion: place of the missionary, Holy Spirit, and indigenous churches. Following this discussion, I will then address three secondary missiological concerns of Allen: native education, voluntary clergy, and non-professional missionaries. Though these secondary concerns were related to spontaneous expansion, they were not seen as primary matters. If the three primary components were accepted, then the secondary concerns would emerge in the proper perspective. This article will conclude with some final thoughts on the spontaneous expansion of the Church.

Place of the Missionary

In Allen's understanding, the focus of the missionary who entered into an international context was to be on three priorities: (1) The missionary was place priority on evangelism; (2) The missionary was to use a catalytic approach much like the apostle Paul; and (3) The missionary was to practice the "ministration of the Spirit." In Allen's mind, these three priorities were bound together by what he referred to as missionary "faith" and all three were to remain in focus in every context the missionary found himself or herself (see Figure 2). In this section, I will attempt to discuss these three priorities along with missionary "faith."

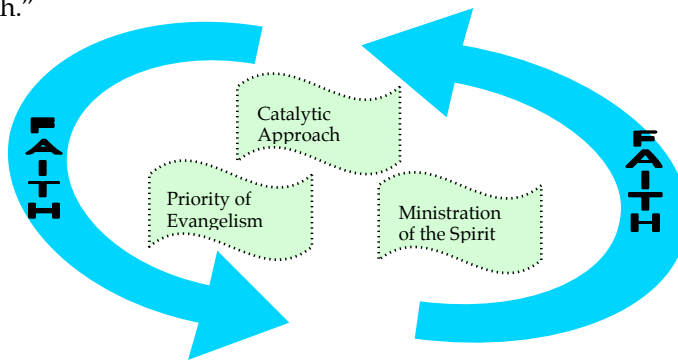


Figure 2. The role of the missionary

Priority of evangelism. Allen spent some of his time address-

ing the relationship between evangelistic, medical, and educational mission work. This concern is no surprise since he lived in a time when the controversy between evangelism and social ministry was on the rise. A “demise of evangelicalism” was the result of the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh (1910) and at the Jerusalem conference eighteen years later,

The Gospel was seen as a way of life, not only a subject for belief. Deeds, they said, must precede proclamation. This new emphasis, however, was not only pragmatic but also a result of the triumph of “modernism” and liberal theology. It was the consequence resulting from a lower view of the Bible. . . . [T]he witness of social action was necessary in order to give evangelistic credibility.⁶¹

Despite this cultural decline in the primacy of evangelism in mission work, Allen did not seem to shift with the times. In an article he penned in 1920 entitled “The Relation between Medical, Educational and Evangelistic Work in Foreign Missions,” he wrote:

Of the reasons for supporting evangelistic missions I need not speak at length. I believe that they are in themselves supreme, and that without them no educational or medical missions would ever have come into existence. . . . Christ, the beginning, the end; the need for Christ; the hope in Christ; the desire for His glory; the conviction of His sovereignty; the impulse of His Spirit--these are some of the reasons for evangelistic missions, and, however we may express them, they are, as I said, in their nature supreme.⁶²

Though he was supportive of medical and educational mission work, he believed that they were not to be divorced from nor where they to dominate over evangelism. Allen continued on with his emphasis on evangelism to the point of stating that the need which evangelistic missions meet in people’s lives is “the supreme need,” and by asking the rhetorical question: “May I, then, take it as agreed that evangelization is the supreme end of missions?”⁶³

Not Results-oriented

Despite this priority of evangelism in mission activity, Allen did not support a focus that was results-oriented. It was his con-

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viction that when missionaries sought to manifest the revelation of Christ in a given culture, then the missionaries would keep their practice in a proper perspective. For Allen the only hope for proper missionary practice was Christ. He wrote:

The Spirit which impels to missionary labour is the Spirit of Christ. All missionary desire and effort proceed from the presence of Christ in the souls of His people. He is the only source He also is the end. From Him proceeds the impulse; in Him it finds its fulfilment [*sic*]; to Him it moves. The Hope set before us in the manifestation of Christ, the unfolding of His nature, the demonstration of His power, the revelation of His glory. Our Hope is Jesus Christ.⁶⁴

This revelation of Christ to others enabled the missionary to understand that he or she was not to be working toward a material, external result. As will be noted below, when the focus was on converts, church growth, or social reform, missionary practice became off-balance. The primary task of the missionary was the “unfolding of a Person.”⁶⁵ Allen described this unfolding as a “revelation” in which missionaries have the confidence of success. He stated:

We seek a revelation. A revelation is the unfolding of something that is, not the creation of something that is not. We are to have a part in the manifestation of the nature, the power, the grace of Christ, in the bringing back to the Father in Him of a world which has gone astray. But this is the unfolding of a mystery hid in God from all eternity, and complete from all eternity in Christ. In Christ the victory is already won; in Him the Saints are perfected; in Him the Church is complete. St. Paul told the Ephesian Christians that they were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. . . . Thus we do not seek to make that to be which is not, we seek to bring to light that which is. It is in Christ. It is the Father’s will to reveal it. What calmness, what security, what hope, is here!⁶⁶

When this revelation of Christ failed to remain at the forefront of missionary thinking and practice, it was easy for the focus to become anthropocentric. If missionaries focused on converts, soon “men’s souls begin to occupy our whole horizon. . . .

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[For] 'Converts' and 'Christ' are not identical."⁶⁷ Allen firmly believed that if missionaries thought in terms of "converts" that they would begin to exaggerate the importance of numbers.⁶⁸ He noted:

But if we habitually rest in the "Christ" term numbers assume their proper place. The question which occupies the centre is not, How many? How few?; but Is Christ here being revealed? Can I find signs of Him? Numbers as "souls" do not cease to be important. There is no danger of careless indifference. We are more eager, not less. Yet the vice has gone out of numbers. The difference is startling.⁶⁹

Allen was also concerned with missionaries who placed church growth as their utmost priority. The missionary, however, should understand "It is only as a Revelation of Christ that the perfecting of the Church has any meaning."⁷⁰ Just as missionaries could not make the conversion of individuals their sole aim, church extension could not be the highest priority. The danger of focusing on the growth of the church was that "It is possible to make the institution the end."⁷¹ For Allen, the focus had to remain on the preaching of the gospel and not the inevitable result, the extension of the Church.

But is not the extension of the church synonymous with the revelation of Christ? According to Allen, the answer was no. He addressed this issue in the following:

It is easy to say they are the same, because the manifestation of Christ is in and through the perfecting of the Church. But it is not reason thus to confound Christ with His Church. Christ and the Church are not convertible terms. It is not the same thing to seek the manifestation of Christ in the growth of the Church, and to seek the growth of the Church. In the one case "Christ," in the other "the Church" occupies the centre of thought; and the effect of that difference upon all missionary work is most profound and far-reaching.⁷²

Not Focused on Social Improvement

Not only was Allen concerned with missionaries who placed their focus on converts and church growth, but he also had a concern with a focus on social improvement. Concerning this

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danger, Allen noted:

There is a strong tendency to-day towards propagating social theories which seem to us Christian, towards making the progress of the world our hope. Men see the truth in heathen religions, they see the virtues of heathen character and they urge that the end of Christian missionary work is not so much to convert individuals, not so much to establish the Church, as to leaven society and to help forward a movement towards a goal of glory to which heathen truth and Christian truth alike are tending. . . . The result is that they would make missionaries, preachers of social and political righteousness more than preachers of Christ.⁷³

The necessary element to prevent this shifting of the missionary focus to social reform was the revelation of Christ. Allen wrote: "But if we habitually speak and think of the Revelation of Christ as the end, if it is the Person of Christ that we desire above all things, we cannot rest in social perfection, we cannot set a false end before us, we cannot degenerate into social reformers."⁷⁴

Summary

In summary, how does one reconcile Allen's previous statement: "May I, then, take it as agreed that evangelization is the supreme end of missions?" with the idea that the focus is to be on the revelation of Christ as the utmost priority? The answer is not as difficult as it may appear. First, concerning the background information, Allen's comments regarding the revelation of Christ appeared seven years prior to his article, "The Relation between Medical, Educational and Evangelistic Work in Foreign Missions." His understanding of the proper focus had already been established. For Allen, the revelation of Christ was evangelism. Second, just as the apostolic church had received the Spirit that moved them to take the gospel of salvation to the entire world, Allen understood that contemporary missionaries had received the same Spirit with the same global purpose. The priority of evangelism had not changed. Just as the apostles had the passion that they could not "stop speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20), Allen assumed that contemporary missionaries were to have the same passion.

Making disciples was still to be the priority (Matt 28:19-20),

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but was not the focus; lost men and women were not the focus. Christ was the focus. Missionaries could keep everything in the proper perspective only when they focused on revealing Christ to the lost. Because the lost were chosen “in Him before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4), the missionary was responsible for making Christ known so that others might believe. As it is written:

How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? (Rom 10:14)

When the missionary understood that the focus was to reveal Christ, proclaim the good news, then secondary issues such as the number of conversions, church extension, and social reformation would fall into a proper perspective.

Catalytic approach. Though Allen did not use the term “catalytic” to define this aspect of the role of the missionary, I have selected this term because of its nearly universal understanding in contemporary missiological circles. According to C. Peter Wagner, a catalytic church planter is understood as follows:

Their ministry is to go into a new area, develop a nucleus for a new church, and then move on and do it again. The biblical prototype of a catalytic church planter was the apostle Paul, who said, “According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it” (1 Cor. 3:10, NKJV).⁷⁵

Having noted that in just over ten years the apostle Paul was able to establish the Church in four provinces of the Empire, Allen made a contrast to his own day:

This is truly an astonishing fact. That churches should be founded as rapidly, so securely, seems to us today, accustomed to the difficulties, the uncertainties, the failures, the disastrous relapses of our own missionary work, almost incredible. Many missionaries in later days have received a larger number of converts than St. Paul; many have preached over a wider area than he; but none have so established churches. We have forgotten that

such things could be. We have long accustomed ourselves to accept it as an axiom of missionary work that converts in a new country must be submitted to a very long probation and training, extending over generations before they can be expected to be able to stand alone. Today if a man ventures to suggest that there may be something in the methods by which St. Paul attained such wonderful results worthy of our careful attention, and perhaps of our imitation, he is in danger of being accused of revolutionary tendencies.⁷⁶

Allen firmly believed that Luke recorded the accounts of Paul not for mere “archaeological and historical interest,” but rather, “Like the rest of the Holy Scriptures it was ‘written for our learning.’”⁷⁷

Allen believed that the apostle Paul passed along four critical elements to the new believers that were essential for them to exist as a church: the Creed, the Sacraments, the Orders, and the Holy Scriptures.⁷⁸ What Allen referred to as the Creed was actually not a formal creed at all, but rather a teaching containing the “simple Gospel” involving a doctrine of God the Father, the Creator, Jesus, the Son, the Redeemer, the Savior, and a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the indwelling source of strength. In conjunction with these teachings was the reliance on an oral tradition of the fundamental facts behind the death and resurrection.⁷⁹

The Sacraments were also passed along to the new church. Paul educated the believers regarding the manner and significance behind the Lord’s Supper and baptism. According to Allen, these were not optional for any congregation Paul founded. In Paul’s writings, it was taken for granted that all believers had been baptized and met regularly for communion.⁸⁰ The requirements for baptism were “repentance and faith” and “The moment a man showed that he had repentance and faith, he was baptized into Christ Jesus, in order that Christ in him might perfect that repentance and faith, and bring it to its full end, holiness in the Body of Christ.”⁸¹

The Orders referred to the ministry. Paul made sure that the new believers had ordained elders overseeing them. Allen stated that “Just as he [Paul] baptized three or four and then committed the responsibility for admitting others to those whom he had baptized; so he ordained three or four and committed the authority for ordaining others into their hands.”⁸² Paul’s selec-

tion of elders *from the church* instead of outside of the church was extremely important in the interpersonal relationships that would exist between the elders and the church as a whole. Concerning this relational bond, Allen wrote:

This is of the utmost importance. It makes a great difference if the ministers feel some responsibility to those to whom they minister, and if the general congregation feels some responsibility for the character and work of those who are set over them. Where candidates for the ministry are selected by the superior order, where they are ordained solely on the authority of the superior order, and are appointed to their posts by the sole direction of the superior order, those who are so appointed are apt to lose any sense of responsibility to the congregation among whom they minister, and the congregation feels no responsibility for them. The result is an inevitable weakening of what should be the strongest support, both to clergy and laity. Where the superior order consists almost wholly of foreigners, the result is often deplorable.⁸³

The final element, which the apostle Paul passed along to the new congregation, was the Holy Scriptures. Paul taught the believers the importance of the Old Testament writings. Paul lectured from the Old Testament and some learned how to “read the Old Testament and to read it in a mystic sense as applying to Gentile Christians. . . . Anyone who had been reading the book and had discovered a passage which seemed to point to Christ, or an exhortation which seemed applicable to the circumstances of their life, or a promise which encouraged him with hope for this life or the next, produced it and explained it for the benefit of all.”⁸⁴

In Allen’s thought, these were the four necessities that the apostle Paul passed on to each of the churches he started: the Creed, the Sacraments, the Orders, and the Holy Scriptures. Before the apostle could move on to plant other churches, one last practice had to occur before the new church could be able to fully grasp the four necessities which had been passed on to them. The apostle had to practice the ministration of the Spirit.⁸⁵

Ministration of the Spirit. Though the ministration of the Spirit concept will be addressed in the following pages, Allen’s understanding of the ministration of the Spirit arose out of a context

whereby a missionary practice known as devolution took precedence. Devolution, as Allen understood it, was a lengthy process of delegating authority. According to Allen, devolution was a top-down process that gradually allowed local churches to practice the rights and privileges of the Church. At the bottom of this hierarchy, were the local congregations; and at the top, a committee, which made decisions that influenced the local congregations (see Figure 3).

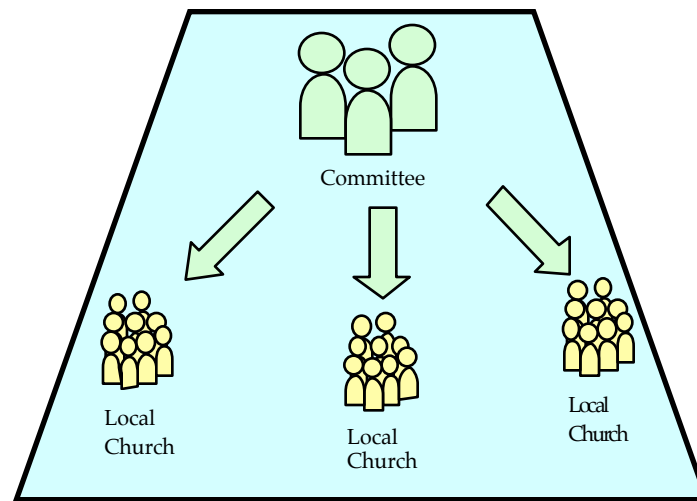


Figure 3. Roland Allen's concept of devolution

Devolution

A discourse about this practice is necessary to grasp Allen's concept of the ministration of the Spirit. In 1927, Allen published an article entitled "Devolution: The Question of the Hour," in which he critiqued devolution. Allen argued that the origin and meaning of the word devolution was derived from a governmental practice involving the delegation of authority. Quoting the *New English Dictionary*, he stated that devolution meant "The delegation or leaving of portions or details of duties to subordinate officers or committees:— 'the passing of power or authority from one person or body to another.'"⁸⁶ When applied to missionary practice, devolution was the approach that gradually delegated rights and privileges to a local congregation. For one holding to this practice, a new congregation was viewed not as capable of functioning as a mature congregation. The mis-

sionary, therefore, had to oversee the community until they could stand on their own without external aid; this oversight included granting authority to the congregation from the missionary or mission agency.

Three Questions

In the aforementioned article Allen sought to answer three questions. First, did a mission have any authority to which it could delegate to a congregation? Second, what was the nature of the authority that a mission claimed? Finally, what was the understanding of a church to the mission that practiced devolution?

In response to the first question, Allen emphatically stated that the devolution as found in the New Testament was not the same as that practiced by contemporary missionaries. For Allen, the contemporary concept had absolutely no place in the Scriptures. He wrote:

St. Paul, for instance, established a Church when he organized converts with their own proper officers, but he did not organize a Church and then later, and piece by piece, devolve an authority which at first the Church did not possess. He devolved all necessary power and authority upon the Church when he established it. . . . When St. Paul had once established a Church there was nothing left to devolve. We read nowhere of his going back to a Church and adding to its powers by devolving upon it some responsibility or authority which he had before kept in his own hands.⁸⁷

In answer to the first question, Allen did not believe that the mission agencies had any authority that could be delegated to the new congregations. Apart from the missionaries passing along the Creed, Sacraments, Orders, and Holy Scriptures to the established congregation, nothing else was to be devolved.

Allen anticipated that some would respond to his critique of devolution by stating that his comments were irrelevant because missions did not claim spiritual authority over new churches, but rather earthly authority related to funding, location of agents, and the passing of bylaws.⁸⁸ It was to this "earthly authority" that Allen attempted to address the second question: What was the nature of the authority for which a mission made claim? This authority was based on three areas: (1) control of

funds; (2) responsibility for evangelization; and (3) responsibility for the care of churches.

Allen saw the control of funds as the most discussed topic among these three areas.⁸⁹ He stated:

If the indigenous Church is to appear by a process of devolution, as we are told, it is a matter worthy of serious concern that money should be put into this place; for it means that the indigenous Church is to appear when it has control of funds, and that unless it can obtain control of funds, the Church cannot be indigenous. For me, simply to write that down is to refute it; but since it seems to be almost universally accepted as an axiom, since our ideas of a Church are bound up apparently with paid ministers, and our ideas of evangelization with paid evangelists, and our ideas of Christian education with costly institutions, I suppose that I must attempt to say something more. . . . To confuse the Church with a financial Committee is not far from blasphemy. The Church is not the Temple of Mammon, but of the Holy Ghost.⁹⁰

Allen addressed this issue of the control of funds in the third section of the article that discussed the concept of the Church. The above quote, however, revealed his disdain for equating the control of foreign monies with the indigenous concept and foreshadowed his austere rebuke yet to follow.

Allen was also concerned about missions devolving the responsibility for evangelism to the native church. Concerning this aspect of devolution, he noted that "Responsibility for evangelization is the responsibility of the possessors of Truth to hand it on. It is a spiritual responsibility which rests upon the Church and upon every member of the Church."⁹¹ This responsibility cannot be delegated. It is a responsibility that has been mandated by the Lord and not to be derived from a mission agency or missionary.

Again, Allen anticipated a rebuttal to his comments. He agreed that some might say that when a mission spoke of devolving the responsibility for evangelism, they were not referring to the biblical mandate, but rather the right to control the funds necessary to support the evangelistic work (i.e., evangelists).⁹² To this declaration, Allen responded by noting that missionaries had placed evangelism into a materialistic category:

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It means that we ourselves have so learnt to look upon evangelization as a matter of money and paid agents, that we have taught our converts to look upon it in that light. Evangelization has been removed out of the sphere of spiritual and moral obligation into the sphere of the material and the commercial, and consequently can be treated as a matter for devolution. But every time we deny that our devolution has anything to do with spiritual authority, we deny that it has anything essentially to do with the establishment of a spiritual Church.⁹³

The final area of authority, which was to be devolved, was the responsibility for the care of the churches. In Allen's day, the practice of transferring the church from the watch care of the mission, to the auspices of the national Church was commonplace. He believed this process to be a superfluous act. He questioned how the church could be transferred to the church as if some great honor was being bestowed. Allen could not reconcile the fact that the local church only became the local church when the mission turned it over to the people. Concerning all of these thoughts he asked: "What are the Christians who are so transferred if they are not themselves the Church in the place where they live?"⁹⁴

Allen viewed this philosophy of devolving the care of the churches to the national Church as fostering co-dependency and proclaiming that the mission originally had ownership of the converts and churches. He wrote:

To transfer a Church to the Church implies and demands that before its transference it was a dependency of something other than the Church; and that is very strange. All this language springs from a conception of missionary work which implies that converts are the property of the Mission through which they were converted. Converts are made and become in the making under the government of the Mission, and then can be treated as under that Government and transferred, or not transferred, to another Government.⁹⁵

In answer to the second question regarding the nature of the authority claimed, the mission did have authority to delegate to the national Church. This authority, however, was based on a paradigm that was not from the Scriptures. This paradigm dis-

torted the biblical responsibilities and authority that already belonged to the national Church by divine mandate. What the churches already possessed was barred from their use. The authority, which was declared to be the right of the mission agency, had a spiritual façade covering a humanistic core.

The final question Allen addressed in this article was: “What was the understanding of the Church to the mission agency which practiced devolution?” Prior to explaining his answer, he established his understanding of the Church:

In the New Testament the idea of a Church is simple. It is an organized body of Christians in a place with its officers. The Christians with their officers are the Church in the place, and they are addressed as such. That is simple and intelligible. That Church is the visible Body of Christ in the place, and it has all the rights and privileges and duties of the Body of Christ. Above it is the Universal Church, composed of all the Churches in the world, and of all the redeemed in heaven and on earth. The Apostolic idea of the Church is wonderfully intelligible to men everywhere. . . . The Apostolic system is so simple, that it can be apprehended by men in every stage of education, and civilization.⁹⁶

The missionary paradigm that fostered devolution was a complex system that required devolution. How could any people (i.e., Easterners), without devolution, maintain the ecclesiastical system that took highly educated Westerners years to develop and apply? Without proper education and training, it was impossible for a new congregation to continue with the foreign Church infrastructure.

Allen noted that the understanding of Church behind the concept of devolution was the idea of “the Church as a Committee.” The mission “represented by a Committee devolves its authority over Christians to a Committee which it calls the Native Church because its members are Native Christians, or Native Christians are in the majority.”⁹⁷ He further stated that “I think that I am safe in saying that the idea of a Committee is always prominent, and the indigenous Church is to appear either when the Committee is composed wholly of Natives of the country, or when Natives are in a majority on the Committee, and that the Committee represents the Church and is spoken of as the Church for the purposes of devolution” (see Figure 3).⁹⁸

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In the article, Allen never fully developed this description of the Church being a committee. He did, however, note that

The Committee is supposed to represent the Church, or to be the Church; but even if it could truly be said to represent the Church, it certainly is not representative of the Church. It is generally a body composed of ex-officio members and members who in some way are elected by, or sent from, self-supporting Churches (*i.e.*, congregations rich enough to pay a minister); it, therefore, is representative only of the richer and more highly educated element of the Christian population. Its business is largely financial, and when not directly financial, depends upon a financial basis; it, therefore, keeps the financial side of Church life in the foreground. Its activities are incomprehensible to the great mass of the less educated laity, who know little of them and understand less. It passes resolutions and transacts business for the Church over the heads of the great majority of the Christians. Most of the members of the Church live all their days in local congregations which are not Churches and have no proper Church organization, and are mere dependents upon this Committee and its Agents. In this way it robs the majority of the Christians of any true knowledge of what the Church is.⁹⁹

In light of this quotation, the reader is able to gain a better understanding of the problem to which Allen was contesting.

Summary

Despite Allen's arguments based on the apostolic pattern, local congregations were not being considered as full-fledged congregations. They were taught to remain dependent on a mission that was responsible for all the local congregations in a given area or country. When the time was right a group (*i.e.*, Committee) of national believers was selected to begin making the decisions for all the local congregations in a given area.¹⁰⁰ They controlled both financial and other various activities. The decisions that they made were to trickle-down and influence each local congregation. When Allen stated that the Church was actually a committee, he was noting that the biblical characteristics and rights of a given church were actually being applied to the governing committee and were being withheld from the local

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congregations. The missionaries had developed a system that allowed the people to be a part of the Church on a national level, but not a part of the church on a local level.

Allen viewed devolution as a serious threat to the spontaneous expansion of the Church. For him, devolution contained two serious problems. First, "It proclaims that the Mission is first lord over the Church of God, with authority to give or to withhold the ordinary rights of the Christians at its will."¹⁰¹ In even more poignant words, he stated that devolution "sets up a Committee in the place of Christ and offers the Committee authority to control the Church regardless of the right of the local Churches to their own proper Church life."¹⁰²

The second major problem of devolution was that "It inverts the whole order of Christ. It teaches men to look forward to attaining what they ought to have at the very beginning."¹⁰³ In the concluding section of his article, Allen wrote:

The answer is simple: the Church with which devolution is concerned is not the Church as St. Paul conceived it or established it. Devolution has no place in his conception of the Church. Christ came first. Spiritual power came first. The establishment of the Body of Christ came first.¹⁰⁴

Allen's Solution to Devolution

Allen's solution to this paradigm of devolution was that the missionary needed to be concerned with the ministration of the Spirit. He was so convinced regarding the importance of the ministration of the Spirit that he referred to it as being the "goal" for missionaries and the "sole work of the missionary of the Gospel."¹⁰⁵ Rather than developing an elaborate methodology or highly structured plan for missions, Allen sought to emphasize the simple truth of relying on the Spirit to work the sanctification process in the life of the new congregation.

He attempted to describe this ministration: "But the ministration of the Spirit speaks not to what *we* can do, but of what *they* can do in the power of the Spirit. It is, therefore, something far more profound than our activities generally admit."¹⁰⁶ Though Allen never endorsed the approach that stated a missionary should begin a church, retire, and never follow up on the new believers, he did realize that the contemporary mission approach was too domineering. Western missionaries would not release

the new congregations from their clutches out of fear of the outcome. Allen's understanding of the ministration of the Spirit was in essence to follow Paul's example by leaving them under the control of the Spirit. He noted:

The Spiritual force with which Christians have to do is a Personal, Active, Spirit who works not only in us, as missionaries, but upon all with whom we deal and in all who will receive Him. Any success to which we may attain is His work. It is He who moves the soul, it is He who enlightens, it is He who establishes and upbuilds. We attain our end only when He is received by and revealed in another. The manifestation of the Spirit is only fulfilled in the ministration of the Spirit.¹⁰⁷

The new church could not carry out the ministry of the church by proxy; they could not live the Christian life dependent upon the mission. Allen continued:

It is not enough merely to show forth the Spirit of Christ by pious and beneficent activity on our part as missionaries; it is the ministration of the Spirit which is our goal. It is not enough that those with whom we have to do should see our activities and recognize that they are inspired by a good spirit; it is not enough that they should imitate our activities; it is not enough that they should help us in them; there is no satisfaction until they are actuated by the Holy Spirit and express the Holy Spirit in their own activities.¹⁰⁸

By leaving the new church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Allen advocated that the missionaries move out of the Spirit's way. In essence, the missionaries were hindering the spontaneous expansion of the Church by placing a muzzle on the local congregations. The churches that knew their people and culture far better than the missionaries were restrained from manifesting the rights and privileges of genuine churches. They were prohibited from being guided by the Spirit.

Because the missionaries were looking at the infrastructures and methodologies, which they created, the obvious answer was devolution. There was no other possible way whereby the new churches could maintain and advance what had been created by Western missiologies. This was not a weakness on behalf of the Spirit, but rather a weakness on behalf of the new congregation.

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The believers did not have the knowledge, training, and experience necessary to continue with that which had been imported into their culture. Again, the only solution was devolution.

Contained within the ministration of the Spirit was also the answer to social problems. Instead of missionaries creating hospitals, orphanages, shelters, and a variety of other institutions that work for social reform, Allen reminded his readers of the work of the Spirit in Church history. As the Spirit worked within the early Church, a redemption and lift occurred. He wrote concerning the churches that Paul established:

[T]hey soon began to bury outcast dead, to purchase the freedom of slaves, and to do other pious works which appealed to them as proper expressions of Christian charity; but St. Paul himself never directly engaged in any such work nor endeavoured to direct the Christian Churches of his foundation in the doing of them. He could not have done so. Social activity of this kind was a fruit of the Spirit and it could not be expected to appear until the Apostles had done their work and had ministered the Spirit. Then the charity of the Spirit expressed itself in these forms. It was the business of the missionary to minister the Spirit, it was the business of the Church to express the Spirit in social service.¹⁰⁹

To use a colloquialism, the missionaries of Allen's day were putting the cart before the horse.

But how could the ministration of the Spirit be possible? How could Paul have "one purpose, and that purpose was . . . to bring them to Christ, to minister the Spirit, to establish them in Churches in which the Spirit lived and was manifested in and through the activities of the Body and of all its members, transforming them from within?"¹¹⁰ How could contemporary missionaries follow after the example of Paul?¹¹¹ Allen had only one response: set the churches free. He observed:

Just as we ourselves only manifest spirit in our activities where those activities are free and spontaneous, not forced or governed or controlled . . . so those to whom we minister the Spirit can only show forth His power in their own free spontaneous activity. Action done under compulsion or direction is not revelation of the Spirit. If we want to see what is the character of any living thing,

we must see what it does in free conditions. To say that it is enough to see how it acts under ordered conditions is only to confuse our minds; because the manifestation of its character is made only so far as it is free under the ordered conditions. If then we want to see a manifestation of the Spirit in a form which can be understood, it must be in the unfettered activity of Christians under their own natural conditions.¹¹²

Without the freedom to be moved by the Spirit and to think for themselves in their own culture, spontaneous expansion was impossible.

In summary, the priorities of the missionary were three-fold. The missionary had to concentrate on evangelism. The missionary needed to practice a catalytic approach to establishing churches. The missionary had to practice the ministration of the Spirit. In light of these three missionary priorities, there remains one last detail to address regarding the place of the missionary. Continually circumscribing the three priorities is the manifestation of faith (see Figure 3 above). The missionary had to manifest faith. Without faith, setting the church free became a very difficult endeavor to accomplish. It was this lack of missionary faith that Allen saw as a major reason for the domination of the contemporary mission approach.

Faith. Encompassing all the missionary priorities was missionary faith (see Figure 3 above). This faith was not a salvific faith nor was it related to having faith in God that He would bring people to repentance. This faith, was rather a faith in the Spirit's ability to sustain His churches, without the missionaries' domination. Because the new churches had the Holy Spirit indwelling within themselves, because leadership had been appointed, and because the missionaries had passed along the Creed, Sacraments, Orders, and Holy Scriptures, the churches could stand on their own.

In Allen's article "The Place of 'Faith' in Missionary Evangelism" (1930), the author contrasted the missionary approach of Christians with the propagation approaches of adherents to other religions. The results were startling. In his observations, Allen saw that the Muslims and Buddhists were closer to the catalytic approach of Paul and his missionary faith than many contemporary Christian missionaries. Concerning Islam in China, he noted:

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[B]ut where they [Muslim missionaries] went with a doctrine which they sincerely believed they made converts. Mosques sprang up. The doctrine which they taught was given wholly to the Chinese. . . . From father to son, from neighbour to neighbour, from friend to friend the doctrine was taught, and the rites, and those who received them were expected naturally to practice them and to hand them on. . . . No precautions were taken to secure its purity, no institutions, which the Chinese Moslems did not themselves create, were raised to train its leaders, or to attract converts: *everything* was rooted in the conviction that the doctrine was so good that it could be entrusted to *anybody*.¹¹³

Regarding the early Buddhists missionaries in China, Allen wrote:

[T]hey certainly had a great faith in the doctrine which they taught. Manifestly they were so persuaded that their doctrine and the rites in which it was expressed were so good that these precious gifts could be given to anybody who would receive them without fear; and that those who received them would be so impressed by them that they would not only hold them but hand them on to others. . . . The monasteries were ruled by Chinese, the rites were preformed by Chinese, the doctrine was taught by Chinese.¹¹⁴

Despite the threat of corruption and opposition, which did take place from time to time, the Muslims and Buddhists in China continued to practice a catalytic approach and also had faith in the power behind their false teachings. It was this type of faith that Allen saw lacking from Christian missionaries.

Writing of those Christian missionaries, he stated:

They do not *so* believe the doctrine which they preach; they cannot *so* entrust the doctrine and the rites to others. . . . The fact is that our missionaries cannot, or will not, entrust the doctrine and the rites of the Christian faith to raw converts, in the simple faith that the Gospel can stand in its own strength. They act as if they thought that the religion which they preach could not stand in its own strength.¹¹⁵

As will be noted later, it is this lack of faith that hinders the spontaneous expansion of the Church.

Allen hypothesized that the major reason that missionaries were not willing to trust the new believers was because of fear of corruption and degeneration of the church. What happens if false teachers come along? What will be the result if division strikes the church? To whom will the new believers turn for help in making the proper decisions? Allen realized that just as Paul's churches experienced problems, contemporary churches would do likewise. Despite this reality, Allen firmly held to the apostolic approach.¹¹⁶ The arguments that spoke of all the possible evil that men and women could bring to a church "admit that we do not believe that our Gospel is so powerful that it can of itself raise a fallen race."¹¹⁷

Allen believed that Christ was able to keep new churches from stumbling (Jude 24). In order for the missionaries to be able to have the proper faith, a paradigm shift was in order. He wrote:

We fear corruption and degeneration; when shall we cease to fear them? The roots of that fear are in us, and when shall we eradicate them, and how? There will always be cause for that fear, if we look at men. If we look at Christ then we may escape; but then why should we not escape now? He does not change. When we talk of a day when we shall be able to trust our converts in non-Christian lands, we are looking at them. So long as we look at them we shall be afraid.¹¹⁸

Allen realized that contemporary missionaries were practicing not only an anthropocentric focus to missions, but they were also very ethnocentric in their views of when a church could stand on its own. He believed that missionaries were measuring the spiritual maturity of the new churches by their own spiritual maturity. In essence they were advocating, "When the new churches arrive at our level, then they can be on their own." Of the various problems related to ethnocentric mission work, Allen mentioned the following in the article:

They suggest that *we* are fit to be entrusted with the Gospel, and that when others are as we are they will be fit; but that is a most unjustifiable assumption. It is utterly untrue, manifestly untrue. We are not entrusted

with the Gospel because we are righteous, and have attained some standard of intelligence and morality, but because God has had mercy on us. Not for our righteousness, but according to His lovingkindness, He has chosen us; and we stand by faith.¹¹⁹

Proper missionary faith was the bond that held together the various responsibilities of the missionary. Without a reliance upon the power of the gospel and the Spirit, devolution was the solution. Until a healthy missionary faith manifested itself in the lives and practices of the missionaries, there could be no priority of evangelism, no catalytic approach, and no ministration of the Spirit. Without a healthy missionary faith, ultimately there could be no spontaneous expansion of the Church.

Indigenous Churches

Allen's understanding of indigenous churches was woven throughout his missiology. It is crucial to understand his view of indigenous churches in order to understand properly his concept of spontaneous expansion. This section is included for several purposes. First, I will discuss Allen's understanding of the term indigenous. This discussion will help to understand what he believed to be the proper and improper understanding of the term. The second purpose of this section is to examine what Allen believed to be the nonessential and essential components of an indigenous church. The third, fourth, and fifth purposes of this section will study Allen's understanding of native education, voluntary clergy, and non-professional missionaries, respectively. Though these three latter purposes do not seem to be related to the concept of indigenous churches, all three were viewed as emanating from the indigenous church concept.

How did Allen understand the term indigenous? In 1927, he penned an article for *The International Review of Missions* entitled "The Use of the Term 'Indigenous'." It was in this writing that he addressed the proper and improper understandings of using the term to refer to the local church.

In the strict sense of the word, Allen did not believe that a church could be indigenous. As Allen showed at the beginning of the article, whenever someone turns to an English dictionary for the definition of the word indigenous, the definition is similar to: something born in a country; arising out of the soil of a particular area; natural to the region. It was this concept of being

natural to a region that Allen refused to believe could be applied to a church. He wrote: "In the natural sense of the strict definition, aboriginal, neither Christianity nor the Church can be said to be indigenous in any particular country in the world; for we know the date of its introduction into every country. In the land where it first appeared it did not spring out of the soil naturally, but was introduced supernaturally at a late date, and it established itself most firmly not in the country where it first appeared but in countries into which it was imported later."¹²⁰ In the proper sense, a church can never be indigenous; the church was never natural to an area. The church was and is foreign. The church was and always will be an intruder.

Despite this semantic impossibility, Allen understood that a church could be indigenous if viewed from both a spiritual perspective and from a growth perspective. Just as Christ incarnated Himself and established the Church in Palestine which began to grow across the world, the gospel and the Church are spiritually indigenous everywhere.¹²¹ It is this supernatural establishment and expansion that Allen viewed as the proper manner to speak of the indigenous church.

Like many of his predecessors, Allen saw the indigenous church as consisting of the familiar terms: self-governing, self-supporting, and self-extending. Concerning the word indigenous, Allen noted, "It certainly does seem to embrace these three terms, because it seems impossible to think of any living thing as indigenous in a country, unless it can support its own life in the country, and that is self-support; unless it can direct its own conduct so as to maintain itself, and that is self-government; and unless it can propagate itself on the soil which is self-extension."¹²²

Regarding the spontaneity of a church's expansion, Allen emphasized that the growth must not be controlled from an outside source. He stated that "we cannot possibly call anything indigenous which does not grow and spread of its own inherent vitality."¹²³ He further commented:

It is essentially in its spontaneous growth and propagation that Christianity, or the Church, is revealed in its true character as indigenous in every country. If we want to know whether anything is indigenous anywhere, we must see it free; if we want to know what its character as indigenous is, we must see how it behaves

when in a free condition. Only its spontaneous activity shows us whether it is indigenous, or what it is.¹²⁴

Summary

In summary of the above paragraphs found in this section, it can be stated that Allen understood the term indigenous as consisting of three components. First, the Christian faith and the Church were “spiritually and eternally proper to all countries and peoples in the world.” Though they did not arise out of the soil, Allen still referred to them as indigenous. Second, when the Church did enter into a particular geographical area or people group, it “appears in time.” In simple terms: there was a time when the Church did not exist there, and now it does exist there. Finally, Allen noted that the Church “makes itself at home” by growing and expanding “on the soil without any external aid, spontaneously.”¹²⁵

Nonessentials and Essentials

Allen believed that there were three nonessentials upon which a church’s indigenous nature was not based. Each of these misconceptions were prevalent during his day: (1) widespread growth or size; (2) local variation; and (3) artificial creation. First, the characteristic of widespread growth or size did not determine the indigenous nature of a church.¹²⁶ Allen’s contemporaries, who held to the understanding that growth and size manifested the indigenous nature, were looking toward the future to see churches become indigenous. Once a church, or even a few churches, was planted, it would take some time before the faith became widespread in a given geographical region. Allen, however, believed that “we should expect that [indigenous] nature to reveal itself in the very first Christians.”¹²⁷ He realized that the contemporary ideology was fallacious because it mistook size with the essential character of a local church. For him, “Indigenous does not mean numerous but essentially at home.”¹²⁸

Second, a church’s indigenous nature was not based on local variation. In the following quote, Allen described this notion:

Now when we think of the expansion of the Church or the propagation of the Christian Faith there is a strong tendency manifest in the speech and writings of many modern Christian leaders towards the supposition that the Christian Faith or the Christian Church cannot prop-

erly be called indigenous in any country unless it is marked by some peculiarly local characteristics or has taken a peculiarly local colour. When men so speak they have really gone beyond the proper sense of the word indigenous; because indigenous does not necessarily imply any such variation.¹²⁹

The danger of ascribing an indigenous nature to a group just because they sing, preach, worship, or interact with one another in a local way was that the group still may have been under the domination of Western missionaries. They may have been manifesting local customs, but not existing as an indigenous church. Regarding this second fallacy, Allen revealed a connection between his understanding of the indigenous church and spontaneous expansion:

To jump to the conclusion that a Church is indigenous because it practises some local custom or expresses its faith in some purely local form, is simply an example of the proneness of men to judge by externals, and often by trivial externals. No Church can be indigenous which is not propagating itself on the soil. To ignore that, and to imagine that local variation is a proof of indigenous character, is fatal. The variation must come out of the persistent and vigorous propagation of itself on the soil; then, and then only, is it a symptom of indigenous character.¹³⁰

Artificial creation was a third fact that Allen believed did not reveal an indigenous church. Some believed that it was possible for the missionaries to make a church indigenous. Allen was quick to refute this notion. He believed that no individual ever caused the Church to become indigenous. For him, this transformation was in reality a supernatural creation “essentially the work of the Divine Spirit, and of the Divine Spirit alone, and that the Church or Christianity is indigenous *ab initio*. We can only hinder the Spirit by attempting to make the Church indigenous.”¹³¹

Since missionaries could not create indigenous churches, Allen did offer the answer to what should be done to see the manifestation of indigenous churches. He suggested that “what we could do would be to plant Churches instead of mission stations, Churches native, self-governing, self-extending, and self-

supporting from the very beginning, and then watch the indigenous character of the Church manifesting itself."¹³² Allen's comments were radical for his day. Though many of his contemporaries were in favor of churches being self-governing, self-extending, and self-supporting, few were open to see local churches manifesting these "selves" from the very beginning. Many missionaries were not willing to release the reins and allow the new believers the freedom to maintain the truth and propagate themselves on their own soil.

Once the church was birthed, the missionaries had to remove all hindrances to expansion. In another article written two years prior to the aforementioned article, Allen realized the necessity of missionaries beginning the first churches. Following these births, however, he was quick to point out that those new congregations were to carry on the birthing of other congregations; the missionaries were to move on to other areas. He wrote:

We often hear people speak of an indigenous Church, and indigenous means native born. Now the first Church is more or less clearly the offspring of some Church which is not native, but the second may be the offspring of the native Church; and the Church may be said to be indigenous in the country when it propagates itself without any external aid. . . . And I suggest that the Church ought to be indigenous in this sense, that is, that a native Church ought to beget native Churches, and that this is an essential property of the Church. I mean that the foreign element that was necessarily present in the establishment of the Church in the first place ought not to be necessarily present in the establishment of later Churches, but that these would be the offspring of the native Church; and that that native Church ought to be able to hand to its offspring directly everything that is essential to its Church life, without any necessary reference to the source from which itself first sprang.¹³³

Allen realized that many missionaries had deviated from the biblical understanding of the essence of a local congregation. For Allen, a church could not be considered indigenous if it was dependent on Western forces for its sustenance. He wrote:

If indigenous means something divinely endowed with power to support its own existence we cannot help ques-

tioning at once whether the dependence of native Christian congregations on us for the training of the ministry, whether our insistence upon the payment of ministers and other financial arrangements which we have imported, making Church life depend upon conditions of our creation, are not in their very nature the denial of that which we profess to desire.¹³⁴

Departing from the common ideology of the day, Allen noted that there were many Western imports that had nothing to do with the essence of the churches. In fact, he believed that these nonessentials were hindering the church from being indigenous.

Are buildings, and finance, and schools essential? Whenever we say that deprived of some property a thing loses its character we say that that property is essential to it. Are these buildings, finance and schools essential to the Church in this sense? Is a paid Minister essential? Is a Church building essential? I can hardly suppose that any one would say that they are. We have all heard of Churches which in their beginnings had no paid ministers, no common property, though it is quite certain that Churches very speedily acquire certain corporate funds and common buildings and expenses, and that officers are appointed to take charge and administer these on behalf of the body, and very often establish schools for the education of the children of the Church. They are obviously useful; but equally obviously they are not of the essence of the Church.¹³⁵

Just as the apostle Paul established native churches and allowed them to decide their own structures, leaders, policies, and practices, Allen believed contemporary missionaries were to do likewise. He was quick to state that “this seems to me to be essentially the right way to establish native Churches in any country. If the foundations are native, the building will be native, if the parts are native, the whole will be native.”¹³⁶

Native education. Allen’s views on native education were closely connected with his understanding of indigenous churches. The common missionary practice of his day was the importation of Western pedagogical systems into non-Western contexts. It was assumed that what worked well in Western

Christian education and theological education would suffice elsewhere. This methodology fostered a dependency upon external resources for church education. It should also be noted that this common methodology was training and equipping the people to maintain the foreign systems and organizations, including church structures, which were imported by the missionaries.¹³⁷

Allen's understanding of native education was very simple: native education was to develop out of the indigenous Church in a given region (see Figure 4). He wrote:

If Christian education ought to be in the Church, of the Church, and by the Church . . . then it must begin with the foundation of the Church at the very beginning. . . . If the Church is established as soon as there are Christians in any place, a Church in the Biblical sense endowed with all the responsibilities and duties and rights and authority essential to the existence of a Church, Christian education begins at its very foundation and grows with the growth of the Church.¹³⁸

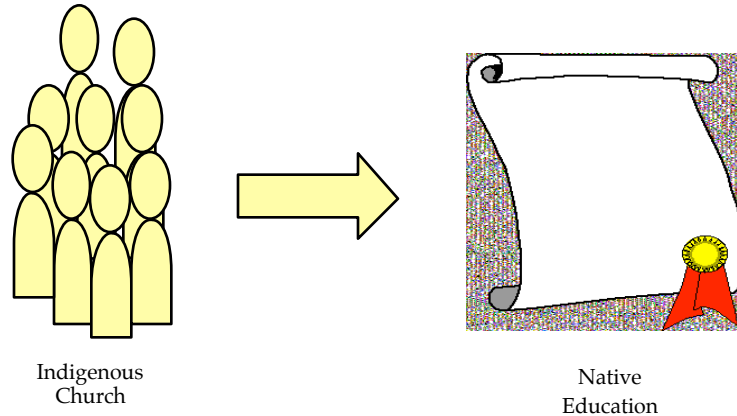


Figure 4. Roland Allen's understanding of the origins of native education¹³⁹

Though the educational systems were established to train Church leaders, as time progressed, the missionaries realized that the schools could serve other purposes, such as educating nonbelievers. The imported institutions were costly and "by ad-

mitting the children of non-Christians who desired education in the arts and sciences, the founders of these institutions received fees and sometimes government grants which assisted considerably in their maintenance, whilst at the same time they hoped to influence and even convert some of the students who might be expected in later years to occupy positions of influence in the country."¹⁴⁰ Overall, four very serious problems encompassed the approach to education.

First, a dichotomy occurred between the education of the Church leaders and the Church itself. This dichotomy separated both the educational institutions and the Church leaders from the local churches. Allen noted that "leaders were selected for the Church by foreigners and they were educated in institutions founded by foreigners and maintained by foreigners, for which the native Christians as a body had no responsibility."¹⁴¹ This separation disconnected the institutions and leaders-to-be from the real concerns and needs at the local level. The education was not ecclesiocentric. The following quote by Allen revealed the anthropocentric approach of the educational process. Referring to the national leaders, he stated:

[T]hey were not trained because they were leaders in the Church, and the Church wanted them trained; they were trained because foreigners wanted to train them in their own way in the hope that they would assist them in their work. They were trained nominally for the Church, but not by the Church nor in the Church and when they were trained, if they led at all, they were far more leaders in the mission organization than in the Church. In relation to the Native Church they were often almost as foreign as the foreign missionaries.¹⁴²

A second problem that Allen saw was related to a dichotomy between the Christian education and the native life. The educational process was grounded in Western structure and pedagogy and out of touch with the culture around it. In cultures where the national government had established an educational system, the Christian institutions many times had been viewed as useless to life within the particular culture. Allen noted that "the Government has its own system of education side by side with the mission system, and, beyond recognizing mission institutions and supporting them with grants in aid, has no responsibility for their continued existence. Governments in-

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deed tend rather to restrict the religious teaching given in them by adopting conscience clauses, which they enforce by threatening to withdraw the grants in aid."¹⁴³ In many cases the government programs did a much better job at educating its own people than the foreign missionaries ever accomplished.

A third problem that Allen noticed about the missionaries approach to native education was that over time the educational process failed to fulfill the original purpose established by the founders of the process. A new purpose developed, and this shifting of purpose resulted in the churches not understanding the educational system. In the beginning, the founders desired that the education imported was for the purpose of educating leaders for the native Church. As time progressed, the purpose of Christian education shifted completely to include a variety of issues: focusing on the evangelization of nonbelievers, improving the country socially and morally, and influencing the people's minds in preparation for the gospel message.¹⁴⁴

Because of this distorted purpose for Christian education, Allen noted:

The Native Christians themselves do not know what the institutions are founded for. They often say that they are not founded specifically and definitely for them, and as I have said they feel no responsibility for them. . . . The system is incomprehensible to the natives. They are full of trust in some excellent heads of institutions whom they know, but full of distrust of the system which they cannot comprehend.¹⁴⁵

A final weakness that Allen saw in the contemporary mission approach to Christian education was that the institutions, which admitted large numbers of nonbelievers and did not convert them, were educating some strong opponents to the Christian faith.¹⁴⁶ Allen stated that in the past the study of the Christian faith had been a requirement, however, this requirement was beginning to come under suspicion.¹⁴⁷ In his mind, though the institutions may have had good intentions, they were actually doing harm in many cases.

Summary.

As mentioned previously, Allen's thoughts on native education were directly connected with his understanding of the importance of the indigenous Church. It was out of the churches

that the need for education and development of educational systems was to arise (see Figure 4). Apart from the churches, the missionaries had no right to impose a system of leadership training onto the people. Allen described his desire for the day: "Now what is needed is a Christian education which will grow with the growth of the Church and wax steadily in proportion as the Church increases in numbers and strength. What is needed is a Christian education which is of the Church, by the Church, for the Church, a Christian education which depends in no sense upon the supply of men or money from a foreign country, but which lives in the life of the Church."¹⁴⁸ Allen held fast to the ideology that until native churches were established "there can be no education of native Churches."¹⁴⁹

*Voluntary clergy.*¹⁵⁰ Because the missionaries received a stipend from the missionary societies, they could not help but propagate the same stipendiary system on the mission field. According to Allen, the missionaries "soon began to train natives to work with them, as evangelists and teachers and pastors, and they paid them. Thus very early the native Christian community was divided into two classes, workers who were called mission agents, and the rest who were not."¹⁵¹ Though the mission agents were initially supported by the mission, as time progressed the national people were urged to support the mission agents. Thus the concept of self-support came to refer to a group who could provide the "maintenance of buildings and the supply of stipends."¹⁵² Allen observed the prominence of this belief when he noted:

It is hardly too much to say that often the duty of supporting paid workers has become one of the first lessons, if not the very first lesson, given to inquirers. That lesson may not be taught verbally by direct assertion; but it is taught by a demand that they must provide and maintain a building and support a teacher if they are to be admitted to the Christian fold; and when once they are within it is taught as a Christian duty of the first importance. Evangelists, teachers, and pastors must all be supported, and it is the duty of the laity to support them.¹⁵³

Allen wrote against the belief that ordained men must be limited to those not involved in any secular livelihood. He believed that a stipend was not necessary for a clergyman to be

present. He emphasized, "What is quite clear is that in the Apostolic age the establishment of a Church with its proper ministers did not depend at all upon the provision of a stipend which might set the ministers free from common toil; it had nothing to do with a banker's account. The Apostles and their successors did ordain men regardless of stipends: that is all that needs to be proved."¹⁵⁴

There are at least fourteen particular problems that Allen believed were related to importing a stipendiary system onto newly established churches. The first problem with the system was that it denied churches the Lord's Supper and baptism. This problem was one that consumed much of Allen's thought and revealed just how far the Church had deviated from the biblical church concept.

According to Allen, the common philosophy within the Anglican Church of his day was if the congregations did not have a minister, then they were not a legitimate congregation and could not practice the rites. The following summarizes the logic of his time: To have a minister required a stipendiary system for the financial assistance of the particular clergyman. If the money was not available, then the congregation did not receive their own ordained clergy; since the ordained could only administer the Lord's Supper, then the church went without the ordinance. Allen summarized this rule with the phrase: "No stipends no clergy."¹⁵⁵

A second problem with the stipendiary system was that it established a "missions by proxy" approach. Allen noted that the stipendiary system was a poor model for the new believers. He wrote that the approach teaches "all our converts that it is the duty of Christians to evangelize by paying evangelists."¹⁵⁶

A third problem, which was closely related to the second, was that a stipendiary system posed a poor witness of the community of believers and of the gospel itself. Allen believed that in the eyes of society, the system displayed a religion without power. Referring to the viewpoints of non-westerners, he stated:

Our organization seems to them to put the wrong things first. We collect money and pay men to preach and teach. Outside our circle nearly all men think that very strange. All knowledge, above all, religious knowledge, is a divine gift and to connect it with money is a sort of simony. A paid preacher is suspected as a preacher paid

to teach what he is told to teach by those who pay him; not the inspired possessor of a divine gift.

An organization which collects money and pays salaries to missionaries of a divine faith seems to such men a monstrous thing, wholly unspiritual.¹⁵⁷

Allen also believed that when a church leader from a new congregation was receiving financial compensation for preaching the gospel, the people of the region would view the individual as a hireling. He wrote:

If he is a paid agent both speaker and hearer are affected by that fact. The speaker knows, and knows that the other knows, that he is employed by a mission to speak. He is not delivering his own message because he cannot help it. He is not speaking of Christ because Christ alone impels him. Do men not ask our paid agents: "How much are you paid for this work?" And must they not answer? And does not the answer destroy the effect of which we have been thinking?¹⁵⁸

A disclaimer related to this third problem must be included. Allen was not opposed to paid clergy. In an almost contradictory fashion, he devoted the beginning of chapter 5 in *The Case for Voluntary Clergy* to explaining the need for a stipendiary clergy. He did not explain the conundrum he established there. He did, however, note that there are individuals like Socrates and the apostle Paul who refused to receive any compensation for religious service. As long as the position of the clergy was equated with a stipend, people such as these, will never accept the office.¹⁵⁹ Within this chapter, he noted:

[W]e ought not to oppose them [stipendiary and voluntary clergy] as if one excluded the other. It must be plain to any one who has read my chapter on the Apostolic qualifications that I did not there attempt to prove that the clergy should never be paid. The Apostolic qualifications are quite compatible with dependence for livelihood upon the offerings of the faithful, either in the form of endowments, or of subscriptions. The means by which the minister gains his living is not in the picture. He may earn it by a trade, or inherit wealth from his ancestors, or enjoy a salary, or receive dues as an official, or be supported by the Church. How he is supported is a

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mere external detail, which is not even mentioned. His call of God and his service do not depend upon such things as that.

The Church unquestionably needs some men who give themselves wholly to prayer and the ministration of the Word and Sacraments, and such men must be supported by the faithful.¹⁶⁰

This apparent contradiction is alleviated when one understands that Allen was not opposed to paying itinerant clergy. His opposition seemed to come from the paying of a stipend to established overseers of a local congregation. Allen noted that the qualifications for the ministry found in the Pastoral Epistles did not include anything that necessitated the resigning of the minister from his original livelihood so he could pastor a church. Allen wrote that “such silence rather suggests that the man will continue to live his life as he has been living it and providing for his family as he has been providing for it.”¹⁶¹ Allen continued and stated the following:

It is said that those who spend all their time as itinerant preachers might rightly expect support at the hand of the faithful. . . . But those passages [1 Cor 9:1-14; Luke 10:7; Matt 10:10] do not refer to the settled presbyters or bishops of whom the Apostle is writing to Timothy and Titus. . . . But it would require much ingenuity and imagination to read into these passages [Gal 6:6; 1 Tim 5:17] any suggestion that the ordinance of the Lord and the Apostolic exhortations to the faithful involved the conclusion that all the presbyters, or even all the traveling evangelists, necessarily must depend entirely upon the alms of the laity.¹⁶²

In all of Allen’s missiology, his understanding of who should receive compensation and who should not receive compensation is possibly the most difficult concept to understand. Even within the same publication, at times he seemed to contradict himself. The majority of Allen’s writings concerning voluntary clergy are opposed to a stipendiary system. It is quotes such as those cited above that confuse the reader.¹⁶³

A fourth problem that the stipendiary system caused was that it prevented the local congregation from experiencing the ministry that rightly belonged to her. When churches were estab-

lished in the New Testament, the focus was on the local bodies of Christ in a given area, not on the clergy. Allen believed that tradition had resulted in the establishment not of the Church, but of the “clergy as a class apart, and of ordination not as the establishment of the Church but as the admission of selected individuals to membership in a professional order.”¹⁶⁴

His fifth concern with the stipendiary system was that it fostered unbiblical qualifications for the clergy. For one to be a clergyman and thus receive a stipend, he had to meet the necessary qualifications as established by the Church. Allen, however, believed these contemporary qualifications for the ministry deviated greatly from that of the apostolic qualifications established in the Scriptures.¹⁶⁵ These contemporary qualifications prevented many qualified individuals from the ministry and placed unqualified individuals into places of leadership.

A sixth problem with the stipendiary system was that it delayed the organization of a local church. Because in the early days of a church there were no qualified leaders (i.e., educated young people), he noted that “thus the organization of the Church is delayed in a most unhealthy way, and the clerical order is established on a most unhealthy basis, whilst the natural leaders of the Christian people are suppressed, and put into a very false position.”¹⁶⁶ The solution to the problem was that the missionaries should ordain voluntary clergy.

A seventh problem was that it was difficult for stipendiary clergy to be a true part of the lives of the people. Allen noted:

Among our own people also the church sorely needs clergy in close touch with the ordinary life of the laity, living the life of ordinary men, sharing their difficulties and understanding their trials by close personal experience. Stipendiary clergy cut off by training and life from that common experience are constantly struggling to get close to the laity by wearing lay clothing, sharing in lay amusements, and organizing lay clubs; but they never quite succeed. To get close to men, it is necessary really to share their experience, and to share their experience is to share it by being in it, not merely to come as near to it as possible without being in it. The church needs clerics who really share the life of their people. The life of the voluntary cleric is not divorced from the life of the laity, it is the life of the laity lived as a cleric out to live it.¹⁶⁷

Because the stipendiary system created a class of clergy separated from the rest of the local congregation, the ministers were not as close to the people as Allen desired. Training and education erected unnecessary barriers among the people.

An eighth problem was that it fostered a dependency mentality on finances. The people had become dependant on the Western concept of a necessary stipend for a minister. Allen warned against this practice of establishing the Church on a financial foundation:

[N]othing can be done without money. If we begin by making the establishment of the Church in a new place dependent upon the maintenance of stipendiary clergy and possibly, often, or rather generally, upon the supply of a building, I do not see how the conclusion can be avoided. There can be no Church in a place until money is forthcoming for the stipend of the cleric and the erection and maintenance of the building. The clergy must be supported, and if the clergy are not permitted to support themselves by any trade or profession, the laity must support them; and if the laity are to support them, the laity must be urged to support them, and before clergy can be ordained the laity must produce the funds. The money must come first in time.

But it is certain that what is put first in time tends to be put first in thought. It usurps the first place in the mind, because it is the immediate pressing need.¹⁶⁸

A ninth concern with the system was that it created a graduated pay scale that paid some greater stipends than others. Those of the higher ministry orders received more pay than those of the lower orders. The result was that an increase in pay reflected progress in Christian service. In Allen's words: "The pay grades the man."¹⁶⁹

A tenth problem with the stipendiary system was related to the impression of the Mission holding the finances. When the indigenous people saw the money coming from the Westerners, there was the tendency for them to work for the Mission rather than for Christ. Many times the people focused on pleasing the missionaries and viewed Christian service "as service of the Mission rather than as the service of Christ."¹⁷⁰

Allen was also concerned with the problem that with paid positions came covetousness. The people began to desire the higher paid positions because they were generally the places of the most honor.¹⁷¹ An unhealthy hierarchy of structure developed whereby people vied for positions of power and prestige.

Another weakness was that it was difficult for missionaries to determine how much to pay the people. Allen noted that this conundrum was a serious dilemma. If the rate of pay made the workers comfortable, then there was the danger of attracting people who were not very spiritual. If the rate of pay was too little, then there would be the danger of starving the workers so that they could not focus on the Lord.¹⁷²

A thirteenth concern for Allen was that the system divided loyalties. Because the stipendiary worker was financially dependent upon the Mission, he felt responsible to the Mission or superintending missionary. A sense of responsibility to his congregation was shallow and secondary in nature. Obedience to the directions of the Mission was a must. The support and approval of the Mission was a necessity.¹⁷³

A final concern with the stipendiary system was that it ultimately hindered the spontaneous expansion of the Church. Allen believed that the natural growth of the churches was hindered due to the necessity of a financial foundation for the church to be a church. He lamented:

That Churches do not spring up where they live is due to the modern tradition that no Church can be established anywhere without a particular type of cleric especially trained and set apart and paid. It is due to the fact that all our Christians are to-day taught this tradition and are so bound by it that their hands are tied and their spiritual power is atrophied. This tradition is so powerful that the establishment of new Churches by the scattering of Christians seems to-day almost a revolutionary doctrine.¹⁷⁴

Summary.

Though in certain cases Allen was not opposed to a paid clergy, overall he believed that the necessity of financial compensation for ministers was a barrier for the spontaneous expansion of the Church. He stated, "The stipendiary system grew up in settled Churches and is only suitable for some settled

Churches at some periods: for expansion, for the establishment of new Churches, it is the greatest possible hindrance. It binds the Church in chains and has compelled us to adopt practices which contradict the very idea of the Church."¹⁷⁵

Non-professional missionaries. A close relative to Allen's conception of voluntary clergy was that of non-professional missionaries. Though this concept did not receive much attention in his missiology compared to his other thoughts, he nevertheless addressed this issue.¹⁷⁶ After having printed one of Allen's pamphlets entitled, "Missionaries Professional and Non-Professional" (1929), the World Dominion Press soon withdrew it from publication. Allen later noted that the pamphlet was withdrawn because a society secretary viewed it as contrary to the policy of the press. Allen felt so strongly about the contents of his writing that he issued it himself, and re-entitled the writing "Non-professional Missionaries."¹⁷⁷

Allen firmly believed when people dichotomized "missionary work" and "secular work," they established an unbiblical distinction that the apostle Paul never accepted.¹⁷⁸ Allen wrote:

If we are prepared to believe that every Christian ought to be a missionary, we must also be prepared to admit that every Christian ought to be a missionary *in* his ordinary daily work, all the time, not merely outside it, and part of the time; that "work for the Lord" includes his ordinary daily work, and is not to be treated as something which he can do only when he escapes from the work by which he earns his living.¹⁷⁹

The non-professional missionaries were those who were not sponsored by the mission agencies; they never joined a mission society. These individuals earned their living by their own professions. As they had opportunity to share the gospel, they shared. They believed that they should not receive a salary for evangelism. Allen observed that "they feel that there is something nauseous in offering to others a way of life in Christ except on terms which wholly preclude any possibility that they are seeking anything whatsoever except the other man's salvation."¹⁸⁰ The appellation "missionary" did not apply to these individuals in the technical sense of the word.¹⁸¹ Allen wrote: "They are often spoken of by the professional missionaries as 'men who do a little Christian work in their spare time,' or as 'men who would be all the better if they joined up' [with a mis-

sion agency]; but they are doing real missionary work, and it is they who prove that Christians do not only try to give their gospel to others when they have made that work their profession."¹⁸²

Allen contrasted his understanding of the work of the professional missionary with that of the non-professional missionary. He observed:

The missionary work of the unofficial missionary is not the same work which a paid professional missionary does. The paid professional missionary leaves the ordinary work of the world and devotes himself to what he calls "religious work;" the non-professional missionary realizes that the ordinary work of the world ought to be done religiously, and does it religiously, and calls it "religious work." The professional missionary secularizes all the work which he does not recognize as religious work; the non-professional missionary consecrates all work. The professional missionary exhorts others to consecrate their lives in the common work which he forsakes in order to consecrate his own; the non-professional missionary sets an example of the consecrated life by refusing to forsake his work. The professional missionary preaches by exhortation; the non-professional missionary preaches by example.¹⁸³

Allen's bias was obviously toward non-professional missionaries. He was quick to note, however, that just as the apostle Paul did not condemn those who received their livelihood from the ministry, non-professional missionaries were not to pass judgment on professional missionaries.¹⁸⁴

Allen's convictions once again originated with the apostolic pattern. The apostle Paul "did not make any distinction such as we make when we speak of 'missionary work' as peculiarly the work of a special class. In his day the church, as a society, was a missionary society, and each man in the church was a member of a missionary society, and his work, whatever its character, was to be consecrated so that the missionary influence of the church might extend into all departments of life."¹⁸⁵

Allen further noted that professional missionaries were deviating from Pauline practice when they were quick to make a zealous believer a professional missionary. He retold the following story that illustrated his concern:

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I received the other day a letter in which I was told of a certain bank clerk who had been converted, and of the influence which his life had upon his fellows. My informant added: "Of course now he wants 'to do some work for the Lord.' I tell him that he *is* with a vengeance; but the . . . people have got tight hold of him and have persuaded him to 'join up'—alas!" There is an example of the practice which I described earlier in the chapter. Professional missionaries are naturally inclined to draw any man who shows any care for the souls of his fellows into the professional body. In so acting they are violating the doctrine of St. Paul when he urged men to abide in the calling wherein they were called. "Let each man," he said, "wherein he was called, therein abide with God" (I Cor. 7:24).¹⁸⁶

Though this Pauline teaching was included in a passage related to marriage, circumcision, and slavery, Allen believed that the teaching had a wider application.

Allen understood that mission societies extracted the leaven from the lump¹⁸⁷ and absorbed too much of the Church's missionary zeal by creating the special class of professional missionaries.¹⁸⁸ The societies were seen as destroying or weakening the "missionary duty of Christian men" by teaching that missionaries were a class apart and their work was not the work of others and by extracting zealous believers from their jobs, and therefore connections with lost people, to do "missionary work."¹⁸⁹ Allen wrote that "it is hard to find anyone who has any missionary zeal who does not take it for granted that he can express it only by supporting one of these societies financially, or by taking service under one of them."¹⁹⁰ He understood that professional missionaries would not reach the world, and that people needed to be educated about the importance of becoming non-professional missionaries.¹⁹¹

One reason Allen was biased toward the non-professional missionary ideology was because it was a reproducible approach to world evangelization. He noted:

The professional missionary preaches by his example that the way to convert the world is to forsake the common life of men and to live in a special class doing a special work. It is neither possible nor desirable that all Christian men should follow his example. Consequently,

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if a “missionary” is a man who does that, the exhortation that every Christian should be a missionary becomes absurd: only a few can live the “proper” missionary life. But if a Christian who lives among non-Christians and consciously seeks by his life and conversation to reveal to others the secret of Christ’s grace is a missionary, then indeed every Christian ought to be a missionary and do missionary work. Thus the example of the professional missionary, as such, is not an example for all; whilst the example of the non-professional missionary is an example for all—an example of universal application.¹⁹²

It is this understanding of universal application which connected non-professional missionaries with Allen’s concept of spontaneous expansion.

Allen’s solution to the Church needing more non-professional missionaries was based on changing the contemporary perspective. He encouraged his readers to place emphasis on the necessity of non-professional missionaries:

I suggest that the first step is to find men and women who have a strong and deep missionary spirit and to persuade them that the highest and best missionary work that they can do is to go out into the mission field as “unofficial missionaries,” refusing to join themselves officially to the professional missionary body. They should go into government service, into the offices of the great trading houses, into the farming community, into the society of the great cities and towns of non-Christian lands with this deliberate purpose—to show that it is possible for a man, or a woman, to be in the fullest sense “in” that life and yet to be a missionary, to prove to the foreign community and to the native people amongst whom they dwell, that it is possible, and so to leaven the whole lump.¹⁹³

Though this changing of perspective seemed like a fairly simple task, one must remember that in Allen’s day, as well as today, the concept of a professional missionary was a deeply entrenched ideology. The changing of a traditional paradigm would not happen overnight. Allen understood that the change would not be immediate. He did, however, offer some more guidance on how to change the perspective.

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The Church needed to change her assumptions. Instead of assuming that a zealous believer would automatically enter into the professional society, the Church should assume that the believer would take on a regular vocation. Allen noted:

The difficulty is that now, when any young man or woman is moved by the Holy Ghost to take thought for the souls of the heathen, everyone conspires to drive him into the position of a professional missionary, and they do it in the most powerful way, by simply taking it for granted. Here is a man who cares for the souls of non-Christian folk; of course he is going to be a missionary, and by "a missionary" is meant a professional missionary. The power of that tacit assumption is incalculably weighty. It ought to become natural for a man who cares for the souls of non-Christians to be asked what sort of a job he is looking for, and where, and the assumption behind the question should be the assumption that he is probably looking for a post under government or on a farm or in a trading corporation, an assumption only to be avoided by the assertion that he is proposing to apply to a missionary society for a post as a professional missionary.¹⁹⁴

Conclusion

If asked to describe Allen's missiology in the briefest of terms, one could respond with "spontaneous expansion." All of his missiological views related to this concept in some fashion. Certain concepts, such as native education, voluntary clergy, and non-professional missionaries were important to the overall understanding of spontaneous expansion, but were secondary in nature. They derived themselves out of a context whereby a proper biblical and theological foundation had been established, the missionary's role was clearly understood, and a healthy understanding of indigenous churches was present. If any of the various components as discussed above, theology, the place of the missionary, indigenous churches, native education, voluntary clergy, or non-professional missionaries, hindered spontaneous expansion, Allen would have been the first to discard that component.

Allen viewed the spontaneous expansion of the Church as something without any restraints placed upon the Church's

natural instinct. He stated that “spontaneous expansion must be free: it cannot be under our control; and consequently it is utterly vain to say, as I constantly hear men say, that we desire to see spontaneous expansion, and yet must maintain our control. If we want to see spontaneous expansion we must establish native churches free from our control.”¹⁹⁵ Allen compared men who believed in spontaneous expansion but were unwilling to abandon control to “children who will not go into the dark while yet they declare that they are not afraid, or like women who are not happy without their mascot while they say that they do not believe in luck.”¹⁹⁶

Allen understood, however, the natural fear that missionaries had when it came to spontaneous expansion. In fact, Allen himself had a great fear of the thought of the Church expanding without any Western control. He even referred to spontaneous expansion as “the terror of missionaries.”¹⁹⁷ He sympathized with many of his colleagues when he stated:

When I think of a Native Church fully equipped with spiritual authority spontaneously expanding in Africa, or in China, or in India, without any control which we could *enforce*, either by threats of withdrawal of grants of money, or by the exercise of a governmental authority which we keep in our own hands, I confess that I tremble. . . . Am I not right in saying that spontaneous expansion viewed from the far distance as something to be hoped for in many years to come is an attractive vision; but that when we come close to it, and view it as something which we ought to expect to-day, it appears a horrible monster?¹⁹⁸

The thought of the Church in a particular region growing without any oversight from more mature believers was a paralyzing thought. Allen realized that when spontaneous expansion occurred at least five results were to be expected. First, the local church members would lead such a lifestyle that others would desire to become a part of the church. Second, church members of their own free will would begin to persuade others to join the church. Next, church members who traveled throughout the country for business or pleasure would begin to share the gospel with others who would soon desire to establish a church where they lived. Closely related to this latter statement is the idea that churches would begin to form in new places without any direc-

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tion from the mission agency. Finally, the new churches, which were established, would repeat these same processes of spontaneous expansion.¹⁹⁹

Allen's fear of spontaneous expansion was because these five natural results could not be organized, directed, or controlled by a mission agency. He understood that there was no way to oversee the speech and conduct of the believers in their homes, marketplaces, or while they were visiting friends and relatives. It was impossible for an agency to control the establishment of new churches under such circumstances.²⁰⁰ Despite his fears, he believed that spontaneous expansion was the biblical pattern and therefore, turned to the Scriptures to find solace for his concerns.²⁰¹

Within the apostolic pattern, he found the proper perspective for overcoming the fear that hindered the spontaneous expansion of the Church. Missionaries were to manifest a proper faith in the Bridegroom, instead of focusing on the imperfections and immaturity of the Bride. In essence, the missionaries were to yield control to the Spirit who indwelled the new believers. Examining the Pauline pattern, Allen wrote:

We are concentrating our attention upon the weakness of man, we are thinking wholly of the weakness of our converts. Is that quite right? I turn to the New Testament and I read of the terrible failings of those little groups of Christians living in heathen cities surrounded by every insidious form of heathen immorality and heathen thought, and I find the Apostle writing to them, not as if he had any faith in them, or in their strength or character, or in their natural virtue, but in quite other terms, of his faith that Christ will work in them, that Christ has called them, that Christ will enlighten them, that Christ will save them. . . . Again I turn to the New Testament, and I find the Apostle of the Gentiles relying not upon his authority, his government, his control but upon something very different. He trusts in God in Christ to meet the obvious and very present dangers. He does not shut his eyes to the dangers, the falls, the ignorance, the weakness of his converts, but that does not prevent him from establishing his Churches in this freedom, or from looking upon spontaneous expansion as something present and admirable.²⁰²

It is in this lack of control that the researcher finds a paradox in Allen's thinking. In order for the missionaries to be in control of what the Scriptures prescribe as proper missionary functions, they must be out of control. Surrender to the Lord's oversight of His congregation is a must. Without this faith, missionaries find themselves kicking against the goads. In the conclusion of *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, Allen admonished his readers to manifest a healthy missionary faith:

What is necessary is faith. What is needed is the kind of faith which, uniting a man to Christ, sets him on fire. Such a man can believe that others finding Christ will be set on fire also. Such a man can see that there is no need of money to fill a continent with the knowledge of Christ. Such a man can see that all that is required to consolidate and establish that expansion is the simple application of the simple organization of the Church. It is to men who know that faith, who see that vision, that I appeal. Let them judge what I have written.²⁰³

Roland Allen Equation of Spontaneous Expansion

Despite the lengthy discussion of the components of Allen's missiology as noted within this article, his concept of spontaneous expansion is fairly simple. In light of his missiology, I have developed what I refer to as the Roland Allen Equation of the Spontaneous Expansion of the Church. I realize that there are at least two possible weaknesses with displaying Allen's views in a linear equation format.

First, there is the accusation of being too reductionistic. It is my hope that within the context of this chapter, this accusation will be leveled. When the reader examines the breadth and depth of Allen's missiology as discussed in this chapter, he or she will hopefully understand that I have not attempted to deconstruct Allen to a point which is more basic than the simplicity of his understanding of spontaneous expansion.

The second possible accusation of compiling the equation is that Allen never offered a formula and therefore no contemporary scholar should attempt to place his views in separate vacuums. As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, Allen never dichotomized his views to the point whereby they could be separated neatly from one another. His thoughts ranging from his theology to his missiology were all interwoven and focused

on a particular result: spontaneous expansion of the Church.

The reason that I have attempted to develop an equation, which displays Allen's understanding of spontaneous expansion, is primarily for pedagogical matters. Allen was a prolific writer. It takes some time for someone to chart the waters of the literature that contain his missiology. The world of academia needs a visual portraying Allen's understanding of spontaneous expansion for the purpose of easily grasping his thought. By establishing his thoughts in a mathematical formula, I have no desire to attempt to convey the belief that if someone adds this component to that component, then the result will be spontaneous expansion. Allen himself never made that type of statement.

Allen's views called for a radical paradigm shift, not a step-by-step process or methodology for church growth. This shift was a return to a biblical understanding of an apostolic pattern, a pattern that consisted of simple missionary belief, practice, and church organization. A pattern that was translatable into any given culture. The following quote showed the radical nature of the necessary paradigm shift.

Thus there can be no place for the man who would practise Pauline principles in the modern missions. He cannot follow their policies, he cannot understand their treaties, he cannot assist in the establishment and expansion of their peculiar codes of morals, or of religious practices. He would be rejected at once by any mission board. . . .

There is no possible answer to the man who asks how to apply Pauline principles to modern mission stations. There is no possible escape from the charge of madness for anyone who would practise them. There is no half-way house.

It is not in the external superficial appearances that the difference between us and St. Paul lies, but in the Spirit of freedom which that Spirit induced. That is the fundamental distinction.²⁰⁴

Just as Allen realized the radical nature of his views,²⁰⁵ by suggesting this equation, I am not stating that a major paradigm shift is no longer necessary. In fact, I believe that a radical paradigm shift is very much a necessity in many contexts (e.g., North America).

When one studies Allen, he or she encounters another missi-

ological paradox. On the one hand, the spontaneous expansion is very simple and is appropriate for any given context. Allen noted:

The spontaneous expansion of the Church reduced to its elements is a very simple thing. It asks for no elaborate organization, no large finances, no great numbers of paid missionaries. In its beginning it may be the work of one man, and that a man neither learned in the things of this world, nor rich in the wealth of this world. The organization of a little church on the apostolic model is also extremely simple, and the most illiterate converts can use it, and the poorest are sufficiently wealthy to maintain it. Only as it grows and spreads through large provinces and countries do any complex questions arise, and they arise only as a church composed of many little churches is able to produce leaders prepared to handle them by experience learned in the smaller things.²⁰⁶

On the other hand, as noted in a previous quote above, spontaneous expansion requires a radical and difficult paradigm shift. The paradox can only be avoided, and the simple nature of spontaneous expansion grasped and applied, apart from any reins of an established system like Allen faced in his day.

The Roland Allen Equation of the Spontaneous Expansion of the Church in essence consists of three components. First and second, Allen's views concerning indigenous churches and the Holy Spirit must be realized and accepted. Third, missionary faith, which is opposed to devolution, must be present.²⁰⁷ As the equation shows, when the concept of indigenous churches is united with the proper understanding of the Holy Spirit and missionary faith is present, then the result is the spontaneous expansion of the Church (see Figure 5).

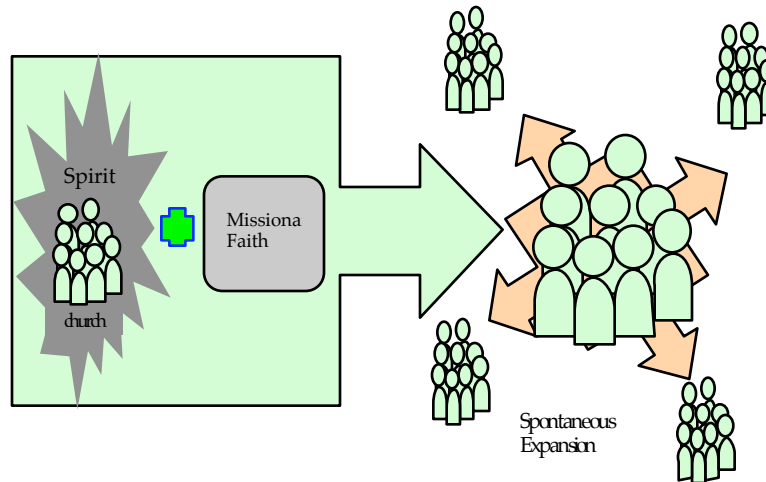


Figure 5. The Roland Allen equation of the spontaneous expansion of the church

Writer

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NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, I will always refer to the local church with a lowercase "c" and the universal, national, or denominational church with an uppercase "C."

2. A detailed description of the historical context of Allen's day and his mission situation is beyond the scope of this work. Others have addressed contextual issues in their biographical discussions. See Hubert J. B. Allen, *Roland Allen: Pioneer, Priest, and Prophet* (Cincinnati, OH: Forward Movement Publications; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995); William Nolan Burkhalter, "A Comparative Analysis of the Missiologies of Roland Allen and Donald Anderson

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McGavran" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1984), 63-85; Michael Don Thompson, "The Holy Spirit and Human Instrumentality in the Training of New Converts: An Evaluation of the Missiological Thought of Roland Allen" (Ph.D. diss., Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989), 8-77; John K. Branner, "Roland Allen, Donald McGavran and Church Growth" (Th.M. thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1975), 1-7; and David M. Paton, ed., *Reform of the Ministry: A Study in the Work of Roland Allen* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1968), 13-45. Because the discussion of the controversies surrounding the mission station approach have been addressed and summarized in various writings over the majority of the twentieth century, I assume that the reader is familiar with the common-place methodology of Allen's day. I will discuss Allen's historical context only as it helps to shed light on certain aspects of his missiology. For information regarding a brief history and some problems with the mission station methodology, see Donald Anderson McGavran, *The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions* (New York, NY: Friendship Press, 1955), 42-67.

3. Hubert J. B. Allen, *Roland Allen*, vii.

4. Harry R. Boer, "Roland Allen, the Holy Spirit, and Missions," *World Dominion* 33 (1955): 297.

5. John E. Branner, "Roland Allen: Pioneer in a Spirit-Centered Theology of Mission," *Missiology* 5 (1977): 175-76.

6. *Ibid.*, 179.

7. Boer, "Roland Allen, the Holy Spirit, and Missions," 299. It should be noted that despite the fact that Allen was not a systematician, he was well educated and theologically trained. He attended Bath College School and the Bristol Grammar School and won a scholarship to St. John's College, Oxford. In 1892 he was ordained a deacon and a year later, became a priest. See Hubert J. B. Allen, *Roland Allen*, 17-20.

8. Branner commented, "Whether one disagrees with Allen's theology or with his methodology does not alter the fact that he must be considered as a biblical theologian. . . . He was determined to be biblical in the spirit of Acts 17:11" (Branner, "Roland Allen: Pioneer in a Spirit-Centered Theology of Mission," 176).

9. Roland Allen, "New Testament Missionary Methods," *The Missionary Review of the World* 52 (1929): 21.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*, 21-22.

14. *Ibid.*, 22.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Hubert J. B. Allen noted that Allen, time and again, whatever the point of discussion, would respond to his critics with the phrase: "This is the way of Christ and His Apostles." See Hubert J. B. Allen, *Roland*

Allen, 172.

17. Roland Allen, *Pentecost and the World: The Revelation of the Holy Spirit in the "Acts of the Apostles,"* in *The Ministry of the Spirit: Selected Writings of Roland Allen*, American ed., ed. David M. Paton, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), 6.

18. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Version, 1996 edition.

19. For example, the persecution in Jerusalem scattered many preachers (Acts 8:4). A Samaritan church was established following the dispersion (Acts 8:1-24).

20. Roland Allen, *Mission Activities Considered in Relation to the Manifestation of the Spirit* (London: World Dominion Press, 1927), 21-22.

21. Roland Allen, *Discussion on Mission Education* (London: World Dominion Press, 1931), 14.

22. Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*, American ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), vii.

23. *Ibid.*, 147.

24. *Ibid.*, 107.

25. *Ibid.*, 148, 149.

26. Ephesians 1:3.

27. Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 149.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*

30. Thompson, "The Holy Spirit and Human Instrumentality," 69-70.

31. Branner, "Roland Allen, Donald McGavran and Church Growth," 22.

32. *Ibid.*, 26.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*

35. Branner, "Roland Allen: Pioneer in a Spirit-Centered Theology of Mission," 178.

36. David M. Paton, "Roland Allen: A Biographical and Theological Essay," in *Reform of the Ministry: A Study in the Word of Roland Allen*, ed. David M. Paton (London: Lutterworth Press, 1968), 24.

37. *Ibid.*, 25.

38. Roland Allen, "The Priesthood of the Church," *The Church Quarterly Review* 115 (1933): 237.

39. Paton, "Roland Allen: A Biographical and Theological Essay," 25.

40. Allen, "The Priesthood of the Church," 237-38.

41. Branner commenting on Allen's ecclesiology, stated: "Hence, as the local church was planted on the mission field and partook of the sacraments it was giving evidence of its inclusion in the Church." See Branner, "Roland Allen: Pioneer in a Spirit-Centered Theology of Mis-

sion," 178.

42. Allen, "The Priesthood of the Church," 240.

43. *Ibid.*, 241. It should be noted that Allen did not discard local church leadership. In fact, Allen once stated: "St. Paul, as I understand his action, was convinced that a native Church requires duly appointed ministers, and in this sense there was no local Church until they were appointed." See Roland Allen, "Essentials of an Indigenous Church," *World Dominion* 3 (1925): 114.

44. Paton, "Roland Allen: A Biographical and Theological Essay," 26.

45. Roland Allen, "Essentials of an Indigenous Church," 111.

46. Roland Allen, "The Use of the Term 'Indigenous'," *International Review of Missions* 16 (1927): 264.

47. Allen, "The Essentials of an Indigenous Church," 496.

48. Roland Allen, "Devolution: The Question of the Hour," *World Dominion* 5 (1927): 283-84.

49. Allen, "The Use of the Term 'Indigenous'," 266.

50. I say "rediscovered" because there is nothing new under the sun. According to Allen, all that he advocated regarding the Holy Spirit in missions had been taught and practiced by the Apostolic and Early Church.

51. Charles Chaney, "Roland Allen: The Basis of His Missionary Principles and His Influence Today," *Occasional Bulletin* 14 no. 5 (May 1963): 5.

52. Branner, "Roland Allen: Pioneer in a Spirit-Centered Theology of Mission," 181.

53. Roland Allen, *Pentecost and the World*, 4.

54. *Ibid.*, 5.

55. Roland Allen, *Essential Missionary Principles* (New York, NY: Flemming H. Revell Company, 1913), 67.

56. Roland Allen, *Pentecost and the World*, 27.

57. Roland Allen, *Missionary Principles* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 144-45.

58. Roland Allen, *Mission Activities*, 13-14.

59. Thompson, "The Holy Spirit and Human Instrumentality," 51.

60. Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church: And the Causes Which Hinder It*, American ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), 7.

61. Arthur P. Johnston, *The Battle for World Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1978), 33, 59.

62. Roland Allen, "The Relation Between Medical, Educational and Evangelistic Work in Foreign Missions," *Church Missionary Society* (March 1920): 57.

63. *Ibid.*, 58.

64. Roland Allen, *Missionary Principles*, 67.

65. Ibid., 68.

66. Ibid., 73-74.

67. Ibid., 84.

68. Ibid., 85.

69. Ibid., 86.

70. Ibid., 90.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid., 93.

73. Ibid., 95-96.

74. Ibid., 97.

75. C. Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest: A Comprehensive Guide* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990), 70.

76. Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 3-4.

77. Ibid., 4. Throughout Allen's life, he encountered many rebuttals to his belief that the apostolic pattern was relevant for any day. Allen spent time countering these rebuttals and many of his writings were polemical in nature. It is beyond the scope of this work to address the rebuttals and Allen's responses. For further information regarding these issues see the introduction to *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* and *Educational Principles and Missionary Methods*.

78. Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 107.

79. Ibid., 87-88.

80. Ibid., 89.

81. Ibid., 97.

82. Ibid., 100. Allen based his understanding of only baptizing a few and then turning the responsibility over to the church from 1 Cor 1:14-17: "I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void." See Roland Allen, "The Essentials of an Indigenous Church," *The Chinese Recorder* 56 (1925): 493.

83. Ibid., 100-01.

84. Ibid., 88-89.

85. This practice reveals an example of the integration of Allen's missiology, thus displaying the difficulty in one's attempt to systematize it. Here the apostle must pass on to the new believers the Creed, Sacraments, Orders, and Holy Scriptures; however, without the ministration of the Spirit, this was an impossible task. In other words, while the apostle was passing on the four necessities described above, he was simultaneously ministering the Spirit.

86. Roland Allen, "Devolution: The Question of the Hour," *World Dominion* 5 (1927): 276.

87. Ibid., 278.

88. *Ibid.*, 279.

89. *Ibid.*, 280.

90. *Ibid.*

91. *Ibid.*, 281.

92. *Ibid.*, 281-82.

93. *Ibid.*, 282.

94. *Ibid.*, 283.

95. *Ibid.*

96. *Ibid.*, 283-84.

97. *Ibid.*, 283.

98. *Ibid.*, 284.

99. *Ibid.*, 285.

100. Concerning the right time, Allen wrote: "It is not until there is a large and strong Christian community with a considerable body of Natives who understand in some sort the working of such a Committee that devolution becomes possible, and then devolution becomes certain only because those Native members begin to understand that the Mission has been exercising an authority which they think ought to be in their own hands, and, therefore, they threaten to revolt unless they can gain it for themselves." *Ibid.*

101. *Ibid.*, 286.

102. *Ibid.*

103. *Ibid.*, 287.

104. *Ibid.*

105. Roland Allen, *Mission Activities Considered in Relation to the Manifestation of the Spirit* (London: World Dominion Press, 1927), 30, 33. This booklet was later republished in Roland Allen, *The Ministry of the Spirit*, American ed., ed. David M. Paton (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), 87-113. This statement that the ministration of the Spirit was the "sole work of the missionary," again revealed the integrated thinking of Allen. Unless the missionary practiced evangelism, the revelation of Christ, the people would not have received the Spirit.

106. *Ibid.*, 29.

107. *Ibid.*, 30.

108. *Ibid.*

109. *Ibid.*, 22.

110. *Ibid.*, 25.

111. Allen received many rebuttals to his argument that contemporary missionaries were to follow the example of Paul. Though it is beyond the scope of this work to address the debates, the reader is referred to the following resources whereby Allen addressed the multiplicity of concerns behind seeing the Pauline approach as relevant for modern missions. See *Educational Principles and Missionary Methods*, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*, and *The Establishment of the*

Church in the Mission Field: A Critical Dialogue. Because much of Allen's writings were repetitive in nature, one might find references to the debates in his other writings.

112. *Ibid.*, 30-31.

113. *Ibid.*, 236-37. For more information on the Islamic paradigm, see Roland Allen, "Islam and Christianity in the Sudan," *The International Review of Missions* 9 (1920): 531-43; and Roland Allen, "Brotherhood: A Contrast Between Moslem Practice and Christian Ideals," *World Dominion* 1 (1923): 92-94.

114. Roland Allen, "The Place of 'Faith' in Missionary Evangelism," *World Dominion* 8 (1930): 235.

115. *Ibid.*, 237.

116. In *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*, Allen wrote: "Now if we are to practise any methods approaching to the Pauline methods in power and directness, it is absolutely necessary that we should first have this faith, this Spirit. Without faith—faith in the Holy Ghost, faith in the Holy Ghost in our converts—we can do nothing. We cannot possibly act as the Apostle acted until we recover this faith" (152).

117. *Ibid.*, 240.

118. *Ibid.*, 238.

119. *Ibid.*, 240.

120. Roland Allen, "The Use of the Term 'Indigenous,'" *The International Review of Missions* 16 (1927): 262.

121. *Ibid.*

122. *Ibid.*, 263.

123. *Ibid.*, 263-64.

124. *Ibid.*, 264.

125. *Ibid.*

126. *Ibid.*

127. *Ibid.*, 265.

128. *Ibid.* Allen here revealed his connection between indigenous churches and proper missionary faith. Unless the missionaries agreed to what constituted a church, it was difficult for them to manifest the faith.

129. *Ibid.*, 265-66.

130. *Ibid.*, 266.

131. *Ibid.*, 268.

132. *Ibid.*, 269.

133. Roland Allen, "The Essentials of an Indigenous Church," *The Chinese Recorder* 56 (1925): 496.

134. Roland Allen, "Use of the Term 'Indigenous,'" 268.

135. Roland Allen, "The Essentials of an Indigenous Church," 495.

136. *Ibid.*, 492.

137. Roland Allen, "The Native Church and Mission Education," *World Dominion* 3 (1925): 154.

138. Roland Allen, "Education in the Native Church," *World Dominion* 4 (1925): 37.

139. The use of a picture of a diploma is only symbolic of education and therefore, one should not assume that Allen understood native education as that which is only derived from a degree program.

140. Roland Allen, "The Native Church and Mission Education," 154.

141. *Ibid.*, 155.

142. *Ibid.*

143. *Ibid.*, 156.

144. *Ibid.*, 156, 157

145. *Ibid.*, 157.

146. *Ibid.*

147. *Ibid.*, 158.

148. *Ibid.*, 160.

149. Roland Allen, "Education in the Native Church," 44.

150. Allen's description and definition of voluntary clergy is as follows: "But we also commonly speak of 'voluntary workers,' meaning men who not only offer their services of their own free will, but also offer their services free of all charge, gratis, as opposed to men who are paid, or receive stipends or allowances, for the work done by them. The term implies nothing derogatory of the service of men who for quite good and sufficient reasons receive stipends. It marks an accidental, not an essential, distinction. It is in this sense that we speak of voluntary clergy. In the first sense of the word we might say that all Christian workers are volunteers, and their service voluntary; but not in the second, the sense in which men habitually use the term as opposed to stipendiary, or paid. Voluntary clergy are men who earn their living by the work of their hands or of their heads in the common market, and serve as clergy without stipend or fee of any kind" (Roland Allen, *The Case for Voluntary Clergy* [London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1930], 80-81).

151. *Ibid.*, 201.

152. *Ibid.*

153. *Ibid.*, 201-02.

154. *Ibid.*, 26.

155. Roland Allen, "The Priesthood of the Church," *The Church Quarterly Review* 229 (1933): 234.

156. Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, 112.

157. *Ibid.*, 113.

158. *Ibid.*, 11.

159. Roland Allen, *The Case for Voluntary Clergy*, 79.

160. *Ibid.*, 81.

161. *Ibid.*, 50.

162. *Ibid.*, 50, 51.

163. Even Allen's grandson's words resound with this confusion: "I myself recall a discussion with a school mate about how much people ought to be paid. . . . Granfer, who was also in the room, murmured words to the effect that the Church had a duty to pay its servants properly, but that—being a priest is not a job. No-one should be paid for being a priest. My friend and I didn't follow this: it seemed to both of us obvious that being a priest was 'a job'. So Granfer went on: It is a privilege and a vocation, not a job. I wasn't at all sure what all these words meant, but Grannie told us not to weary him with questions—and no-one ever argued with Grannie." Hubert J. B. Allen, Roland Allen, 122-23.

164. Roland Allen, "Voluntary Clergy and the Lambeth Conference," *The Church Overseas* (1931): 153.

165. One example of a major difference was the contemporary practice of the ordination of young people who had not truly experienced life or had time to develop a healthy reputation, but rather, received ordination because of their education. Allen had much to say about the discrepancies between the contemporary qualifications and the apostolic qualifications. See Roland Allen, *The Case for Voluntary Clergy*, 41-78.

166. *Ibid.*, 88.

167. *Ibid.*, 88-89.

168. *Ibid.*, 123.

169. Roland Allen, "Voluntary Service in the Mission Field," *World Dominion* 5 (1927): 136.

170. *Ibid.*, 137.

171. *Ibid.*, 138.

172. *Ibid.*, 139.

173. *Ibid.*, 141.

174. Roland Allen, *The Case for Voluntary Clergy*, 129.

175. *Ibid.*, 23.

176. Allen's grandson, Hubert J. B. Allen, thought this concept to be so noteworthy that he entitled the tenth chapter of his book "Non-Professional Missionaries." See Hubert J. B. Allen, Roland Allen, 117-27.

177. Hubert J. B. Allen, Roland Allen, 120. Aside from the preface, the entire work was later reprinted in David M. Paton's collection, *The Ministry of the Spirit: Selected Writings of Roland Allen*. Also, the majority of the work can be found in two articles published by the World Dominion Press in 1928: "The Need for Non-professional Missionaries," *World Dominion* 5 (1928): 195-201; and "The Work of Non-professional Missionaries," *World Dominion* 5 (1928): 298-304. Apart from Allen's comments as noted above, it is still not clear why *World Dominion* originally published the majority of Allen's work in pamphlet form and two articles before withdrawing it.

178. Hubert J. B. Allen, Roland Allen, 121; Roland Allen, "Non-

professional Missionaries," in *The Ministry of the Spirit: Selected Writings of Roland Allen*, American ed., ed. David M. Paton, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), 83.

179. Roland Allen, "Non-professional Missionaries," 81-82. Allen was not one who believed that just any task or work could be labeled as evangelism, but rather that everything the individual did was for the purpose of communicating the gospel to the lost. For example, one worked as a farmer for the purpose of taking the gospel to others. A person could not be a missionary without being evangelistic. Allen wrote: "By a 'missionary of the gospel' I understand a man who having found the secret of life in Christ is eager to impart it to others. The gospel is for him the only way of life; there can be no other: men who do not share his secret are living in darkness and perishing in their ignorance: that is the difference between a missionary of the gospel and a lecturer on comparative religion. A missionary is therefore an evangelist" (*ibid.*, 65).

180. *Ibid.*, 74.

181. *Ibid.*, 74, 75.

182. *Ibid.*, 75.

183. *Ibid.*, 82.

184. *Ibid.*, 74.

185. *Ibid.*, 83.

186. *Ibid.*, 80-81.

187. *Ibid.*, 81.

188. *Ibid.*, 77.

189. *Ibid.*, 83.

190. *Ibid.*, 77.

191. *Ibid.*, 81.

192. *Ibid.*, 82.

193. *Ibid.*, 78.

194. *Ibid.*, 79.

195. Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, 5.

196. Roland Allen, "Spontaneous Expansion: The Terror of Missionaries," *World Dominion* 4 (1926): 223.

197. *Ibid.*

198. *Ibid.*, 221.

199. *Ibid.*, 219-20.

200. *Ibid.*, 220.

201. This concept of fear was the hindrance to spontaneous expansion. In Allen's writings, he stated that "the greatest of all hindrances to the immediate appearance of a wide spreading spontaneous expansion is this unbelief on our part which fears spontaneous expansion; for that impresses upon all men a sense that it is something at once terrible and impossible" (*ibid.*, 223).

202. *Ibid.*, 221-22.

203. Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, 157.

204. Roland Allen, "The Application of Pauline Principles to Modern Missions," *World Dominion* 11 (1933): 356, 357.

205. As noted at the beginning of this article, Allen believed that no one would understand his views until he had been dead for a decade. See Hubert J. B. Allen, *Roland Allen*, vii.

206. Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, 156.

207. Again, to show the interrelations of Allen's thoughts, the faith can be present because of a proper understanding of the Holy Spirit and the indigenous nature of the Church.