

## GHANA: PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

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Of all the points in the significant career of the movement which for some years was labelled the International Missionary Council, the meeting at Ghana involved the most illuminating soul-searching as to its nature and destiny. As always when names are changed or are being proposed for change, original purposes are rethought and reconsidered.

It is the writer's conviction that Ghana was not the preparation for a funeral service (as some who were there feared) but merely a medical check-up of a powerful movement in mid-career, a movement which to this day portends much of high significance in the present and the future. It could be said that the two councils, the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches, had been "engaged to be married" ever since 1948 when each adopted an "in association with" phrase to indicate that they wanted to be close to each other. The marriage took place at Delhi, and the two have been under the same roof ever since. The honeymoon meeting was at Mexico in 1963 (at which the writer was a member of the conference staff). Then came the Bangkok meeting (about which the writer collected some articles into a little book called *The Evangelical Response to Bangkok*). Now we all look forward to what may well be the most significant meeting of all, in May 1980 — the 70th anniversary of the 1910 meeting. What light does the soul-searching that went on at Ghana cast upon the hopes and aspirations we may legitimately have for the 1980 meeting?

The chief historian of the IMC, Richey Hogg, writing just after the official founding of the WCC in 1948 said, "Edinburgh may best be described as a *lens* — a lens catching diffused beams of light from a century's attempt at missionary cooperation, focusing them and projecting them for the future in a unified, meaningful and determinative pattern".<sup>1</sup> Looking back from today we might note that Edinburgh was also a prism which projected a spectrum of interests which in fact do not now converge and may never do so. Another way to put it, to continue our earlier metaphor, is that the union of the IMC and WCC has already brought forth children, some of whom will not likely be present at the family reunion in 1980. Just prior to the Bangkok meeting (1972-3), the writer warned in these pages of the astonishing increase of mission agencies unrelated to any council both in the Western and non-Western worlds.<sup>2</sup> Since then the Lausanne Congress in

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<sup>1</sup> WILLIAM RICHEY HOGG: *Ecumenical Foundations* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952), p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> RALPH D. WINTER: "The New Missions and the Mission of the Church", *International Review of Mission*, Vol. LX, No. 237, January, 1971, p. 89.



1974 and many other regional congresses on world evangelization have occurred, the permanent Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization has been established as well as the new Commission on Missions of the World Evangelical Fellowship, plus the Asia Missions Association, a council of mission councils (similar to the Western half of the IMC but confined to the Asian area). In fact, born certainly in part by the impetus of the 1910 meeting, two other meetings have been proposed for 1980, one of these proposed even prior to Bangkok by a group of mission scholars who felt that since 1910 there had not yet been a proper counterpart to that meeting. All of these children must be briefly noted if the richness of the tradition being debated at Ghana is to be fully understood.

However, before even attempting to distinguish the various streams running into the discussions at Ghana, we have no alternative but to pause for recognition of two important sets of distinctions.

### **Preliminary Distinctions: Two Structures and Three Tasks**

The first distinction has to do with two different kinds of organizational structures (church and mission); the second with three successively overlapping tasks (mission, missions and foreign missions) which both of these two organizations can perform.

**The Two Structures** There is not sufficient space here to enter fully into what is a large subject. But for pressing, practical reasons we must recognize the great difference organizationally between a church and a mission agency, board, or society. Both, inevitably, were present at the 1910 meeting although structurally only the latter were represented.

When Paul and Barnabas departed from Antioch, their move and their new organizational relationship to each other were not regarded as a breakdown of unity in the body of Christ, but did clearly constitute a separation of functions. The new missionary team that was formed carried all the authority of a travelling church, and in this sense foreshadowed the Roman Catholic missionary strategy involving the appointment of apostolic bishop (apostolic vicars). But both organizational forms, the team and the church, were "church"; both the stationary Christian synagogue that remained in Antioch and the travelling missionary team (which, note well, no longer took its orders from the Antioch church) were essential elements in the body of Christ, the people of God of the New Covenant, and were equally the church.

Yet neither of the two structures could by itself effectively fulfil the functions of the other. Both were essential to the unfolding purposes of God as the story of the expansion of Christianity has amply revealed. The writer is profoundly convinced that the very life of the church and its mission in history depends upon the existence and friendly, productive relationship between these two



contrasting manifestations of the church.<sup>3</sup> This fact has been demonstrated by the Roman tradition which has, in the main, achieved a successful balance between bishop and abbot, diocese and order. Protestants, in their attempt to start out all over again, were very slow in reconstituting the second structure and were thus very tardy in joining with the Roman church in the evangelization of the world. As a result, the IMC at its inception (1921) was built upon scarcely a century of Protestant experience, and there was not yet even at that late date widespread clarity in the Protestant mind about the nature and the legitimacy of the second, mission structure. In the minds of most of the Americans involved, only one variety of mission agency — the denominational board — was proper. Continentals, on the other hand, were for the most part mainly acquainted with mission agencies that were not structured as church boards. Thus what the writer considers the simplest way to account for the structural drama highlighted at Ghana may not even today be immediately acceptable because not many yet think in these structural terms.

**The Three Tasks** The second set of distinctions, referring to the kind of work organizations do, is neatly captured in some explanatory remarks made by Lesslie Newbigin to the General Assembly of my own church (the United Presbyterian Church in the USA) in its 1960 meeting. What he said then we may well take seriously especially if we recall his tenure between 1958 and 1963, first as director of the IMC until New Delhi (1961) and then as secretary of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and director of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC until the Mexico meeting.

We have to begin making some verbal distinctions if we are going to have our thinking clear. The first is between *mission* and *missions*. When we speak of the *mission of the Church* we mean everything that the Church is sent into the world to do — preaching the Gospel, healing the sick, caring for the poor, teaching the children, improving international and interracial relations, attacking injustice — all of this and more can rightly be included in the phrase *the Mission of the Church*.

But within this totality there is a narrower concern which we usually speak of as *missions*. Let us, without being too refined, describe this narrower concern by saying: it is the concern that in the places where there are no Christians there should be Christians. And let us narrow the concern down still further and say that within the concept of *missions* there is the still narrower concern which we call — or used to call — *Foreign Missions* — which is the concern that Jesus should be acknowledged as Lord by the whole earth.<sup>4</sup> (Italics added.)

The three categories Newbigin labels are more important than the labels which he later in his remarks acknowledged as less than ideal. These could just as easily have been called “the work of the Church”, “evangelism”, and “frontier evangelism”. Let us note in passing that while *mission* organizations commonly labour in all three tasks, *churches* as such are not often involved effectively in the third.

<sup>3</sup> RALPH D. WINTER: “The Two Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission”, *Missiology: An International Review*, January, 1974.

<sup>4</sup> LESSLIE NEWBIGIN: “Mission and Missions”, *Christianity Today*, August 1, 1960, p. 23.



**Employing These Five Categories** Now, however, in these categories what was Edinburgh stressing that Ghana might have missed? If the range of concerns discussed in 1910 is considered a basic and long-term mandate for the IMC, it is safe to say that nothing less than the full spectrum of the task Newbigin defines as the *mission of the church* was surely included in such a mandate. An example would be the discussion in 1910 of what should be done about the atrocities in the Belgian Congo. On the other hand, it is equally true that the particular kind of structure formally represented at Edinburgh was primarily the *mission* structure and not the *church* structure. But it must be admitted that the actual outworking of the mission (task) of the church has always been the work of both structures — the church structure and the mission structure. Yet the all-inclusive concern — the mission of the church — has been most successfully carried out by the mission structures, which have been in effect the “programme” structures of the various ecclesiastical governments. It would simply not be true to say that the mission structures have confined their work to evangelism (another word for Newbigin’s second category) anymore than it would be true to say that the mission structures have been useful only in foreign activity. Note the confusion, then: missions (the agencies) have not merely been active in the missions task (Newbigin’s “narrower concern”).

For example, when William Carey first landed in India, he was very much concerned about winning people to Christian faith and planting the church. (This was *missions* and specifically the *foreign missions* aspect of the *mission of the church*). Carey found it an inseparable concern, however, to attack the social injustice represented by the practice of widow burning (which, while not strictly a *missions* task in Newbigin’s second category, is surely within the *mission of the church* even though the concern of a mission agency). Thus, as a missionary Carey was alert to the full range of concerns reflected in the phrase “the mission (task) of the church”.

Moreover, as an evangelical Carey believed that the principal foundation upon which he could build for long-term impact was the spiritual transformation of heart church historians call “the evangelical experience”. It is important to note that Pietism and its English-speaking counterpart — the Evangelical Movement — is very simply and irrefutably the source of the vast majority of all man and woman hours of missionary labor deriving from the Protestant tradition. Thus inevitably the presence or the absence of an emphasis upon a foundational “evangelical experience” is a matter of great importance to a considerable body of Christians in the modern world, especially those resulting from the Protestant mission movement, and specifically to the framers of the 1910 conference.

Thus while Edinburgh and mission work in general tackled the whole range of the *mission of the church*, it is probably fair to say that the principal concern of the missionary movement represented in 1910 was what Newbigin called *mission* and his still narrower phrase *foreign missions*. In this John R. Mott,



Oldham and others back in 1910 doggedly adhered to their own definition of priorities. (The writer does not accept the allegation that Mott, in excluding mission agencies operating in Europe and Latin America, was merely paying a price exacted by Anglicans.) Those student leaders did not deny that missions of some sort were necessary in all countries of the world, but with what some felt was a cavalier disregard for true spiritual needs, they deliberately excluded from conference participation those mission agencies that only worked in those portions of the globe where a large percentage of the people considered themselves Christians. Thus if they erred they did so in the direction of overstressing what they felt was of highest priority, namely Newbigin's narrowest category, the activity of reaching into communities where a culturally relevant church was yet to be established or had only recently been established.

To sum up, then, the tradition in deliberation at Ghana had begun by acknowledging the full range of concern defined by Newbigin's first category and did so in a meeting exclusively of mission agencies. Secondly, the necessary missions to deal with the concern that "in the places where there are no Christians there should be Christians",<sup>5</sup> and this especially "among non-Christian peoples" was a fundamental concern, interpreted in conventional evangelical terms. So long as the latter concern was prominent, the full range of the mission of the church held no fears. But there would come a time when neither the prominence of the specific mission structure nor the specific task of evangelism could be as easily discerned. How did that happen?

### **Ghana: Pivot of Transition**

As we started out by implying, the writer feels that there was in fact no big crucial decision made at the Ghana meeting. Someone has said, "Men make very few big decisions in life; strings of small, insignificant decisions usually carry men in the paths their lives take."

The relatively brief career of the International Missionary Council was like that. Its apparent purpose was changed not so much by decisions at the central office of the IMC as by decisions at the level of the field bodies composing its membership. Thus we may see the action taken at Ghana as not exactly a momentous decision so much as a moment of truth in which the implications of longstanding and staggeringly important transition could formally be observed and in effect ratified. Our purpose here is to describe the nature of that transition and therefore the implications then and now of the decision central to the Ghana meeting which led to the merger of the IMC with the WCC, being alert while doing so to the categories we have taken time to describe.

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<sup>5</sup> *Loc. cit.*



**Before Ghana: The Growth of an Anomaly** Protestant mission societies, once they began belatedly to appear, sustained various degrees of relationship to the churches. Some of these mission endeavours, as in the cases of the Moravian Brethren and the Scottish church, were so closely tied into conventional church governments that the phrase "church in mission" could easily be applied. Other societies were totally autonomous and unrelated to any specific denomination (like the China Inland Mission, or the YMCA). Still others were half-way between total subservience and total autonomy, like the Church Missionary Society.

However, no matter how directly or indirectly these organizations were related to specific home churches, whenever the missionary agents of these Western societies met each other in India or China or wherever the "mission field" happened to be, at least their Western Christian and increasingly collegiate cultural affinity allowed them to recognize more easily (than could their supporters back home) their basic similarity of motivation, purpose, and commitment. In the case of all those missionaries recruited by the Student Volunteer Movement, there was a further and earlier tie. All of this led them into various field associations and relationships, as missionaries. However, the overarching practical goal of virtually all of the mission agencies, especially in the earlier days, was not to perpetuate themselves nor even to reproduce themselves but was basically the planting of worshipping congregations among non-Christian populations in the non-Christian lands. Selfconsciously Protestantism was centered in churches, not in missions. In relatively few cases (perhaps the most notable exception being the Melanesian Brotherhood in the Solomon Islands) were the *churches* on the field expected to be balanced out by indigenous *mission* structures. In other words, only one of the two structures was considered basic — despite the inevitable prominence of the very mission structures that carried the missionaries to the field!

Thus in India, for example, the National Christian Council (along with virtually all the other similar councils which John R. Mott's catalytic efforts helped into being) started out representing the mission societies arriving there from abroad. But gradually more and more they came to be composed of the "younger" churches which were the chief and irreplaceable product (in India) of those mission societies. Meanwhile, back in the "sending lands" mission societies also sensed an identity of purpose and function and generally formed conferences or councils, but these bodies were exclusively composed of mission agencies, whether or not those agencies were related to specific church constituencies. For example, half of the thirty member councils of the IMC at the time of the founding of the WCC in 1948 were councils in the so-called "sending countries" while the other half were in the "receiving countries". But note the difference and the impending tension: the member councils in the sending countries, all of them, actually employed the word "missionary" or "mission" in their titles. The other half, in the receiving countries, almost all included churches in their membership (as well as expatriate missions), some of them already including the word *churches* in their very title, while some had



no missions as members at all. Shortly in India, mission structures would be entirely, and specifically, excluded from direct representation.<sup>6</sup>

Briefly, then, expatriate missionaries were drawn together on the field by their similarity of purpose but also their common Western background. Their unity attracted into conciliar unity the churches they planted in the "mission field". As a result it soon became clear that the IMC stood with one foot in the Western world, where its membership consisted of mission councils, and the other foot in the non-Western world, where its membership became increasingly councils of churches. This anomaly Ghana gave over to the WCC unresolved.

One reason for the replacement of the earlier councils in the mission lands by church councils was a curious omission in mission strategy, showing up in an unnoticed lack of parallelism between the situation in Western and non-Western countries. Both mission agencies and churches were present in both places. But the receiving countries only very rarely possessed their own indigenous mission societies (Bishop Azariah's work a stunning exception) and thus the only visible unity on the field had to be unity exclusively between churches, if it were to be indigenous. The missions, especially, wanted these overseas councils to be indigenously led.<sup>7</sup>

**Ghana, Wrestling with an Anomaly** At Ghana, then, there was an irreversible element which the delegates had no power to change. It is true that there had been no preparation of pro and con documents, as Max Warren pointed out. But the overarching *fait accompli*, which was hardly the fault of either IMC or WCC leadership, and indeed was due to mission field successes, was the "great new fact of our time" (as William Temple put it at Madras) — the rise of the younger churches. Yet the very existence of those precious churches crowded out the concept or representation for indigenous mission agencies in the receiving countries, even though it proved the power of the gospel and the workability and legitimacy of the missionary enterprise. The cultivation of these tender plants became the major focus of Western mission energies (less and less the penetration of new frontiers). Thus it would have been unthinkable at Ghana to decide (or even to propose for consideration) the exclusion of *churches* from the membership of the non-Western councils. This is all very understandable since conventional mission perspectives did not include the concept of the very indigenous mission societies that could have possibly formed missionary councils parallel to the missionary councils in the Western countries. The whole force of the missionary movement thus seemed almost presumptuously to have assumed that 1) only Westerners could be missionaries, or that 2) only Westerners could learn how to run missionary societies, or that 3) non-Western churches should discreetly wait 250 years before starting missionary societies like the Western (Protestant)

<sup>6</sup> WILLIAM RICHEY HOGG, *ibid.*, p. 286.

<sup>7</sup> *Loc. cit.*



churches did, or that 4) missionary societies ought not to exist, or most likely, 5) that the new churches would somehow automatically carry forward missionary theory and practice without being instructed, or 6) something else. We face one of the great mysteries of the history of mission theory. The strategy of deliberately planting the indigenous *church* in foreign lands was endlessly discussed. Even the "euthanasia of the missions" was long planned. But it is difficult to find much more than a trace of thinking about the need to found indigenous mission societies. For example, at the Ghana meeting itself, so far as I can determine, the only reference to a field council of indigenous mission societies was John V. Taylor's statement which I shall quote below, and I have scrutinized every word of the verbatim transcript of the meeting as it is found in the files at Geneva.

I would be happy indeed to see at the top [on the world level] a structure such as is envisaged, but only when such a structure truly represents the deep convictions of its member bodies, that is to say, only when those convictions are so profoundly held that they are already given the same structural form in the national and regional councils . . . If the local and regional churches do not feel the need to *have their own agencies and boards devoted exclusively to the missionary task toward the world*, I am afraid that the time may come when, as member bodies, they will, after a time, cease to be convinced of the need for a separate Commission on World Mission at the top.

I believe that a great deal of our present distress arises from the anomalies in the present structure of the IMC — anomalies that began to appear in the years after 1910 when its member units included not only missionary agencies but Christian Councils which were in effect councils of emergent churches. There lies the confusion. At that time it was unavoidable, for the IMC was the only ecumenical body of that type to which any sort of unit could belong, but since the creation of the WCC the anomaly has been more evident.

We are just entering on the period in which NCC's may be expected to disappear, becoming in their general aspect Councils of Churches, which we frankly hope to be members of the WCC, while at the same time every one [area] should be setting up its own missionary agency or board or missionary council to coordinate the work also, of whatever race or background in that area which are engaged specifically in making known the Gospel to the non-Christian world. These [mission] agencies should eventually be the constitutive members of the IMC and later the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC. That is, in fact, precisely what has taken place in the NCC of Indonesia, with a Commission on Missions which retains contact even with church bodies not members of the Council. I believe it is important not merely as an organizational matter, for at the heart of the matter I believe that the organizational anomalies are really important because they are symptomatic of spiritual confusion and inhibition.<sup>8</sup> (Italics added.)

There is much in this statement. A few minutes earlier in the meeting Max Warren's profound reluctance to see integration happen so soon was not quite so clearly articulated. For the moment we will brush past Taylor's allegation that spiritual confusion underlay the organizational enigma. The crux of what

<sup>8</sup> "Transcription of Verbatim Notes on the Discussion of Integration of IMC/WCC at the IMC Assembly, Ghana, Dec. 28, 1957-Jan. 8, 1958 (and unpublished document). Geneva: WCC, pp. 32-3.



Taylor says is that whether or not there was a *will*, there was no *way*: the younger churches were involved in councils that did not yet have any clear structural provision for the carrying out of classical missions. He cites as an exception and a good example the National Council of Churches of Indonesia, but at that same moment in history he might just as easily have referred to the new National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA with its prominently structured Division of Foreign Missions which succeeded the longstanding Foreign Missions Conference of North America.

Taylor felt the *timing* was unfortunate and was not the only one who felt so. A structural feature was missing at the level of the non-Western field councils. Probably no one at Ghana was inclined to doubt the potential missionary fervor of the younger churches. It may have been easy to assume that the younger churches would eventually be missionary in structure. It may have been expected that the younger church councils could not easily avoid so magnificent an example as had been set for them by the US National Council of Churches, or by the soon-to-be-created analogue of the OWME.

**Post Ghana: The Missions Themselves Now an Anomaly** In any case, things did not turn out as expected. The non-Western churches certainly did not move decisively forward to create their own mission structures, much less the type of structural appendage for their church councils that would correspond to the Division of Foreign Missions of the NCCUSA or the DWME of the WCC. Worse still for the hopes of some at Ghana, there was a rising cry against the continued existence of Western missions themselves. This in a part explains the change of name from the Division of Foreign Missions of the NCCUSA to the Division of Overseas Ministries. It also explains the famous "dropping of the *s*" from the name of this journal in 1969, which was editorialized as making it more palatable to non-Western church leaders.<sup>9</sup>

One of the most moving and eloquent expressions from the "younger churches" is Emerito Nacpil's brief and masterly statement in 1971, "Mission but not Missionaries". More recently John Gatu's widely quoted plea for a moratorium makes the same eminently reasonable proposal that missionaries, however useful they may be in reaching non-Christian populations, are not always a benefit to well-established younger churches. Nacpil's statement in particular is certainly one of the most eloquent and basically reasonable statements on the part of a non-Western churchman with regard to the impact of westernization upon his country, and specifically the impact of Western mission agencies on the non-Western churches. Azariah's and Ching-Yi's earnest statements at Edinburgh were nothing compared to the explicit forthrightness of Nacpil's. His is brief, powerful, in some respects even exultant, clearly heralding the new era of the "reality of the Church in Asia", as he put it.

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<sup>9</sup> "The Dropping of the *S*", editorial in *International Review of Mission*, Vol. LVIII, No. 230, April, 1969, p. 141.



This one final act of self-sacrifice on the part of modern missions is nothing less than the charter of freedom and life for the younger churches. In other words, the most *missionary* service a missionary under the present system can do today in Asia is to go home! And the most free and vital and daring act the younger churches can do today is to stop asking for missionaries under the present system. And both actions — self-oblation on the part of missions and self-expression on the part of the younger churches — are consistent with the Gospel by which they both live.<sup>10</sup> (Italics added.)

Nacpil's country, the Philippines, 97% "Christian", is the only one in Asia where the vast bulk of the population is even nominally Christian — in this similar to John Gat'u's Kenya — and naturally provides a quite different setting than, say, India from which Newbiggin speaks:

The conclusion would then seem to be that in a few years' time we could withdraw all missionaries from India. The logic is impeccable. What is wrong is the starting point. The argument goes wrong because it starts from the Church and not from the world. While 97% of India remains non-Christian, and probably 80% out of touch with the Gospel, what is the missionary logic that can permit us to say "the task is done and missionaries can be withdrawn?"<sup>11</sup>

Newbiggin might have said that the argument for withdrawal starts from the *churches*, not the *Church*. It was the non-Western churchmen at Ghana who outnumbered representatives of mission agencies, but both types of leaders are leaders in *the Church* of Jesus Christ. But notice that the organizational mandate of the leaders of *churches* is and was inevitably concerned with that third of the world's population which is nominally Christian. Wherever those Christian are, there also are their leaders.

On the other hand it is the organizational mandate of a *mission* agency, classically understood, to focus on the two-thirds of the world's population which is not and never has been Christian. Stephen Neill opposed integration with this difference in mind. He could not see how any interchange of workers between churches, called missionaries or not, could necessarily be expected to bridge this yawning difference:

The WCC is by its nature "concerned with that third of the world's population which is nominally Christian, and in particular that ten per cent of the world's population which belongs to the member churches of the WCC; whereas the IMC is concerned with the two-thirds of the world's population which is not and has never been Christian. This latter responsibility cannot possibly be brought under the heading of inter-church aid as at present understood."<sup>12</sup>

The boiling crux of Ghana's soul-searching revolved then, as it still does today, around Neill's stunning phrase — "the two-thirds of the world's population which is not and has never been Christian". Some felt integration would finally carry this concern organically into the WCC, where it had never existed

<sup>10</sup> EMERITO P. NACPIL: "Mission but Not Missionaries", *International Review of Mission*, Vol. LX, No. 239, July 1971, p. 360.

<sup>11</sup> NEWBIGGIN, *ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> As quoted by Karsten Nissen in "Mission and Unity: A Look at the Integration of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches", *International Review of Mission*, Vol. LXIII, No. 252, Oct., 1974, p. 546.



sufficiently before. Others feared that without a leg to stand on it would be lost in the merger. Fry intimated that the IMC itself could gain something from the WCC. Thus it went.

But the most crucial of all unresolved questions was whether the two-thirds of the world could be kept in view. If the business and the main busy-ness of the WCC was with the one-third of the world, and if the main concern of the IMC was the much larger and more needy two-thirds of the world, why didn't the WCC join the IMC? As we have seen, however, neither premise is fair to the facts. The IMC, never a council of missions, was not now even mainly a council of mission councils. Furthermore the Western mission structures themselves had by 1958 become so identified and involved with their overseas progeny — that is, churches — that their vision could be said to have been as reduced and focused upon the Christian third of the world (now partly to be found in Asia and Africa) as the WCC itself. Indeed the WCC had already displayed its capability of organizing inter-church aid.

In any case, foredoomed was any easy assumption that the valiant and idealistically hopeful younger churchmen, working either on their own or with the help of Western churches, would be able soon to constitute a substantial new force in mission outreach to the remaining frontiers. Max Warren, on this matter, was quoted in a paper presented to the Ghana Assembly as saying,

Today the gravest embarrassment of the mission societies lies in the actual unwillingness of the younger churches to set them free to perform the tasks for which they properly exist — the pioneering of those new frontiers, not necessarily geographical, which have not yet been marked with a cross.<sup>13</sup>

Not being involved in mission structures of their own, the non-Western churchmen could not easily have been expected to understand the unique purposes of mission societies, Western or otherwise.

### **Ghana's Children and the Enduring Crisis**

One of Ghana's princely children was the Theological Education Fund, with which the writer has had such excellent relations in the gradual unfolding of the movement toward theological education by extension. Much more troublesome was the birth shortly after Ghana of the DWME, a structure far less capable than the IMC of maintaining contact with the so-called voluntary sector. This limitation was, somewhat unintentionally, the fulfilment of a distinctly American dream.

**The Crisis: Structural Perceptions** The Americans, from the early days of the Student Volunteer Movement, as they have encountered European mission leaders, have often and characteristically pressed for a certain specific structural interpretation of the otherwise theologically-becoming

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<sup>13</sup> S. C. GRAAF VAN RANDWIJK: "Some Reflections of a Mission Board Secretary" (translated from the Dutch original), submitted previous to the Ghana Assembly (unpublished). Geneva: WCC, p. 13.



phrase "the Church in mission". Interdenominational structures, unattached to a specific church constituency, were a perennial source of perplexity. No one doubts the ecumenical force of the Student Volunteer Movement, or of the YMCA which was so essential to its formation, No one can question the vitality of the China Inland Mission, today called the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, in its more recent truly internationalized structure. A "Consultation on Church and Mission" sponsored by the Church of South India in August 1977, to which the writer was invited as a resource person, clearly revealed the enduring confusion about the two structures and the three tasks.

Thus, the most unmentionable irregularity in the IMC bloodstream was the early, almost utter dependence of the movement upon two completely non-denominational structures, the SVM and the YMCA. Already in 1910 the Edinburgh-leadership heard disparaging remarks about the "YMCA mentality" that on occasion seemed to belittle church distinctives. But long before 1910 Mott had had lengthy experience in apologizing to church leaders for SVM inadvertencies.<sup>14</sup> Long before 1910 the Foreign Missions Conference of North America had decided to reduce the interdenominational mission agencies to mere "corresponding membership".<sup>15</sup>

More difficult to recognize, as we look back on Ghana's decision today, is the fact that the full and intended vitality of the IMC did not result in children carrying the family name. Even before Ghana, in the USA at least, much of the actual function of the SVM, now enwrapped (and eventually smothered) in the bosom of the NCCCUSA, was being taken over by three other "voluntary" organizations — InterVarsity, Navigators, and Campus Crusade, which grew 445%, 612% and 502% respectively from just 1970 to 1977, Campus Crusade today fielding 8,000 full time staff.<sup>16</sup>

Just preceding Ghana at the preparatory Joint Committee of the WCC and IMC at New Haven, Connecticut in July, 1957, Norman Goodall, long the editor of the *International Review of Missions*, warned with prophetic insight that the mainline ecumenical movement might all too easily dismiss all other children of the broader missionary movement as "non-cooperating bodies". He cited statistics to show that in 1957 only 42% of American missionaries were related to the NCCCUSA.<sup>17</sup> The writer, in these pages, quoted this percentage as 28% in 1969.<sup>18</sup> By 1975 only 14% of American Protestant missionaries were related to the NCCCUSA, and only 7% came from the member denominations.<sup>19</sup> For the first time in more than a century of US

<sup>14</sup> *Report of the 18th Conference of the Officers and Representatives of the Foreign Mission Boards and Societies in the U.S. and Canada*, New York: Foreign Missions Library, 1910, p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> *Report of the Sixth Conference of the Officers and Representatives of the Foreign Mission Boards and Societies in the U.S. and Canada*, New York: Foreign Missions Library, 1898, p. 4 (the constitution).

<sup>16</sup> RALPH D. WINTER: "Protestant Mission Societies and the Other Protestant 'Schism'" (unpublished manuscript available from the author).



history, the number of missionaries functioning under denominationally related boards or societies (whether or not those denominations were related to the NCCUSA) was less than 50% of the total.<sup>20</sup> The year of Ghana may have actually been the point at which the "American standard pattern" of church board missions came to be superseded in America by the impetus of non-aligned voluntary societies. Norman Goodall noted in 1967 that "from time to time obedience in mission has been more apparent in movements structurally independent of the churches than in the churches themselves."<sup>21</sup> In his comment on this statement, John V. Taylor added "History shows consistently that a church, or a fellowship of churches, either embraces elements of independency to its own greater health or, by demanding a monolithic control, sows the seeds of secession."<sup>22</sup>

The roots of this structural defect may be seen in the strongly American perspective of most of the 1910 leaders and is perhaps betrayed by the fact that Azariah, founder (before 1910) of two voluntary mission societies in India, was not invited on that basis even though Edinburgh theoretically invited *all* mission societies in the world working in non-Christian countries. Thus blame cannot easily be thrown on Ghana for this hiatus in mission strategy. Indeed, it would be grossly misleading to suppose that the only crisis related to the two structures and three tasks mandate would be a matter of structure. Much more grave in the writer's estimation is the inevitable confusion by the time of the Ghana meeting in regard to one of the three tasks.

**The Crisis: Task Perceptions** Totally beyond the control of that dedicated host assembled at Ghana was the luxuriant growth of the national churches overseas and their unwitting displacement of the mission structures in the discussion at Ghana. Equally beyond the powers of the Ghana meeting was the much more subtle change in function even of the mission societies that were still represented. Stephen Neill's concern about the two-thirds of the world existed not merely because there were virtually no indigenous mission structures in the non-Christian parts of the world but because the activities of even the foreign mission agencies working in those parts of the world had at first gradually (but by Ghana, massively) moved away from the classical preoccupation with the world beyond the church, very specifically that vast majority of the non-Christian world which is "out of touch with the Gospel".<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> NORMAN GOODALL: "'Evangelicals' and WCC/IMC", *International Review of Missions*, Vol. XLVII, No. 186, April, 1958, pp. 210, 214.

<sup>18</sup> RALPH D. WINTER: "The New Missions and the Mission of the Church", *Op. cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>19</sup> *Missions Handbook: North American Protestant Ministries Overseas*, 11th edition, Monrovia, CA: MARC of World Vision, Inc., 1976, pp. 389-436.

<sup>20</sup> RALPH D. WINTER: "Protestant Mission Societies and the Other Protestant 'Schism'", *Op. cit.*, pp. 8-10.

<sup>21</sup> NORMAN GOODALL as quoted by John V. Taylor in "Small is Beautiful", *International Review of Mission*, Vol. LX, No. 239, July 1971, p. 335.

<sup>22</sup> JOHN V. TAYLOR, "Small is Beautiful", *International Review of Mission*, Vol. LX, No. 239, July 1971, p. 335.

<sup>23</sup> LESSLIE NEWBIGIN: *Ibid.*, p. 23.



Long overdue is the realization that Paul was a missionary not because he learned a foreign language or went to a foreign country; he did neither. If we had properly understood the New Testament we would have never assumed that mission could be focused on just certain *continents*. The mission frontiers are now and always have been those challenged by the primary force of Paul's ministry: Paul opened the door for the gospel in the Gentile world into a new community where there was not yet a culturally relevant church. Churches there were; witness there was; converts — at least “devout persons” — we find before Paul opened the door. But Paul was a missionary because by his ministry the gospel became contextualized in the Gentile world. So radical was that process that earnest Jews then (and now) maintained that there was a discontinuity. Similar missions today, if the full diversity of mankind — geographical, racial and sociological — is ever to be penetrated by the gospel, will once more be sharply questioned about the radical demands of indigenization.

Of two things however there is no doubt. For this kind of mission a vast mission field still exists. If Newbigin said 80% of India is out of touch with the gospel, the writer's own research would indicate that 84% of all non-Christians are beyond the normal evangelistic range because outside of the cultural traditions, of any national church anywhere in the world. Only a renewed, contextualizing Pauline mission can possibly cut through the massive cocoon within which the churches of the world and almost all missionaries everywhere now live and move and have their being. The unevangelized masses of the world are still mainly compartmented away from existing churches and present mission activities, and thus are still mainly a mission field, not a field that can effectively be dealt with by local evangelism.

If there is still a mission field, there is still a mission passion. A recent meeting of 1800 young people in Singapore gathered together by the Navigators was faced with an old-fashioned question: “Will you be willing either to be a missionary or to devote every increase in your income for the remainder of your life to the evangelization of the world?” Twelve hundred of those 1800 students and career young people stepped forward. This response is as strategic now as it would have been in 1910. Newbigin's third task is still the largest of the three.

**Three Children Face the Crisis** As we look forward to 1980, we need not wring our hands about what did or did not happen at Ghana. At least three children of Ghana will present themselves for Confirmation in 1980.

The CWME meeting will carry the family name, will represent the largest cooperative structure in the history of Christendom and will need to work effectively in relation to both the two structures and the three tasks.

What can we expect from the CWME meeting? An early document by Emilio Castro is creative and realistic. The creative theme suggested is



"Your Kingdom Come", with an impressive four-fold breakdown. The sweep of his awareness of the myriad factors and problems in our contemporary world is both inspiring and forceful. Realism is substantially evident throughout, not only as he assesses the possibilities for Christian participation in world problems, but also as he evaluates the strengths and limitations of the CWME apparatus itself. He recognizes that the CWME is now bound, structurally, to its churchly constituency, and to the churchly structures (rather than voluntary structures) as such. He is not unhappy about the contrast between the 1910 meeting where the "dominant factor" was "the voluntary element", and the proposed 1980 CWME meeting where he merely hopes the voluntary element "should not be absent". The CWME's alternative in 1980 will be based willingly and intentionally (and constitutionally) upon churches. Leaders of mission agencies where they enter the picture at all will be there as delegates of churches or church-dominated councils, with few exceptions.

The Ghana decision may have failed to convert the WCC into a mission organization but it has succeeded in taking mission into the very heart of the WCC. The WCC has always carried forward the first of Newbigin's three tasks — *the mission of the church*. Nairobi stressed his second — the concern for evangelism. We hope that Melbourne, 1980 will stress the third — the remaining frontiers.

A second child of Ghana is the series of "congresses" sponsored by forces catalyzed by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Berlin, 1966 and Lausanne, 1974 were massive gatherings. Many regional congresses have resulted. In 1974 the phrase *world evangelization* was consciously picked from the SUM Watchword that guided and motivated the frames of the 1910 meeting. *Evangelism* in this vocabulary is merely an *activity* which seeks to bring people into the fellowship of Christ whereas *evangelization* is a measurable *goal* which demands measurements which encompass all humankind. The permanent Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization with significant consultations and meetings and regional congresses also plans a Consultation on World Evangelization early in 1980. This too will be a broad spectrum conference drawing together both church and mission leaders. Topics ranging from lifestyle and social justice to frontier evangelism will crowd the agenda. As this meeting (possibly to be held south of Bangkok) will represent the consciously evangelical element in the world Christian family, how will Newbigin's third task fare in the hands of the evangelicals? We may hope for the best.

The third child presenting itself in 1980 was conceived in 1972 and born in 1974 when a group of American missiologists drafted a "Call" for a 1980 meeting:

It is suggested that a World Missionary Conference be convened in 1980 to confront contemporary issues in Christian world missions. The Conference should be constituted by persons committed to cross-cultural missions, broadly



representative of the missionary agencies of the various Christian traditions on a world basis.<sup>24</sup>

It is noteworthy that such a meeting, like the one in 1910, is to be based exclusively on the mission agency structures. Unlike 1910, this "professors' 1980" could easily, due to the development of history, include representatives of more than one hundred non-Western mission societies. And we would hope that such societies for the first time could meet as equals with representatives of the Western societies which have so long dominated the scene. Western missions in general have tended to stay too long in the midst of younger churches and may well almost have worn out the welcome for the very word *missionary*. But there are many signs to the contrary in Asia and Africa as the new missions of the non-Western world grow in prominence. The second meeting of the Asia Missions Association is in August 1978, and will attract not only new missions but new national associations of Asian missions into its membership. Its executive committee has already looked favorably on the 1974 "Call" for a world level 1980 meeting of mission agencies.

A second feature of the 1974 Call is the phrase *cross-cultural missions*. This very specifically is an attempt to focus the conference on the third task defined by Newbigin. It will not simply be a meeting of mission agencies but will be restricted, as in 1910, to those agencies working "among non-Christian peoples". The difference is that in 1980 we are looking at the texture of human societies with a magnifying glass. In 1910 the categories were relatively simple: Chinese, Hindus, etc. Now we know that there are at least fifty mutually unintelligible Chinese languages, not counting the hundreds of non-Chinese tribal languages within the border of that great country. Now we know and have much greater respect for the potential diversity within the world church and therefore the corresponding complexity and necessary decentralization of the mission structures by means of which new people, new complexions, and new cultures — sociological, economic, racial and political — can be added to the world family belonging to Christ. Perhaps Latourette alone in the mainline ecumenical movement would be undaunted (were he alive today) by the irrepressible profusion of creativity and diversity that constantly outpaces the patient and necessary organizing efforts of mature Christian leadership.

Looked at from this standpoint, Ghana was a preparation for a fruitful marriage with many different children resulting; Ghana was a new beginning, not an ending.

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<sup>24</sup> RALPH D. WINTER: "1980 and That Certain Elite", *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. IV, No. 2, April 1976, pp. 151-2.