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PROTESTANT CHRISTIAN MISSIONS, RACE AND EMPIRE:
THE WORLD MISSIONARY CONFERENCE OF 1910,
EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

by

KIM SANECKI

Under the Direction of Ian Fletcher

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores prevailing and changing attitudes among Protestant Christians as manifested in the World Missionary Conference of 1910, held in Edinburgh, Scotland. It compares the conference to missionary literature to demonstrate how well it fit the context of the missionary endeavor during the Edwardian era. It examines the issues of race and empire in the thinking of conference participants. It pays particular attention to the position of West Africa and West Africans in conference deliberations. It suggests that the conference, which took place soon after the scramble for empire and just before World War I and the subsequent upsurge of nationalism and anti-colonialism, offers a valuable historical perspective on the uneven nature of globalizing Christianity.

INDEX WORDS: Race, Empire, Paternalism, Edinburgh 1910, World Missionary Conference, West Africa, Cross-cultural contacts, Foreign and native missionaries, Subaltern voice, Indigenous churches, Christianity, missions, Henry Venn, John Mott, V. S. Azariah, Native Church, West Africa, Protestant ecumenism, Edwardian era

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KIM SANECKI

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

(All missionary societies are British, unless otherwise noted)

CMS	Church Missionary Society (Anglican)
E&W	The East and the West: A Quarterly Review for the Study of Missions (quarterly journal published by the SPG)
SPG	The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (Anglican)
SVM	Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (North America)
SVMU	British Student Volunteer Missionary Union
UFCS	United Free Church of Scotland
WMC	World Missionary Conference; WMC documents (Vol. 1 – 9)
WMMS	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society
WSCF	World's Student Christian Federation (non-denominational; based in the United States)
YPMM	Young People's Missionary Movement of the United States and Canada

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Our age calls for a careful and searching review of the Christian message and of the Christian apologetic to be used on the mission fields. That such examination is in progress both at home and on the fields, is evident in an extensive literature in both magazines and books. Not yet is there agreement, but there is enlarged thinking, deepening understanding, progress toward agreement, and there is sympathetic coöperation among those who represent various special phases of missionary work... This was no small part of the task of the missionary conference in Edinburgh.¹

In June, 1910, more than thirteen hundred Protestant missionary advocates, predominantly from North America and Northern Europe, gathered at the United Free Church of Scotland's Assembly Hall in Edinburgh, Scotland, for the first World Missionary Conference (WMC). Just four years before World War I, delegates representing dozens of denominations and missionary societies gathered together to discuss ways to better evangelize² the non-Christian world. The author of the epigraph above, writing the same year as the Conference, recognized that he and his contemporaries were living in a time of missionary self-examination and comity. Missionary advocates were writing extensively about their work and were open to cooperation with members of other denominations. The Conference flowed from such trends within the common

¹ William Owen Carver, *Missions and Modern Thought* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910), 292.

² Although both are used, the term "evangelize" is preferred to "proselytize" in this thesis. While both convey an attempt to convert people from one religion to another, or from no religion to a religion, the former refers specifically to conversion to Christianity.

agenda of global Christianity. In addition to suggestions for attaining this goal, the texts missionary promoters left behind captured a wide range of opinions and attitudes on other issues. Because of this, the WMC is an important event from which to better understand larger historical themes, such as Christianity, race and empire, during the Edwardian era.

The Conference took place in the atmosphere of widespread optimism within the Protestant Christian community following the conclusion of one hundred years of Protestant expansion. The nineteenth century had witnessed an explosion in European- and American-based, largely Protestant, missionary societies. These organizations initiated, funded, supported, and staffed overseas missions and missionaries. For much of the century, overseas missions often preceded European or American colonial occupation of Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. As such, the work of European and American missionaries was largely a story of cultural encounter as opposed to one of official colonial expansion.

The nineteenth century also marked the rise of native³ missionaries who had converted to Christianity. Born in areas increasingly subject to foreign domination, native missionaries were educated largely by Europeans and

³ David B. Guralnik, ed., *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language* (New York: Warner Books, 1984), 308, 400. Use of the words "native" and "indigenous" as adjectives are synonymous in this thesis to refer to those born or originating from specific areas. Both terms are loaded with colonial baggage, but need to be employed in order to identify which missionaries are in question in a given situation: those born in the same country or region then being evangelized, or those born in foreign countries to them. *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines the adjective "native" as "1. inborn 2. belonging to a locality of country by birth, production, or growth 3. being, or associated with, the place of one's birth [one's *native* land or language] 4. as found in nature; natural 5. of or characteristic of the original inhabitants of a place." Of these definitions, the fourth is problematic when using the word to describe people, but I believe the others are adequate. I also recognize problems with the term "indigenous," a word defined in the same dictionary as "existing or growing naturally in a region or country; native." I hesitate to use this word because it implies a lack of movement among peoples, as if a society had always existed in a particular geographic region. Even so, I employ both terms in this thesis, and apologize to anyone who would take offense to my use of either.

Americans, then recruited and trained by missionary societies to convert other indigenous and colonized peoples. In West Africa, for example, there arose a sizeable number of Christians who had been enslaved, rescued during the “middle passage” overseas, freed, and returned by the British navy. This community supplied many of the native missionaries who undertook the evangelization of Africans.

The climax of these movements in the metropole and the colonial periphery occurred at the end of the nineteenth century. The Scramble for Africa left the continent divided artificially along European colonial lines and marked the peak of prestige for the white missionary, who was no longer the primary contact for most indigenous peoples. In West Africa, moreover, the black missionary became much less visible after most were dismissed by the major missionary society active in the region,⁴ sparking the establishment of independent African churches.

In light of these and other movements, those involved in the missionary endeavor invested a lot of energy researching, writing, and meeting to further its aims. The culmination of their efforts came with the convening of the World Missionary Conference in 1910. Its aim was not merely to draw support for the missionary movement, as previous national or regional conferences had done.

⁴ The Church Missionary Society’s dealings with Bishop Crowther and the native missionaries will be discussed in greater detail later. Historians don’t agree on the reasons for the trumped up allegations brought against Crowther’s men in the 1881, but I believe the actions were part of a general shift in white missionary attitudes toward indigenous missionaries: earlier in the century, native pastors were seen as the future of the local church, but by the end of the century, white missionaries were questioning their very capability to lead local faith communities. Crowther’s pastors were discredited to make way for increased white missionary control, thus sparking the establishment of several independent African churches, not only within the Anglican denomination, but in other denominations as well.

Instead, as an insiders' conference, its purpose was to take an honest look at all aspects of the missionary endeavor in the non-Christian world by discussing the findings of two years' research on identified important concerns and issues facing the global, Protestant Christian missionary project: non-Christian cultures and religions; the development of the Church in non-Christian lands; problems missionaries faced in the field; ways to improve missionary training; the extent to which the missionary endeavor was supported in the European and American metropolises; and the possibilities for unified work by members of different denominations in the field. Delegates to the Conference, like the missionary writers surrounding its convening in 1910, recognized, criticized, accepted, and ignored new imperialism and indigenous Christianity. In so doing, they exemplified the open-ended and transitional nature of the Edwardian era.

Scholarship

The scope of my thesis ranges across several fields of scholarly inquiry. I have consulted works by anthropologists, theologians, sociologists, comparative psychologists, and missiologists, and brought their work, along with that of historians, together into three general areas of scholarship for this thesis: the study of missions and missionaries, the history of West Africa, and the story of the 1910 World Missionary Conference itself. The amount of available scholarship in each area is by no means balanced: West African history is a favored topic among historians, but missionary history is only reemerging as a field of interest, and the WMC has been virtually overlooked. Missionary history

is better accepted among theologians, notably those working within missiology.⁵ The Conference itself has received more notice by scholars in these fields, particularly because several ecumenical world missionary conferences followed it during the twentieth century. While anthropologists, sociologists, and comparative psychologists have been heavily involved in West African area studies topics, religion and missionary history have usually been avoided. Space does not permit me to discuss the findings of scholars from these various disciplines at length. I will limit myself to a few scholars from each of my general areas in order to ascertain some of the major arguments which have developed in recent scholarship. The bibliography provides further examples of those whose work is relevant to my topic.

Many historians describe the actions of the missionaries either as agents of imperial expansion, or as simply motivated by a Christian philosophy that worked against European and American colonialism. The historian Norman Etherington argues that neither side of the debate is either convincing or adequate for an understanding of missions and imperialism.⁶ He is suspicious of the classic historical model which posits that missionaries primarily laid the cultural and social groundwork for colonization by first bringing the language and social order necessary to the subsequent arrival of traders and the eventual conquest by colonial armies and bureaucracies. According to him, no such

⁵ Missiology, a sub-discipline of theology, is the study of Christian missions. It is not secular but religious in its outlook, and is underscored by a belief in the legitimacy and necessity of Christian missions.

⁶ Norman Etherington, "Introduction," *Missions and Empire*, ed. Norman Etherington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3-9.

progression of events can be discerned in reality.⁷ If anyone studies the actual facts concerning both imperial and missionary history in a particular colony, they do not conform to the stereotypical model. Etherington observed that at the root of this problem was the tendency of British imperial historians to discredit or ignore missionary history, and missionary historians to omit the story of British imperialism. To him, both histories “play related parts in a larger drama – the spread of modernization, globalization, and Western cultural hegemony.”⁸

Etherington is also critical of historians who give too much credit to missionaries for such projects as education for supposedly working against European and American traders’ interests by instigating the formation of nationalist movements. Instead, he offers evidence of Eurocentric attitudes among missionaries working in education and medicine.⁹ Etherington argues that historians need to pay more attention to the role of missionaries in the British Empire at home and abroad, yet warns against idealizing or condemning the motivations for, or effects of, that role.

Another historian to argue that mission history, and its connection to imperialism, has been oversimplified is Andrew Porter. In *Religion versus Empire?*, he argues that individual missionaries may not have advocated empire themselves, but their tangible projects in areas like education were associated by

⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁸ Ibid., 3-4.

⁹ Norman Etherington, “Education and Medicine,” in *Missions and Empire*, 260-284. Etherington is discussing how missionaries were unwilling to admit to any similarities between their methods and those of traditional practitioners, thus demonstrating a dismissal of the legitimacy of traditional knowledge and practices.

local peoples with larger imperial institutions.¹⁰ For Porter, white missionary attitudes toward indigenous peoples can neither be dismissed as ethnocentric and racist nor held up as examples of beneficent humanitarianism. While many missionaries may have been genuinely motivated by a desire to bring spiritual and material advantage to their fellow brethren, Porter believes that the way they carried out this work could not help but be influenced, even if unconsciously, by the ethnocentric and racist attitudes of the imperial societies they belonged to.¹¹ Like Etherington, Porter recognizes a space for scholars to write a new colonial history of missionaries by accepting both the negative and the positive effects of their presence in pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial societies.

Historians are not the only scholars who have recently recognized the need to reevaluate the role of missionaries in colonial history. In fact, the work of two anthropologists studying missionaries in nineteenth and twentieth century South Africa has greatly influenced historical scholarship. Jean and John Comaroffs' two volume work, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, argues that the Protestant missionary encounter was just as much a story of local peoples influencing and even helping form the missionaries' attitudes and world views as it was one of missionaries changing the social consciousness of local peoples.¹² According to the Comaroffs, missionary history has often focused on the effect of white missionaries on local peoples: those who were educated, healed,

¹⁰ Andrew Porter, *Religion versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 316.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 91-6, 146, 283-9, 313.

¹² Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, vol. 1, *Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), xi, xii, 7, 8, 54, 60-81, 198, 253, 310, 311.

Christianized, etc., by the white missionaries. In contrast, they describe this interplay between the two cultures as a dialectic because missionaries and, to some extent, their home countries were changed or constructed through the very process of interaction and dialogue with other cultures and peoples.¹³

These three examples of the current scholarship on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Protestant Christian missionary history all point to the mistake of simplifying arguments about the attitudes and motivations of missionaries, the role of missionaries in the expansion of western imperialism, and the effects of the missionary enterprise on either the indigenous peoples evangelized or the home cultures of the white missionaries themselves. They indicate a complex web of relationships shaping the Protestant missionary encounter in general and demonstrate the need to pay closer attention to how the interaction between cultures unfolded without falling into the trap of over-simplifying or over-generalizing.

Although this thesis is primarily centered on Northern European and North American missionary attitudes as expressed at the Conference and in their literature, West Africa provides the case study from which to gauge this interactive model. As such, we must briefly address the historiography of the region before addressing that of the World Missionary Conference. In the decade following the termination of official colonial occupation and rule in Nigeria, a number of scholars addressed missionary history using a critical, nationalist view. In *Christian Missions in Nigeria*, J. F. Ade Ajayi criticizes the

¹³ Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, vol. 2, *The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 5, 8, 14, 22, 24, 27, 37, 79, 179, 320-1, 409.

attitudes and motivations of white missionaries as Eurocentric and paternalistic.¹⁴ E. A. Ayandele's *Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria* follows Ajayi in taking a critical stance on the role of white missionaries in West Africa by portraying them as tools of empire.¹⁵ In *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland*, F. K. Ekechi heavily criticizes the overall work of white Christian missionaries, figures he sees as opportunists.¹⁶ In recent years, scholarship on West African missionary history has begun to lean toward the interactive model. J. D. Y. Peel's *Religious Encounter and the Making of Yoruba* argues that the role of the missionary in West African history was a good deal more complicated than that portrayed by Ajayi, Ayandele and Ekechi: they were not simply tools of the colonial state, and their actions were tied to the rise of nationalism.¹⁷

¹⁴ J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891: The Making of a New Elite* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1965), xii, 17, 126, 162-5, 263. Ajayi looks at the fifty years of the nineteenth century during which white Protestant missionaries had the most power to effect real change in Nigerian society. He argues they adopted a racist attitude toward native missionaries, members of the new middle class who were products of mission education and western training, by accepting prevailing Eurocentric values. This made them eventually question the authenticity of African conversions and the capacity of converts for self-leadership.

¹⁵ E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914* (New York: Humanities Press; London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1966), 5, 15, 29, 82-7, 155-62. Ayandele argues that many areas of Nigeria were brought peacefully under the British flag thanks to the work and propaganda of white Protestant missionaries. He notes that missionary work was often resented by western traders and local rulers, but the overall tone of his research is one of condemnation of the missionaries.

¹⁶ F. K. Ekechi, *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland, 1857-1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1971), 1-8, 17, 18, 88-91, 123, 128, 141. Ekechi questions the motivations of foreign missionaries in West Africa, suggesting that political and economic motives may have been just as important as spiritual ones: once the missionaries were established in the region, they became heavily involved in trade and generally believed that European colonial rule would benefit them more than the local political infrastructures already in place.

¹⁷ J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 7, 149, 279. According to Peel, who is writing outside the Nigerian nationalist perspective, the colonial government supported missionaries only as far as they were in line with its goals. Missionaries became supporters of the imperialist agenda in the late nineteenth century, but their presence and educational work in the region actually stimulated the development of nationalism. Yoruban, later Nigerian, identity was neither a pre-colonial attribute nor a post-colonial construct, leaving missionaries as mere catalysts in a process beyond their control.

The World Missionary Conference has received very little attention from historians studying missionary, imperial, and cross-cultural topics. Instead, we must turn to the work of theologians and missiologists. For example, theologian Roger Hedlund considers it to be an important event in mission history, for it marked the end of classical Protestant missionary work for the nineteenth century and the beginning of a global evangelization movement in the twentieth.¹⁸ In *Christian Missions in the Twentieth Century*, theologian Timothy Yates uses the Conference to demonstrate how missionaries who were involved in the new introspective field of missiology held theologically expansionist attitudes at the time of the Conference.¹⁹ A. Marcus Ward, in *The Churches Move Together*, recognizes it as the beginning of the Protestant ecumenical movement.²⁰ African theologian Gwinyai Henry Muzorewa points to the WMC as evidence of European and American dominance within Christian theology before the First World War, stating, "...views from the third world delegates were not heard and, when expressed, they did not make any difference to the prevailing concept of mission held by most Westerners..."²¹ While these three scholars treat the WMC with more consideration than most historians, their work is entirely contained within the framework of theological inquiry and debate.

¹⁸ Roger Hedlund, *Roots of the Great Debate in Mission: Mission in Historical and Theological Perspective* (Bangalore, India: Theological Book Trust, 1997), ix.

¹⁹ Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 7-31.

²⁰ A. Marcus Ward, *The Churches Move Together: A Brief Account of the Ecumenical Movement from the Edinburgh Conference of 1910 and its impact on the Churches of Great Britain as They Press on to Easter 1980* (Nutfield, Redhill and Surrey, Great Britain: Denholm House Press, 1968), 15. Dr. Ward was the General Secretary of the British Council of Churches.

²¹ Gwinyai Henry Muzorewa, *An African Theology of Mission* (Lampeter, UK: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 14-16.

One recent scholar researching the WMC and its relation to West African missions is J. Stanley Friesen, an American Mennonite pastor and religious studies scholar. His *Missionary Responses to Tribal Religions at Edinburgh, 1910*²² marks an advance in scholarly, albeit theological, attention to the Conference. Friesen is particularly interested in a chapter from one of the eight commission reports of the WMC which dealt with how missionaries presented the Christian Gospel to indigenous religions.²³ He argues that the Conference represented a higher level of appreciation for indigenous religions than present in contemporary European and North American society. This sympathy was present among missionaries at that time, but has not been sufficiently recognized by scholars.²⁴ However, even with the Conference serving as the backbone of his research, Friesen is primarily concerned with theological and missiological matters, specifically the theological traditions that influenced members of the sub-committee and their report.

As this brief overview suggests, there is room for new historical perspectives toward the 1910 World Missionary Conference. Whether because the WMC was not an event open to the public, or simply because its goal was the global spread of Christianity, the Conference has not been given much attention by historians, leaving the event largely to be treated by theologians and missiologists. These scholars have noted the importance of the Conference to history, but their focus was primarily religious in nature. This thesis will work to

²² J. Stanley Friesen, *Missionary Responses to Tribal Religions at Edinburgh, 1910* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996).

²³ *Ibid.* Commission IV's chapter on Animistic Religions formed the basis of Friesen's research.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, xiii.

fill the bridge the gap between the various fields by situating the WMC within the discipline of history, studying the topics of language, race and empire instead of theological ones.

Sources and Methods

The major primary source material for this thesis is the collection of official publications produced for the World Missionary Conference. Prior to traveling to Edinburgh in June, 1910, each delegate received eight volumes of material to be reviewed there. Each volume was based on two years of internal research done by missionaries and professionals and represented findings of one of eight commissions established to study and make recommendations on various aspects of the missionary project, including: the overall goal of missionary work, missionary fields around the globe and native religious beliefs, church organization and theology, missionary education and training, the relationship between missionaries and their home communities and governments, and the state of cooperation among missionary organizations. A ninth volume, published after the Conference, contained its proceedings and major speeches. A separate volume by the official historian of the event, Rev. W. H. T. Gairdner, provided a colorful popular history account of the WMC.

Other primary sources used in this thesis include a large number of books published by missionary societies or by independent authors interested in the missionary debate between the turn of the twentieth century and World War I. Among relevant periodicals is a quarterly journal published by the Society for the

Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. I also consulted the collection of John Mott's²⁵ papers and speeches. These sources helped situate the attitudes expressed at the Conference in relation to general attitudes among Edwardian missionaries as expressed in their literature. In addition to this literature, the fifth chapter utilizes a number of secular newspapers and journals to gauge public awareness of the WMC in Britain and America.

The methods I use in this thesis are customary: close reading and contextualization of primary sources. Generally, my thesis belongs to British imperial, cross-cultural, trans-national, and world history, and is grounded in the strategies of post-colonial or subaltern scholarship.²⁶ I focus on the ambiguities and ambivalences of language in an attempt to recover the very voices historian Gyan Prakash states "in history had been denied by elite perspectives anchored

²⁵ John Raleigh Mott, an American layman and Nobel Peace Prize winner, was heavily involved in student, missionary and ecumenical movements during his life-time. The roles he played before, during and after the WMC makes him a primary character in this thesis.

²⁶ The following scholars have been particularly influential in the development of the lens through which I view history: Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Gyan Prakash, "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism." *AHR* (December 1994): 1475-90; Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997); and Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000). Said studied mostly English and French literary texts and demonstrated the problems of the imaginary divide between East and West or Orient and Occident, and how these polarities have been problematic in linking civilization with the latter term in each pair. Prakash also discussed the problem of equating the west with concepts like progress or modernity, and talked about the importance of reading between the lines of elite texts in order to recover the voices of silenced, or subaltern, peoples. Mignolo criticized how the idea of modernity has been forced on the colonized by imperial powers, effectively de-legitimizing some forms of knowledge in favor of accepted mainstream Eurocentric ones. Dirks and Guha both looked at how an imperial power can create the history of a colonized people for them by identifying what counts as legitimate history, demonstrating the very power of colonization in its effects on something as basic as what history is. These scholars all point to the need to try to think outside the intellectual framework and culture a person was raised in, and to search for new ways to return the agency to groups otherwise overlooked or dismissed in history. Such a position falls within post-colonial or subaltern theory.

in colonialist, nationalist and or Marxist narratives."²⁷ In other words, I read texts by elite writers in a critical fashion in order to discern both the attitudes of the writers and the voices of otherwise silenced groups described and discussed in the texts. By so doing, I attempt to find evidence of the shifting or reworking of western epistemological knowledge in the ways elite voices actively silenced those of subaltern peoples at the Conference.

Much is gained in the attempt to uncover the marginalized. I recognize the balancing act it is, though, to uncover their voices without moving too far from what is stated in the texts, problematic as they are. While I do not take the words about the societies North American and European missionaries were coming in contact with at face value, I also do not entirely dismiss those words in an attempt to uncover authentic voices of the silenced. I must remember, and ask the readers to do the same, that my sources are primarily British and American texts, and I do not have ones from colonized places with which to compare them. While I attempt to uncover the silenced voices, particularly those of West Africans, in the American and European texts, I am only able to go so far in this endeavor.

Although a large part of the secondary research done for my topic was written by scholars in other disciplines, my own interest and training in this topic are within the field of history. I do not address specifically theological, anthropological, or sociological questions and concerns. As a practicing Roman Catholic Christian, I hold a strong belief in the hand of God in human history while recognizing the role of human free will within it. My treatment of

²⁷ Gyan Prakash, "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism," *AHR* (December 1994), 1478.

missionaries is not intended to exonerate or condemn. I am looking for cross-cultural encounters and exchanges of ideas and beliefs, and how they are captured in the texts available to us today.

Feminist, gender, and economic historians will be disappointed in this thesis. I am interested in cross-cultural encounters and representations and how they relate to, or flow from, assumptions on race and imperialism during the Edwardian era. I do not focus on views on women, men, femininity, masculinity, gender, the body, or sexuality, nor do I trace the globalization of trade, colonial dependency, or center to periphery economic systems. Such themes are connected to mission history and offer space for more work to be done by historians. However, while some appear sporadically in this thesis, their discussion herein is limited.

My secondary research favors British missionary societies and British colonial West Africa. However, as research for this thesis progressed into primary material, other missionary sites and metropolitan countries came into play. The very fact that this thesis is centered on a world conference means that work by missionaries from other countries, or those working in other parts of the world, were studied. Delegates from many Northern and Western European countries were present at the Conference: Germany, Holland, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, France, and Belgium. The collective of this group of historically, predominantly Protestant nations is referred to as Protestant Europe in this thesis. Great Britain belongs to this category, even though the British world-view of the time was one in which Britons distinguished themselves

as separate from people of “the Continent.” Other home countries represented at the Conference, Canada, the United States, South Africa, and Australia, had all been dominated by Britons, making their rulers cousins of the British in a larger Anglo Saxon family. I label missionaries belonging to all of these nations North American and Protestant European missionaries.

The use of the term missionary also requires explanation. Roman Catholic missionaries did play an increasingly important role in the evangelization of places like West Africa over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, this thesis is centered on the expansion of Protestant Christianity. By the very nature of their religion, Roman Catholic missionaries had very different relationships with European and American political systems and societies than their Protestant counterparts. In addition, they were simply not invited to the WMC.²⁸ Because of this, when I use the term missionary in this thesis, it refers to that of the Protestant Christian missionary. Alone, the word does not specify whether a missionary in question was native or foreign to a particular area. It only means the missionary was Protestant.

Readers of this thesis will also notice that I shy away from the use of scare quotes. Although I recognize the value of a highly critical examination of texts, I feel that if I began the process of placing quotation marks around suspect words used by the original authors, I wouldn't know where to stop. It is better for me to caution the reader beforehand and then allow the original writer to speak for him or herself. As for my own voice, as discussed in previous footnotes, the verbs

²⁸ As a result of this omission, Latin America was also dropped from discussion at the conference. Sadly, even though this was a world conference, representation of the Americas was limited to Canada, the United States, and the Caribbean.

“proselytize” and “evangelize” will both be used, although the latter will take precedence. “Native” and “indigenous” will be interchangeable. While the writers of the day may have used “native” over “ethnic” and “Negro” instead of “African,” when not directly quoting a source, I will use the latter in both cases.

Argument and Significance

Few histories of British imperial expansion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries discuss the spread of Christianity in great detail. Among the notable exceptions found in the bibliography are works by Jeffrey Cox, Susan Thorne, Catherine Hall, and Peter van der Veer. The World Missionary Conference has received very little, if any, attention from historians. However, I am arguing that, aside from the interest theologians have in its spiritual aspect, the WMC can be used to explore Edwardian Protestant Christian missionaries' troubled encounter with the indigenous, the colonized, and converts before the First World War.

The Conference was an outcome of several years of missionary introspection during which supporters of the missionary endeavor were constantly questioning ideas on both race and imperialism. Its reports reflected the range of opinions among commission members, providing evidence of debates among missionaries and their supporters on such issues. After its conclusion, the flux of opinions continued in missionary literature. Thus, the WMC encapsulates many of the themes that missionaries were concerned with during the period in question.

The missionary endeavor often sought to distance itself from the imperial project because of the devastating impact of empires on the colonial subjects that the missionaries were trying to work with. However, there were some structural similarities between the two. Colonial space was often used as an experimental space. Ideas on architectural styles, government policies, or social organization were first tried in the non-western world, and if successful, were then advocated in the western world. The treatment of unity in this thesis, a theme central to the Conference and Edwardian literature, shows that the missionary enterprise paralleled the imperial one in this aspect. Cooperation among missions of different denominations was advocated first in non-Christian lands. If successful, the cause of Protestant unity in Christian lands would then be promoted. Debates on another theme important to Edwardian missionaries, the Native Church, also parallel the imperial project as a debate over whether or not non-western peoples were competent or ready for sovereignty. Regarding ideas on imperialism itself, most missionary literature either ignored it or supported it. At the Conference, discussions of imperialism and the Native Church employed similar tactics.

In terms of race, the Conference captured several generations of beliefs. Within white British society, it was during the later nineteenth century that racial lines hardened and white supremacy rose. Thus, the oldest generation still alive in 1910, the mid-Victorians, did not hold the hardened racial views that the late-Victorians possessed. Many of the Edwardians questioned fixed racial hierarchies and held ideas more similar to mid-Victorians than late-Victorians.

The presence of these three generations at the WMC as delegates contributed to a range of racial views. In addition, several members of younger churches in historically non-Christian lands were present at the Conference, some of whom were able to speak out on the issue of race. Finally, foreign missionary service helped many North American and Protestant European missionaries, some of whom were present at the WMC or consulted by its commissions, reject old racial ideas and accept new ones reflecting Christian brotherhood. Thus, the WMC successfully captured the Edwardian interplay of opinions on race.

For the non-academic audience, the value of this thesis lies strictly in the importance one places on missions and missionaries. As will be seen near the end of the thesis, the WMC marks the beginning of twentieth century Protestant ecumenism. Finally, although stories from the past often speak to concerns of the present, I will leave it up to the reader to draw any conclusions in terms of the implications for early twenty-first century religious revivalism, Protestant evangelism, or cross-cultural conversions.

Chapter Outline

In addition to the introductory and concluding chapters, this thesis is divided into four chapters structured around a number of preliminary questions. The chapter following this introduction gauges the intellectual climate of the missionary endeavor in the years preceding the Edinburgh conference: why were they questioning themselves so heavily; what were some of the common attitudes about race and empire among missionaries; what was the stated goal of

the missionary enterprise, something I call the Venn model;²⁹ what were some of the prevailing attitudes concerning indigenous churches; were missionaries optimistic or pessimistic about their future work; and what were some of the prevailing attitudes concerning indigenous churches in West Africa. These themes are explored through the use of missionary texts produced between the late nineteenth century and the WMC in 1910, and help form a basis from which to gauge the success of the Conference in capturing Edwardian missionary attitudes.

My next chapter discusses the actual World Missionary Conference: what was fueling the drive to convene in Edinburgh; which organizations and nations were involved, and who represented them; how it was promoted; what areas and topics it addressed; what some of the important findings of the commissions were; and what themes emerged. Thus, the WMC documents provide the basis of this chapter, which is largely a narrative one to help readers understand the dynamics of the Conference.

The fourth chapter applies the Conference to the West African context: how race was treated in the World Missionary Conference texts; how the Native Church was debated; whether or not West Africans were physically present as delegates; if their voices were heard in the commissions' questionnaires to missionaries in the field; what, if any, was the response of North American and

²⁹ Henry C. Venn was the Honorary General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society from 1841-72, which was the time that that society had the greatest influence in West Africa. His goal for overseas missions was one of planned obsolescence: send European missionaries, educate and train native converts to take up various responsibilities of the missionary endeavor, ordain native converts, give them greater hierarchical responsibilities and authority, make sure the local church can fund and support itself, then withdraw the European missionaries so that they can start the process over again in a new location.

Protestant Europeans to the independent West African Church; and how race developed as a theme. Like the previous chapter, this chapter builds primarily on the WMC texts. It especially addresses the role of the Venn model within the missionary enterprise.

Chapter five follows chapter two in its use of missionary literature in order to interrogate the Conference as an event which can be used by historians for gauging broader missionary attitudes and philosophies during the pre-war Edwardian period: what were some of the immediate responses to the WMC by those interested or involved in the missionary project; how was its work continued between its conclusion in 1910 and the beginning of World War I in 1914; and whether or not it influenced missionary literature produced in those four short years. Thus, this chapter will carry the story of the missionary endeavor to the end of the Edwardian era. The century of Protestant missionary expansion largely closed with the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Four years before the war, though, missionaries were still optimistic about their work.

The World Missionary Conference tells the story of the drive for the global expansion of Christianity during the early twentieth century. Within that story lies evidence of North American and Protestant European missionaries' changing ideas on race and empire.

CHAPTER TWO

“The Evangelization of the World in This Generation”

The present generation is one of unexampled crisis in all parts of the unevangelized world. Missionaries from nearly every land urge that, if the Church fails to do her full duty in our lifetime, not only will multitudes of the present generation pass away without knowing Christ, but the task of our successors to evangelize their generation will be much more difficult.¹

These words, written by John Mott in 1900, capture a common sentiment among Protestant missionary writers of the early twentieth century. As they anticipated a new century containing endless possibilities, many of them sensed urgency, sparking a desire to help accelerate the missionary endeavor. One hundred years into what they commonly saw as the modern missionary era, these missionaries looked to both the past and the future in order to determine how they could succeed in their agenda of world evangelization. The future was generally acknowledged to be bright. With the rallying cry of evangelizing the world for Jesus Christ, possibly within their own generation, Edwardian missionaries sought answers on how to realize their obligation and duty. The World Missionary Conference (WMC), largely influenced by Mott, was the outcome of this atmosphere of both optimism and urgency.

Before looking at how well the conference fit in with the common attitudes among Protestant missionaries during the Edwardian era, it is necessary to first

¹ John R. Mott, *The Evangelization of the World in This Generation* (New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1900), 27. Hereafter, “SVM” will be used for “Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions.”

determine what those attitudes were. Fortunately, missionaries of the early twentieth century left a wealth of written material that can be used in order to gauge the intellectual climate surrounding the conference. The early twentieth century witnessed a wave of missionary books, text-books, and journal articles. Missionaries, and those working within the missionary enterprise, wrote histories, sermons, guides and hand-books, reports, and general state-of-the-field surveys. Those written in English were read on both sides of the Atlantic, allowing ideas to cross freely back and forth between Britain and the United States.

This chapter utilizes missionary texts² written between the turn of the twentieth century and the Edinburgh conference in 1910 in order to answer some of the questions outlined in the introduction. First, this chapter answers why this period was marked by so much introspection about the missionary endeavor, why missionaries were optimistic about the future, and what were some of the challenges they faced. It then determines how attitudes on race and empire came through in the writings of missionaries. In particular, it examines how well they supported the development of local indigenous churches. Finally, this chapter discusses how well missionaries were working together and how much support there was for a general world conference.

² Charles H. Robinson, "Editorial Notes: The E. & the W. on American Steamers," *The East and the West* 6 (1908): 342. Hereafter, all references to articles published in *The East and the West* quarterly journal will appear as follows: "E&W 6 (1908): 342." In addition to using books published by missionary writers and or societies, I also use several articles from *The East and the West*, which began publication in 1903. It was begun for the very purpose of gathering together articles on the most current missionary issues, and its articles were written by missionaries and experts on mission work for the benefit of other missionaries, or those interested in mission work. The quarterly journal, published by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), was widely distributed among the English-reading public, and read copies were mailed to missionaries in the field for further distribution.

Looking Within: Missionary Introspection

In addition to the expansion of Protestant missionary activity, the nineteenth century witnessed the acceleration of European and American imperialism, as well as a revolution in communications and other technological developments. Those living in the early twentieth century sensed that the world was rapidly changing and hoped that the future would prove to be beneficial. Missionaries hoped it would be one rich with countless opportunities to send out more missionaries from North America and historically Protestant Europe to the rest of the world, one full of converts to Christianity. We know this today only because these missionaries continually wrote about their optimism and about how things could be improved in order to reach such goals.

The wave of missionary enthusiasm which has passed over the Church in recent years has made itself felt so widely that Missions are no longer tolerated as a hobby of a few fanatics, but are regarded, even by the public Press, as a serious fact, alike in religious and political spheres.³

Why was there so much internal introspection taking place in the opening years of the twentieth century?

To begin, the closing years of the nineteenth century marked the centennial and bicentennial anniversaries of several of the major British missionary societies.⁴ With the anniversaries of the oldest, well-respected societies came a number of celebratory histories, causing readers to review the

³ T. A. Gurney, "The Influence of Laymen on Missions," *E&W* 5 (1907): 293.

⁴ The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was established in 1699 and the SPG in 1701; both began with the purpose of evangelization at home in Great Britain and in British settler colonies. Other British missionary societies were established in the late eighteenth century for the purpose of evangelizing non-settler British colonies: Baptist Missionary Society in 1792, London Missionary Society in 1795, Edinburgh Missionary Society and Glasgow Missionary Society in 1796, and CMS in 1799. The SPG, in response to these societies, also began sending missionaries to non-settler colonies in the early nineteenth century.

last century of missionary history and question what was to come in the next.

The missionary writers of the early twentieth century followed this current of looking to the past, and often acknowledged that nineteenth century missionary work had laid the groundwork for what was to come in the twentieth.⁵

In terms of Africa, several missionaries in the early years of the twentieth century discussed the changes over the course of the nineteenth century that had allowed Europeans to go from knowing very little about the African continent to being able not only to map it, but also to colonize vast tracts of it. For example, one writer recalled that West Africa at the beginning of the nineteenth century “was considered impenetrable, with wild savages and deadly fevers, all intensely hostile to the white man, and presenting barriers beyond which he could not pass.”⁶ The Edwardian era was a time of praising the achievements of the past and hoping for better things to come in the future.

As well as reviewing the past and dreaming about the future, these missionary writers were trying to take an honest look at their own time. Several authors confronted some of the criticisms of missionary work in general. Most welcomed such criticism,⁷ often describing how honest criticism could only lead to improvement, while others were defensive of the charges laid against missionary work by its detractors and skeptics. For example, one missionary, Arthur Brown, discussed and dismissed a total of twenty-two criticisms of the

⁵ Henry H. Montgomery, *Foreign Missions* (London, New York, and Bombay: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1904), 152. Montgomery is one example; he even called the nineteenth century the century of English missions.

⁶ James L. Barton, *The Unfinished Task of the Christian Church: Introductory Studies in the Problem of the World's Evangelization* (New York: SVM, 1908), 131.

⁷ Robert E. Speer, *Missionary Practice and Principles: A Discussion of Christian Missions and of some Criticisms upon Them* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1902), 79-80, 87.

missionary endeavor in his book. From his list, it would appear that some of Brown's contemporaries viewed missionaries as inferior opportunists with ill-behaved children who were only working to enrich themselves by forcing their destructive Western civilization on other peoples, working against the interests of their own governments, and accomplishing very little in the end.⁸ More common criticisms of the missionary enterprise were that there was enough work to be done at home, that there was no reason to interfere with other religions and their adherents, that indigenous peoples did not need Christianity, that missionaries often caused problems for their own governments by intervening in local colonial politics, and that missionary work was unsuccessful.⁹

Perhaps in the face of such criticisms, missionary writers of the Edwardian era sought to legitimize their work by defending the very motivations of missionaries. Most writers sought to counteract conceptions of missionaries as being driven overseas by romantic ideas about faraway places or simply by naive benevolence, arguing instead that missionaries were, above all, consciously

⁸ Arthur J. Brown, *The Foreign Missionary: An Incarnation of a World Movement* (London, Edinburgh, New York, Chicago, and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1907), 319-51. The following criticisms against missionaries were also given: converts were not genuine; missionaries were responsible for stirring up the nationalist feelings that led to the Boxer Rebellion in 1900; they were continuing to stir up the Chinese by interfering in politics; indigenous peoples hated missionaries but tolerated other foreigners; they denationalized converts; they spread sectarian instead of fundamental Christianity; they were hypocrites because there was enough evil still present in so-called Christian lands; they should focus their charity on their home countries first; converts made bad employees; missionaries had to kidnap and buy native kids in order to fill their schools; missionary women scandalized indigenous peoples by their impropriety; missionaries were forcing a civilization that did not suit the needs of the people receiving it; the effect of conversion was a raising in moral standards; other religions were good enough for those who were practicing them; it was more expensive to convert an indigene than a white man; missionaries did not accomplish much.

⁹ William T. Ellis, *Men and Missions* (Philadelphia: The Sunday School Times Company, 1909), 146-54; Charles H. Robinson, "Heathen London," *E&W* 2 (1904): 58-59.

carrying out the larger work of the Christian Church.¹⁰ In fact, many writers portrayed a sense of obligation or duty for all Christians to support missionary work, which in turn motivated the missionaries themselves, helping to reinforce such awareness. As one writer put it, “loyalty to our religion demands that we preach it.”¹¹ Such loyalty was transnational in nature, rooted neither in capitalism nor in the nation-state, but in a religion that potentially ignored national borders. Protestant Christianity offered its followers a collective identity that transcended those of the family, village, city, nation, or empire. Thus, at a time when loyalties to the nation and empire were very important, Protestant Christianity, by emphasizing the duty and obligation to follow Jesus Christ’s Great Commission, created a contesting transnational identity based on social and cultural ties instead of national ones. However, the very promotion of this community and its obligations demonstrated how it was only an imagined one.

Since so many missionary writers spoke about the duty and obligation of missionary work in the Church, it is reasonable to suppose this was a response, not only to criticism from without, but also to a larger fear of declining interest among church-goers in the missionary endeavor at the beginning of the twentieth century. One writer openly lamented what he felt was a fading of the sense of obligation and duty within Protestant Christianity.¹² Perhaps the desire to focus on theological reasons for why a person would respond to appeals from within the Church to preach, teach, or practice medicine overseas, or to admit that there

¹⁰ Stephen L. Baldwin, *Foreign Missions of the Protestant Churches* (New York: Eaton and Mains; Cincinnati: Jennings and Pye, 1900), 27-35.

¹¹ Barton, *Unfinished Task*, 29.

¹² W. W. Holdsworth, “The Missionary Motive,” *E&W* 8 (1910): 132.

were other, perhaps secondary, motives behind the desire,¹³ were both part of a larger attempt to legitimize the missionary endeavor itself to both outsiders and insiders.

It is clear that many writers in the early twentieth century were writing in an attempt to generate support for mission work within the metropole,¹⁴ or to defend charges brought against it by its critics. However, publishing missionary literature in order to generate support was nothing new.¹⁵ What was unique to the texts of the Edwardian era was an overwhelming sense of urgency in the face of a rapidly changing world. Caught in the transition to what would later be called modernity, several authors talked about what would today be recognized as globalization: “The bigness of the modern man and the littleness of the modern world are twentieth century discoveries ... The twentieth century has entered upon a marvelous era of cosmopolitanism.”¹⁶ There was a transcontinental awareness¹⁷ of the fact that the world was changing technologically,¹⁸ allowing

¹³ Brown, *Foreign Missionary*, 13-24. Brown listed five other motives: philanthropic; intellectual, such as those who wanted to explore lands unknown to Europeans; commercial; historical, for wanting to be involved in part of a historical process of conversion; and that of wanting to bring a certain type of civilization to others.

¹⁴ Barton, *Unfinished Task*, 97-98. Barton blamed missionary burn-out on lack of support, or even hostility toward missionaries, at home; Randal Thomas Davidson, “Missionary Problems,” *E&W* 2 (1904): 3. Davidson, then Archbishop of Canterbury, observed that public opinion of missionaries had recently improved, thanks to the recent increase in missionary literature of various sorts.

¹⁵ Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Johnston argues that missionary writers often sought to legitimize the religious aspect of their work, but were caught within, and even helped frame, the British imperial mindset because of mutual imbrication.

¹⁶ Ellis, *Men and Missions*, 9-13.

¹⁷ Charles H. Robinson, “Editorial Notes: American Laymen and Foreign Missions,” *E&W* 5 (1907): 339. Discussing the newly formed American, non-denominational Laymen’s Missionary Movement, the British editor demonstrated a transcontinental sense of the changing world.

¹⁸ Henry H. Montgomery, “The Pan-Anglican Congress, and After,” *E&W* 6 (1908): 362. Several authors wrote about how technological improvements had made transportation easier and faster. Montgomery commented on the changes he had witnessed in the past decade, speculating how changes would continue in the next, saying in “...1897 cabs clustered round the gates of Lambeth

improved communication between peoples around the globe, and many writers used the opportunity that the mix of anxiety and optimism about the future afforded to appeal for renewed support of missionary work. If imperialism and capitalism were going to place peoples from around the world increasing in contact with each other during the twentieth century, it was Protestant Christianity that would “soon be called upon to guide and direct this new world of wonder and romance.”¹⁹ These writers favored modernity, but were willing to use it to support their promotion of evangelization as the means by which it could be better dealt with.

Many of the writers contributing to the wealth of missionary texts in the early twentieth century spent a lot of space defending and promoting the need for the missionary endeavor to expand its reach. Whether this was sparked by the late nineteenth century centennial celebrations, or was in response to criticisms or lack of support from within or outside the Christian community, it amounted to an overall sense of obligation and duty to evangelize in a globalizing world. Missionaries called upon the Edwardian generation to awaken to the “realization of the substantial one-ness of humanity.”²⁰ Writers were optimistic about the future while questioning themselves about the present and the past. Because of their intense introspection, we can discern common attitudes on major world historical themes.

Palace; in 1908 the cabs had almost disappeared and motor-cars had taken their place; in 1918 it is likely that motor-cars will have disappeared and air-ships will be tethered to pillars erected for the purpose in the garden.”

¹⁹ C. F. Andrews, “Race Within the Christian Church,” *E&W* 8 (1910): 256. Andrews placed this appeal after a discussion of the revolution in communications and transportation of the past few years.

²⁰ Ellis, *Men and Missions*, 20.

Empire and Race

Most missionaries, both British and American, openly celebrated the imperial encroachments upon various peoples of the world during the nineteenth century. Whether or not overtly racist, these missionaries overwhelmingly gave paternalistic support to colonization. Even those who supported the development of native churches, to be discussed shortly, supported colonial occupation: “English rule as everywhere has been favourable, despite some actions which have seemed the reverse.”²¹ British writers were not the only ones who demonstrated imperialist attitudes. American missionaries openly supported European colonialism, further revealing a transnational flow of ideas underpinned by a shared assumption of white, Western superiority. For example, writing in 1904, twenty years after the Berlin conference’s partition of Africa, Robert Speer, Secretary of the Board for Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, commented:

...practically nothing is left of independent Africa. That it was far better for Africa and the world that the continent should thus have been absorbed by Europe, there can be no doubt. In no other way could its turbulence be stopped and the slave trade be suppressed. It is conceivable that in long centuries purely moral influences working among the people might have produced a voluntary and more or less indigenous civilization; and it is true also that European rule has its vices and short-comings; but no one can deny that the partition of Africa has resulted in immense progress and is sure to issue in increasing good.²²

²¹ Edward M. Bliss, *The Missionary Enterprise: A Concise History of its Objectives, Methods, and Extension* (N. p., 189?; 2d ed., rev. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1908), 202.

²² Robert E. Speer, *Missions and Modern History: A Study of the Missionary Aspects of Some Great Movements of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1 (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1904), 240-4.

Thus, Speer used humanitarianism to justify violence and domination while presenting a history that ignored the fact that European civilization brought the very slave trade he was congratulating the suppression of in West Africa.

Many authors tried to infuse Christianity into wider sentiments supporting official colonial expansion, one going as far as describing a “consecrated imperialism”²³ that would provide greater opportunities for both Christian and British expansion. These authors often desired to demonstrate how missionary work could complement official government work in the colonies in the name of civilization,²⁴ and worked to reinforce Christianity as an essential part of the English identity supposedly finding its expression in imperialism:

Slowly but surely the English people, who are not easy to move, and who are a strange mixture of insularity and imperialism, have been brought to respect the Christianity which believes sufficiently in Christ to carry His name throughout the world.²⁵

Thus, Christianity provided missionary writers with an identity that transcended the English national identity and, in this case, its insularity and imperialism.

While some missionary writers criticized the ill effects of imperialism when it interfered with missionary work, no one openly questioned it.²⁶ In addition, as already discussed, they often defended their work in the face of critics who accused them of working against imperial interests. Thus, it is safe to conclude that missionaries of the Edwardian era on both sides of the Atlantic were unabashed imperialists.

²³ Edgar Alban, “A Generation of Missions,” *E&W* 3 (1905): 7.

²⁴ T. F. V. Buxton, “Uganda: A Retrospect and an Inquiry,” *E&W* 3 (1905): 251-2.

²⁵ Montgomery, *Foreign Missions*, 153.

²⁶ Mott, *Evangelization*, 31-2. Mott criticized, but did not attack, “nominally Christian powers” for their mistreatment of non-Christians, citing the forced opium trade in China as an example. To Mott, this made it harder to evangelize in lands hurt by the ill effects of imperialism.

While the record on imperialist attitudes among missionary writers of the twentieth century is clear, opinions on race varied. Missionary after missionary stereotyped the Asian, or Indian, or African as an “ignorant savage”²⁷ or a “heathen,”²⁸ often making fun of, or belittling, indigenous culture.²⁹ In addition, most writers still subscribed to a nineteenth-century theory of racial order and supremacy. At the bottom of the hierarchy were the “child-races... races that are still in their early stages, that have either had no development, or have so long lost any degree of civilization that they once had, that it is quite forgotten.”³⁰ It was usually left unsaid, and taken for granted, that at the top of that hierarchy were the populations that the writers themselves belonged to: the white, Protestant, Christian Europeans and North Americans.

The promotion of racial superiority effectively erased the devastating social, economic, and political history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade introduced and carried out by the European societies now claiming natural and inherent supremacy. Rather than facing the African continent’s history, writers instead focused on the perceived inferiority of its native residents. Attitudes toward Africans were usually the most racist among missionary texts accepting the notion of a racial hierarchy, one writer even describing South African “Bushmen”

²⁷ Ilsey Boone, *The Conquering Christ* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1909), 68.

²⁸ Baldwin, *Foreign Missions*, 58.

²⁹ Belle M. Brain, *Fifty Missionary Programmes* (Boston and Chicago: United Society of Christian Endeavor, 1901), 98-99, 113-5. This guide book on holding meetings to draw support for mission work suggested a night for “Cannibal Stories: A Programme for Boys.” The night on “An African Palaver” contained a ten-question quiz on Africa, with one question asking “What great statesman was born in Africa?” With Moses as the only answer, this question effectively dismissed countless African statesmen. The evening also included an “African Greeting,” a short dialogue in an unnamed African tongue, and suggested decorating the room in palms and crimson curtains because “the civilized natives are very fond of them.” Such a meeting for African missionary work could only reinforce racial stereotypes of Africans.

³⁰ G. Congreve, “The Attitude of the Church towards the Child-Races of the World,” *E&W* 6 (1908): 53.

as “still in the hunter stage.”³¹ Many writers divided Africans into five or six different races,³² bringing the late nineteenth century³³ desire to classify and categorize peoples into the early twentieth.³⁴ These racist attitudes fit well with the imperialist attitudes already described: if the so-called lower races were incapable of self-rule, then it was the duty of the supposedly higher races to help them out by doing so for them. Such attitudes also helped reinforce racist practices in the field by portraying the image of the white missionary as racially superior to those he was trying to convert.³⁵ Whether permanent or permeable, racial categorization reinforced paternalistic ideas about white Christian missionaries’ duty to help colonized indigenous peoples by bringing them Christianity.

However, such attitudes were beginning to be questioned in the early twentieth century. In an article in *The East and the West* that appeared in January, 1910, an Anglican missionary in South Africa, Robert Callaway,

³¹ W. A. Norton, “South African Native Customs: A Study in Anthropology,” *E&W* 8 (1910): 335.

³² Boone, *Conquering Christ*, 87-8. Boone said they “may be divided into two main classes or types, the white races of the north and the black races of the south,” with the white races of the north having had civilization for centuries, and the black races of the south instead being “devoted to fetichism and superstitious.”

³³ B. Broomhall, *The Evangelization of the World: A Missionary Band: A Record of Consecration, and an Appeal* (2d ed., rev. London: Morgan and Scott, 1897), 81. This book outlined six “great groups of nations” in Africa: “1. The *Semitic*—Arabs, Abyssinians, and other Amharic speaking peoples. 2. The *Hamitic*—Berbers, Egyptians, Libyans, Ethiopians, and kindred nations. 3. The great group of *Foulah* tribes, who dwell on the Senegal, the Niger, the Gambia, and Lake Chad. 4. The *Negro* races proper, extending from the Atlantic to the Nile in the Sahara and Soudan latitudes. 5. The largest division of all, the widely-extended *Bantu* group, occupying all Central Africa and from Atlantic to Pacific, covering thus one-third of the continent, and including the Congo tribes, the Zulus, Kaffirs, and countless others — forming one-fourth of the population of Africa. 6. The *Hottentot* group in the Southwest — including the Bushmen and other extremely degraded and diminutive aboriginal races.”

³⁴ Montgomery, *Foreign Missions*, 87. Montgomery identified five African races: “aboriginals,” Arabic and Semitic groups in the North, the “negro belt” in Central Africa, the Bantu in the South, and the Hausa.

³⁵ G. L. King, “The Preparation of a Native Ministry,” *E&W* 7 (1909): 164. King, a bishop in Madagascar, said most of the men the missionary preached to were “stupid,” but very often a few stood out as smarter among “the race to which he ministers.”

admitted that there was “an instinctive colour prejudice” keeping white missionaries from socializing with South Africans.³⁶ He argued that missionaries should try to get past this prejudice when in church, since “The natives themselves are much more sensitive to such slights than is commonly supposed.”³⁷ Even though he recognized that white prejudice was the basis of destructive tensions within the South African Church, Callaway was not calling for anything more than equity within church services. The missionary accepted the idea that black South Africans were racially inferior, and thus, did not support the need for social interaction outside of church.³⁸ His goal was religious, not social, equity.

In response to Callaway’s article, C. F. Andrews, a United Free Church of Scotland missionary working in India, wrote in the July issue about the need to go further than mere communion in church services. The editor of the journal asked his readers to take Andrews seriously. He stated that the topic was critical, yet no writer had before had the courage to discuss the problem in any missionary publication. Moreover, he acknowledged that racial prejudice was hindering conversions to Christianity.³⁹ In the article, Andrews criticized the missionary in South Africa for being “content with the compromise of the present,

³⁶ Robert F. Callaway, “Colour Antipathies: A Study of the Conditions of Church Life in South Africa,” *E&W* 8 (1910): 60. Callaway went on to admit that he personally felt “a great repugnance to shaking hands with some native whom probably in my reasoned judgment I esteem highly.”

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 59-62.

³⁹ Charles H. Robinson, “Editorial Notes: The Inter-marriage of White and Coloured Races,” *E&W* 8 (1910): 344-5.

without looking far into the future.”⁴⁰ Using a theological basis, he continued by arguing that social equality was the logical outcome of church equality:

First, the human race is one Man in Christ. This common humanity is to be realised in its wholeness within the Body of Christ, of which all Christians of every race are equal members (Eph. iv. 13, &c.).

Secondly, the Sacrament of the one Bread, the one Cup, is the Sacrament of Unity, whereby the members of Christ’s Body become so intimately one that their unity is comparable to the unity of the Divine Nature itself (St. John xvii. 22, &c.).

Thirdly, Christ in His Incarnation shares, wholly and fully, the nature of every child of man, of every race (Heb. ii. 14-17, &c.).

In the light of these Christian principles there can, I think, be no doubt whatever that the Holy Communion – taking the form of a social meal – was intended to cover the whole of life; to consecrate all the humanities of social intercourse; to symbolise and lead on to the most intimate human friendship and affection between the members of Christ’s Body, fulfilling thus Christ’s new commandment of love for one another.⁴¹

He hoped the “repugnance of the present time” would be a “passing phase,”⁴² argued that social equality should lead to racial intermarriage, and warned against allowing racial prejudice in South Africa to develop into a caste system.⁴³ Here is an example of a missionary who, perhaps thanks to his interactions with different cultures overseas, began questioning nineteenth century racial ideas by using his theology against conventional beliefs. Thanks to his world experiences, he had gone as far as questioning objections to interracial marriage, something that most missionaries would have considered taboo in 1910. While his attitudes toward race were far ahead of most of his contemporaries, he was not alone.

⁴⁰ Andrews, “Race Within the Christian Church,” 252.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 256.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 256-63.

In a book published in 1907, Arthur Brown wrote about how racial prejudice was destructive in the missionary endeavor, calling for greater Christian sympathy and reminding readers “that other races are not as inferior to us as we are wont to believe.”⁴⁴ He dismissed the notion of racial supremacy, saying all men were inferior to Jesus Christ, and warned against missionaries judging the religions of those they were preaching to.⁴⁵ Like Andrews, Brown used his Christianity to attack racial prejudice during the Edwardian era. While most writers displayed racist attitudes in overt and subtle variations, these two men demonstrate that such attitudes were not universal among Christian missionaries. As previously mentioned, missionaries sensed that they were living in a time of great change, and these two men saw no reason why these changes should not extend to social relations among people of different races.

The Native Church

Before discussing views of the Native Church among Edwardian missionaries, it is important to first understand the Venn model for Protestant missions and local indigenous churches. Henry Venn, Honorary Secretary⁴⁶ of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) from 1841 to 1872, developed a plan over the course of twenty years for a self-sustaining, self-supporting, self-extending

⁴⁴ Brown, *Foreign Missionary*, 282.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 284

⁴⁶ Peter Williams, “‘Not Transplanting’: Henry Venn’s Strategic Vision,” in *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999*, eds. Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Richmond, England: Curzon Press, 2000) 151. Williams notes that this position was not a paid position, so secretaries had to be financially independent.

Church in Africa and Asia.⁴⁷ Venn's model for mission work was a simple process: Northern European missionaries first preached in a new place; new converts then formed small faith congregations; the most promising among the converts were trained by the European missionaries as catechists and assistants; after a time of experience in these positions, the converts were ordained as priests and become pastors; once an indigenous pastorate was established, the European missionary moved on to the next unevangelized community and begin the process again.⁴⁸ This model was rooted in the beliefs that all men were equals as Christians, culture was an important part of conversion and local church services, and paternalism could only hurt the development of local churches.⁴⁹ Venn enacted his policy first in West Africa, in the face of internal opposition,⁵⁰ and then used it in other CMS mission fields.⁵¹ Other missionary societies adopted his policy during the mid-nineteenth century,⁵² making Venn's model an integral piece of the general missionary endeavor.

⁴⁷ Michael Marioghae and John Ferguson, *Nigeria Under the Cross* (London: Highway Press, 1965), 34.

⁴⁸ John Loiello, "Bishop in Two Worlds: Samuel Ajayi Crowther (c. 1806-1891)," in *Varieties of Christian Experience in Nigeria*, ed. Elizabeth Isichei (Hong Kong: Macmillan Press, 1982), 36.

⁴⁹ Williams, "Not Transplanting," 149, 163, 172.

⁵⁰ Lamin Sanneh, "The CMS and the African Transformation: Samuel Ajayi Crowther and the Opening of Nigeria" In *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999*, eds. Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Richmond, England: Curzon Press, 2000) 176-90. Sanneh is one of several historians who have documented British missionary Henry Townsend's opposition to West African missionary, and later bishop, Samuel Crowther, and to the development of a local church.

⁵¹ A. J. Temu, *British Protestant Missionaries* (London: Longman Group, 1972), 12-32. The CMS implemented this policy as a model in East Africa after the success in West Africa.

⁵² Bela Vassady, Jr., "The Role of the Black West Indian Missionary in West Africa, 1840-1890" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1972). Vassady's dissertation shows how several societies recruited West Indian missionaries in the hopes that they could more quickly develop indigenous churches in West Africa.

Missionaries became increasingly racist by the end of the nineteenth century,⁵³ and, as we have seen, this racism continued into the new century. Nevertheless, missionary writers were readdressing and debating the question of the development of the Native Church. Several societies⁵⁴ and missionaries⁵⁵ still strongly favored Venn's model for their own policies. One author called for the "self-propagation, self-support, and self-government"⁵⁶ of local churches, terms clearly influenced by Venn's model. He wanted converts to become missionaries:

Self-propagation, therefore, should be insisted upon as soon as converts appear. They should be taught from the beginning that as soon as they become Christians, the missionary motive should become operative within them, and that they are under precisely the same obligations as Christians in Europe and America to give the knowledge of Christ to others.⁵⁷

While some supported the development of the Native Church who still held strongly racist views,⁵⁸ others took the view that indigenous pastors could actually do a better job in evangelization because of their cultural understandings

⁵³ Andrew Porter, *Religion versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 288. Discussing this trend among missionaries, Porter stated, "Even among one-time supporters of Venn's principles there developed a sense of caution and misgivings as to the capacity – financial, administrative, ethical, spiritual – of indigenous Christians in many places to sustain churches from their own resources. These reservations were only reinforced by the emergence of young, impatient and far more narrowly ethnocentric or racially conscious missionaries in the late 1880s and 1890s."

⁵⁴ Alfred Plummer, "The Universities' Mission to Central Africa," *E&W* 4 (1906): 57. Plummer wrote about how, for example, the Anglican Universities' Mission to Central Africa made the training of converts "its chief care" in the effort to create a self-sustaining native ministry.

⁵⁵ Barton, *Unfinished Task*, 8. Barton's text is an example, wherein he argued that the evangelization of the world required the development of "self-supporting, self-directing, self-perpetuating Christian institutions" because "The missionary is not to remain forever the spiritual father and guide of the people," Venn's model was still held by many as the model for missions.

⁵⁶ Arthur J. Brown, *The Why and How of Foreign Missions* (New York: Young People's Missionary Movement of the United States and Canada, 1908), 150.

⁵⁷ Brown, *Foreign Missionary*, 33.

⁵⁸ King, "The Preparation of a Native Ministry," 164-70. Although Bishop King spoke in derogatory terms about races, he did support the development of an indigenous deaconate, priesthood, and episcopacy.

and sympathies.⁵⁹ Perhaps these views were still held, in spite of the growing racism of the nineteenth century, because of experiential encounters with native preachers. For some, it was no more than the realization that it was not possible to send out large numbers of white men to evangelize the rest of the world.⁶⁰ Whatever the reason, among missionary writers who discussed the development of the Native Church, it appears that most still endorsed Venn's model as the ideal during the Edwardian era.

However, there were a number of missionary writers who displayed paternalistic attitudes in relation to local churches,⁶¹ openly questioning the competency of those churches. Some even ignored the presence and achievements of indigenous pastors.⁶² A few writers either found problems with the Venn model, or completely rejected it:

But it may be asked, 'If the Negro cannot be expected to evangelize Africa is there any hope that the white man can do it?' White men will have to do it just as white men will have to evangelize Asia and South America. They must organize the work, keep up its morale, its definiteness of purpose, its aims, and pour into it a tide of unresting energy and unhesitating sacrifice.⁶³

⁵⁹ Bliss, *Missionary Enterprise*, 180-91. Bliss also pointed out that both European and American churches had developed their own cultural differences over the course of their Christian history, so it was unreasonable to assume that non-European or American churches should blindly follow the pattern set by the European and American missionaries.

⁶⁰ Brown, *Foreign Missionary*, 34. Brown commented, "It is impossible for the churches of Europe and America to send out and maintain enough missionaries to preach the gospel effectively to each one of the thousand millions of the unevangelized world. To attempt this would be as foolish as it would be for a g to make an army out of major generals while making no provisions for subalterns, non-commissioned officers and privates."

⁶¹ Chalmers Martin, *Apostolic and Modern Missions*, Students' Lectures on Missions, Princeton Theological Seminary (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1898), 61. Martin is an example of one missionary, who, in a series of lectures delivered in 1897 and published the following year, spoke of the "duty of [European missionaries] watching over these infant churches."

⁶² Barton, *Unfinished Task*, 59-63, 159. When introducing the subject of the mission field in Africa, Barton spoke of how most of the continent was without, presumably white, pastors. Discussing the problem, he did not even give any consideration, for or against, the training and commissioning of indigenous pastors. He simply ignored their very existence.

⁶³ Speer, *Modern History*, vol. 1, 286.

Some of the supporters of the Venn model defended it against the attacks of doubters and detractors.⁶⁴ One even pointed to fear as a possible motivation behind the rejection of Venn's model:

The rather extraordinary objection has been urged that if the native church becomes self-supporting and self-governing, the missionary cannot control it. But why should he control it? Because the native brethren are not fitted for independence? When will that be, if they are not given a chance to learn? Shall we wait until they equal the American and European churches in stability?⁶⁵

All of this suggests that missionaries contested ideas in relation to the Native Church during the Edwardian era. The Venn model still enjoyed prestige it once held during the late nineteenth century to a degree that made it hard for many missionaries to openly criticize it. The expressed end of the missionary endeavor was the establishment of a self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating indigenous church, even if the practice of foreign missions did not confirm such an agenda. Most missionary writers still expressed support for the Venn model, even if they had adopted racist, imperialist, and paternalistic views to help them legitimize the delays in carrying out its execution. Others had rejected the model in different degrees, and for various reasons. This interplay of opinions and attitudes on indigenous Christianity will be developed further in chapter four in relation to the WMC.

⁶⁴ Baldwin, *Foreign Missions*, 73.

⁶⁵ Brown, *Foreign Missionary*, 301.

“The Evangelization of the World in This Generation”

No other phrase would capture the enthusiasm among missionary writers during the Edwardian era more than the watchword first adopted by the newer and missionary organizations, which had younger members, the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (SVM), British Student Volunteer Missionary Union and Young People’s Missionary Movement of the United States and Canada: “The Evangelization of the World in This Generation.” It was to be the unifying rallying cry for all English-speaking missionaries, young and old, on both sides of the Atlantic.⁶⁶ This watchword captured the culmination of a number of the themes among missionary texts as discussed earlier in this chapter: the sense that the world was rapidly changing, that communication and travel had improved, that there were critics of foreign mission work who needed to be answered in order to generate more support for the missionary endeavor in the metropole, and that it was a duty or obligation of all Christians to support the work of missionaries. According to the SVM:

The Watchword emphasizes the pressing and overwhelming urgency of the missionary situation and appeal. It reminds us constantly that our problem is a living one – one which living men have to face on behalf of men now living... The Watchword is a vast and bold challenge.⁶⁷

It meant that the world had changed enough in the past few years, thanks to technological and political changes, to make it possible for every living person in the world to at least hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the current generation.

⁶⁶ Mott, *Evangelization*, 2.

⁶⁷ “A Quadrennium in the Life and Work of the SVM: Report of the Executive Committee of the SVM,” in *Students and the Present Missionary Crisis: Addresses Delivered Before the Sixth International Convention of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, Rochester, New York, December 29, 1909, to January 2, 1910* (New York: SVM, 1910) 27.

The idea was not a new one. In the late 1880s, the nascent China Inland Mission published a book about its short history in a work entitled *The Evangelization of the World*.⁶⁸ Its author discussed two themes of theological justification for mission work: the duty of Christians to evangelize, and the open field of mission work around the world.⁶⁹ What was missing, or had not yet developed, was the optimistic view that this task of proselytizing all human beings in the present age was possible. Many writers were enthusiastic about the prospects by the opening years of the twentieth century, making the watchword a truly Edwardian sentiment:

Never before has the subject of the evangelization of the world been so widely and carefully considered as during the last decade. Whatever the reason, a new interest in those who dwell in the remoter regions of the earth has been waked, and thousands are studying conditions in order to transform them.⁷⁰

Thus, they were aware of the trend of self-introspection, and hoped such work would lead to increased support for the missionary endeavor.

While most missionary writers approved the watchword, and what it stood for, some distrusted it for lacking an honest dose of humility and self-criticism:

Underlying [the fascination behind the watchword] is a subtle compliment to the persons who adopt it. Does it not imply that, although the generations of Christian effort in the past have failed to transfer the world's allegiance to its Redeemer, now that *we* have come on the scene, things will be different? Our fathers were not of our calibre or of our class. Good and pious they were: but *we* are world-statesmen and empire-builders, and *we* are surely equal to this great endeavor. So we find the modern students, and now, in increasing throngs, the laymen, cantering jauntily into the arena, confident that they will do the task before sunset.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Broomhall, *The Evangelization of the World*.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 66-72.

⁷⁰ Barton, *Unfinished Task*, 19.

⁷¹ Ellis, *Men and Missions*, 182.

This sobering voice was not representative of most missionary writers, though, who eagerly adopted at least the enthusiasm inherent in the watchword in order to defend, or draw support for, the missionary endeavor.

Implicit in the call for “The Evangelization of the World in This Generation” was a call for unity among missionaries of different Protestant denominations. Some writers called for unity on theological grounds, claiming the “catholicity of the [Protestant Christian] Church is a characteristic of her existence.”⁷² Others feared that the Roman Catholic missionaries were perhaps more successful because they were unified, suggesting Protestant missionaries should find areas where work could be combined.⁷³ Some even called for the creation of a “science of missions,”⁷⁴ to streamline mission work. If there was only one common humanity for all people, then the same mission problems could be applied to different fields, thus preventing future wasted time and energy in working out the same issues over and over again.⁷⁵ In the face of those who would object to unity among missionaries in different fields and of different denominations, the early years witnessed an increasing hope in such a project, if only for practical reasons.⁷⁶

⁷² Gurney, “The Influence of Laymen on Missions,” 301.

⁷³ G. T. Manley, “Co-operation in Missionary Study,” *E&W* 6 (1908): 86-7.

⁷⁴ Speer, *Missionary Practice*, 43-4.

⁷⁵ Bliss, *Missionary Enterprise*, 380.

⁷⁶ Speer, *Missionary Practice*, 45-6. Speer wrote that, “This view [against the development of a science of missions] seems to be losing what popularity it ever had. The fact that a century of modern missions has passed, the conviction that the experiments of this century should have produced principles of guidance for the future that would save us from the errors of the past, the obvious waste and pain due to the retrial of methods disapproved by unfavourable result already, the growing agreement among missionaries as to certain great principles, the necessity of a wiser and more far-reaching use, if such be possible, of the scanty funds available for the world’s evangelization, the instinct of progress that revolts against incessant and duplicative experimentalism – these are some of the grounds for the growing belief than an effort should be

The notion of unity among Protestant missionaries was another one of the ideas about missionary work that were not yet fixed in the early twentieth century, as opinions among missionaries on the subject were still being formed and debated. A series of four articles written on comity among missionaries, which appeared in *The East and the West* between 1906 and 1908, best illustrated this. Between the quarterly journal's first appearance in 1903 and the WMC in 1910,⁷⁷ only one topic sparked such a discussion. Arguing that denominational differences did not matter in the field, the first writer, William Smythe, Bishop of Lebombo, Zululand, used a theological basis for unity.⁷⁸ He also argued that it was acceptable for missionaries to socialize with Protestant missionaries of other denominations, as well as Roman Catholics, for all were part of the same spiritual family.⁷⁹

Following this article was one by a former bishop in Capetown, South Africa, Alan Gibson, which appeared in *The East and the West* in October, 1907. Like Lebombo, the missionary who wrote the article from the April 1907 issue, Gibson agreed on the importance of socializing with both Protestants of other denominations and Roman Catholics, and lamented the problems that divisions

made to reach and formulate and thenceforth rigorously to apply the main principles of the missionary enterprise."

⁷⁷ Charles H. Robinson, *The Interpretation of the Character of Christ to Non-Christina Races: An Apology for Christian Missions* (London, New York, Bombay, and Calcutta: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1910). Even though the editor of *The East and the West* was an Anglican (and also the Editorial Secretary of the SPG), he implied support for unity among missionaries of different denominations in the field in his own book.

⁷⁸ William Edmund Smythe, "Christian Comity in the Mission Field," *E&W* 4 (1906): 121. Talking about missionaries meeting each other in the field, Smythe observed, "The missionary does not ask to what denomination he or she belongs, whether they are superstitious or not; he recognizes one who has been made a 'member of Christ,' and if he reflects on the matter, he comes to see how superficial after all are the schisms with which the devil has marred the fair face of the bride of Christ."

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 122-3.

had caused for the wider Christian community.⁸⁰ Furthermore, he suggested the holding of a general conference in support of the goal of Christian unity.⁸¹

Whether or not this Anglican former missionary knew about the plans for a world conference one year prior to their announcement is unknown. Either way, his article demonstrates that there was a desire among missionaries, even before the WMC had been officially announced, to come together to work out problems that could be solved regardless of denominational differences.⁸²

In response to this article, an Anglican missionary in China, Frank Norris, wrote an article printed in January, 1908. Norris disagreed with the main points of Gibson's article, claiming that conditions in China were too different from those in South Africa to allow for the same degree of comity between Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries.⁸³ On the question of holding a general conference, he pointed out that a Centenary Conference had been held in Shanghai in May, 1907, and that a regional conference had also been held recently in India.⁸⁴ In addition, he was suspicious of allowing non-episcopal

⁸⁰ Alan G. S. Gibson, "Comity of Missions," *E&W* 5 (1907): 368.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 371-2. "The tokens of increasing friendliness among the various religious bodies at work in the Mission field lead one to believe that much might be effected by mutual conference. There are obvious difficulties in the way. It is hard to attend his own Diocesan Synod, and perhaps also the Provincial Synod and Provincial Missionary Conference. The very mention of a general conference of all Christian denominations suggests further and more serious obstacles. Would not a meeting of this kind be almost equivalent to the condonation of schism? Is there not a danger that it might lead to the watering down of doctrine and suppression of truth? Such misgivings and questions are, perhaps, only natural. But that which is here proposed is not, of course, just a meeting with a vague, indefinite purpose of showing a general goodwill and giving a kind of recognition to all who can by any means be called fellow-labourers; but a conference for very practical purposes, and one which would (as will be presently shown) make perfectly clear the principles of the historic Church, and indeed of all communions which send representatives to it, and would give no colour to the belief that the maintenance of the Catholic faith and practice in its entirety is a matter of indifference."

⁸² *Ibid.*, 372-3. Bishop Gibson recognized that liturgical and creedal differences need not be worked out at such a conference, but practical conditions and problems could be addressed.

⁸³ Frank L. Norris, "Comity of Missions' II. China," *E&W* 6 (1908): 148.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 139-42.

Christian groups to attend Anglican conferences and visa versa, but thought that all Protestant missionaries were part of the same general witness to those they were trying to convert.⁸⁵ Norris is representative of those who thought very limited cooperation between different Protestant denominations was possible, but believed that an international conference was unnecessary because each region had its own specific conditions.

The last article in the series appeared in the July 1908 issue of *The East and the West*, which was the last issue before the general announcement of the World Missionary Conference to be held in 1910. In it, M. Burrows, a vicar in Ceylon, put forth reasons why missionaries, particularly Anglican, should be suspicious of attempts to unify mission work overseas. He stated that Anglican bishops had ignored the appeal for comity, which only dated back a few years, leaving people in Nonconformist denominations to push it forward.⁸⁶

[The appeal] was practically an agreement to sink differences. It is no exaggeration to say that the line adopted by its promoters took often the following form. It was based on the idea that a native Church was to be founded, and that the differences now existing between the different Protestant bodies in England and America would disappear as soon as the expected native Church reached maturity; these differences, therefore, were not to form part of the Gospel message as delivered to the heathen. It was consequently thought right to make as little as possible of them.⁸⁷

Burrows believed that missionaries should be free to go where they chose, instead of trying to stay clear of areas already occupied by other denominations, but favored limited comity in the form of overlapping work.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Ibid., 144, 151-2.

⁸⁶ M. J. Burrows, "The Comity of Missions III. Ceylon," *E&W* 6 (1908): 265.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 265.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 266-71. For instance, cooperation could occur with educational institutions.

These four writers, all missionaries, demonstrate that the very idea of coming together for something as general as a world conference was not something all missionaries agreed on. While they may have agreed on the need to avoid waste in having duplicate, rival institutions in place in mission fields, they were not willing to lay aside theological differences in the name of the evangelization of the world. Some were suspicious of even bringing episcopal and non-episcopal missionaries together in any type of conference. Yet, a general Protestant conference was exactly what was being planned when these issues were being debated for the English-reading missionary public. The voices wary of unity would be lost in the excitement surrounding the coming conference.

Conclusion

The World Missionary Conference of 1910 in Edinburgh, Scotland, did not happen in a vacuum. This chapter has shown that the decade leading up to it was one rich with missionary literature on a vast number of subjects. Several themes emerge from these texts, which allow historians to gain a sense of common attitudes and opinions among missionaries during the Edwardian era.

Missionary writers spent a lot of time and energy looking within their field, hoping to defend it, justify it, or draw support for it. They were largely caught within the imperial and racist attitudes of their day, yet often still believed that there was a legitimate space for indigenous churches, free from Northern European and North American rule. Overall, they were aware that they were

living in a time of great change, and were optimistic about the future of the Christian campaign of global evangelization.

However, they did not agree on the need for, or the usefulness of, the type of unity that the WMC would offer. The texts these missionaries left behind show that, above all, they were still working out ideas about their project, and the peoples they encountered, during the Edwardian era. The interchange and debate among missionary writers demonstrates that their attitudes and opinions were not set in stone.

The next chapter examines the unified image presented at the Conference: an image emerging from two years of research among various North American and Protestant European mission boards and societies; an image spearheaded by a charismatic American who had never been a missionary; an image including the voices of colonized converts to Christianity.

CHAPTER THREE

A “Conference for a Conference”

We fear that some of our readers will hold their breath in horror when they grasp the fact that the Pan-Anglican Congress is to be followed by another which is, if possible, still more ambitious in its aims than was the one which is just over. We trust, however, that they will not be content to draw any conclusion from the magnificent title of the proposed Conference until they have read carefully what Mr. Mott has to say on its behalf.¹

Charles Robinson, Editorial Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, wrote these words to his readers in the October, 1908, issue of *The East and the West*, in reference to an article appearing in the same issue by John R. Mott to promote the upcoming World Missionary Conference (WMC). For many readers, Mott’s article was the first news they had heard of the proposed conference to be held in the summer of 1910. Appearing well in advance of the Conference, the article was an attempt to draw support and foster anticipation. As Robinson’s remarks showed, however, the idea of holding a Christian or missionary conference was nothing new. Along with the increase in missionary literature produced during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a large number of missionary conferences were held. The World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, though, promised to be something

¹ Charles H. Robinson, “Editorial Notes: A World Missionary Conference,” *The East and the West* 6 (1908): 459-60. Hereafter, all references to articles published in *The East and the West* quarterly journal will appear as follows: “E&W 6 (1908): 459-60.”

entirely new. It was to be this conference which would mark a turning point in modern Protestant Christian missionary history.

This chapter focuses on the WMC itself: who was at it in Edinburgh, why it convened, and what it said. Fortunately, the eight commissions produced volumes of material that provide the basis of this chapter. These volumes give readers today the ability to understand the major events that took place at what Mott called “the most notable gathering in the interest of the worldwide expansion of Christianity ever held, not only in missionary annals, but in all Christian annals.”² First, this chapter examines prior conferences and how the WMC was planned and promoted to be different. The story of John Mott, who was a key figure in the Conference, is told, and then the actual commission findings are discussed. Finally, this chapter returns to the common attitudes held among Protestant missionaries during the Edwardian era and the extent to which the Conference conformed to these attitudes. The themes of race and the indigenous church are discussed in the next chapter.

The Road to Edinburgh: Prior Missionary Conferences

Advocates of the missionary enterprise during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often gathered together to discuss topics of concern. There was a wide range of conferences: regional, for example, white missionaries from the predominantly Protestant countries stationed in Japan coming together as a body; denominational, such as Anglican or Methodist

² Howard C. Hopkins, *John R. Mott, 1865-1955: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1979), 342.

conventions; voluntary, such as the Young People's Missionary Movement of the United States and Canada (YPMM) or the Laymen's Missionary Movement conferences; or nominally ecumenical, such as the 1888 Centenary Conference in London. Some societies held yearly conferences; other denominations met rarely. Delegates for most conferences belonged to the particular society, denominational mission board, or region in the mission field for which the conference had convened, but the conferences were open to the general public. These conferences often served as exhibitions of the work being carried out in the field in order to draw support. While the WMC was different, in many senses, from the scores of missionary conferences convened during this time, it built on many of their procedural practices.

As an ecumenical conference, the World Missionary Conference developed from the visit of Dr. Alexander Duff to New York in 1854, for it was his initiative that set in motion a series of interdenominational conferences that evolved into the WMC.³ Six years after Duff's visit, a multi-denominational

³ *World Missionary Conference, 1910; To Consider Missionary Problems in Relation to the Non-Christian World, Vol. 9: The History and Records of the Conference, Together with Addresses Delivered at the Evening Meetings*, (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson, and Ferrier; New York, Chicago, and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1910), 3; Edward M. Bliss, *The Missionary Enterprise: A Concise History of its Objectives, Methods, and Extension* (N. p., 189-. 2d ed., rev. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1908), 117. Hereafter, all World Missionary Conference references will appear in the following format: "WMC v. 9: 3." 150 people were present at the Union Missionary Convention, held in New York on 4-5 May, 1854. Of those present, eleven were missionaries, and eighteen were members of mission societies or boards. Three topics were discussed: whether or not missionaries should be scattered or concentrated in the field, whether missionaries sent by different boards or societies should be stationed in the same proximity, and how to recruit and prepare a higher number of foreign missionaries. On Duff's return to England, a similar conference was held in London 12-13 October, 1854. Like the one in New York, this conference was attended by members of the better known missionary societies.

conference was held in Liverpool.⁴ What was important about this conference, in relation to the WMC, was that separate meetings were held nightly for the general public, while day sessions were closed, and a report of its proceedings was published at the end of the conference.⁵ Another interdenominational conference was held in 1878 in London, but it was more of an exhibition for the public than a conference to discuss solutions to missionary problems.⁶ Due to the success of this conference,⁷ another was held ten years later, in London. The ten-day Centenary Conference of 1888 was a celebration of one hundred years of mission work, and was the first attempt at holding a missionary conference that was both interdenominational and nominally international. It welcomed delegates, though not proportionately, from dozens of British and American, as well as a few Northern European, societies.⁸ Two volumes of information about the conference were published, containing information on the

⁴ *Conference on Missions Held in 1860 at Liverpool: The Papers Read the Deliberations, and the Conclusions Reached; With a Comprehensive Index Shewing the Various Matters Brought Under Review, Edited by the Secretaries to the Conference* (London: James Nisbet and Company, 1860); WMC v. 9: 3. The Conference was held on 19-23 March, 1860, and consisted of seven sessions on the following topics: European missionaries abroad, ways to promote missionary work, missionary education, how to get people at home to give more money to mission work, the role of indigenous workers on mission stations, preparing missionary candidates, and the best form of administration for foreign mission churches. Among the 126 delegates who attended the conference in Liverpool, twenty missionaries were present, and one Indian. Thirty-four of the major missionary societies were represented at this conference.

⁵ *Conference on Missions*. The volume, like other pre-WMC publications, reprinted the major papers and speeches given, listed delegates, and included separate papers on mission work in its appendix.

⁶ WMC v. 9: 4. There were 158 delegates representing 34 missionary societies, 11 of which were not British. The conference was held 21-26 October, 1878. No volume was published.

⁷ Bliss, *Missionary Enterprise*, 117.

⁸ WMC v. 9: 4; James Johnston, ed. *Report of the Centenary Conference on Protestant Missions of the World, Held in Exeter Hall (June 9th-19th), London, 1888*, Vol. 1 (London: James Nisbet and Company, 1888); James Johnston, ed. *Report of the Centenary Conference on Protestant Missions of the World, Held in Exeter Hall (June 9th-19th), London, 1888*, Vol. 2 (London: James Nisbet and Company, 1888). Some 53 British, 67 American, 18 Continental, and 3 Colonial societies were represented at Exeter Hall; there were 1,341 British, 132 American, 18 Continental and 3 Colonial delegates. The conference was held 9-19 June, 1888.

topics discussed at the conference.⁹ Building on the success of this conference, New York City's Carnegie Hall hosted the Ecumenical Conference on Foreign Missions in 1900.¹⁰ This conference, although not having proportionate representation, was the most interdenominational and international missionary conference at that time, as every predominantly non-Christian geographical region with Protestant missionaries stationed there was represented.¹¹ After this conference, many hoped another conference would be held in another ten years, but no plans were made for six.¹²

In addition to these ecumenical meetings, two regional conferences held in the early years of the twentieth century had a profound influence on the way the WMC was structured. For the Decennial Missionary Conference in Madras, India, eight separate committees were established before the conference convened in 1902. Their duty was to research a number of the common issues

⁹ Johnston, *Report of the Centenary Conference*, Vol.s 1-2. Among the major themes presented at this conference were: the rise of Islam, Roman Catholic missions, commerce, diplomacy, the last century of mission work, a survey of different fields, medical missions, women's missions, medical missions, missionary education, comity, Christian literature, and the duty of evangelization.

¹⁰ *Ecumenical Missionary Conference, New York, 1900: Report of the Ecumenical Conference on Foreign Missions, Held in Carnegie Hall and Neighboring Churches, April 21 to May 1, in Two Volumes*, Vol. 1 (New York: American Tract Society; London: Religious Tract Society, 1900); *Ecumenical Missionary Conference, New York, 1900: Report of the Ecumenical Conference on Foreign Missions, Held in Carnegie Hall and Neighboring Churches, April 21 to May 1, in Two Volumes*, Vol. 2 (New York: American Tract Society; London: Religious Tract Society, 1900). Among the topics discussed at this conference, held 21 April to 1 May, 1900, were the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (SVM), the duty of evangelization, the promotion of mission work, comity, missionaries, a survey of mission fields, Christian literature, education, industrial training, medical missions, indigenous workers, and native churches.

¹¹ WMC v. 9: 5. This conference had 1500 American and Canadian delegates appointed by their missionary societies, 200 representatives of British and North European societies, and an additional 600 foreign missionaries. These delegates combined to represent 115 societies and 48 home or mission field countries. There were over seventy principal and sectional meetings, to which over 50,000 tickets for visitors were distributed for a hall that held 3,600 at a time and surrounding churches. Like the few which preceded it, two volumes of information were published at the conclusion of this well-attended conference.

¹² WMC v. 9: 5.

facing missionaries in India.¹³ This pattern of basing the conference discussion around the findings of pre-established topical committees was also used at the Centenary Missionary Conference in Shanghai, China, in 1907.¹⁴ This conference went a step further by printing pamphlets written by the committees before the conference, and distributing them to the delegates so that they would be better prepared for the discussions of the committee reports.¹⁵ It was at this conference that a regional policy of future comity and unity in many areas of mission work among Protestant missions was adopted for the first time,¹⁶ in a declaration stating the goal of mission work in China would be the production of one Chinese Church, free of denominational divisions.¹⁷

These conferences demonstrate how the World Missionary Conference was largely framed by its time, building on ideas on how to hold a missionary conference brought forth in prior conferences. The very idea of trying to hold a world missionary conference evolved over time as multi-denominational and multinational missionary conferences increasingly sought to include representatives from more nations. With the large amount of missionary literature discussed in chapter two, these conferences were part of a larger

¹³ *WMC* v. 8: 39. The committees did not produce published volumes of their findings, which were simply discussed at the conference. The assigned committees studied education, women, medical missions, vernacular work, the indigenous Church, work with English-speaking non-Christians, industrial work, and comity among missions.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁵ W. H. T. Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910: An Account and Interpretation of the WMC* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1910), 17.

¹⁶ William Gascoyne-Cecil, "Impressions of the Shanghai Conference," *E&W* 6 (1908): 21-7; Frank L. Norris, "Comity of Missions' II. China," *E&W* 6 (1908): 139. The call for unity in China may have been a reflection of the imperial tendency to use the non-Western world as a place to experiment ideas or policies before implementing them in Western metropolises. If Protestant unity seemed too difficult to achieve in North America and Protestant Europe, perhaps some missionaries hoped to first succeed in establishing unity overseas, in this case, China, before making it a primary goal at home.

¹⁷ *WMC* v. 8: 10.

campaign to promote the missionary enterprise within the Church and to the public. The idea of publishing information gathered for the WMC owes its beginning to the wave of missionary literature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and to the publication of a similar nature by some of the early ecumenical conferences. Finally, the structuring of a conference around reports submitted by subcommittees responsible for researching certain topics traces its beginnings to two regional, but multi-denominational, conferences of the early twentieth century.

Planning a “Most Notable Gathering”

The World Missionary Conference, held at the Assembly Hall of the United Free Church of Scotland (UFCS) between 14 June and 23 June, 1910, has been seen by some scholars as marking the beginning of modern missiology and the global expansion of Christianity.¹⁸ However, most scholars, notably historians, have not given the conference much attention. Its contemporaries, though, anticipated the WMC as a highly important event. Some looked forward to it for its promise

...to bring together and to focus the opinions of missionaries, government officials and others who are capable of contributing towards a discussion, if not towards a solution, of the chief

¹⁸ Roger Hedlund, *Roots of the Great Debate in Mission: Mission in Historical and Theological Perspective* (Bangalore, India: Theological Book Trust, 1997), ix; Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 7-31; Gwinyai Henry Muzorewa, *An African Theology of Mission* (Lampeter, UK: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 14-16; *WMC* v. 6: 275. Commission VI stated, “...one of the greatest needs of the day is a widely extended and systematic knowledge of the facts of missions among the members of religious bodies,” describing the field of missiology before it had its name.

problems of thought and action which are raised by missionary work in all parts of the world.¹⁹

Influential men and women whose opinions would be of value to their contemporaries, and thus possess the ability to meaningfully contribute to the missionary debate, would gather together as a body to discuss issues of importance to missionaries across the globe.²⁰ Others hoped the conference would lead to greater efficiency in the mission field by turning unity and comity into policy for missions.²¹ While some may have been wary of yet another missionary conference,²² the WMC succeeded in its goal of becoming the largest, most representative ecumenical conference to date, and it was attended by most of the top figures of missionary history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. How was such a successful conference planned, organized and structured?

¹⁹ Charles H. Robinson, "Editorial Notes: The Edinburgh World Missionary Conference," *E&W* 8 (1910): 348-9. Robinson noted that this was the same goal of the journal he had been editing for the past eight years, but that the journal, unlike the Conference, also welcomed articles by Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Muslim writers.

²⁰ "The World Missionary Conference," *The Times*, 13 June 1910, 8. *The Times* echoed the anticipation soon before the Conference, describing the delegates as a group of "men and women whose experiences, if collected and written down, would fill a library of adventure as exciting as a dozen polar expeditions; and their first-hand knowledge of the non-European races and countries would furnish materials for a whole encyclopedia of ethnological and geographical science." Praise aside, those delegated to attend were among the most notable missionary figures of the time. In addition, a number of well-known political figures were sent.

²¹ Bliss, *Missionary Enterprise*, 382.

²² Norris, "Comity of Missions' II," 141-51; Alan G. S. Gibson, "Comity of Missions," *E&W* 5 (1907): 368-82. Norris's article was written in response to Gibson's article, which had called for a general missionary conference. Norris was critical of the idea, since he was suspicious of non-episcopal Christian groups and Anglicans coming together in conferences, downplaying ideological differences. Norris was in favor of an increase in regional conferences, like the Madras and Shanghai conferences, but was not a supporter of a general world conference. His article appeared in the issue preceding that which contained Mott's promotional piece on the WMC.

According to one of the official histories of the WMC, the beginnings of the 1910 conference only reached back four years.²³ Leading figures of the missionary endeavor considered the idea for holding another ecumenical conference late in 1906. It became a formal decision at a meeting in Edinburgh in January of the following year.²⁴ Invitations were soon sent out to the major missionary societies to send delegates as members of the General Committee, which later became the Executive Committee, and a number of meetings were held in the summer and fall of 1907 in the United States and Great Britain to plan the actual conference. At these meetings, the organizers decided that the precedent set by the Madras and Shanghai Conferences in appointing eight special committees would be adopted for this conference. While acknowledging the debt owed to prior ecumenical conferences for its very existence, the planners of the WMC wanted this conference to be new and different. As George Robson explained in the WMC documents, the London 1888 and New York 1900 conferences were

...chiefly great missionary demonstrations fitted to inform, educate, and impress. It was felt, however, that the time had now come for a more earnest study of the missionary enterprise, and that without neglecting the popular demonstrational uses of such a gathering, the first aim should be to make the Conference as far as possible a consultative assembly.²⁵

²³ *WMC v. 9*: 5-6. J. Fairley Daly of the UFCS, in a letter to Robert Speer of the Board of Foreign Missions for the Presbyterian Church in the United States on another topic, asked if the mission boards in America had discussed, or had any opinion about holding another conference like the one held in 1900. Speer then took the idea to several mission boards, which were in favor of it.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 6. The decision was unanimous among the 37 delegates present from twenty societies.

²⁵ *WMC v. 8*: 50; *WMC v. 9*: 8; Galen M. Fisher, *John R. Mott: Architect of Co-Operation and Unity* (New York: Association Press, 1952), 46. The only topics to be discussed would be those associated with the larger theme of missionary work among non-Christian peoples and nations. Thus, the lands to be studied and represented did not include Latin America and Russia. Although they were Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic, they were still Christian, meaning they did not fit the topic of non-Christian. While Protestant missionaries were active in these

This meant that all doctrinal and ecclesiastical differences would be off-limits for discussion, and no binding resolutions would be made unless they were supported by all of the delegates. In addition, this conference strove to be representative of the entire Protestant missionary endeavor. Of the 1200 delegates allowed to attend, mission boards and societies²⁶ were allowed to send a proportionate number of delegates²⁷ based on their annual expenditure, leaving one hundred spots available for special delegates appointed by the British, American, and Continental Executive Committees.²⁸ By early 1908, the details for how the Conference would be organized and carried out had been finalized. The work then passed from the planning committees to that of the commissions and the promoters.

Eight commissions, each with twenty members, one as chairman,²⁹ and one or two as vice-chairmen, were assigned a wide range of subjects.³⁰ The

lands, it was argued that if they were allowed in as part of the Conference, the WMC would also have to study home missionary efforts in Europe and North America.

²⁶ Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910*, 47-9. It was the mission boards and societies who paid for the travel of the delegates attended, and had full control on who was delegated to attend.

²⁷ WMC v. 9: 12, 18, 19, 144. The report says 160 different Churches and organizations were represented: 46 British societies were represented by over 500 delegates, 60 North American societies by over 500, 41 Continental societies by 170 delegates from Germany, Holland, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, France, and Belgium, and a dozen South African and Australian societies by 25 delegates. There was also room in the upper gallery for about 1000 guests: missionaries, wives of delegates, hosts, and reporters.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 6-7. Societies with an annual expenditure on foreign mission work of £2,000 were entitled to one delegate. Each additional £4,000 of expenditure brought the society an additional delegate. For example, the largest British society, the Church Missionary Society, was able to send 91 delegates, while the YPMM, SVM, and British Student Volunteer Missionary Union, as supporting and recruiting organizations without missionaries in the foreign field, had to rely on special invitations by the Executive Committees for delegation privileges.

²⁹ Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910*, 23. Gairdner described the chairmen as "public men of the highest calibre." The men selected were among the leaders of the missionary enterprise during the Edwardian era: John Mott of the World's Student Christian Federation (WSCF), J. Campbell Gibson of the Presbyterian Church of England, Bishop Gore of Birmingham, D. S. Cairns of the UFCS, President MacKenzie of Hartford Theological Seminary, James Barton of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, and Sir Andrew Fraser, former Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal.

members of most commissions were primarily British or American with one or two Western and Northern Europeans or Canadians, and each commission was left to make its own plans on how to best produce its report as a team.³¹

Regardless of how they chose to delegate the work, all of them used the approach of deciding which issues would be addressed by the commission, then researching these issues by sending out questionnaires to active missionaries in foreign fields, teachers and principals involved in mission training and education, administrators who worked for mission boards and societies, and others involved in the missionary endeavor. Most of those who received the questionnaires were recommended by the mission boards and societies themselves,³² or because they were acquainted with a member of a commission.³³ Therefore, the answers the commissions received were influenced by the correspondents' standing with

³⁰ John R. Mott, *Addresses and Papers of John R. Mott*, Vol. 5, *The International Missionary Council* (New York: Association Press, 1947), 66; *WMC* v. 9: 28-30. Mott, writing in 1912, wrote that "Perhaps the most serious omission in the preparations for the Edinburgh Conference was the failure to appoint a commission to deal with the subject of medical missions." This error was compensated by making medical missions the topic of one of the separate parallel meetings. The main meetings for delegates and guests were held at the UFCS Assembly Hall to discuss the reports of the commissions during the day; evening meetings were public and held at both the Assembly Hall and Tolbooth Church. In addition, several parallel meetings or conferences were held in Tolbooth Church, Synod Hall, a number of nearby churches, and in meeting halls in Glasgow. These parallel conferences dealt with special topics such as medical missions, women, laymen, businessmen, the YPMM, and the Bible. Edinburgh was an international city, close to London and home to students from around the world, so it is possible that these meetings could have been attended by any number of foreigners interested in mission work. However, no evidence exists listing who attended the parallel meetings. Therefore, this chapter will only deal with the main meetings held at Assembly Hall, and occasionally, the public night sessions.

³¹ *WMC* v. 3: 3; *WMC* v. 5: 2; *WMC* v. 6: 3; *WMC* v. 8: 187. For example: Commission III split itself into five groups (studying India, China, Japan, Africa, and the Near East), then the British members met in November, 1909 to write the report by region; Commission V circulated the answers from all of the questionnaires among all members, then held a three day session in London, with the American chairman attending, to outline their report; Commission VI had responses written in nine languages and split the work into two groups, European and North American; Commission VIII held most of its meetings in Great Britain, leaving American members to either travel to Britain or correspond by mail.

³² *WMC* v. 3: 1; *WMC* v. 9: 11.

³³ Hopkins, *John R. Mott*, 350. For example, Commission I's chairman, Mott, had contacts all over the world, thanks to his extensive travels for the YMCA, WSCF, and SVM prior to the WMC.

their employers, and the personalities of those selected to serve as members. Nonetheless, each commission drafted their own set or sets of questions,³⁴ which were mailed out to the selected correspondents by February, 1909.³⁵ The final reports of the commissions, printed in time for the delegates to receive a copy before traveling to Edinburgh, were based on answers received from these questionnaires.

The commission reports were anticipated to be of high value, well before their publication.³⁶ *The East and the West* published their price and promoted their value, stating, "These volumes will not consist of dry statistics, but will be found to be as interesting as they are instructive."³⁷ Their value was academic, not historical: "As far as the ground covered is concerned we expect that these volumes will be for several years to come a standard work of reference."³⁸ The reports published by the WMC were to contain the best, most up-to-date

³⁴ WMC v. 1: 372-392; WMC v. 2: ix-xx, 1, 277-83; WMC v. 3: ix-xx, 3; WMC v. 4: xi-xx, 1-2; WMC v. 5: 221-33; WMC v. 6: ix-x; WMC v. 7: ix-xii, 1; WMC v. 8: ix-xiii, 1-2; John R. Mott, "Address," in *Students and the Present Missionary Crisis: Addresses Delivered Before the Sixth International Convention of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, Rochester, New York, December 29, 1909, to January 2, 1910* (New York: SVM, 1910), 385. The length of the questionnaires varied, as did the number of questionnaires mailed out. Naturally, not all who received the questionnaires responded. Half of the commissions received around two hundred responses, and the other half received varying amounts: Commission I received over 600 responses; Commission III received less than seventy, Commission VII received 41, and Commission VIII received just over one hundred. Most commissions sent ten to twelve questions, but a few were more thorough. Commission II sent out five pages of detailed questions, and Commission V sent different sets of questions to different types of correspondents: missionary society administrators, heads of colleges that trained missionaries, heads of American seminaries, and heads of British seminaries. Finally, the length of the responses varied. Mott, speaking of the responses received for Commission I, told an audience that they had ranged from five to 140 typewritten pages.

³⁵ Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910*, 24.

³⁶ William T. Ellis, *Men and Missions* (Philadelphia: The Sunday School Times Company, 1909), 103. Ellis suggested readers pay attention to the documents to be printed for the WMC because they would be honest accounts based on real facts about the mission field.

³⁷ Robinson, "Editorial Notes: The Edinburgh WMC," 226. The set of nine volumes cost 13s. if ordered before the WMC, and 18s. if purchased after.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

information available on the missionary enterprise. As one of the commissions stated, the conference was the “first attempt at a systematic and careful study of missionary problems of the world, including those that bear upon both the work abroad and the operations of the Societies at home.”³⁹ Therefore, the WMC reports would be a useful addition to any missionary library.

The works of the authors discussed in chapter two could not compete with the accuracy and breadth of knowledge expected to have been obtained from the thousands of answers the commissions received from their correspondents. To the Edwardian missionaries, the WMC reports were comprised of the best information available on their field, a fitting tribute to over one hundred years of missionary expansion. To historians, they offer valuable information about North American and predominantly Protestant European foreign missions, but more importantly, these texts open a window on the opinions and attitudes of those involved in the Edwardian missionary enterprise.

Promotion and the Face of the Conference: John R. Mott

Before describing the content of the reports, it is important to understand the immediate context of the World Missionary Conference. In order to generate anticipation and approval, the WMC executive committees carried out a full promotional campaign in the United States and Great Britain. According to the conference documents, the purpose of this campaign was to ensure that the Church would know “what was happening, look forward to the opportunity of the

³⁹ *WMC* v. 6: 251. It was hoped that this would not be the last attempt, as knowledge gathered in 1910 would soon become “antiquated.”

gathering, appreciate its significance, and be ready to receive its message.”⁴⁰

Articles, interviews, and advertisements appeared in missionary and secular journals and newspapers.⁴¹ Scotland hosted over one hundred public meetings on the conference. Key figures went on speaking tours to raise support.⁴² A newsletter containing current news on the WMC was mailed out monthly to missionaries and missionary administrations.⁴³ All of these actions helped raise the consciousness of not only those involved in the missionary endeavor, but people living in the metropolises associated with the Conference.

Within the historically Protestant community, approval for the Conference came easily from most denominations. Again, the world had already seen a few well-attended multi-denominational conferences in the past few decades.

However, these were not usually attended by ecclesiastically episcopal branches of the Christian Church, and the aim of the World Missionary Conference was to bring all Protestant missionary bodies, in proportionate numbers, together for a general meeting. Thus, a great part of the promotional campaign for the WMC

⁴⁰ WMC v. 9: 14.

⁴¹ Hopkins, *John R. Mott*, 346. These were intended to raise attention to the significance of the event: “It [was] emphasized that comity and cooperation were to be stressed in every aspect of the planning and program. Each early release carried excerpts from or the full text of letters from President Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Lord Bryce, endorsing the Conference and its aims. And each release quoted both Oldham and Mott on the need for special prayers...”

⁴² John R. Mott, *Addresses and Papers of John R. Mott*, Vol. 6, *Selected Papers and Addresses on Evangelistic, Spiritual, and Ecumenical Subjects, and the Outreach of Life and Influence* (New York: Association Press, 1947), 248, 263. For example, Mott made several trips to Great Britain promoting the WMC. The following words were delivered in a speech in London, 21 November, 1908: “We have come together tonight as citizens of the world. We have assembled also as citizens of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. We stand face to face with mighty world forces and world movements... The World Missionary Conference to be held in Edinburgh in June, 1910, has large promise. It should do much to enable the Church to arrive at a concerted plan as to the distribution of missionary agents and agencies with reference to the actual occupation of the entire world field. It may be questioned whether there has ever been held a conference of larger possibilities for the Kingdom.” Thus, Mott used his religion to attract attention to the conference.

⁴³ WMC v. 9: 14-15. Fraser, Richter, and Oldham visited the United States about a year and a half before the conference; Speer visited Scotland early in 1910. The monthly *News Sheet*, a 16-24 page pamphlet distributed between October 1909 and May 1910, had a circulation of 8,000.

was spent seeking the approval of the Church of England. In order to appeal to all denominations, both episcopal and nonconformist, it was decided early on that no communion liturgy would be celebrated.⁴⁴ Instead, separate communion services and prayer meetings would be held for delegates the Sunday during the conference in neighboring churches.⁴⁵ This decision alone was not enough to bring about full support. It was personal contacts that won the favor of the Anglican Church. Rev. Tissington Tatlow, General Secretary of the British Student Voluntary Missionary Union (SVMU), has been credited with winning the favor of Anglican officials for the Conference in 1908,⁴⁶ while John Mott helped generate approval among mainstream Anglicans in his key article detailing the event published in *The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts' The East and the West* in October, 1908.⁴⁷ Anglican conferences in the past were those at which policies were changed. They were not merely consultative assemblies. Mott stilled Anglican fears of an ecumenical conference by carefully telling readers that it would have no binding power to change the policies of any denominations present:

⁴⁴ Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910*, 37. The official historian of the conference lamented this reality using the following language: "In reading the accounts of the great Œcumenical Councils of the past, one is struck by the invariable feature of their solemn inauguration, -- the celebration of the Eucharistic Feast with which they consecrated their whole proceedings. In this world-conference meeting that was not to be. And the fact, borne in on the soul, wounded and hurt it."

⁴⁵ *WMC* v. 9: 31.

⁴⁶ Robert C. Mackie, *Laymen Extraordinary: John R. Mott, 1865-1955* (London: Association Press, 1965), 41-2. Tatlow visited several representatives of the Anglican Church. At one key meeting with Archbishop Davidson in 1908, he was accompanied by Joseph Oldham, the Secretary of the WMC, who worked full-time promoting the Conference in the two years before it was held, and John R. Mott, the eventual Chairman of the Conference sessions.

⁴⁷ Hopkins, *John R. Mott*, 346; John R. Mott, "A World Missionary Conference," *E&W* 6 (1908): 368-85. The opening epigraph for this chapter is from the editorial note published in reference to this article. It was from this article that many missionaries first heard the news of the convening of a WMC, bringing correspondents the news before they received questionnaires from the commissions.

The Edinburgh Conference will be cosmopolitan, and will be representative of the aggressive forces of Christianity to a degree which has not characterized any other Christian assembly. While it is expected that all the regular missionary societies or boards throughout the world will be officially represented, the Conference will be free in the sense that no effort will be made to bind corporately or organically any society thus represented.⁴⁸

In the article, Mott explained the eight-commission structure of the conference, and promised that the event would send a message to the entire Protestant Christian Church.⁴⁹

Mott was not the only person⁵⁰ promoting the Conference, or helping to raise the necessary funds for it in advance.⁵¹ However, he was arguably the single figure, more than any other, whose spirit and ideas most influenced the WMC. Mott called it an honor to be involved in its planning and promoting.⁵² The very act of holding such a conference in the first place fit in very well with his personal goals, ambitions, and ideas for the greater missionary enterprise. A popular figure in missionary circles, Mott, an American who had never been a missionary, was selected to chair both Commission I and the meetings of the WMC. The Conference took place midway into his life, and marked a key point in his career.

⁴⁸ Mott, "A WMC," 368-9. It was also in this article that Mott called the WMC a "...Conference for a conference," which serves as the title of this chapter.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 369-75, 380.

⁵⁰ Mackie, *Laymen Extraordinary*, 44. While Mott was not paid to promote the WMC full-time by the WMC as Oldham was, he wanted to make sure the Conference was well-prepared and successful. He put most of his energy into promoting and working on the Conference in the year and a half leading up to it.

⁵¹ Hopkins, *John R. Mott*, 349; Mackie, *Laymen Extraordinary*, 42; *WMC* v. 9: 16. Mott raised more than \$55,000 for the work of the commissions (his commission received \$9,900 of that sum). He was also present at the meeting that decided which topics would be discussed and who would chair the commissions. An additional £7,000 was raised in Great Britain, Protestant Europe, and North America to pay expenses for the actual holding of the conference in 1910.

⁵² Mott, "Address," in *Students*, 385.

Mott was recognized as a key figure within the missionary enterprise,⁵³ and in contemporary American society,⁵⁴ well before the WMC was held. This was due to his position as the General Secretary and Chairman of the World's Student Christian Federation, Chairman of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (SVM), and President of the World Alliance of the Young Men's Christian Association. He had played a key role in the organization or founding of each of these organizations,⁵⁵ had traveled the world twice on investigative expeditions into the state of foreign missions,⁵⁶ building important missionary relationships along the way, and had spent decades working to promote ecumenism among mission boards and societies both at home and abroad.⁵⁷ Yet he was only forty-five in 1910.⁵⁸

In addition to traveling the world and helping to organize major international missionary organizations, Mott gave major speeches and wrote several books. This output makes it easy to discern his ideas and passions. His 1900 book, *The Evangelization of the World in This Generation*, best sums up the optimism found in missionary literature during the Edwardian era; its title was

⁵³ Tissington Tatlow, "The Student Christian Movement," *E&W* 4 (1906): 204. "...Mott, is now well known in all missionary circles... The [WSCF] has kept its secretary, Mr. Mott, traveling continually among the students of the world."

⁵⁴ William R. Steward, "Dominant Impressions of Dr. John R. Mott Gained in the Years 1905-10," in *Addresses and Papers of John R. Mott*, Vol. 6, *Selected Papers and Addresses on Evangelistic, Spiritual, and Ecumenical Subjects, and the Outreach of Life and Influence* (New York: Association Press, 1947), 526. Steward, Mott's private secretary during that time wrote, "President Taft designated Dr. Mott as 'one of the great men of this generation.' President Wilson described Dr. Mott as 'certainly one of the most nobly useful men in the world.'"

⁵⁵ Norman Goodall, J. E. Lesslie Newbegin, W. A. Visser 't Hooft, and D. T. Niles, eds. *A Decisive Hour for the Christian Mission: The East Asia Conference 1959 and the John R. Mott Memorial Lectures* (London: SCM Press, 1960), 10.

⁵⁶ Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910*, 20. Gairdner described Mott as a man who thought in terms of continents.

⁵⁷ Ruth Rouse, *The WSCF: A History of the First Thirty Years* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1948), 10.

⁵⁸ Mackie, *Laymen Extraordinary*, 42. By 1910, "...only fifteen years passed since the WSCF had been founded, but in that time Mott had arrived in the front rank of church leaders."

the Watchword driving the student movements in North America and Great Britain. Reading his speeches and books, readers are left with a sense of urgency in the obligation to evangelize non-Christian peoples. He was a master of rhetoric, turning the goal of the missionary enterprise into a call to arms, motivating primarily college and university students to invest their time or life in the endeavor. For example, at the 1909 SVM Conference, he told students that accepting the Watchword as a personal one meant making a commitment to

...give all people of our day an adequate opportunity to know of Jesus Christ, an adequate opportunity to accept Jesus Christ. It means to preach the Gospel with such fullness, clearness and power to the non-Christians of our generation that the responsibility for its acceptance or rejection shall rest, not upon those who have thus preached the Gospel, but upon those to whom it has been preached.⁵⁹

Such words were meant to inspire listeners considering becoming missionaries, giving them a sense of purpose. With the marked rise in recruits under Mott's influence, it is easy to see that he was a man who practiced his craft well.

Although the Watchword was not officially used for the WMC,⁶⁰ the meaning behind it still comes across in its reports, notably the report of Commission I, which he chaired. Mott had been selected to lead the first, and arguably the key, commission of the conference, on "Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World." He was well-suited for this assignment, considering his involvement in the student and ecumenical movements and his focus on the Watchword. His commission set the tone for the rest of the Conference. It is clear that Mott was largely responsible for most of the writing of the report

⁵⁹ Mott, "Address," 169.

⁶⁰ Hopkins, *John R. Mott*, 278. The watchword was not adopted officially because several of the leading British figures, except for Oldham, felt that the slogan should be abandoned.

produced by the commission, as his distinctive literary style made the report read very differently from the others, which followed more scientific or narrative styles.⁶¹

Mott was rewarded⁶² for his efforts in actively promoting the WMC and guiding the key commission when he was asked to chair the main meetings for the discussion of the reports during the Conference. Thanks to his extensive travels and publications, Mott was already a well-known figure to the delegates. In addition, he represented the student movement, the symbol of the future. As Joseph Oldham, the Secretary of the WMC, later stated, Mott was

...asked, as a young layman in his early forties, to be the sole chairman of a gathering composed in the main of members of an older generation. His conduct of the conference was masterly and set many precedents.⁶³

As chairman, Mott received in writing the names of those who wished to speak on the floor the day before. During morning sessions, commissions were given forty-five minutes to present their reports. The remainders of the morning, and the entire afternoon, sessions were filled by seven-minute speeches given by delegates Mott selected.⁶⁴ One delegate remarked,

The Conference was singularly fortunate in its Chairman. Dr. Mott presided over all the meetings for discussion with promptitude and precision, with instinctive perception of the guidance required, and

⁶¹ John R. Mott, *The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions* (New York: SVM, 1910), vi. In the process of what we can assume was Mott writing most of the Report of Commission I, he used much of the material to produce a book of his own. Further indication of Mott's authorship of the Report, in the Preface to his book, Mott admitted to using "without quotation certain parts of the report written by himself."

⁶² Hopkins, *John R. Mott*, 352. Mott, along with 13 other WMC leaders, among them Harada and Speer, were all rewarded at a ceremony the week before the WMC with honorary degrees from the University of Edinburgh. Mott was given his first LL.D., turning him into Dr. Mott overnight.

⁶³ Joseph H. Oldham, "Reminiscences of Dr. Mott," in Robert C. Mackie, *Laymen Extraordinary: John R. Mott, 1865-1955* (London: Association Press, 1965), 106.

⁶⁴ WMC v. 9: 13; Hopkins, *John R. Mott*, 356.

with a perfect union of firmness and Christian courtesy, of earnest purpose and timely humour, which won for him alike the deference and the gratitude of the members.⁶⁵

Another observer present at the Conference described Mott as

...a born leader of men. Square-faced, irregular in feature, with a massive forehead, a full mouth that closes with a snap, and eyes that suddenly gleam and seem to send shafts of light shooting through the dense masses of humanity before him, Dr. Mott stands up like an officer and speaks with the directness of a drill-sergeant. He has no eloquence, no fine sentences or phrases, but he knows what he wants to say and he says it. His diction would be monotonous were it not that he has every now and then a key-word; and this word, jerking back his head and his eyes gleaming, he enunciates and sends hurtling like a bullet from a gun.⁶⁶

Mott was a leader, and his presence and position gave him a lot of power in how the WMC was conducted. This power, albeit for religious ends, was militaristic to those who experienced it. The missionary endeavor was a battle for souls, and Mott was an important officer responsible for directing the ranks by inspiring them to continue in the fight to bring others to Jesus Christ.

John Raleigh Mott, newly Dr. Mott, performed his role as chairman to positive acclaim. As moderator of the recorded discussions of the report, he had the power to influence the Conference in ways no other person was able. His own commission set the theme of the conference, and he was largely responsible for what was said in its report. His dual position as chairman of the first commission and chairman of the WMC allowed him to open the discussions of the Conference, when he personally presented the report of his commission, and to close them, when he delivered the closing address. He was a popular

⁶⁵ WMC v. 9: 23.

⁶⁶ "WMC: Impressive Closing Scenes,' Article in *The Scotsman*, 24 June, 1910," in *Addresses and Papers of John R. Mott*, Vol. 5, *The International Missionary Council* (New York: Association Press, 1947), 58.

visionary, and his own ideas largely influenced the overarching positive atmosphere of the WMC. His voice was heard far above other participants in the Conference.

The Eight Commission Reports

The reports produced by each of the eight commissions varied widely, thanks to the personalities of their members, the questions they submitted, who they chose as correspondents, the answers they received, how transcontinental communications were arranged among members and the degree to which members or sub-committees were responsible for the reports edited by the chairmen. What follows is a short summary of each commission, addressing what was unique to each in topic and content.

Again, the commission on “Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World” helped to set the tone of the Conference and was largely influenced by the ideas of its chairman⁶⁷ and the Watchword of the student movement. For example, one of the summary findings of the commission could have easily appeared in any of the SVM or YPMM textbooks of the Edwardian era:

...time is really at hand –not coming– when the Christian Church should bestir itself as never before in the countries of the non-Christian world in which it is already at work. In our judgment the present is the time of all times with reference to the evangelisation of the non-Christian world. It is so because of the awakening of these nations and the desirability of bringing Christianity in its full strength to bear upon these nations while they are still plastic; it is so because of the critical movements and tendencies which are manifesting themselves in almost all the non-Christian nations, for

⁶⁷ While the introductions to most of the commission reports discussed how their reports were assembled, Mott’s read like a mission statement, using key themes common to most missionary literature, notably his own, at that time: urgency, duty, obligation, cooperation, and opportunity.

example, the spread of the corrupt influences of our Western civilisation, the expansion of great systems of secular education, the growing racial pride and antagonism, the increasing activity and enterprise and aggressiveness of some of the non-Christian religions. It is so because of the rising spiritual tide in almost all parts of the non-Christian world and the desirability of the Church taking advantage of a rising tide, when it is possible to do more in a short time than the Church can do in long periods if she misses such an advantage.⁶⁸

Such a statement could have easily appeared in most of the Edwardian missionary texts, especially those produced by the YPMM, SVM, and SVMU. Missionaries were living in an important time in history, one which offered Christianity plenty of opportunities to expand because of the global political situation: Japan's awakening, as demonstrated in its recent military victory over Russia; the results of the forced trade of opium into China and liquor into West Africa by traders from historically Christian nations; the hardening of the classification of peoples by race and caste in places like India and South Africa; the increased colonial domination, official and unofficial, by North American and European nations. Instead of promoting evangelization as a means to spread western civilization, this commission saw in Christianity a corrective to the ill effects of that civilization while recognizing the agency of potential converts.

Commission I's report was split into four parts: a tract on the missionary enterprise, which emphasized the urgency and opportunity of the present situation; a survey of different foreign missionary fields; suggestions on how to better distribute missionaries and build up indigenous churches; and a concluding section describing the commission's findings, or rather, opinions. In this final part, the commission argued that the four most important areas in

⁶⁸ *WMC* v. 1: 403.

foreign mission work at that time, those requiring the most attention, were the following: China, which was reported to be just as suspicious of Christianity as it was of Western ideas and influences; Equatorial Africa, because of the spread of Islam; India, home to a mix of rising nationalism and spiritualism which could potentially evolve into a rejection of Christianity; and the Near East, due to the fact that the region had largely been ignored by Protestant missionaries up until that time.⁶⁹

The report of the second commission, "The Church in the Mission Field," while not as persuasive as the first, still read like an Edwardian missionary textbook on its subject. Reporting on churches planted within the last two hundred years in areas largely dominated by non-Christians,⁷⁰ this commission did not address indigenous churches, but rather the constitution and organization of mission churches.⁷¹ It studied the conditions under which people were allowed to convert, finding most denominations had different rules on probationary periods preceding baptism. It addressed how converts were trained in their new faith, suggesting they should be involved in some type of ministration in their new congregation. It treated the settlement of disciplinary issues within the mission churches, stressing the important witness of Christian converts for their own society. It commended the role of weddings, funerals, Sunday Schools, hymns, revivals and other practices in their ability to strengthen Christian communities, as well as the faith of individual believers. It stressed the

⁶⁹ Ibid., 81-102, 135-63, 168-84, 203-33, 364-5.

⁷⁰ WMC v. 4. The verb planted is original to the text of the report.

⁷¹ Ibid., 11-29. The following types of mission churches were discussed: Congregational, Continental, Moravian, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Friends' Missions, Reformed Church of France, and Interdenominational.

importance of keeping Christian families centered on Jesus, but not removed from their larger, predominantly non-Christian communities. Finally, it looked at how Christian literature was not developing in vernacular languages very well. In the conclusion to the report, the commission echoed the cautious ecumenical tone of the Conference, saying missionaries could still learn a lot from the procedures of other missions while respecting denominational boundaries.⁷²

Commission III was assigned the topic of foreign educational work: “Education in Relation to the Christianization of National Life.” A large portion of the work of this commission was split into several subcommittees, each responsible for generating individual reports, which were then turned into chapters, leaving the overall report a very disjointed one.⁷³ It did, however, provide readers with a sense of Edwardian Protestant reasons for conducting mission education in the first place: to give students the means to read a Bible, to train minds and free them from superstition, to give students the moral character needed to resist the evils introduced by Western civilization, to help students find gainful employment, and in higher education, to train the future leaders of the native churches. The commission also addressed the concerns of missionaries associated with industrial training and the recruiting and preparation of mission

⁷² Ibid., 40-64, 93-4, 122-55, 171, 217-221, 238-60, 266. “We frankly avow that we are loyal members of different communions, and are in brotherly conference with each other without any relaxation of the responsibilities which such membership implies. In our consultations we have come to a clearer understanding of each other’s principles and position, and rejoice to recognise that we call all learn from each other’s teaching and polity, without being unfaithful to our own.”

⁷³ WMC v. 3: 3. The five sub-committees, and subsequent chapters in the report, divided correspondence received from the following regions: India, China, Japan, Africa, and the Near East.

teachers, and concluded its report by arguing that mission schools provided the “best moral and spiritual influences” present at mission stations.⁷⁴

Commission IV addressed the “Missionary Message in Relation to non-Christian Religions.” Thanks to the guidance of the commission’s chairman,⁷⁵ of all of the commission reports, Commission IV’s made the most extensive use of providing the name of the foreign missionary behind particular facts, opinions, ideas, quotations, or summaries of their work.⁷⁶ In addition, like Commission III, Commission IV distributed its work into five subcommittees,⁷⁷ but unlike Commission III, the findings of Commission IV’s subgroups were successfully pulled together into one cohesive, finished product. Chapters on the five religious groups it discussed were organized around the same set of questions asked all of the correspondents on their observations of the similarities and differences between Christianity and the religions they encountered, what were the most difficult Christian concepts for converts, what were some of the societal barriers against conversion, and what were the elements of Christianity most easily understood by those being proselytized.

Correspondents were also asked by Commission IV what effect, if any, their experiences had had on their own personal beliefs. While many correspondents denied any effect, or said that their encounters had only

⁷⁴ *WMC v. 3*: 173, 365.

⁷⁵ The chairman was Rev. Professor D. S. Cairns of the UFCS College in Aberdeen, Scotland.

⁷⁶ Other reports either occasionally mentioned the name of a correspondent, either because their responses had gone against the norm, or because theirs was a well-respected, popular missionary name. Some of the reports avoided the naming of any correspondents, probably in an attempt to paint a more unified picture of the mission field.

⁷⁷ *WMC v. 4*: 4, 38, 73, 122, 156. The commission was split into the five groups of religions studied: Animistic (what theologians currently label “Tribal”), Chinese (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism), Japanese (Shinto, Confucianism, and Buddhism), Islamic, and Hindu.

strengthened their faith, some were open about how their lives in foreign mission fields had changed their Christian paradigm. For example, some missionaries found that they were able to sift out some of the unessential externals of Christianity because of their experiences. As a correspondent described,

“The dogmas of theologians, as such, have now little place in my thinking, and the most important and vital elements in the Christian Gospel seem to me to be few in number and simple in fact. Peter’s confession, ‘Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God,’ and the young lawyer’s summary, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and they neighbor as thyself,’ ... seen to me to comprise the vital and important.”⁷⁸

Because of his experiences, his appreciation of what was essential to his faith had narrowed considerably. Another echoed such sentiments, stating,

“My life in the East ... has taught me the need of simplicity in faith and practice, and I have found myself shedding quite a number of things which twenty-five years ago I should have considered as being of very vital importance. But amongst the things I have shed, I have not found it necessary to include any of the articles of the Apostles’ or Nicene creeds, or my belief in Christianity as the supreme and perfect revelation of God to man.”⁷⁹

Both of the missionaries, along with others mentioned in similar discussions in the commission’s report, found their denominational differences to be of little importance thanks to experiences among the Japanese or other peoples. Thus, this commission, while perhaps not openly, was suggesting that the missionary enterprise was perhaps a cross-cultural exchange, rather than a one-way exercise of power by the metropole on the colony.

⁷⁸ WMC v. 4: 117-8. Rev. George Rowland.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 118, 206-7. Rev. Arthur Lloyd. These are just two, but not the only, examples given in the report on Japan; the report on Hinduism also had similar comments. Correspondents in the report on Animistic Religions did not admit to any change on their personal faith.

Commission V was assigned the task of researching the “Preparation of Missionaries,” which made this the one of two commissions not to include actual foreign missionaries among its correspondents. Instead, questionnaires for this commission were directed to those involved in the training of missionaries in North America and Protestant Europe. Because of the way the work was divided among the members of the commission, the finished report reads in a very disconnected manner, suddenly changing from information obtained by British, to Continental, to American correspondents in each chapter.⁸⁰ In addition, the topics covered by this commission are not of interest to many today.⁸¹ For example, the role of language, or the ability of missionaries to understand the words of those they were trying to reach, received little attention aside from mission boards and societies’ desire to hire intelligent men and women capable of quickly learning languages.⁸² This report dealt primarily with early twentieth century missionary pedagogy, included little information on actual missionaries, and portrayed the sense that mission boards and societies wished they could raise the standards used in employing men and women as missionaries.

Like the report on “The Church in the Mission Field,” by Commission II, the report on the “Home Base of Missions,” by Commission VI, provided readers with

⁸⁰ *WMC v. 5: 2*. The introduction states that the chairman wrote the first draft of the report, but it appears that he simply molded the two reports by his subcommittees together, adding prefatory phrases like “In the United States...” or “British colleges...”

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 5. Among the topics discussed were the following: the current state of the missionary field, which included similar themes to those discussed in other reports; the standards set by mission boards and missionary societies for candidates, which were admitted to be too high for most applicants; how candidates qualified for mission work; how they were trained; special training that some received, such as for medical or teaching fields; a discussion about theological institutions; the training of women, which often fell short of the wishes of mission boards and societies; and ways that the preparation and training of missionaries, since the desire to improve it came through from most correspondents, could be improved, including a suggestion for a central missionary training college in different home countries.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 17-18.

an orderly presentation, although it also lacked Mott's rhetoric. Moreover, like Commission IV, this commission did not contact actual missionaries, since its topic dealt with the metropolises in North America and Protestant Europe.⁸³ Its purpose was to investigate the ways in which mission work was promoted so that those involved in the missionary endeavor could better understand how to generate more support and recruit more candidates for foreign mission work.⁸⁴ While Edwardian missionary propaganda holds its own value for contemporary scholars, the report also included a very important tool for historians of Protestant missionaries during that time. The report of this commission was the thickest, not for its content, but for its two hundred fifty-two page bibliography. Dividing the literature into major categories and subcategories, seven contributors from North America and Protestant Europe gathered together lists of missionary books and periodicals written in several languages for this bibliography.⁸⁵ Their extensive project offers historians an invaluable guide for what those involved in the missionary endeavor were reading in the early twentieth century.

⁸³ *WMC v. 6: 3*. Members of mission societies and boards in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, France, Belgium, Holland, Scotland, England, Canada, and the United States were used as correspondents for this report.

⁸⁴ *WMC v. 6*. This report discussed the role of pastors, church services, newspapers, missionary literature, mission study programs, public and private schools, furlough visits of foreign missionaries, conferences, exhibitions, the youth movement, fundraising, missionary leaders, women's boards, training indigenous leaders in the metropole, missiology (then called the "science of missions"), and correspondence from missionaries as all ways that could both keep the missionary enterprise ever present in the lives of Christians, and to generate or strengthen support, ideological or financial, for it.

⁸⁵ *WMC v. 6: 333-558*. The contributors compiled lists from Great Britain, the United States and Canada, Denmark, France and Switzerland, Germany, Norway, and Sweden. The sections of the bibliography included the following: general missionary topics, such as geography, "The Home Base," and apologetics; departments of work, which included mostly books in Scandinavian and German languages; history, including general and mission society histories; conferences and conventions, broken down into general and student subgroups; biography; tours and visitations of those who had written about their travels to foreign missions; mission lands of North and Latin America; and missionary narratives, broken down by world region.

The seventh, and shortest, report was that of “Missions and Governments.” While it dealt with the interesting topic of the relationship between missionaries in the field and indigenous or colonial officials and political leaders, it was the least-researched of the commissions.⁸⁶ It was also the most paternalistic and condescending in tone,⁸⁷ and sounded defensive of colonialism. Perhaps this was due to its aristocratic chairman.⁸⁸ Arguing that there should be no tension between church and state, since both parties were primarily interested in promoting the welfare of their subjects, this commission called for nothing less than freedom for missionaries to come into a land to evangelize, and for converts to be allowed to accept the faith without political or legal penalties.⁸⁹ Due to the lack of research and the dominance of its chairman, the voice of missionaries active in foreign lands was largely lost in this report. This is unfortunate, for if this report had used as many correspondents as the others, or relied more heavily on the statements made by those correspondents, it would have provided readers and historians with a better understanding of the delicate relationships between

⁸⁶ *WMC v. 7*: ix-xii. Only forty-one correspondents responded, which meant that the commission was left to make generalizations based on the reporting of a few people. For example, only two missionaries to Japan responded, so the part of the survey on their section of the mission field was based entirely on two responses. In length, the actual report of the commission was 145 pages, but with the appendices, the volume came just short of 200 pages.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 88-9. For example, the commission describe five types of governments for foreign mission fields: “...*(a)* those of low civilisation, but independent; *(b)* those of higher civilisation, and independent; *(c)* those of low civilisation, under Christian rule or influence; *(d)* those of higher civilisation, under Christian rule or influence; *(e)* those of the highest international rank.” Of these groups, lands belonging to the first were said to be disappearing, China and Persia were examples of the second, African protectorates and colonies fell in the third, the fourth included India, and Japan belonged to the last.

⁸⁸ The chairman of the commission was Lord Balfour of Burleigh, a former Conservative Cabinet Minister. This may explain the use of so few correspondents, and the paternalistic, imperial tone of the finished report. He was also the only member of nobility to serve as a chairman, and was officially the President of the WMC. However, he was not asked by the leaders to chair discussions, breaking tradition with those holding head positions at prior conferences. His Vice-Chairman, Seth Low, was the former mayor of New York City, also someone removed from the everyday dealings of missionaries with colonial governments.

⁸⁹ *WMC v. 7*: 2, 91-104.

missionaries and foreign or colonial governments before the First World War. Given the inherent tensions in those relationships, perhaps it was felt best for official reports of the WMC to avoid making things more difficult for foreign missionaries by closely analyzing the policies and actions of colonial agents.

The final report, on “Co-Operation and the Promotion of Unity,” was well-written, although it was based on the responses of less than two hundred correspondents.⁹⁰ It read like a persuasive tract culminating in a call for unity, which was also the way it was discussed at the conference. The appeal for comity, unity, and cooperation were tied to all of the other seven commissions, for as the report explained:

A World Missionary Conference such as the present is itself an indication that the Christian Church generally has recognised the magnitude and gravity of the task committed to it in the evangelisation of the world. Christian Churches and Societies have realised the necessity of meeting together to face the facts of the situation, to discuss the suitability and adequacy of their present methods, and to devise measures for the increase and more effective use of their resources.⁹¹

While the commission found scarce evidence of actual comity and cooperation among missionaries of different societies and denominations in the field, it promoted future unity in as many areas as possible, such as education and the production of Christian literature. Reflecting the desire to use colonized lands as experimental spaces, it also called for federation among indigenous churches as they developed into self-supporting and self-sustaining bodies.⁹² At the end of

⁹⁰ *WMC* v. 8: ix-xiii.

⁹¹ *WMC* v. 8: 4.

⁹² *WMC* v. 8: 1, 13, 27-50, 83, 87. The commission saw great potential in regional conferences for starting the process that would lead to the practice of comity and unity among denominations working in the same country.

the report, a Continuation Committee of the WMC was proposed to continue the work begun with the Conference.⁹³ This committee, to be discussed in further detail in chapter five, was unanimously approved by the delegates, thanks to the successful language used in Commission VIII's report, the speakers selected to discuss its findings on the floor, and the skillful timing of Mott's call for a vote.

The Conference had been promoted as the culmination of two years of research on the most important topics relevant to the missionary enterprise, and the Protestant Christian public had anticipated the value of the reports for their accuracy and breadth of knowledge. What they received, though, was a set of works comprised of eight individual reports. Although unified in purpose in association with the Watchword fueling the Conference, each report had its own distinctive style, importance, and flaws, and was guided by disparate personalities and correspondents.

Major Themes to Emerge at the WMC

Even though each commission was given leave to set its own policies concerning how research would be conducted and a final report comprised, several of the themes common to missionary literature of the early twentieth century were expressed in each of their reports. Without wishing to diminish the individuality of each report, it is important to understand just how well the Conference as a whole conformed to overall attitudes and opinions common among missionary writers of the era.

⁹³ *WMC* v. 8: 146-7.

The first theme to come through in the texts was that which offered delegates justification for their life's work: it was their obligation and duty to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations. As one speaker at the public evening meetings put it,

...the Foreign Mission Movement is a gigantic enterprise which rests upon a tremendous assumption... that the Christian religion is superior to every other religion that exists or has existed upon earth, and that consequently we are both entitled and bound to try to persuade every tribe or nation which has not already become Christian to exchange its ancestral faith for our own.⁹⁴

Christianity was the true religion, and if its adherents believed it, they were bound to bring it to others. A couple of the reports followed a common pattern in Edwardian missionary literature by listing the statistics of Christian and non-Christian populations in the world in the hope of emphasizing the immensity of the task before them, and thus the duty to throw one's efforts into evangelizing those who had yet to receive the message the missionaries carried.⁹⁵

Tied to the sense of obligation was that of urgency, reflecting the youth movement Watchword, "The Evangelization of the World in This Generation." Not only was the work of evangelization an obligation for all Christians, but it needed to be carried out quickly and fully. While the Watchword was not officially tapped by the WMC, it was still prevalent among attitudes expressed in its reports. Presumably Mott's words, published in the report of Commission I, exemplified the atmosphere of urgency in which missionaries were believed to be caught in the midst of after one hundred years of modern mission work:

⁹⁴ WMC v. 9: 156. These words were spoken by Rev. Prof. Paterson of Edinburgh University.

⁹⁵ WMC v. 6: 269. One report estimated a total of one billion people who were not Christian.

It is a startling and solemnising fact that even as late as the twentieth century the Great Command of Jesus Christ to carry the Gospel to all mankind is still so largely unfulfilled. It is a ground for great hopefulness that, notwithstanding the serious situation occasioned by such neglect, the Church is confronted to-day, as in no preceding generation, with a literally world-wide opportunity to make Christ known... never before has there been such a conjunction of crises and of opening of doors in all parts of the world as that which characterises the present decade. It is likewise true that never on the home field have the conditions been more favourable for waging a campaign of evangelisation adequate in scope, in thoroughness, and in power. Therefore, the first duty of a World Missionary Conference meeting at such an auspicious time is to consider the present world situation from the point of view of making the Gospel known to all men, and to determine what should be done to accomplish this Christ-given purpose.⁹⁶

While perhaps not as well-stated as Commission I's declaration, the reports of the other commissions echoed similar sentiments, one even calling the present situation an emergency.⁹⁷

The sense of immediacy was infused by an awareness of living in a shrinking world during a time of change. Like other missionary writers of the early twentieth century, the dozens who contributed to the WMC documents recognized the technological, social, and most especially, political changes under way around the world.⁹⁸ In expressing imperialist sentiments, Commission VII was the strongest, offering a classic example of paternalistic imperialism by suggesting colonial rule was primarily for the benefit of those placed under foreign domination, not for the economic gain of the colonizers.⁹⁹ In opposition to Lord Balfour's commission were more cosmopolitan ideas expressed by Mott's:

⁹⁶ *WMC* v. 1: 1.

⁹⁷ *WMC* v. 4: 215.

⁹⁸ *WMC* v. 3: 6; *WMC* v. 8: 83. Several of the commissions addressed the rising nationalism of the time, arguing that missionary work should never interfere with it.

⁹⁹ *WMC* 7: 115, 117.

There is a widespread movement among the nations and people of Asia, Africa, and Oceania toward independence of European and American control and influence... This national movement in almost every place is the expression of the growing self-consciousness of the peoples. They are proud of their past; they believe they have resources and ability to make their own contribution to the life of the world. They wish to preserve their individuality and independence, and to develop and be true to their national and racial characteristics.¹⁰⁰

Mott recognized the agency of colonized peoples and the legitimacy of their desire for independence before the rise of twentieth century nationalism. He went further than recognizing early nationalism, which other reports had as well, by openly calling for it to be allowed to develop:

This national and racial spirit cannot and should not be crushed or checked. It is a matter of profound concern to the Christian Church. It will have much power to hinder or to facilitate the spread of Christ's Kingdom. Christ never by teaching or example resisted or withstood the spirit of true nationalism.¹⁰¹

However, most of the reports fell somewhere between Mott's and Balfour's commissions, not openly supporting colonialism, yet shying away from openly condemning or criticizing the great imperial powers. Missionaries initially wanted to cooperate with colonial governments, but were opposed to disruptions colonial agents caused in the lives of the people they were trying to work with in building new faith communities. Therefore, criticisms of imperialism were often buried in discussions of the ill effects of the western culture introduced by colonial rule and trade. Such criticism provided another justification for the missionary enterprise: traders spread materialism and cheated workers, and western education

¹⁰⁰ *WMCv.* 1: 32.

¹⁰¹ *WMCv.* 1: 33, 35. The report also argued, "The development and spread of the spirit of national and racial patriotism constitutes a most inspiring summons to carry the Gospel of Christ to all these peoples. Pure Christianity should be brought to bear at once in order to help to educate, purify, unify, guide, and strengthen the national spirit."

deteriorated moral culture, while missionaries carried the only curative for colonized societies.¹⁰² Thus, imperialism was questioned only in ways that helped to promote the missionary agenda, not for its own intrinsic deficiencies, causing missionaries to take an ambiguous stance on modernity.

Perhaps the most prevalent theme to emerge among the reports was that of a desire for comity, unity, and cooperation. The very fact that so many Protestant denominations and nations were represented at the Conference was a sign that the call for unity was well-supported. No one questioned the theological divisions among those present. As one commission explained,

We frankly avow that we are loyal members of different communions, and are in brotherly conference with each other without any relaxation of the responsibilities which such membership implies. In our consultations we have come to a clearer understanding of each other's principles and position, and rejoice to recognise that we all learn from each other's teaching and polity, without being unfaithful to our own.¹⁰³

Protestants of very different theological backgrounds and nations had gathered together to learn from each other's mistakes, and to find ways of working together in the larger campaign of world evangelization.

In addition to the entire commission dedicated to its promotion, most of the commissions expressed some desire for limited or full unity among Protestant missionaries overseas. Several of the reports urged that the goal of the Watchword was only possible if missionaries of different denominations, societies, and countries, worked together.¹⁰⁴ One commission endorsed the

¹⁰² *WMC* v. 1: 22, 25, 46; *WMC* v. 3: 197; *WMC* v. 5: 6; *WMC* v. 7: 63.

¹⁰³ *WMC* v. 2: 266.

¹⁰⁴ *WMC* v. 1: 404. For example, Mott's commission stated, "...if this world situation is to be met there must be united planning and concerted effort on the part of the missionary forces of the

notion, stating, "It is the judgment of the Commission that the time has come for a complete co-operation of all foreign missionary forces for the evangelisation of the non-Christian world."¹⁰⁵ It was time for Protestant missionary forces to put aside minor differences and work together. If they remained divided, they would only succeed in forming small, divided communities in mission fields, instead of helping to build strong, united Christian ones.¹⁰⁶

It was also hoped that the work of proselytizing in foreign lands would help bring about unity among Protestants in the metropole¹⁰⁷ and keep the peace among the historically Christian nations in the future.¹⁰⁸ Doctrinal differences were not discussed at the WMC, so the call for unity was promoted and defended along utilitarian lines. The Conference itself was a reflection of a growing call for cooperation among missionaries in the early twentieth century. With the themes discussed in this chapter and the last, the discussion of unity at the Conference demonstrates just how well many of the attitudes and opinions that emerged at the WMC were consistent with those expressed by a wide array of missionaries throughout the Edwardian era. Ideas on comity and imperialism were being rethought, while those which provided the basis and motivation driving the

Church. We fall back frankly in front of this task if it must be faced with a divided Christendom. We approach it with calmness and confidence if the true disciples of Jesus Christ stand together as members of a common family."

¹⁰⁵ *WMC v. 6*: 277.

¹⁰⁶ *WMC v. 8*: 7. "The absence of combination robs missionary effort of the results which a strong and concerted united policy might be expected to produce. Weak and scattered communities and feebly-manned institutions are failing to make any impression where co-operation might build up a strong centre of far-reaching influence."

¹⁰⁷ *WMC v. 1*: 48. Mott's commission best summed up the attitudes expressed by other commissions: "Who can measure the federative and unifying influence of foreign missions? No problem less colossal and less bafflingly difficult will so reveal to the Christians of to-day the sinfulness of their divisions, and so convince them of the necessity of concerted effort, as actually to draw them together in answer to the intercession of their common and Divine Lord."

¹⁰⁸ *WMC v. 9*: 145.

missionary enterprise remained largely unchanged. Attitudes toward race and the Native Church will be discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how the World Missionary Conference encapsulated the ideas, attitudes, concerns, and opinions of the larger missionary endeavor during the Edwardian era. Thus, the WMC is a key event which historians can use to try to understand the missionary enterprise as it stood almost a century ago.

The WMC was an extension of prior multi-denominational, primarily evangelical, and multi-national conferences, but it was organized in the interest of holding the most representative Protestant missionary conference in the world to date. John Mott largely influenced the Conference, but each of its commission reports reflected the individualism of their members. While the Conference failed to produce a unified accounting of the state of the missionary enterprise, it presented tantalizing signs of ideas still being sorted out in the minds of those responsible for the reports and for the Conference more generally.

Many of the themes to emerge in the reports mirrored those discussed in chapter two: the duty of evangelization, the immediacy in carrying out that work, and the varying calls for cooperation. Chapter four discusses the themes of race and the indigenous church as presented to and discussed at the conference. It also gauges the degree to which West African voices were present or represented at the world conference.

CHAPTER FOUR

Who Spoke for West Africans?

The pioneer missionaries were often 'fathers' to the converts. The converts in their turn were glad to be their 'children.' But the difficulty in older missions now is that we have a new generation of young missionaries who would like to be looked upon as fathers, and we have a new generation of Christians who do not wish to be treated like children.¹

It was the evening of Monday, 20 June, 1910, and the World Missionary Conference (WMC) in Edinburgh, Scotland, was entering its second week of deliberations. Four of the commission reports had been discussed the week before, and the final week had just begun. The official delegates had spent the morning and afternoon session in the main meeting place for the Conference, the Assembly Hall of the United Free Church of Scotland, discussing the shortest, least-researched, and most paternalistic and condescending report of the WMC: Commission VII's report on "Missions and Governments." Bishop Roots and Rev. Ibuka had just finished giving their speeches on the topic of the evening, "The Problem of Co-operation between Native and Foreign Workers," when Rev. Vendanayagem Samuel Azariah, later to become the first Indian Anglican bishop, rose to deliver the final address of the evening. In the words which serve as this chapter's epigraph, he delivered the strongest criticism of the racist attitudes then

¹ *World Missionary Conference, 1910; To Consider Missionary Problems in Relation to the Non-Christian World, Vol. 9: The History and Records of the Conference, Together with Addresses Delivered at the Evening Meetings*, (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson, and Ferrier; New York, Chicago, and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1910), 309. Hereafter, all World Missionary Conference references will appear in the following format: "WMC v. 9: 309."

undermining mission work to be heard during the entire conference. He had traveled from India and stood amidst a predominantly older group of missionary administrators, men from North America and historically Protestant Europe, at what was supposed to be a world missionary gathering. It was his voice that spoke best on behalf of countless colonized converts and their compatriots around the world encountering racist attitudes from foreign imperial missionaries.

Even though it was a big step for Protestant ecumenism with delegates present from all major missionary organizations in Protestant Europe, North America, South Africa and Australia, the World Missionary Conference was not diverse in terms of race. Much attention had been given in its planning to make it proportionate in terms of mission boards and societies, but not in terms of the world's Christian population. Delegates had been chosen, and their travel paid for, by the boards and societies represented, and few societies had chosen Christians from foreign, usually colonized, lands. None had selected Africans. As a world conference on Christian missions in non-Christian lands, how were the voices of Africans, particularly West Africans, supposed to be heard with no West Africans present?

This chapter addresses this key question in order to determine how West Africans were represented, their voices heard or ignored, and their very persons portrayed at the WMC. The first section discusses some of the important themes to emerge at the Conference by examining how race was treated. Following a brief section on the historical context of the Christian Church in West Africa at the time of the WMC, the third section treats the role of the Native Church. Finally,

this chapter considers the notion of voice in relation to West Africans and others from the younger churches at the Conference.

Race and Racism at the WMC

The World Missionary Conference expressed many of the ideas and attitudes common in Edwardian missionary literature. One of the issues being reconsidered in the missionary literature of the day was nineteenth century assumptions about racial classifications. Once-hard racial lines were increasingly seen as permeable or irrelevant, and several writers criticized fellow missionaries for holding old racist attitudes instead of those of Christian fellowship towards those they were preaching to. The documents of the WMC captured debates and changing opinions evident in missionary literature during the early twentieth century. While many of the commissions expressed variations on themes of white and western supremacy, the Conference also expressed newer attitudes on racial equity in light of the Christian Gospel.

Absent from the WMC texts were many of the harsh adjectives common in nineteenth, and some early twentieth, century missionary literature: savage, barbarian, and bushman. One commission employed the term heathen,² and some spoke of indigenous populations as uncivilized.³ However, even though the language may have become refined, several of the nineteenth century racist ideas were still expressed in the final documents.

² *WMC* v. 4: 19. Reference was made to the “heathen mode of thinking.”

³ *WMC* v. 3: 422; *WMC* v. 7: 88. Rev. Harvey, an American missionary in the Congo, described the indigenous population as “totally uncivilized” and in desperate need of elementary education; Commission VII spoke of varying levels, low to high, of civilization among the non-Christian peoples in the world.

Perhaps the most racist attitudes expressed were given in a speech by Rev. R. Wardlaw Thompson during an evening session the Saturday of the Conference. The topic for the evening was “Changes in the Character of the Missionary Problem.” Two talks, one on the Far East and the other on Dar al-Islam had just been given when Thompson, then Secretary of the London Missionary Society, addressed missionary work “Among Primitive and Backward Peoples.”⁴ Expressing approval of the idea of a global racial hierarchy, he began by describing races which possessed an ancient religion and culture. According to his world-view, these races were “in a state of remarkable wakefulness under new intellectual and political influences.”⁵ Thus, some races were more advanced than others, but there was room to move in the racial hierarchy as seen by the awakening of some of the older races. He then addressed races to believe in what were called animistic religions, which would have included many non-Muslim West Africans.

The missionary to primitive and barbarous peoples is in a totally different position from the worker among Chinamen or caste Hindus. He is admittedly one of a superior race – everything about him is superior, his clothes, his tools, his medicines, his knowledge on many subjects are all far, far beyond the wildest dreams of the people to whom he goes. The poorest habitation he erects for himself is far better than the best hut the native lives in.⁶

Thus, according to Thompson, white missionaries to West Africa belonged to a superior race and West Africans were themselves inferior to both the white missionaries and other races being proselytized by the missionaries.

⁴ *WMC* v. 9: 238-71.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 265. This was a common description of Chinese, Japanese, and Indian cultures during the Edwardian era. Note the paternalism in the idea that it was thanks to western encroachment that these races were awakening.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 266.

Thompson went further by deprecating the intellectual capacity that West Africans would have possessed as members of these lower races:

The undeveloped intellectual life of such races, the absence of any sense of sin, and the gross materialism and corruption of their natural state, have proved further barriers, everywhere operative against the reception of the gospel.

These difficulties, however, are not of the same stubborn and powerful character as those which present themselves among the more highly civilised and religiously developed races. They have melted away after a time under the influence of the simple and wonderful story of the love of God for the degraded and the ignorant, proclaimed to them first of all and most effectively in the life and conduct of the missionary, who is to them the living embodiment of the Christ of whom he speaks.⁷

Thus, according to Thompson's racial hierarchy, West Africans did not possess the same advanced religious and cultural tradition as, say, the Chinese.⁸

Culturally, they were behind; racially, they were inferior; intellectually, they were not as bright. However, this last idea was not necessarily a hindrance to conversion. In fact, civilization could be an obstacle to conversion. In Thompson's understanding, the intellectual dimness of the lower races meant they did not have the capacity to make similar objections to Christianity as, say, the more civilized Chinese. With the superior witness of a white missionary, and presumably his family, these simple peoples would quickly trade their own religious beliefs for those of Christianity.

Even with these overtly racist sentiments, Thompson did offer his listeners a sense of the possibility for changing one's racial position in the world. There was room to advance in his racial hierarchy. True, a West African's skin may

⁷ Ibid., 266-7.

⁸ *WMC* v. 5: 210-8. Several commissions, without saying it explicitly, conveyed the opinion that the Chinese were more advanced than other races, so missionary efforts should first focus on China before the minds and hearts of the Chinese were closed forever to the Gospel message.

remain the same color regardless of which religion he or she practiced. With Christianity, though, he or she could become civilized.⁹ Then, perhaps well into the future, his or her descendants could progress far enough to join the Christian family as an equal: “We look for the day when the black man with the yellow man, and the brown man with the white man, shall become one great brotherhood in Christ...”¹⁰

While these attitudes and words may sicken readers today, Thompson was certainly not the only person holding them present at the WMC. He was simply the person to put them forward in a speech at one of the evening sessions open to the public. It would be unfair and inaccurate to condemn Thompson as one delegate sustaining old racial views at the Conference. The oldest participants, mid-Victorians like Eugene Stock, would have been less overtly racist than their younger, middle-aged counterparts. The same would have been true for the youngest generation present, represented by figures like John Mott and Joseph Oldham. However, most delegates present were older administrators sent by their mission boards and societies. Belonging to the middle generation present at the Conference and raised in an atmosphere of social Darwinism, scientific phrenology and solidifying racism, many of them undoubtedly held similar views to Thompson’s. Although we may not know for how many, Thompson’s words presumably represented the voice of many delegates present at the WMC.

⁹ WMC v. 9: 268-70.

¹⁰ Ibid., 271.

Thompson's ideas served as one end of the spectrum of racial attitudes expressed at the Conference, for he included most nineteenth century racist assumptions in his speech. Pieces of such attitudes also appeared in many of the commission reports. Commission I referred to primitive races,¹¹ Commission II suggested that some races held a "lack of independent thought,"¹² and Commission VII described five levels of civilization among the non-Christian peoples of the world.¹³ All of these characterizations would have applied to West Africans, but Commission III specifically stereotyped Africans when it suggested "negro races" would best benefit from agricultural and industrial training rather than higher education,¹⁴ while Commission IV explained that such "peoples usually stand on a lower stage of human development, and intellectual hindrance arises chiefly from that fact."¹⁵ Thus, elements of Thompson's racial world-view were found in many of the commission reports, further demonstrating that racist views would have been widely held by the overwhelmingly white male delegates from North America and Protestant Europe present in Edinburgh that summer.

Even so, the WMC took place during a time when old attitudes were being reconsidered. This is evident in the treatment of race, for the above opinions

¹¹ *WMC v. 1*: 319. "Among the primitive races, the white man, when he has been able to settle peacefully in their midst, wields commonly an enormous influence. He comes to them as the representative of the higher knowledge, the superior forces, the marvelous apparatus of the outer world which is breaking in upon their lower level; he is associated in their minds with the deference due to the foreign power whose authority overshadows them; the qualities developed in him by education and culture, and still more the Christian principle which regulates his life and work amongst them, win their confidence, or at least compel their regard." While extremely racist, this passage suggests that racial lines were not necessarily fixed. The white man was supposedly superior not because of biology, but because of education, culture, and Christianity.

¹² *WMC v. 2*: 258-260. The report was discussing the lack of the Christian literature produced by converted indigenous writers, suggesting the small amount was due to mental deficiency.

¹³ *WMC v. 7*: 88. This was discussed in the section on this commission in chapter two.

¹⁴ *WMC v. 3*: 277. This was in reference to peoples practicing animistic faiths, to which West Africans would have belonged.

¹⁵ *WMC v. 4*: 13.

were not the only ones expressed. Most of the texts were neutral on race, and some openly criticized racism among Christian missionaries from North America and Protestant Europe. Commission I reported that many of the missionary correspondents had noticed the negative effects of missionaries from those lands presenting themselves as socially superior to the people they were trying to evangelize, observing “the social aloofness and superiority of the missionary is inimical to the realisation of Christian brotherhood between him and his fellow-Christians in the native Church.”¹⁶ Thanks to their experiences overseas, some of the missionary correspondents were questioning the racist assumptions they had once held when they first sailed overseas.

For example, Rev. Nassau, former Presbyterian missionary to West Africa, was quoted in Commission IV’s report saying,

I have known missionaries who seemed to have come with only a feeling of hard duty to bring the Gospel to dirty, degraded, fellow-members of the human race. They felt a personal antipathy to colour, dirt, vermin, and ugly faces. Unintentionally they showed that antipathy in their manners. The alert-eyed natives saw it. Without at first saying anything disrespectful, they quietly gave them outward obedience. But they never gave them respect, never opened their hearts to them. The teachings of such missionaries fell flat. They filled a certain niche in the roll of station members; but they never had influence for good. Rather, some of them, by their harsh words or curt manner, brought only evil to the missionary name.¹⁷

Here was an example of a missionary who, perhaps thanks to personal experience, had reconsidered racist assumptions many of his fellow white missionaries brought with them to foreign mission fields. His description of the unresponsiveness of indigenous listeners showed his own disdain for racial

¹⁶ *WMC* v. 1: 320.

¹⁷ *WMC* v. 4: 22.

superiority. Nassau used the responses to racism that he had witnessed as a way to prove to others how destructive racial views rendered the missionaries who held them ineffective in the greater campaign of evangelization. By showing how the attempts of missionaries holding superiority complexes only hurt the evangelization project, Nassau demonstrated a rejection of older views on racial superiority.

In addition to the words of some white missionaries that came through in the reports of some of the commissions, a number of colonial subjects present at the WMC were given the floor during discussions and evening programs, allowing them to voice their opinions on racial assumptions. The significance of their voices will be discussed later in this chapter.

Rev. Azariah's speech offered an example of the type of criticism presumably held by countless native pastors. Azariah described the problem he had seen in missionaries wishing to keep an attitude of superiority over converts and second generation Christians. For example, he said he remembered an incident from a few years prior to the WMC when

...a young missionary told me of what he called the impudence of an Indian clergyman, who was a graduate of one of the Indian universities, in going forward to shake hands with him. "This man," he said, "thinks, that because he is a graduate and has put on European costume, I must shake hands with him!"¹⁸

In this case, the Indian pastor demonstrated a cultural understanding of social order, one in which his religious position placed him on an equal standing with the educated European missionary. The missionary, though, still held a solidified understanding of racial categories that placed Indians, regardless of dress,

¹⁸ WMC v. 9: 310-11.

degree, or vocation, below Europeans. Explaining he did not think this example was the norm for cross-cultural relations in India, Azariah continued, “Even if they were solitary instances, occurrences of this extreme type ought to be impossible.”¹⁹ His very criticism of racial superiority was cautious, as if he were trying to bring it to the attention of his listeners without upsetting them too much.

Azariah also discussed the long-term effects of racism on indigenous Christians. Saying relationships between the two were more like that of master and servant than that of Christian brothers, he stated, “As long as this relationship exists, we must admit that no sense of self-respect and individuality can grow in the Indian Church.”²⁰ He then took the theme of urgency in the face of a changing world common among missionary appeals and applied it to the issue of race:

The problem of race relationships is one of the most serious problems confronting the Church to-day. The bridging of the gulf between the East and the West, and the attainment of a greater unity and common ground in Christ as the Unifier of mankind, is one of the deepest needs of our time. Co-operation between the foreign and native workers can only result from proper relationship. Co-operation is ensured when the personal, official, and spiritual relationships are right, and is hindered when these relationships are wrong. The burden of my message is that, speaking broadly, at least in India, the relationship too often is not what it ought to be, and things must change, and change speedily, if there is to be a large measure of hearty co-operation between the foreign missionary and the Indian worker.²¹

Azariah voiced the frustration of countless Christians and native pastors encountering relationships marred by racial superiority in colonized lands. He

¹⁹ Ibid., 311.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 306.

understood that it was this problem that would have to be resolved in the twentieth century.

Azariah and the white missionaries noted above were not alone in their opinions on the need for changed racial views. For example, Commission VI understood the importance of the race problem, yet its report was undermined by paternalistic residue. First, it approved releasing administrative authority from white missionaries to native pastors²² and recognized the magnitude of the racial problem for the Christian Church. Then, calling for greater sympathy among white missionaries toward indigenous peoples, it stated,

There can be little doubt that the racial question is likely to prove one of the most pressing and difficult questions of the twentieth century. The work of foreign missions has done much to prepare the Church to meet this tremendous problem. Missionaries have taken a leading part in asserting the rights of Asiatic and African peoples to just and fair treatment, in educating these peoples to take their proper share in the life and work of the world, and in protesting against the injustices and cruelty perpetrated by representatives of the white races.²³

By describing the white missionaries as taking the initiative in asserting the rights of primarily colonized peoples, agency remained in the hands of white men. It was the beneficent white missionaries who helped the uneducated indigenous peoples understand their very own plight. At the same time, the commission conveyed an image of the white missionary as an ally of colonized peoples in their fight against injustice. It well understood the problem expressions of racial superiority caused the Christian Church, and recognized the importance cross-cultural relations would hold in the twentieth century.

²² *WMC* v. 6: 246-8.

²³ *Ibid.*, 261.

The Edwardian era was a time when old racial assumptions were being reworked. This was true in the larger body of missionary literature of the day, as well as in the texts produced for the WMC. The Conference failed to put forth one unified expression of interracial sympathy and human solidarity. Instead, it provided a wide range of attitudes, from Thompson's regurgitation of white superiority to Azariah's open criticism of it. The differences in racial opinions were also detected in the discussion of the Native Church at the Conference.

Christianity and West Africa in 1910

Before addressing how the Native Church was presented at the World Missionary Conference, it is important to appreciate the historical context of the Christian Church in West Africa at that time. The reality of the missionary situation there will aid in the discussion of indigenous churches and the presence of their voices, particularly West Africans', at the Conference.

It may be remembered that the policy adopted by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in West Africa was developed by Henry Venn in the mid-nineteenth century. He wanted to establish a self-sustaining, self-supporting, self-extending native or indigenous church, free from the control of white foreign missionaries. The implementation of his plan was considered a success, largely due to the public personality of Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther. As the first African Anglican bishop, ordained in that capacity in 1864, Crowther exercised full leadership within the indigenous Anglican community. Over the next few decades, other missionary societies adopted Venn's model and it was used in

other foreign mission fields. Eventually, it became the well endorsed goal of foreign mission work among missionary writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Crowther's episcopacy, that of a former slave converted, educated and repatriated to West Africa by the British, ended in a manner devastating to him, his subordinates, and the West African Church. From the very beginning, his authority and capacity for leadership had been attacked by a fellow CMS missionary to West Africa, the Englishman Henry Townsend. Twenty years Bishop Crowther's junior, Rev. Townsend began his career as a missionary in West Africa around the same time as Crowther's in the early 1840s. Over the next four decades, Townsend used every opportunity available to criticize Crowther's efforts, as well as those of the rising group of indigenous preachers in what later became Nigeria.²⁴ Despite these efforts, under Venn's administration, Crowther's recommendations for ordinations had been quickly approved, and the native pastorate had grown considerably.²⁵ Indigenous pastors had been given a plenty of space to evangelize as they chose, under the direction of their African bishop, and the Church in West Africa had grown progressively.²⁶ Venn's model had been considered a success, but despite the growing Christian community, racial opinions of people like Townsend had only hardened. White missionaries

²⁴ Michael Marioghae and John Ferguson, *Nigeria Under the Cross* (London: Highway Press, 1965), 31-41; Lamin Sanneh, "The CMS and the African Transformation: Samuel Ajayi Crowther and the Opening of Nigeria" in *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999*, eds. Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Richmond, England: Curzon Press, 2000) 176-90.

²⁵ Peter Nlemadim DomNwachukwu, *Authentic African Christianity: An Inculturation Model for the Igbo* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 51-7; Elizabeth Isichei, ed, *Varieties of Christian Experience in Nigeria* (Hong Kong: MacMillan Press, 1982), 34-44

²⁶ James Bertin Webster, *The African Churches Among the Yoruba 1888-1922* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 191.

had felt increasingly threatened by the strength of the growing indigenous church under African leadership.

Venn died in the early 1870s, and Townsend continued to criticize Bishop Crowther and the native pastorate, despite their success. Venn's office was filled by a series of secretaries hostile to African authority. In 1890, the CMS, with the help of Townsend, conducted an investigation and charged many of Crowther's priests with placing secular matters above spiritual ones. At a public hearing, the CMS found twelve of the fifteen ordained African missionaries working at the CMS Niger mission to have failed to lead an exemplary Christian life, and suspended them from all sacerdotal and evangelical functions. Bishop Crowther objected, saying bishops, not secretaries of special commissions, had the authority to suspend clergy from their pastoral duties. When he refused to use his office to fire the priests, Crowther was dismissed from the special hearing. By 1891, most of the African missionaries had been removed, not by their bishop, but by the CMS, from their positions at mission stations. Crowther died later that year, marking the end of the era of missionary societies' implementation of the Venn model in West Africa.²⁷

In response to the way Crowther had been treated during the past several years of his life, and in response to growing racism, social Darwinism and superiority complexes among white missionaries of different denominations, a grass-roots movement had begun develop within the West African indigenous churches in the closing years of the nineteenth century. Christians of several

²⁷ F. K. Ekechi, *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland, 1857-1914*, Cass Library of African Studies: General Studies, ed. John Ralph Willis (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1971), 61-6; Sanneh, "The CMS and the African Transformation," 190-3.

denominations, proselytized by different foreign societies, came together to form new communities free of North American and Protestant European control. In 1888, the Native Baptist Church was formed.²⁸ In 1891, the United Native African Church was formed.²⁹ In 1892, five of the twelve priests previously employed by the CMS joined former African missionaries of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) to create the Anglican Niger Delta Pastorate.³⁰ Over the next fifteen years, more schisms took place within mission churches, and a number of prophetic churches arose.³¹ By the time the WMC convened, several independent African churches had existed for a generation, often populated by families whose Christianity could be traced back generations. These churches were free of North American and Protestant European control, financing, and guidance.³²

Despite the tremendous success story in planting self-supporting, self-propagating Christian communities in West Africa, the Christian Church in that part of the world received comparatively little attention at the WMC. Replicating common ideas on racial hierarchy at the time, the focus of the Conference instead centered on China, Japan, and India. When Africa was discussed at all, South Africa usually received the most attention. West Africa's success in having

²⁸ Sanneh, "The CMS and the African Transformation," 194

²⁹ Webster, *African Churches*, 68. This Church decided to allow polygamists to receive sacraments. They had formerly been excluded by all missionary denominations from converting and joining a church.

³⁰ J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841 – 1891: The Making of a New Elite*, Ibadan History Series, ed. K. O. Dike (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 254.

³¹ Gordon Hewitt, *The Problems of Success: A History of the Church Missionary Society, 1910-1942*, Vol. 1: *In Tropical Africa; The Middle East; At Home* (London: SCM Press for The Church Missionary Society, 1971), 37-8; Ajayi, *Christian Missions*, 273. All of these church movements were the beginnings of what would later become the nationalist movement.

³² Hewitt, *Problems of Success*, 37. By 1921, members belonging to the greater African Church Movement made it the second largest denomination in Western Nigeria alone.

achieved the proclaimed goal of missionary evangelization apparently counted for little credit.

Those who possessed knowledge of the state of the Christian Church in West Africa would have found it difficult to find legitimate information about it when reading the WMC documents. Most of the commissions that addressed West Africa followed the common practice in missionary literature of the day by completely ignoring the presence of established, independent indigenous churches. Instead of recognizing the success of the indigenous missionary agency in the evangelization of the world belonged to the white missionary from North America and Protestant Europe.³³ West Africans were silenced and erased from the history presented in the WMC texts. When the situation in West Africa was described, it was usually as a means to further portray urgency in an attempt to quicken the pace of the missionary enterprise: the threat of the advance of Islam received more treatment than any other issue in the discussions of West Africa.³⁴

The history of the West African Christian Church in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was, and is, a fascinating one. Thanks to generations of repatriated Christian slaves, many of whom became missionaries, to Henry Venn's policies and friendship with Samuel Crowther, and to Bishop Crowther's authority and influence within both the Anglican and larger Christian

³³ *WMC v. 1*: 217-22; *WMC v. 2*: 180; *WMC v. 3*: 379. Reading these reports, it sounds as though the nineteenth century days of "pioneering" and "exploring" the interior were still being undertaken by courageous North American and Protestant European missionaries, leaving them with the hard work of converting and training the uncivilized West Africans. Another trope used was that of the paternalism, which also gave agency to the white missionary as the one responsible for fixing the evils introduced to simple peoples by his own society and economy.

³⁴ *WMC v. 1*: 9, 18-22, 130, 203-45; *WMC v. 3*: 197; *WMC 7*: 58-9.

communities, a strong faith community had taken root. Because of the rising racism amongst white missionaries, ordained missionaries helped establish a number of newly-formed independent West African churches. By 1910, an arguably stable Christian community was in place in many parts of West Africa, free of foreign missionaries. Venn's model had been realized, but doing so had required several schisms and realignments. West Africa could have provided an excellent case study for developing Christian communities at the Conference, but it was largely overlooked. When it was noticed, agency remained largely in the hands of North American and Protestant European missionaries, not the subaltern Christians in the pews. The myth of metropolitan initiative was amplified instead of subaltern autonomy.

The “Delicate Task”: The Native Church

Despite the relative lack of attention to the independent West African Christian Church, the establishment of a Native Church was largely promoted as the end of the missionary enterprise in the WMC texts. Henry Venn's model was extolled, and no one spoke against it. Only a few addressed the issue of how the model was not being turned into reality, but their very recognition of existing missionary policy falling short of the goal was an advance from past missionary literature. Even so, the very fact of the already present Native Church in West Africa was almost completely ignored at the Conference.

While missionary literature of the Edwardian era contained the opinions of a few who felt that indigenous converts should never be allowed to take control of

their own churches, such opposition to the Venn model was not expressed at the WMC. Instead, almost all of the WMC documents specifically accepted and promoted the Venn model as the goal of the missionary endeavor.³⁵ A few even recognized existing native churches outside of West Africa. Commission I, which supported the Venn model, stated:

...it is generally recognised that the most highly multiplying work which the missionary can do, in the interest of accomplishing the evangelisation of a country, is that of raising up and training an adequate staff of native workers and of inspiring them and co-operating with them in the work of evangelisation. Recent achievements in Manchuria, Korea, Livingstonia, and Uganda suggest the great evangelising possibilities of the native workers and leaders.³⁶

This was one of the very few open acknowledgements of the reality of indigenous Christians carrying on the work of preaching present in the WMC volumes.

Missing from the list was mention of the independent West African Church.

Commission V also supported Venn's model in its report, and recognized the presence of native evangelists in the missionary endeavor:

Amidst all this, the hope and aim of all our work has appeared already in many lands in the shape of an indigenous Church. Through that Church the future work is to be accomplished. Within its membership must be found the largest number of evangelists, the most influential leaders, the most sympathetic teachers of the future. It is only through the Native Church that the social evils of heathendom can be radically dealt with, and only through it that the Gospel will gradually lose its "foreignness" for the mass of the people and find its way to the centre of national feeling. It is in comparatively recent years that the Native Church has assumed

³⁵ *WMC v. 1*: 312-26, 368, 429; *WMC v. 2*: 352; *WMC v. 3*: 7, 316-7; *WMC v. 5*: 11; *WMC v. 6*: 246-8; *WMC v. 8*: 84, 136. For example, Commission I gave four reasons why native converts should carry out the work of evangelization: they were used to the climate; they knew the language, morals, and traditions of their peers; they set a good example for others to follow; and by living a better life, they were appealing to their non-Christian peers. The commission also recognized that conversion completely changed the culture of a convert, convert's family, or convert's community.

³⁶ *WMC v. 1*: 295.

such proportions and power as to constitute a real element in the modern missionary situation. Experience has shown at once the importance and difficulty of dealing aright with this fruit of missionary labour. To attempt to retain indefinitely the control of these developing Churches in the hands of missionaries would be unwise, even if it were possible. To know when and how to withdraw that control will be a delicate task.³⁷

Like Commission I, Commission V also openly recognized the presence of indigenous preachers, but did not discuss where they were operating. In addition, Christianity was again promoted as possessing the curative for the ills of western civilization. It had to be appropriated, though: it was not something that could remain culturally foreign to those who adopted it. Furthermore, this statement revealed a state of ambivalence also discernible in a few other WMC texts. On the one hand, the goal of establishing the Native Church was still the same as it had been a half a century beforehand when Venn made it CMS policy. On the other hand, dissatisfaction with the fact that Venn's model had not reached its full conclusion was not expressed.

Attitudes rooted in this ambivalence, or middle ground, preferred to consider newly developed Christian communities in non-Christian lands as children to the older, established ones in historically Protestant lands. The commission dedicated to the question of the newer churches in non-Christian lands described the paternalistic view of the indigenous church as follows:

...it is in close relation with an older Christian community from which it at first received the truth, which stands to it in a parental relation, and still offers to it such help, leadership, and even control, as may seem appropriate to the present stage of its development.³⁸

³⁷ WMC v. 5: 11. The section heading comes from this quotation.

³⁸ WMC v. 2: 5.

Without explaining how long the present stage would seem appropriate, this commission saw the paternalistic relationship as the ideal one.³⁹ At the evening meetings, a Japanese missionary explained the paternalistic relationship as one of the phases of progression between the first conversions to Christianity to the full establishment of a self-sustaining, self-supporting, self-propagating church. Stating Japan was in the middle stage when missionaries worked side by side with indigenous workers, Ibuka did not call for a quick progression to the final stage, the removal of the white missionary. Instead, he simply observed without challenging the fact that missions in Japan belonged to the middle phase, and pleaded for cooperation.⁴⁰

In addition to those accepting the ambivalent middle ground, there were a few at the WMC who openly criticized the fact that the final stage had not yet been reached. While none of the official commission reports expressed frustration over the issue, or even recognized it as a problem, four individuals voiced their opinion on the subject at the discussions of Commission II or at the evening meetings. Rev. Arthur Brown of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, stated

We have always said that it was our aim to establish a self-supporting and self-propagating and self-governing Church, but we have thus far failed to realise the effect of that aim upon our methods, and I hope that this Conference will mark the period of transition.⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid., 171. The report only called for indigenous converts to be somehow involved, even if only in the smallest capacity, in the activities carried out by the mission station. No mention was made of preparing them to quickly assume all administration of it.

⁴⁰ WMC v. 9: 294.

⁴¹ WMC v. 2: 344. Two of Brown's books were discussed in chapter one of this thesis.

Brown told delegates he had gained a lot of respect for his fellow Christians in Asia through personal experience and asked listeners to “have faith in our brethren and faith in God... The operations of the Spirit of God are not confined to the white man.”⁴² After Brown spoke, a WMMS missionary to South Africa described a situation in which whites had pulled out of a local congregation’s affairs, and the church was doing well on its own.⁴³ Thus, during a discussion of the report that was supposed to clarify the true situation of the indigenous churches in non-Christian lands, it was left to these two men to describe situations where native Christians had gained control of their own faith community and were doing well, and to call for an end to the complacency of whites on the question of pulling out of well-grounded churches.

Two speakers at the evening sessions also expressed dissatisfaction with the slow or non-existent process for native churches gaining autonomy. One, a bishop in China, addressed the question of when the appropriate time was for white missionaries to pull out. Since the vague answer given often had to do with whether native workers and church administrators were sufficiently trained and prepared, he argued that foreign missionaries should be honest about the situation and pull out as soon as their presence was peripheral.⁴⁴ The other

⁴² *Ibid.*, 345. He also described a problem of white missionaries getting complacent in their positions of power. Early on in the history of missions, “the missionaries, and the Missions, and the Missionary Society at home, were virtually supreme. They determined everything. This was an entirely congenial task to the white man, and he has been so long in the habit of managing things on the foreign field that it is not easy for him to adjust himself to the changed conditions.”

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 357. Rev. T. E. Duckles.

⁴⁴ *WMC v. 9*: 289. He stated his remarks were based solely on his experiences in China, and that it was his sincere hope that the Chinese would be allowed to speak for themselves at the next WMC.

person to show frustration was Rev. Azariah of India. Speaking of the situation there, he observed,

The aim of the Missionary Societies, we know, is to develop self-governing Churches and to give freedom and scope to indigenous leadership, and to strive to make themselves unnecessary in the field. But the Societies have not convinced the natives that this is their aim. Nay, in some missions Indian Christians truly, though I know erroneously, believe that the missionaries are against any full self-support and real self-government, because that will make them unnecessary in the leadership of the work. It is commonly supposed that the man of independent thought is the man least consulted in the administration of the mission. I know some instances where independent action in the smallest affair has been repressed, and indigenous efforts – even indigenous missionary efforts – have been looked upon with suspicion and distrust.⁴⁵

Azariah painted a picture of missionaries from North America and Protestant Europe unwilling to cede power. He asked for steps to be taken immediately to begin releasing that power to Indian Christians, and said, “The favourite phrases, ‘our money,’ ‘our control,’ must go.”⁴⁶ Tired of hearing that power would be turned over gradually, he called for the transfer to begin at all, for “There can never be real progress until the aspirations of the native Christians to self-government and independence are accepted, encouraged, and acted upon.”⁴⁷ He believed his countrymen were ready, and he was willing to stand up and say so to those at the WMC whose policies had indicated they primarily believed otherwise. By doing so, he undoubtedly expressed the opinions of hundreds and thousands of indigenous Christians around the globe.

With the high volume of expressed support for Venn’s model for the establishment of the Native Church and subsequent withdrawal of foreign

⁴⁵ Ibid., 312.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 313.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

missionaries, frustration at the fact that the goal had yet to be realized in most places was left to a handful of people at the Conference. No urgency for withdrawal was expressed amidst any of the commission reports, which had been written largely by administrators rather than missionaries with extensive personal experiences overseas. Furthermore, the very history of the Church in West Africa was largely unaddressed by commission reports and delegate speakers. When West Africa was mentioned, it appeared as though there was no existing Native Church.

In the end, there was only one acknowledgement of the West African independent church movement amid all of the commission reports. Found in a discussion of the training of missionary workers in Freetown, Sierra Leone, the observations of one missionary were repeated in the report, stating,

...ordinary missionary's work is becoming more indirect. Organised native Churches and Christian communities have risen up, over which in most instances native ministers exercise oversight, so that the part of the European is becoming more and more one of general administration. He stands as the representative of ultimate authority. Mr. Balmer points out that in parts of the West Coast of Africa Christianity was associated with deliverance from slavery, and with the transplanting of those who had been freed. In these countries there was such a complete break in the lives of the people that there was little or no difficulty in winning acceptance for the broad truths of the Christian religion. But now we are seeing the third or fourth generation of these negroes.⁴⁸

After this small recognition of the Native Church, the text continued its discussion of missionary training and education. This was the only acknowledgement of the twenty-year history of the grass-roots development of Christian faith communities in West Africa contained in the commission reports of the WMC, and it still

⁴⁸ WMC v. 3: 197. Rev. W. T. Balmer was a WMMS missionary to Freetown.

appeared as though the writers were making their best effort to subalternize the West Africans and place agency and authority in the hands of the white missionary.

The World Missionary Conference was convened for the very purpose of discussing the state and problems of foreign missionary work in predominantly non-Christian lands. The accepted goal of the work by those present at the Conference was the same one put forward by Henry Venn fifty years before: a self-sustaining, self-governing, self-propagating Native Church, free of foreign control, administration, and support, but part of a larger world family of Christian believers. This goal had been realized in many communities in West Africa during the generation leading up to the WMC in 1910. Instead of providing an excellent case study, though, only one passing reference was made to the independent church movement in West Africa in the WMC documents. In addition, few present at the Conference expressed frustration at the fact that power was not being transferred to the indigenous churches. Perhaps this was a reflection of the fact that, despite its being a world conference, very few members of indigenous churches were actually present, instead consisting of delegates almost entirely from North America and historically Protestant Europe.

Voice: Who Spoke for the Native Church at the WMC?

The first world missionary conference was promoted as the most proportionate representation of the non-Roman Catholic and non-Eastern Orthodox Christian Church to date. It convened to discuss how to better

evangelize the peoples of the world who had yet to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. However, members of nations, cultures and races who had already converted to Christianity in the lands in question, who were then working to bring more people to their faith, were almost completely unrepresented at the Conference. Out of the 1,355 delegates, between one and two dozen were Christians from colonized lands.⁴⁹ Out of the thousands of correspondents, of whom the largest portion were missionaries in foreign lands, used by the commissions to base their reports, perhaps less than a hundred were native missionaries. Who was it, then, who spoke for the Native Church at the World Missionary Conference?

Delegates selected by their home missionary societies and boards were primarily employees holding administrative positions.⁵⁰ Few missionaries were selected and funded by their home organizations to attend the WMC. Even fewer native missionaries were thus sent. A number of the planners of the Conference, who had hoped more representatives from newer Christian communities in non-Christian lands would have been selected to attend, were disappointed by this fact.⁵¹ However, colonial subjects were present at the

⁴⁹ Ruth Rouse, *The World's Student Christian Federation: A History of the First Thirty Years* (London: S.C.M. Press Ltd., 1948), 130; Howard C. Hopkins, *John R. Mott, 1865-1955: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1979), 357; John R. Mott, "Edinburgh, Jerusalem, and Madras," *The International Review of Missions* (July, 1938), Reprinted in *Addresses and Papers of John R. Mott, Vol. 5, The International Missionary Council* (New York: Association Press, 1947), 658. Rouse recalled twelve or thirteen colonial subjects, while Mott recalled less than twenty. All went not as representatives of the Native Church, but as representatives of their missionary societies and boards.

⁵⁰ Robert E. Speer, "The Edinburgh Missionary Conference," *The East and the West* 8 (1910): 372. "There had been some complaint that the Commissions had not contained more missionaries instead of being made up almost wholly of home administrators and students of Missions."

⁵¹ Hopkins, *John R. Mott*, 348; Joseph H. Oldham, "Reminisces of Dr. Mott," in Robert C. Mackie, *Laymen Extraordinary: John R. Mott, 1865-1955* (London: Association Press, 1965), 107-8.

WMC, whereas none had attended the ecumenical and regional conferences preceding the World Missionary Conference. The presence of a dozen or two colonized subjects was a big change for missionary conferences. According to the official documents of the WMC, the younger churches within Christianity were represented by members from Japan, Korea, China, Assam, Burma, India, and Ceylon.⁵² One delegate added to this list representation from South America,⁵³ while another added Armenia and stated that almost all of the colonized subjects were associated with the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions and World's Student Christian Federation in their own countries.⁵⁴ The WMC was the first non-student movement missionary event at which the voice of the Native Church was heard and taken seriously.⁵⁵

The few individuals present did not include among their number anyone from Africa. Curiously, the popular history of the WMC written on its behalf by a missionary to Egypt, Rev. W. H. T. Gairdner, claimed otherwise and noted the presence of

...Oriental and African delegates, yellow, brown, or black in race, that were scattered among the delegates in that World Conference. For not only by their presence but by their frequent contributions to the debates, they gave final proof that the Christian religion is now rooted in all those great countries of the Orient and the South; and not only so, but that it possesses in those countries leaders who, for intellectual ability and all-round competence, were fully worthy of standing beside the men who have been mentioned, even without

Nelson Bitton, Joseph H. Oldham, and John R. Mott all realized the problem before the WMC convened.

⁵² WMC v. 9: 19.

⁵³ Speer, "The Edinburgh Missionary Conference," 376.

⁵⁴ Rouse, *The World's Student Christian Federation*, 130. Although written well after the WMC, the author, then Traveling Secretary of the Student Volunteer Movement, was a member of Commission I and was present at the WMC.

⁵⁵ Hopkins, *John R. Mott*, 357. Hopkins also did not include Africa as represented by these nationals.

the traditions of two millenniums of western Christianity at the back of them.⁵⁶

Gairdner went on to describe some of the non-western individuals present by name or association, and concluded his list by mentioning the presence of “men of African race, from Liberia, which he claimed was the only independent negro organised state in Africa.”⁵⁷ A review of the list of delegates provided by the WMC, which, when missionaries were listed, usually included the field they had traveled to the Conference from, does not substantiate his florid claims. What is more plausible is that a handful of African Americans, sent on behalf of American Baptist, Methodist Episcopal and Presbyterian organizations, were present at the WMC as delegates.⁵⁸ Although West Africans may well have attended some of the public sessions of the WMC in Edinburgh and Glasgow, they were not official delegates. As such, they did not have the opportunity, as other colonial subjects did, to have their names called to speak at the Conference and have their statements recorded in official WMC texts.

A few of the representatives of other indigenous churches spoke verbally at the WMC. Three were asked to speak at the evening sessions,⁵⁹ and several were selected by John Mott to speak at the morning and afternoon sessions

⁵⁶ W. H. T. Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910: An Account and Interpretation of the WMC* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1910), 56-7.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁵⁸ *WMC v. 9*: 39-71. Most of the celebrated nationals present from the younger churches were primarily sent on behalf of American, not British, mission boards.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 284-9, 294-8, 306-15. Rev. Ibuka, of Japanese nationality, spoke about what the Indian, Chinese and Japanese culturally had to offer Christianity; Rev. Harada, also from Japan, called for cooperation between native and foreign missionary workers; Rev. Azariah, of Indian nationality, spoke about the cross-cultural relations between Indian and foreign missionary workers.

during discussions of commission reports.⁶⁰ By calling on nine of the colonial subjects present at the conference, Mott provided them with a larger voice than their delegated representation had allowed them.⁶¹ Nonetheless, no West African, indeed, no African, spoke at the WMC.

Even though no West Africans were present as delegates, there were other, very limited, ways in which their voices were still heard at the WMC. Again, the reports of the commissions were largely based on correspondence received from those involved in the missionary endeavor at home and abroad. Mission boards and societies provided the names of most of the correspondents, but in the end, the final decision on whom to contact was made by commission members. Two of the commissions chose not to contact any missionaries, for their topic dealt with the home base, not the foreign mission field. Thus, their reports completely lacked West African voices.⁶² The other commissions did utilize missionaries as correspondents, and some used a number of colonized missionaries. The commission to do this the most was Commission I.⁶³ It is unclear if any of the colonized correspondents were West African, for the advice

⁶⁰ *WMC v. 1*: 406-429; *WMC v. 2*: 352, 372; *WMC v. 3*: 418-22; *WMC v. 7*: 154. Usually, they did not speak about larger race issues or about the Native Church, but instead kept their comments relevant to the discussion about mission education, the payment of native workers, or other topic being deliberated.

⁶¹ Hopkins, *John R. Mott*, 357. Hopkins listed the following speakers, which are verified by the WMC documents: Chiba, Chang, Yun, and Azariah all spoke at the discussion of Commission I; they, and five others, Honda, Cheng, Ibuka, Harada, and Chatterji, spoke at the remaining seven.

⁶² *WMC v. 5*: 13; *WMC v. 6*: 1-3.

⁶³ Hopkins, *John R. Mott*, 350; *WMC v. 1*: 3, 372-92. Commission I was also the only commission to thank the members of the indigenous Christian churches for corresponding. According to Hopkins, twenty of the over 600 correspondents for that commission were colonial nationals, and ten of those were Japanese. Of the seventy correspondents listed for Africa, eight were stationed in West Africa. Thus, of the remaining ten nationals consulted, only one possibly could have been West African: Rev. John R. King, DD, missionary in Freetown, Sierra Leone. King was with the United Brethren in Christ, which had previously sent an African American couple as early as 1870, and had employed Africans. I have been unable to find any biographical information on King.

and expertise of black missionaries in West Africa was not courted like that of white missionaries like the famed Mary Slessor.

The primary means through which the West African voice could be detected among the documents of the WMC was through comments made by missionaries from North America and predominantly Protestant Europe assigned to West Africa. Several reports, notably Commission IV, made use of listing the name of correspondents from whom certain information had been provided. Thus, in the presentations or surveys of West Africa, their words sometimes directly reflected the subaltern voice. Rev. W. T. Balmer, WMMS missionary in Freetown, was contacted by Commission III and IV, and was quoted or referenced in both of their reports.⁶⁴ From him, readers learned that

“...Africans have, to an amazing degree, the power of separating doctrine and practice. They have tenacious memories, and are able and willing to acquire knowledge, while regarding it as a merely external addition to their inherited views and prejudices. To their minds, thought seems divorced from reality.”⁶⁵

While perhaps Balmer was venting frustrations from his work in evangelizing and reshaping the world-view of indigenous West Africans, his statement demonstrated that at the very least, they were often skeptical of accepting new Christian dogma as the personal paradigm from which to base their decisions.

There were two other missionaries whose words on West Africans allowed readers and listeners to detect their voice or opinions. The passage by Rev. Nassau criticizing the racism of fellow missionaries was quoted earlier in this chapter. From his words, West Africans appeared to be respectful toward those

⁶⁴ *WMC* v. 4: 14. In a passage describing the overall intellectual ineptitude of West Africans, Commission IV referenced Balmer for holding the opposite opinion about the Bantu.

⁶⁵ *WMC* v. 3: 190-1.

they were being slighted by, yet unwilling to accept their message as truth.⁶⁶

Finally, at the discussion of Commission IV's report, Rev. Jays, CMS missionary to West Africa, stated that the report had over-generalized its statements on traditional West African religions.

It is no doubt due... to the immense amount of material. I cannot help feeling that there is not enough from those who have been working in West Africa. I think a great many very different answers would have been given, and would have modified some general statements that have been made. It has been suggested that the people will not admit wrong-doing. My experience is that they will admit wrong-doing. They will answer directly when you ask them whether a thing is right or wrong. One man is spoken of as being an exceedingly reliable authority, because that man has gone and asked questions, written them down in the language, and then got interpretations on difficult points. If you ask categorical questions you will get categorical answers, and you will get the answer that they think you want. In this way you will very often get quite a wrong impression. I am quite certain that the only way to find out these things that the people themselves are ashamed of, and do not care to tell you, is to simply wait and watch, and the longer you wait and watch the less you seem to know.⁶⁷

In his experience, West African non-Christians often tried to answer questions with responses they thought missionaries sought. From his comments, readers and listeners could hear West Africans who were perhaps suspicious of foreign missionaries asking them personal questions about morality and world-view. Instead of trying to justify their religion, tradition, or culture, perhaps they simply wished to appease missionaries with quick responses in the hopes of satisfying and ending their inquiries. These three missionaries to West Africa, in speaking about, and for, the West Africans, offered the best representation of what these

⁶⁶ *WMC* v. 4: 22.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 287-8.

otherwise silenced people thought, or were motivated by, in their dealings with foreign missionaries.

Very few native members of the churches in non-Christian lands were present at the World Missionary Conference, and none were present from West Africa. When information was needed from missionary correspondents in the field, it was North Americans and Protestant Europeans who were usually consulted. In talking about the West African, about what needed to be done in West Africa, or about the future of West Africa, the commissions largely failed to ask West Africans what they thought. Instead, agency remained in the hands of foreign missionaries. Even so, traces of West African voices could still be discerned in the words of three missionaries as correspondents referenced by two commissions or delegates who spoke at the Conference. However, the voices presented by these three were very limited for a region occupied by a large number of native Christians living in a land home to several generations of converts and a growing independent Native Church.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the themes of race and the establishment of a Native Church addressed by missionary literature during the Edwardian era were present among many of the documents of the WMC. Old ideas and assumptions on race were being reworked, while Venn's model for indigenous churches was still being honored. However, the WMC largely kept its eyes directed away from the reality of Christianity in West Africa. It was there

that Venn's program had first become a missionary society policy, and it was there that a generation of Christians had enjoyed membership in independent churches. The WMC, although it was the first ecumenical conference to include members from the younger churches of historically non-Christian lands, failed to provide a forum for the Native Church in West Africa. Instead, West Africans, and West African Christians, were barely heard through the words of white missionaries corresponding with two of the commissions or speaking at the Conference. For the most part, they were silent at the WMC.

During the WMC, two epistles were drafted and sent out to the Church: a message from the Conference to "Members of the Church in Christian Lands, and another "To the Members of the Christian Church in non-Christian Lands."⁶⁸ In the latter, indigenous Christians were told, "nothing has caused more joy than the witness borne from all quarters as to the steady growth in numbers, zeal, and power of the rising Christian Church in newly awakening lands."⁶⁹ After expressing happiness over the growth of the indigenous churches, the epistle promoted the Venn model as the ultimate goal of world evangelization:

Accept our profound and loving sympathy, and be assured of our confident hope that God will bring you out of your fiery trial as a finely tempered weapon which can accomplish His work in the conversion of your fellow-countrymen. It is you alone who can ultimately finish this work: the word that under God convinces your own people must be your word; and the life which will win them for Christ must be the life of holiness and moral power, as set forth by you who are men of their own race. But we rejoice to be fellow-helpers with you in the work, and to know that you are being more

⁶⁸ *WMC* v. 9: 108-10.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

and more empowered by God's grace to take the burden of it upon your own shoulders.⁷⁰

The politics surrounding the need to put such sentiments into the official record of the WMC are unknown. It is clear, though, that members of the business committee responsible for drafting the letter desired to voice support to indigenous missionaries and pastors who did not attend the Conference in Scotland. Nevertheless, as enabling as these words may have sounded to the presumably North American and Protestant European men who wrote them, they illustrated a larger problem at the very root of the World Missionary Conference. Though it may have been pleasing to the home churches or the foreign mission fields, the epistle's message was a metropole to colony one. No one really asked the members of the non-Christian Church in mission lands what they had to say to those meeting on their behalf in Edinburgh at the first world missionary conference. Their message was hardly sought.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER FIVE

After the World Missionary Conference, 1910 to 1914

Recent visits to many of the principal battle-fields of the Christian Church have impressed me with the strong conviction that the forces of pure Christianity are facing an absolutely unprecedented world-situation in the non-Christian world.

It is unprecedented in point of opportunity, for nothing like it has been known in the annals of the Christian religion. There have been times when the opportunity in some one part of the world was as wonderful as now; but there never has been a time when, in the Far East, in Near East, in Southern Asia, in all parts of Africa, in the East Indian island world, in many parts of Latin America, as well as of Latin Europe, and Greek Europe, doors were simultaneously as wide open as they are to-day before the forces of the Christian religion.

Unprecedented in this situation also, in point of danger. This is owing to the shrinkage of the world, through the greatly improved means of communication which have caused the nations and races to act and react upon one another with startling directness, power, and virulence. The world has become a dangerous place, and nothing save the expansion of Christianity in its purest form can make it a safe home for man.¹

John Mott, the notable American layman heavily involved in the missionary movement in the early twentieth century, delivered these words at the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (SVM) convention in 1914. Just four years after the World Missionary Conference (WMC) was held in Edinburgh, Scotland, an event he promoted and chaired, Mott appeared at the SVM conference as a key speaker still heavily involved in the student movement

¹ John R. Mott, "An Unprecedented World-Situation," *Students and the World-Wide Expansion of Christianity: Addresses Delivered Before the Seventh International Convention of the SVM, Kansas City, Missouri, December 31, 1913, to January 4, 1914* (New York: SVM, 1914), 85. The visits Mott was referring to will be discussed later in this chapter.

both at home and overseas. His words echoed the call to action so often expressed in his earlier speeches and writings.

As the last two chapters demonstrated, the WMC continued many of the themes presented in the missionary literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries discussed in chapter two. Attitudes on issues like race and empire moderately changed in the years leading up to the WMC, while ideas on which the missionary endeavor was largely based, such as duty and unity, remained largely unchanged. After the conclusion of the Conference, such trends continued, as will be seen later in this chapter. The campaign of promoting foreign mission work, and Mott's role within it, did not end with the Conference. Along with many others, he continued to speak for, write about, and confer with others in an effort to aid, promote, and advance the missionary project for decades.

At the SVM convention in 1914, Mott found himself once again in front of an audience largely consisting of college and university students, trying to inspire in them a positive response to the call for missionary work on behalf of what he was calling the purest form of Christianity, Protestantism. His words built on themes familiar to many of his prior speeches, yet only months before the outbreak of World War I they had taken a new tone. Mott, while continuing to convey the sense of opportunity in the possibility for evangelizing the world, used heightened world political tensions to further emphasize the theme of urgency in the face of a changing world. The optimism present in missionary literature

before the WMC continued in the years after the conference, but it was an uneasy optimism for those who recognized the signs of impending world conflict.

This chapter focuses on the missionary enterprise during the years between the World Missionary Conference in June, 1910 and the outbreak of World War I in August, 1914. Like chapter two, it is primarily based on missionary literature. First, this chapter addresses the immediate responses to the WMC, demonstrating how those involved in the missionary movement viewed the conference, as well as how the conference was presented to British and American readers of the secular press. The chapter then discusses how ecumenical work initiated at the WMC was continued for a few years before being temporarily interrupted by a world war, and what John Mott's role was in that movement. Finally, a survey of missionary literature written or published in the years between the WMC and World War I is conducted in order to determine how well the WMC influenced, or was a part of, important themes and ideas within the missionary enterprise.

Immediate Responses to the Conference

It will be remembered that the World Missionary Conference was promoted as a major event for Protestant Christianity. After the close of the Conference, it was seen as having reached its elevated goals. To its observers and participants, the WMC was a success.

Most missionary texts, especially those written by men and women who had attended it, commended it. As one British delegate remarked,

A great event has taken place. It is not too much to say that a new era for Christendom has been ushered in by this Conference; but whether we have only had a sunny March day, to be followed by many a black storm before the summer of the new era will shine on us, or whether that summer will come quickly and abide, will depend not only upon an ardent desire for unity, but upon accurate thinking, a clear recognition of differences of belief, and a reverence for all honest conviction.²

To him, the pervading ecumenical call for unity present at the Conference was a major factor in determining its value. One observer echoed his sentiments on the historical importance of the WMC by deeming it the most important event in Christianity since the fourth century Council of Nicaea.³ Another delegate said it was “the most remarkable assemblage of the people of God that this world has yet seen.”⁴ Yet another called it a “watershed in missionary history ... Comprising within itself, the finest missionary leaders the world has ever known.”⁵ Still another called it the “biggest thing that ever struck Scotland,” and emphasized its ecumenism.⁶ An American also sang the praises of the Conference, calling it “the most remarkable [gathering] that ever met in the world’s history.”⁷ William Jennings Bryan, one of the best known American delegates at the Conference, simply called it “a very impressive meeting of men ... [that] has probably not been

² “Theology and Missions: To the Editor,” *The Spectator*, 9 July, 1910, 54.

³ Caroline Fox, “Theology and Missions: To the Editor,” *The Spectator*, 2 July, 1910, 13.

⁴ “WMC: Impressive Closing Scenes,” Article in *The Scotsman*, 24 June, 1910,” in *Addresses and Papers of John R. Mott*, Vol. 5, *The International Missionary Council* (New York: Association Press, 1947), 58.

⁵ James Pickett, *The Modern Missionary Crisis* (London: W. A. Hammond, 1913), 121.

⁶ Charles Clayton Morrison, “The World Missionary Conference,” *The Christian Century* 27 (1910), 660. “The theme of Christian unity is running through the whole conference like a subterranean stream. It breaks through the ground of any subject the conference may be considering, and bubbles on the surface for a time. It is almost the exception for a speaker to sit down without deploring our divisions. The missionaries are literally plaintive in their appeal that the church of Christ re-establish her long lost unity.” What impressed him most at the Conference was just how well the spirit of comity had been carried out in the midst of so many denominational differences

⁷ Fox, “Theology and Missions,” 13. She was quoting an unnamed delegate.

equaled by any previous gathering in its representative capacity.”⁸ All of these congratulatory sentiments were common among delegates asked to provide or write their impressions of the Conference soon after it ended. To them, and the employers who sent them,⁹ they had participated in what would be seen as an important event in Christian history because of the way unity within the missionary endeavor was stressed at the Conference.

The very holding of the Conference was an important step in the history of Protestant ecumenism, and in the name of comity, doctrinal differences had been omitted from discussion. As one observer explained to a largely Anglican reading public, many of whom would not have attended the WMC,

There was an appearance of unity in the Conference that might be deceptive unless explained. In the first place polemical topics were not under discussion. There are certain subjects pertaining to the faith and polity on which we are not ready as yet to confer, at any rate not in a great and heterogeneous assembly. These were not in evidence. In the second place carefully worked out themes on which a consensus of opinion had already been reached in the various Commissions occupied our whole attention ... A small area of common ground was occupied and found large enough for edifying fellowship without trespassing on areas held by the respective churches as more or less private property, so to speak.¹⁰

His remarks show how it was still important after the conclusion of the Conference to stress to Anglicans the fact that theological differences had not been compromised. The Conference had recognized a desire to stop duplicating

⁸ “Bryan Talks Little,” *New York Times*, 26 June 1910, C2.

⁹ “Annual Report of the Committee,” *Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East: One-Hundred-and Twelfth Year, 1910-1911* (London: CMS, 1911), 1. The Church Missionary Society (CMS), as the largest missionary society, had the most delegates present at the WMC. The CMS was confident that it would “stand out in the annals of Christianity for the Apostolic character of its aim, the timeliness of its conception, the comprehensiveness of its personnel and the statesmanship of its plan.”

¹⁰ C. H. Brent, “A World Missionary Conference,” *The East and the West* 8 (1910): 366. Hereafter, all references to articles published in *The East and the West* quarterly journal will appear as follows: “*E&W* 8 (1910): 366.”

work in foreign mission fields and to find ways that different denominations could work together in the goal that they all shared, the evangelization of the world. Doctrinal differences, though, were not to be compromised in the campaign to find areas of cooperation. The WMC had convened to open limited dialogue, and it was just the beginning of a series of large ecumenical conferences to be held during the twentieth century.

Those involved in the missionary enterprise appreciated the WMC's intrinsic value as a contribution to Protestant ecumenism, and the findings of its eight commissions. Interest in the Conference was not reserved to missionary insiders, though, partly due to the publication of the nine official WMC volumes and Gairdner's official history of the event discussed in the last two chapters.¹¹ These books helped spread awareness of the Conference and increase British and American appreciation of its significance in the months following its closing address.

In addition to publications, the WMC had reached out to the general public by holding open evening sessions and parallel conferences. During the primary morning and afternoon sessions closed to the public, eighty members of the North American and European press joined official delegates.¹² The reporters and editors submitted their observations to secular newspapers, newsweeklies, and journals, helping to spread awareness of, and support for, the Conference to

¹¹ *World Missionary Conference, 1910; To Consider Missionary Problems in Relation to the Non-Christian World*, Vols. 1-9, (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson, and Ferrier; New York, Chicago, and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1910); Gairdner, W. H. T. *Edinburgh 1910: An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference*, (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier for The Committee of the World Missionary Conference, 1910). Hereafter, all references for the nine World Missionary Conference volumes will appear in the following format: "WMC v. 1: pg #."

¹² WMC v. 9: 20-6.

the general public. Some newspapers and journals printed basic facts about the Conference, while others, among them some major American and British newspapers, gave very detailed accounts of the daily proceedings. London's *The Times* and Dublin's *The Irish Times* printed full daily columns while the WMC was in session; the *New York Times* began doing the same at the beginning of the Conference, but decreased its attention considerably by the end of its second week. Articles in the major daily newspapers added descriptive adjectives to express support for the Conference, portraying a meeting as "remarkable," a speaker as "the most acceptable of all speakers" or as having given an "excellent summary," a message as having been greeted by "loud cheers," or a hymn as having been sung with "great heartiness."¹³ Such words were used in an effort to convey support of the Conference to readers when appearing to simply detail the facts of the event.

In addition to news articles on the Conference, *The Times* published two lengthy leading articles about it: one during its convening and one immediately following its conclusion. The first recognized the grandeur of the event, commended its expressed interest in better understanding the religions with which Protestant missionaries came in contact, and noted the cultural value converts contributed to the universality of Christianity.¹⁴ The second called the Conference "triumphant," extolled John Mott as a "born master of assemblies," and hinted at the desire for greater unity by presenting the possibility for a future

¹³ "The Edinburgh Conference: A Forward Look," *The American Review of Reviews* 42 (July-December, 1910), 87; "World Missionary Conference," *The Irish Times*, 22 June, 1910, 9; "World Missionary Conference," *The Irish Times*, 16 June, 1910, 8; "The World Missionary Conference," *The New York Times*, 15 June, 1910. These are just a few examples of the language used.

¹⁴ "The World Missionary Conference," *The Times*, 18 June, 1910, 11-12.

permanent international missionary body with positive words.¹⁵ Thus, while the World Missionary Conference was primarily a consultative gathering convened for the benefit of those involved in the goal of evangelizing the world, news of the conference in the secular press worked to build appreciation and support for it among those not involved in its agenda. It was considered an important, newsworthy event by the American and British press at a time when interest in missionary work was still prevalent among the general population.

The efforts undertaken by those who had promoted the Conference within missionary circles in North American and historically Protestant Europe were rewarded. After its cessation, WMC delegates, others involved in the missionary enterprise, and major daily newspapers in the secular press, all expressed their approval of it. Many estimated its future worth to history in the form of Protestant ecumenism. As contemporaries of the event, they were unable to see, or did not wish to see, the flaws of Conference in terms of representation as discussed in the last chapter. The World Missionary Conference had been a success, and many looked forward to the continuation of its spirit of optimistic ecumenism.

The Face of the Conference and Protestant Ecumenism: John R. Mott

The work of the World Missionary Conference continued in the years after its closure. Before addressing how this was carried out, it is necessary to return to the figure who largely shaped, and was shaped by, the Conference. It will be remembered that the spirit of comity in which the Conference convened was greatly influenced by John R. Mott's efforts, rhetoric, and personality. After the

¹⁵ "The World Missionary Conference," *The Times*, 25 June, 1910, 11-12.

Conference, his role in its continued work, and in the greater early twentieth century Protestant ecumenical movement, continued. The spirit of the WMC and Mott's ideas were intertwined. Therefore, in examining the responses to the Conference within the missionary enterprise, it is important to understand how his ideas and career were shaped by and tied to its convening.

Mott's opinion of the World Missionary Conference was stated simply in the book he finished while still in Great Britain the summer of 1910:

The World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in June of the present year constituted in its plan, its personnel, in the spirit which characterised it, and in its promise, the most significant gathering ever held in the interest of the world's evangelisation.¹⁶

The world's evangelization, and the possibility of seeing it done within one's lifetime, drove Mott's career. It remained with him for decades, unchanged, as he spent his time energy trying to help those involved in the missionary endeavor attain some of the "awakened expectations of greater things in the expansion of the Kingdom of Christ" that the Conference had put forward.¹⁷

A large part of his energy in trying to help reach those goals was spent traveling the world, speaking at conferences, and gathering information on behalf of the organizations he was involved with. As a great orator and rhetorician, his skills were often employed in order to promote foreign mission work. The epigraph of this chapter, given at the 1914 SVM convention, illustrated how, several years after his role in the WMC, his ideas had largely remained unchanged. His speeches continued to portray a sense of urgency, opportunity,

¹⁶ John R. Mott, *The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions* (New York: SVM, 1910), vi.

¹⁷ John R. Mott, "The Continuation Committee," *The International Review of Missions* (January, 1912), reprinted in *Addresses and Papers of John R. Mott*, Vol. 5, *The International Missionary Council* (New York: Association Press, 1947), 61.

duty, and obligation for Protestant churches to put their best efforts into evangelizing parts of the world whose peoples did not yet belong to them.

In addition to traveling, he continued to publish books and articles written for the purpose of promoting foreign mission work. Most of the themes discussed in chapter two in relation to the Watchword of the SVM continued unchanged in his speeches and writings, but some of his focus began to shift, either influenced by his involvement with the WMC or in response to major world conflicts and political changes. The most notable addition to his thoughts concerned the racial question. In books published in 1910 and 1915, he criticized racial prejudice within Christianity in South Africa, a problem increasingly being recognized within the missionary movement at that time.¹⁸ In a speech delivered in 1926, Mott recognized race and nationalism as issues of “world-wide interest, and world-wide concern.”¹⁹ In Mott’s earlier writings, race was largely overlooked. His goal was one Christian family, and as a white man raised in America, race was not an issue that demanded much of his attention when promoting the evangelization of the world. After the WMC, he began to see how destructive racial prejudice was to the evangelical goal his ideas and words relied on. Whether or not this was in response to conversations with colonial subjects present at the predominantly North American and Protestant European Conference, or to his witness of events in foreign mission fields while

¹⁸ Mott, *Decisive Hour*, 30-33; John R. Mott, *The Present World Situation* (New York: SVM, 1915), 69. Several articles appeared on Christianity in South Africa in *The East and the West* during the same time period. British Christians were more sympathetic to South Africans than Dutch Reformed Christians, who later became apologists for Apartheid.

¹⁹ John R. Mott, “‘The Race Problem,’ Address at the Australian Missionary Conference, Melbourne, 12 April, 1926,” in *Addresses and Papers of John R. Mott*, Vol. 5, *The International Missionary Council* (New York: Association Press, 1947), 608.

on tour with the Continuation Committee, cannot be determined at this point in my research.

What is known, however, is that the major themes prevalent in Mott's ideas and the Conference's documents, the call for unity and the need to evangelize the world, continued in Mott's career well after the close of the WMC. As he told an audience at the UFCS Assembly Hall in 1930, "I come to you from journeys which have kept me moving among the nations in obedience with the vision which broke upon me in this hall twenty years ago, at the World Missionary Conference, and has commanded me ever since."²⁰ Part of that vision was for world evangelization, something he still understood as both possible within the present generation and as an immediate obligation for Christians decades after the close of the WMC.²¹ Another part of the vision was the call for unity, from which sprung the Protestant ecumenical movement in the twentieth century.²² In it, he was a key figure, for which he was rewarded with a Nobel Peace Prize in 1946;²³ a movement other mission historians have described as having its roots in Edinburgh in 1910.²⁴

²⁰ John R. Mott, "'The Present World Situation,' Address at the Meeting of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1930," in *Addresses and Papers of John R. Mott*, Vol. 6, *Selected Papers and Addresses on Evangelistic, Spiritual, and Ecumenical Subjects, and the Outreach of Life and Influence* (New York: Association Press, 1947), 237-8.

²¹ John R. Mott, *The Larger Evangelism: The Sam P. Jones Lectures at Emory University, 1944* (New York and Nashville, TN: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1944), 79-83.

²² John R. Mott, "Edinburgh, Jerusalem, and Madras," *The International Review of Missions* (July, 1938), Reprinted in *Addresses and Papers of John R. Mott*, Vol. 5, *The International Missionary Council* (New York: Association Press, 1947), 657.

²³ Robert C. Mackie, *Layman Extraordinary: John R. Mott, 1865-1955* (London: Association Press, 1965), 12; "John R. Mott – Biography," [<http://nobelprize.org/peace/laureates/1946/mott-bio.html>].

²⁴ Goodall, J. E. Lesslie Newbegin, W. A. Visser 't Hooft, and D. T. Niles, eds. *A Decisive Hour for the Christian Mission: The East Asia Conference 1959 and the John R. Mott Memorial Lectures* (London: SCM Press, 1960), 9-10; Robert C. Mackie, *Layman Extraordinary: John R. Mott, 1865-1955* (London: Association Press, 1965), 12; Roger Hedlund, *Roots of the Great Debate in*

Keeping the WMC Alive: The Continuation Committee

It has been demonstrated in this thesis that the World Missionary Conference was an outcome of Edwardian missionary introspection. The very holding of the Conference was an expression of Edwardian Protestant ecumenism. Thus, the final embodiment of the WMC, the International Missionary Council established in 1921, was an idea that had been promoted in missionary circles and literature well before the twentieth century began.²⁵

At the WMC, members of dozens of denominations gathered together in a consultative body to concentrate their attention on how to better carry out their work. It was promoted as a non-legislative conference to draw support of episcopal churches. While it was not originally intended to become a continuing organization, that is what it became under Mott's influence.²⁶ Thanks to the successful atmosphere of unity surrounding the first week of deliberations, the presentation of Commission VIII, on "Co-Operation and the Promotion of Unity," was moved ahead of two other commissions in the second week. Nearing the conclusion of its discussions at the afternoon conference, Mott put its seven recommendations for an international board, which would perpetuate the WMC's interests and continue the work begun by its commissions, to a vote.²⁷ As *The*

Mission: Mission in Historical and Theological Perspective (Bangalore, India: Theological Book Trust, 1997), ix, 33-4, 55-56.

²⁵ Arthur T. Pierson, *The Crisis of Missions* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1886), 355-7. Pierson called for a "World's Missionary Council," and stated it was an idea based on twenty-five years of experience meeting with those involved in the missionary movement.

²⁶ Joseph H. Oldham, "Reminisces of Dr. Mott," in Robert C. Mackie, *Laymen Extraordinary: John R. Mott, 1865-1955* (London: Association Press, 1965), 106-7.

²⁷ *WMC* v. 8: 129, 146-7; *WMC* v. 9: 25-6, 134-5. The seven goals of the Continuation Committee, as proposed by Commission VIII, included: continuing work begun with the WMC in

Times reported the following day, "The resolution was carried without a dissentient voice amid great cheering, which was followed by the singing of the Doxology."²⁸ The delegates had unanimously approved the formation of a Continuation Committee to perpetuate ecumenical work begun with the WMC.

The thirty-five delegates selected for the Continuation Committee of the World Missionary Conference met for three days immediately following the close of the conference. During the meetings, familiar figures in the organization of the WMC were given top positions: John Mott was elected chairman, Eugene Stock of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and Julius Richter became vice-chairman, and Joseph H. Oldham was asked to be the full-time secretary. The committee selected nine topics to be researched before meeting again in London the following year. After that, it was to meet biannually.²⁹

At the meeting in 1911, Mott was asked to tour the major foreign mission fields in the world, meeting with small groups of roughly fifty representatives of the local missionary endeavor, and gathering information to be studied by the Continuation Committee. He agreed, and spent the next two years meeting with local foreign missionaries and native church leaders in cities in India, Burma,

the interest of coordinating missionary work; to finish unfinished research on behalf of the eight commissions; to consider holding another WMC, and to plan one if needed; to make plans for continued correspondence among international missionary bodies, through literature or other means; to work closely with mission boards and societies, and offer advice or suggestions; to work with the same organizations in the possible establishment of an international missionary body; and to form special committees, similar to the eight formed for the WMC, to deal with suggestions arising from the reports of the eight commissions.

²⁸ "The World Missionary Conference: Co-Operation Among Churches," *The Times*, 22 June, 1910, 6.

²⁹ *WMC v. 9*: 134-5. Among the members were ten Britons, ten Americans, ten Europeans, one white Australian, one white South African, one Japanese, one Chinese, and one Indian.

Malaysia, China, Korea, and Japan.³⁰ Notably absent from the list of the twenty-one cities where conferences were held was any location in Africa. These conferences, largely driven by the expressed desire for comity and unity, were primarily fact-finding visits designed to gain a better understanding of the state of foreign mission work in specific areas.³¹ By continuing ecumenical work begun at the WMC, the committee members present at the conferences, under Mott's leadership, tried to identify areas of practical work that could be consolidated among missions of different societies and denominations. Their primary goal was to find and offer suggestions for ways to establish concrete unification in the field.³²

The holding of these conferences, though, had another important effect. As noted, each conference had both foreign missionaries and local indigenous church leaders present. Thus, through the representation of indigenous Christianity, these conferences were able to do what the WMC had not in listening to the younger churches. Even though Africa was overlooked, Mott and his companions provided an opportunity for the Native Church to speak by taking the work of the WMC out of Edinburgh to foreign mission fields in parts of the world then recognized as awakening.

What the younger churches had to say at the conferences was not unified, nor was it necessarily global in scope. What follows are examples of the

³⁰ *The Continuation Committee Conferences in Asia 1912-1913: A Brief Account of the Conferences Together with Their Findings and Lists of Members* (New York: The Chairman of the Continuation Committee, 1913), 9-11.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 471-4. Eight sets of questions were addressed to each group of missionaries on topics similar to those put forth to the correspondents of the eight commissions.

³² Charles H. Robinson, *History of Christian Missions*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), 506. Robinson noted that this work helped to focus the attention of missionaries on finding solutions to common problems.

localized voices heard at the conferences. The tour began in lands officially under British colonial occupation, in India, Burma, and Malaysia. Bombay wanted more funding for young men and women interested in university education.³³ Jubbulpore called for more emphasis “on aggressive evangelism, both by missionaries and by Indian agents...”³⁴ Allahabad wanted more services to the large numbers of deaf and blind in its region.³⁵ Lahore stated, “Greater freedom in the forms of worship and organization, as demanded by Indian opinion, should be allowed to congregations.”³⁶ Calcutta called for more Indian autonomy in church affairs.³⁷ Rangoon, Burma did not want to change the predominantly Western liturgy already in use.³⁸ Singapore, Malaysia could not agree on whether missionary teachers should be trained at Christian schools or by the colonial government.³⁹

Similarly localized voices were expressed as the tour continued in the Chinese Empire, free in name from Western colonization. Canton wanted a Bible with text in parallel columns of Mandarin and Wenli.⁴⁰ Shanghai wished for a

³³ *Continuation Committee*, 49-50. More cooperation was suggested among different denominations in order to provide more college and university level education.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 59. This was to be a cooperative campaign among denominations to the nearly 80,000 villages.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 71-2. 27,125 deaf persons in the region were without any school; 105,722 blind persons only had two institutions available.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 89-90. This was followed by the suggestion of forming an interdenominational committee to find methods on how to develop self-support and the withdrawal of foreign control.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 106-7. After the suggestion to advance the cessation of foreign control, four suggestions were made on the cultivating of Indian leaders: training boys and girls early in responsibilities, giving as many tasks to young men and women in mission work as possible, assigning positions of responsibility “to Indians and Europeans on the basis of personal qualifications without distinction of race,” and giving village or mass movement leaders roles as Christian leaders.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 159. This was “given expression to by both native and foreign delegates present...”

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 176-7. Because of the disagreement, the conference suggested three of the delegates visit with the (British) Government of the Straits Settlement to discuss the issue further.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 204-5. This was part of the suggestion for Bible Societies to make vernacular translations of the Bible accessible to the largest number of classes possible.

lending library and correspondence school for its ministers.⁴¹ Tsinanfu recognized there were enough Chinese young women wanting to become involved in the medical field to merit local training for them.⁴² Peking called for an increase in various forms of Christian literature in Chinese languages.⁴³ Hankow noted the success of private study and prayer meetings between ministers and laymen of different denominations, evidence of local initiatives within the larger campaign for Chinese unification.⁴⁴ Moukden called for better outreach to Korean immigrants in Manchuria.⁴⁵

The tour of Continuation Committee conferences were completed in the Japanese Empire. Seoul called for an expansion of Christian literature written in Korean, most likely an expression of indigenous Christians wishing to maintain their language in the face of Japanese colonization.⁴⁶ Tokyo concluded the series of conferences, and provided the clearest voice of the Native Church in the holding of a conference unlike any other: of the three conferences held in Tokyo, one was explicitly for Japanese leaders. Among other topics, they discussed funding a Continuation Committee of Japan, fostering respect for Christian ministry among young people, increasing the salaries of Christian

⁴¹ Ibid., 226-7. Chinese ministers could not afford large personal libraries and wanted to continue their studies while carrying out pastoral duties.

⁴² Ibid., 262-3. Chinese women were to be trained as both physicians and nurses.

⁴³ Ibid., 283-6. The beginning of the discussion on literate read, "In view of the changes connected with China's revolution, the governing classes, the students and people generally are laying increasing emphasis upon literature, eagerly seeking all new thought and are making zealous efforts to search into and set forth the tenets of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and Mohammedanism."

⁴⁴ Ibid., 301. These helped promote "a cordial mutual understanding."

⁴⁵ Ibid., 371. To do so, it was suggested that Manchurians contact American and Canadian Presbyterian missionaries in Korea.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 395-6. Large amounts of Chinese and Japanese literature were circulating in Korea. "The simplicity of the Korean language and its native script, together with its adaptability for all kinds of literature, renders it the finest vehicle in the Far East for the expression of thought."

workers, changing the unsatisfactory standing of Christian education, working toward unity, and increasing opportunities for education abroad.⁴⁷

This sampling of issues addressed by members of the younger churches at the Continuation Committee conferences in 1912 and 1913 demonstrate the practical nature of the missionary enterprise in its local expressions. No single voice representing the Native Church in Asia was heard. Instead, what largely concerned native church leaders were practical issues that would better enable them to carry out their work. Opinions on issues such as the cultural appropriation of liturgy, the desire for unification among denominations, or ways and means of removing foreign missionaries, differed. However, the very fact that native ministers were present as delegates on an equal standing with foreign missionaries at the conferences was a realization of Mott and Oldham's original goal for the WMC. They had desired more representatives of the younger churches to be present at the WMC, but as it was the mission boards and societies who had selected the delegates, less than two dozen had traveled to Edinburgh. The Continuation Committee's conferences in 1912 and 1913 corrected the error by providing a better opportunity for indigenous Christians to speak. The knowledge they shared at the conferences was localized and practical, but it helped demonstrate their competency in the missionary enterprise.

In addition to perpetuating the work of the WMC and listening to the voice of indigenous Christians, Mott's conferences had another effect. The WMC was an event that lasted only ten days. Its planning and promotion lasted two years,

⁴⁷ Ibid., 430, 432, 433, 435-8, 440. Medical missions were not discussed at this conference.

but after its conclusion, those belonging to its Continuation Committee had to find ways to sustain interest in the work of a Conference that belonged to the past. Along with the actual meetings of the committee in Edinburgh in 1910, London in 1911, New York in 1912, and The Hague, Holland, in 1913, the conferences Mott conducted in foreign mission fields in 1912 and 1913 turned the work of the Continuation Committee into news for the secular press at home, keeping awareness of the WMC and its Continuation Committee alive among the general public.⁴⁸ In addition, members of the committee worked to perpetuate interest within missionary circles by writing articles about their work in missionary publications, speaking at missionary events, and publishing a new missionary journal, the *International Review of Missions*.⁴⁹ All of these efforts helped to continue the work begun at the WMC in the hope of inspiring others to accept and pursue Christian unity.⁵⁰

In terms of twentieth century missiology, an important outcome of the Continuation Committee lay in its efforts in keeping dialogue open among different branches of Protestant Christianity after the conclusion of the WMC. By continuing to investigate questions and concerns put forth at the Conference, the Continuation Committee helped perpetuate the spirit of comity by keeping

⁴⁸ "Visited Many Missions: Messrs. McBee and Mott Soon to Return Here After Successful Tour," *New York Times*, 11 May 1911, C3. The actual meetings of the Continuation Committee in Edinburgh in 1910, London in 1911, New York in 1912, and Holland in 1913 were also covered by the press.

⁴⁹ Louise Creighton, "The Continuation Committee of the Edinburgh Conference," *E&W* 11 (1913): 281-9; Charles H. Robinson, "Editorial Notes: The International Review of Missions," *E&W* 10 (1912): 93.

⁵⁰ Roland Allen, *Essential Missionary Principles* (New York and Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1913), 147. For example, Allen was astonished by the unity of the conferences held in India as reported in the Continuation Committee's journal.

administrators of mission boards and societies in contact with each other.⁵¹

Through their efforts, they also helped continue the tradition of Edwardian missionary introspection. In addition, by sending Mott and his companions to the foreign mission field to interview those who managed its everyday work, the voice of indigenous Christians, largely absent at the WMC in Edinburgh, was not only heard, but actively sought: both foreign and native missionaries were present at the twenty-one conferences.⁵²

Missionary Literature in Response to, and Following, Edinburgh 1910

The World Missionary Conference marked the peak of missionary interest and enthusiasm in the early twentieth century. The publication of missionary books and text-books had flourished in the generation leading up the WMC, but began to decline after it concluded. Those involved in the missionary endeavor pointed to the Conference for years as the pinnacle of collected intelligence on their work, and few openly criticized its findings. The reports of the WMC were accepted as the authoritative or standard interpretation of missionary issues of the day, and as a result of their perceived value, fewer missionary books were published in the years following the Conference. Instead, those involved in the missionary enterprise had a handsome set of nine red-covered volumes to consult for accurate missionary information.

⁵¹ Caroline Atwater Mason, *World Missions and World Peace: A Study of Christ's Conquest* (West Medford, Mass.: The Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions, 1916), 258.

⁵² *Continuation Committee*, 11. While most of the material in the volume consisted of short statements on practical Church issues, such as requirements for baptism or the training of catechumens, some of the opinions native pastors on issues like cooperation and Church unity were also recorded. Their opinions varied from place to place, showing the futility of making generalizations about pastors raised and working in lands not historically Christian.

The publication of the WMC volumes did not bring an end to missionary literature. Some missionary texts produced after the WMC were clearly written in response to issues it had raised,⁵³ and missionary journals continued to address current events of value to their readers. Overall, though, the wave of general missionary books and articles dissipated in the four short years between the WMC and World War I. In light of heightened international tensions and rising anti-colonialism around the world, though, some authors found that there were still important themes to be discussed that the WMC had not closed.

Following trends set in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century texts, missionary advocates continued to stress the theme of the evangelical duty of all Christians and promote the optimistic Watchword of the SVM, the “Evangelization of the World in This Generation.”⁵⁴ Writers gave classic summaries of Christian history over its first eighteen hundred years in order to celebrate Protestant efforts undertaken in its nineteenth.⁵⁵ Authors recognized signs of changing world political situations and promoted Christianity as a corrective to both rising tensions and the evils introduced to colonized societies

⁵³ William Herbert Perry Faunce, *The Social Aspects of Foreign Missions* (New York: Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1914), 28, 44, 109, 272; Pickett, *Modern Missionary Crisis*, iv-v; Robinson, *History*, 499, 506; Stephen S. Thomas, “Co-operation for the Promotion of Unity – A History,” *E&W* 8 (1910), 448-53. Some authors used the authoritative reports of the commissions as the basis of their claims, such as Faunce and Robinson. Pickett, a delegate present at the Conference, was inspired to write a tract on world evangelization and Protestant unity. Thomas, also a delegate, wrote a response to Commission VIII’s report on cooperation and unity, stressing the need for limited cooperation that still respected doctrinal denominational differences.

⁵⁴ Robert E. Speer, “The Evangelization of the World in This Generation,” *Students and the World-Wide Expansion of Christianity: Addresses Delivered Before the Seventh International Convention of the SVM, Kansas City, Missouri, December 31, 1913, to January 4, 1914* (New York: SVM, 1914), 85.

⁵⁵ Edward Caldwell Moore, *The Spread of Christianity in the Modern World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1919), 5-250. Moore’s book was based on a series of lectures delivered in 1913, but its publication was delayed because of World War I. Other books used in this chapter with publication dates after 1914 had similar histories.

by Western civilization.⁵⁶ Others continued to paint a romantic image of missionaries in an effort to inspire others to undertake their work.⁵⁷ In response to criticisms of the missionary endeavor, apologists perpetuated the importance of missionary work as an agent of Western civilization.⁵⁸

In addition to the continuation of earlier missionary attitudes in the literature were signs of Edwardian debate. The theme of unity and comity among missionaries of different denominations before and after the Conference has already been treated in this chapter. What once drew very little support at the beginning of the Edwardian era became an anticipated reality, in varying degrees, by the end of it.

Missionary attitudes on imperialism before and after the Conference were not as openly expressed as those concerning ecumenism. While some authors accepted rising nationalist movements, others defended imperialism.⁵⁹ However, open defenses were no longer as prevalent among missionary writers as they once were in the opening years of the twentieth century. One American author criticized Christians for defending the British Empire and expressed a hope that

⁵⁶ Faunce, *Social Aspects*, v, 63; A. J. MacDonald, *Trade Politics and Christianity in Africa and the East*. (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1916), 4, 6; Mott, *Present World*, 118.

⁵⁷ Pickett, *Modern Missionary Crisis*, 121.

⁵⁸ Isaac Taylor Headlund, *Some By-Products of Missions* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1912); H. H. Johnson, "The Value to the World of Christian Missions," *E&W* 10 (1912), 241-5; MacDonald, *Trade Politics*, 53; Joseph Ernest McAfee, *World Missions from the Home Base: A Group of Addresses and Papers* (New York, Chicago, Toronto, London and Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell, 1911), 22, 97. Headlund's entire book was a series of events he credited to Christianity and mission work; the other authors extolled Christianity for its contributions to world civilizations.

⁵⁹ Faunce, *Social Aspects*, 63; MacDonald, *Trade Politics*, 55-6. Faunce did not openly criticize imperialism, but subtly supported nationalism. MacDonald openly supported imperialism, arguing missionaries should be apprised of and work to aid colonial policies, observing, "The extension of empire is an extension of religion."

Christianity could be separated from political questions.⁶⁰ Most authors, though, simply avoided the subject of imperialism. Instead of upsetting the political norm of their time, they chose to remain silent on the issue of the domination of one people or group of peoples over other peoples.

As with imperialism, a wide range of opinions appeared in the treatment of race by contemporaries of the Conference. Speaking of Africans on the eve of World War I, one author promoted the idea of racial hierarchy, claiming, “The majority of the inhabitants of this continent are more backward, and from a social and intellectual point of view less developed than are those of any other continent.”⁶¹ Another, also writing on the eve of the war, claimed, “Biology and sociology point to the superiority of the Caucasian or white races over the coloured races...” and “a great biological gulf exists between the white Caucasian and the Negro.”⁶² Such authors worked to perpetuate conventional ideas about racial hierarchy and superiority just before the outbreak of World War I.

However, discussions of the Native Church demonstrated that the racial ideas of such authors were no longer the norm in the years following the WMC. Instead of ignoring it, a few missionary authors began to address the reality of the indigenous Church in West Africa. Some, such as *The East and the West's* editor, Charles Robinson, did so while continuing to express racist opinions. He recognized the Native Church in various regions of West Africa, and then quickly

⁶⁰ Allen, *Essential Missionary Principles*, 91-7.

⁶¹ Robinson, *History*, 277. He perpetuated the world-view where some races were more intellectually and socially advanced than others. Europeans were at the top of his racial order and Africans were at the bottom. To him, races were separate, permanent categories.

⁶² MacDonald, *Trade Politics*, 242, 270.

belittled it.⁶³ Discussing Yoruba, he curiously described almost twenty-five years of work as beginning: “The Anglican churches in Lagos and district are no longer connected with any missionary society, but are beginning to support missionary work on their own account.”⁶⁴ Robinson saw the CMS Niger Mission as a potential case study, one that had “a special interest for all students of Missions,”⁶⁵ but didn’t approve of its outcome. Instead, he excused the decision to give authority to West Africans as rooted in the harsh climate of the region for white missionaries, then criticized Bishop Crowther’s leadership and ability to keep his subordinates in line with their employer.⁶⁶ Another author followed a similar strategy in order to argue that what he saw as the failure of missions, which in reality was only the establishment of mission-free churches, was due to Crowther’s weak leadership and the poor moral character of the inhabitants of the Lower Niger region.⁶⁷ These authors, while still holding old racist understandings, realized they could no longer ignore the existing independent indigenous churches when discussing Christianity in West Africa. However, they could not accept the legitimacy and success of the native Church because of

⁶³ Robinson, *History*, 288-9. Speaking of Sierra Leone, the author stated, “Both the Anglican and Methodist missions have developed into what are practically independent churches. The moral character of the Christians connected with all the missions leaves very much to be desired; the tendency of the Christians is to imitate the dress and the social habits of Europeans, whilst making little attempt to imitate the character which they have acquired as a result of long centuries of Christian education.” Speaking of Liberia, he observed, “The Liberians have not attempted to evangelize their heathen fellow-countrymen, but some good work has been done...” by white British and American missionaries.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 295.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 296. “It embodied a serious attempt, which was persevered in for nearly half a century, to establish a branch of the Christian Church in tropical Africa through the instrumentality of Africans and with a minimum of European supervision.”

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 296-7.

⁶⁷ Moore, *Spread of Christianity*, 266.

their racial views. Instead, they recognized them, then criticized them and portrayed them as failures.

These authors' recognition of the indigenous Church in West Africa, rooted in old racist assumptions, showed they were living in a time of changing opinions. The very fact of successful independent churches in West Africa, the land home to people supposedly belonging to the lowest races, undermined their racial paradigm. Instead of rejecting old beliefs in light of the evidence, they allowed their racial understanding to distort their image of the native Church. After the WMC, though, a few other authors were able to not only recognize the existence of native Churches, but to call for a quicker removal of foreign missionaries. Their words, reflecting ideas spoken by Rev. Azariah at the WMC, were free from the racist opinions that hindered the ability of some of their contemporaries to accept the future of foreign mission work.

Eugene Stock, former Editorial Secretary of the CMS and one of two vice chairmen of the WMC Continuation Committee, was clearly a follower of Henry Venn's missionary model. Stock was of the opinion that not only should converts quickly be trained as pastors, but that a native episcopate should become a primary goal in the early period of evangelizing a particular area. He reminded those who may have forgotten that the stated goal of the missionary enterprise was, after all, the establishment of a stable Christian community free of outside missionaries. Addressing West Africa, he lamented the fact that Crowther had been replaced by a Briton instead of a Yoruban after his death.⁶⁸ He also criticized the way his contemporaries tended to use the word "native" as a noun,

⁶⁸ Eugene Stock, "The Future of Native Churches," *E&W* 9 (1911), 248-54.

commenting, “We use the word ‘native’ with curious inaccuracy, as if it only belonged to coloured races...”⁶⁹ Unlike the authors already discussed, Stock was able to view the results of the policies of his own missionary society in West Africa in a positive light. Furthermore, he criticized the expressed racial overtones used by his contemporaries and called for the continued release of autonomy from foreign missionaries to their local Christian brothers.

Another author, one who had visited Asia and Africa, also called for an increase in constructive policies to hasten the removal of missionaries foreign to a particular society. Echoing Rev. Azariah’s speech at the WMC, he argued that, if foreign missionaries did not make it clear to the local populations that they did not intend to stay indefinitely, such an omission could only lead to distrust, tension, and hostility.⁷⁰ He also proposed the setting of concrete goals and agendas by missionary societies to be used to determine and recognize the appropriate time for releasing control from foreign to native missionaries.⁷¹ In addition, his ideas directly built on the institution of the WMC. He recognized an opportunity for policy changes in the spirit of unity projected by the WMC and its Continuation Committee. Through the very cooperation between missions of different denominations that they enabled, he hoped the dialogue would lead to better policies for building indigenous churches.⁷² His ideas, instead of continuing the belief in racial superiority, demonstrated an acceptance of the need to implement the stated goal of the missionary endeavor. Calling for an

⁶⁹ Ibid., 241.

⁷⁰ “Coming Away from the Mission Field,” *E&W* 10 (1912), 206-13.

⁷¹ Ibid., 211-12.

⁷² Ibid., 210. Showing how optimistic he was because of the WMC’s work, he said, “The present would, therefore, appear to be the moment of unparalleled opportunity in the history of Missions.”

end to the prolonged control of mission-begun faith communities by foreign agents, part of his suggestions for the implementation of his goal were built on the ecumenical dialogue initiated at the WMC and perpetuated by its Continuation Committee. In his treatment of the Native Church, he offered evidence not only of the rethinking of old assumptions during the Edwardian era, but of the influence of the WMC in that questioning.

The themes discussed in this section situate the WMC as both an effect of missionary introspection and an instigator of new ideas during the Edwardian era. As seen in the last two chapters, ideas contained in the documents of the WMC showed signs that old assumptions were being reworked by members of various commissions and those who spoke at their presentations. At the same time, some themes, ones which formed the basis of the missionary endeavor itself, remained unchallenged. In this section, similar processes were observed in subsequent missionary literature produced before World War I. Themes providing the justification of the missionary enterprise remained largely unchanged for most authors, as did old assumptions on imperialism and race for some authors. Others, however, were able to reject old ideas and recognize the need to implement the stated goal of the missionary enterprise: the successful conversion, in the historically non-Christian regions of the world, of populations large enough to perpetuate the work of evangelization, free from foreign control.

Conclusion

Contemporaries saw the World Missionary Conference as a successful event, one highly important to the history of Christianity. The Continuation Committee carried on the ecumenical work begun at the Conference. John Mott spent the rest of his career trying to build bridges between different denominations, all for the greater goal of evangelizing the world. Because of the high acclaim given to the WMC by those involved in missionary work at the time, its volumes of research were accepted as definitive sources on missionary topics. As such, missionary literature decreased after the Conference. However, those who continued to write about the missionary enterprise in the years between the Conference and the war reflected a reworking of old ideas and the development of new ones.

With all of the changing ideas and attitudes evident in missionary literature produced before, during, and after the Conference, it is safe to say that the WMC was part of a wide, mutually influencing dialogue. The WMC was so closely tied to the very introspection driving the missionary endeavor during the early twentieth century that it was both an outcome of processes begun in the nineteenth century and an instigator of ecumenical initiatives undertaken in the twentieth. Thanks to this congruity, the World Missionary Conference can be viewed as an event representative of missionary attitudes of the Edwardian era. This time of reworking ideas did not last, though. The work begun at, and the optimism driving, the WMC in 1910 was dramatically interrupted four years later.

The fourth meeting of the Continuation Committee was scheduled for Oxford in 1914.⁷³ It never met. When the nations of its members went to war with each other, an emergency committee of eight British and American members was formed instead.⁷⁴ After the war, their work would form the basis of the International Missionary Council, but during the war, the outlook of global Protestant ecumenism, or even foreign mission work, no longer enjoyed the optimism Edwardians once held for it. The war diverted and displaced the passion driving “The Evangelization of the World in This Generation.” As one writer stated during the war, “From the headquarters of mission after mission comes the lament over the fruits of decades of patient labor menaced with ruin.”⁷⁵ The great century of Protestant missionary expansion had closed.

⁷³ Mason, *World Missions*, 258

⁷⁴ John R. Mott, “Proposal for the Organization of the Emergency Committee of Co-operating Missions, 4 April, 1918,” in *Addresses and Papers of John R. Mott*, Vol. 5, *The International Missionary Council* (New York: Association Press, 1947), 218.

⁷⁵ Mason, *World Missions*, 247.

CHAPTER SIX

Epilogue and Conclusion

In 1972, a number of those involved in the Protestant missionary movement began calling for a world conference to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the World Missionary Conference (WMC) of 1910.¹ They wanted the gathering to be the largest, most representative gathering of mission leaders in history. Thus, in 1980, missionary advocates gathered once again in Edinburgh, Scotland for a world conference. However, 1980's World Consultation on Frontier Missions fell short of its goal.

Edinburgh 1910 began a century of world evangelical conferences, each important in its own way in terms of twentieth century Protestant ecumenism. By 1980, such conferences had become commonplace. That year, not one, but three international evangelical conferences were held. Of the three, Edinburgh 1980 is the least known.² What was intended to reproduce the enthusiasm, widespread support, knowledge, and interdenominational dialogue demonstrated at the 1910 WMC instead produced very little. Instead of more than thirteen

¹ Ralph D. Winter, "The 'Third Call' for Global Networking: Precarious Milestones to 1980," Article in *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 4 (1980), [http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/20_2%20PDFs/15%20Winter_Milestones.pdf]; Allan Starling, ed., *Seeds of Promise: World Consultation on Frontier Missions, Edinburgh '80* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981), 17. While the idea for the consultation dates to 1972, most of its planning did not happen until 1978 and 1979.

² Roger Hedlund, *Roots of the Great Debate in Mission: Mission in Historical and Theological Perspective* (Bangalore, India: Theological Book Trust, 1997), 407-9.

hundred delegates, two hundred and sixty-four attended.³ Instead of close to two weeks of daily meetings structured around discussions of eight topical commission reports, four speakers delivered key speeches at the four-day consultation.⁴ Instead of nine volumes of extensive research on the state of global evangelism, a small, paper-back copy containing comparatively little information about the consultation and its proceedings was published a year after its conclusion.⁵ Instead of day-to-day accounts of daily events appearing in major British and American newspapers, the consultation was ignored.⁶

Nonetheless, Edinburgh 1980 paralleled Edinburgh 1910 in a few ways. The watchword driving the 1910 conference, “The Evangelization of the World in This Generation,” was reworded in 1980 as “A Church for Every People by the Year 2000.”⁷ Global Christianity had not been realized, but it was still hoped that world evangelization could take place within the next generation. In addition, 1910 convened to discuss the missionary endeavor in non-Christian lands and included a number of discussions on peoples not yet reached by Protestant missionaries. 1980 focused on missionary frontiers, fields containing the unevangelized, hidden peoples of the world.⁸ Again, a hope for those attending the WMC had not been attained seventy years later, despite the continuation of increased contact between societies around the world. In addition, members of Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christianity were not invited in 1910 or in

³ Starling, *Seeds of Promise*, 3.

⁴ Winter, “Precarious Milestones.” The consultation was held 27 October to 1 November, 1980.

⁵ *Seeds of Promise*. It is hard to find information like the dates of the consultation, information on delegates, the daily schedule, and the content of debates on the floor using this book.

⁶ *The Times*, *The Irish Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Los Angeles Times* were consulted.

⁷ Starling, *Seeds of Promise*, 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*

1980.⁹ Finally, the planners of the WMC had desired to make the Conference representative of the Protestant Christian Church. The size of a particular missionary society determined how many delegates it could send; who it sent was at its discretion. Thus, less than two dozen delegates came to Edinburgh from places outside North America and Protestant Europe. In 1980, the goal again was to make the consultation representative of the world Protestant community. Through its choice of delegates, though, over a third came from nations outside of North America and Protestant Europe.¹⁰ Thus, 1980 came closer to a plurality not seen in 1910.

However, even with this accomplishment in terms of representation, the 1980 World Consultation on Frontier Missions was not as well-organized, promoted, or executed as the 1910 World Missionary Conference. Missionary leaders at that time were either tired of world conferences, or had their attention on the other two conferences held that year. Twenty-five years later, an international meeting was held to plan an international conference to take place in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 2010 in celebration of the centenary of the WMC. This conference, like the WMC of 1910, will be organized around the findings of eight commissions, but will include a greater plurality of the Christian Church, including Roman Catholic and possibly Eastern Orthodox representatives.¹¹ In addition, it

⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3. The delegates included 24 from Africa, 69 from Asia, 9 from Latin America, 40 from Great Britain, 84 from the United States, 3 from Canada, and 35 from Europe.

¹¹ "The Centenary of 'Edinburgh 1910' and the Direction of Christian Mission in the 21st Century," [http://www.sedos.org/ed_2010.doc]. The eight proposed commissions are: "Good News to Share! Inspirations and Foundations for Mission," "Christian Mission in Relation to/among Other Faiths," "Mission and Postmodernities," "Mission and Power," "The Agency of Mission: Forms of Missionary Engagement," "Theological Education and Formation," "Development of Christian Communities in Contemporary Contexts," and "Mission Spirituality for the Kingdom of God." In

will not favor North America and Protestant Europe, but will have an “intentional bias to the South, recognizing that Christianity’s centre of gravity has moved markedly southwards during the past century. The process will aim to be truly worldwide in its scope.”¹²

Conclusion

The World Missionary Conference was the first major conference to include representatives of both evangelical and episcopal denominations from several countries for the purpose of studying the Protestant missionary endeavor in foreign fields as a whole. It was promoted as the most representative missionary conference to date and included a large number of well-known North American and European figures in Protestant Christianity of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Those involved in the missionary enterprise anticipated the WMC as a major event within the greater agenda of world evangelization, one that would become a landmark event for Protestant Christianity.

In the years preceding the Conference, those involved in the missionary enterprise contributed to a large body of missionary literature and participated in numerous conferences. A number of themes emerged in the literature they left behind. Missionary writers tried to defend or legitimize the missionary endeavor in the face of a changing world, an enterprise driven by the goal of the

addition, a number of themes will run through all of the commissions: “Women and Mission,” “Reconciliation,” “Contextualization,” “Authentic Discipleship,” and “Subaltern Voices.”

¹² “Thursday, September 15, 2005: Towards Edinburgh 2010,” [http://biblestudiesandmission.blogspot.com].

“Evangelization of the World in This Generation.” In terms of race and empire, most gave paternalistic support to colonization, but attitudes on race varied. Some ascribed to the late nineteenth-century idea of hard racial categories; others rejected racial hierarchy and called for Christian brotherhood among its adherents. Tied to the racial debate were ideas on the development of the Native Church as promised by the Venn model. Two themes central to the Conference, unity and cooperation, were also debated in missionary literature antedating the WMC. Thus, the opening years of the twentieth century were a time in which a number of issues were being either debated or continued without challenge by writers contributing to Edwardian missionary literature.

Well before it convened, the WMC’s eight commissions began work that would add to this body of missionary literature by spending considerable time researching topics the organizers selected as the most important issues facing the Church. The “treasure of information”¹³ collected in the nine volumes were intended for foreign missionaries overseas, the missionary administrators working in home offices, and serious students of foreign mission work. Although they were collected as the findings of one conference, the eight reports of the WMC contained a wide range of attitudes on imperialism, from open criticism to open condemnation, with silent or more ambivalent views on either side also in evidence.

In addition, the holding of the WMC flowed from a current of missionary conferences held in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The very act of holding the Conference was a step toward Protestant unity and comity,

¹³ “Enthusiastic over Mission Conference,” *New York Times*, 27 June, 1910, 6.

themes threading through the reports written by its eight commissions. Furthermore, the atmosphere of optimism and urgency surrounding the conference was largely an effect of the personality of John Mott. Heavily involved in its promotion and planning, he then chaired the official proceedings of the WMC, a job, according to many, he executed well.¹⁴

The WMC was promoted as the most representative conference to date of the major missionary organizations. It was not representative of the Protestant Christian community. Dozens of North American and Protestant European mission boards and missionary societies selected its delegates. As a world conference, I had hoped to find West Africans among the Protestant Europeans and North Americans at Edinburgh. However, they were not there. Their voices were silenced.

A number of members of other younger Christian churches, including several from India and Japan, were present, though, and from them came some of the criticisms of Eurocentric and paternalistic attitudes among foreign missionaries working in non-Christian lands. Between them and the overwhelming majority of North American and Protestant European delegates were expressed a wide range of racial views, situating the WMC well within the context of Edwardian missionary attitudes.

¹⁴ "The World Missionary Conference," *The Times*, 25 June, 1910, 11-12. For example, this leading article stated, "The most important of these gatherings, which were held in the spacious Assembly Hall of the UFCS, seem to have owed much to the remarkable personality of the young American whom public opinion designated to the chair. Mr. J. R. Mott is henceforth to be recognised as a born master of assemblies. Himself the product of Cornell University, he has learnt to know men, and to be known, in almost every academic centre in the world."

The commission reports and WMC speakers largely overlooked the existing independent West African churches already in existence for a generation by the time the Conference convened in 1910. While the native churches in West Africa would have provided an important case study for WMC commissions studying better ways to establish self-supporting, self-sustaining, self-propagating churches, they were almost completely ignored in the texts. The reality of independent West African churches did not fit the old racial model for understanding the capabilities of peoples belonging to different cultures. After the WMC, though, this began to change.

Many of the themes present in missionary literature written before the Conference continued largely unchanged between its conclusion and the outbreak of World War I, especially those connected to justification for the missionary endeavor. Output decreased after the WMC, and missionary writers continued to ignore or shy away from criticizing imperialism. The debate on race continued, ranging from the perpetuation of racial categorization to condemnation of it. Missionary writers increasingly recognized the problems that an ideology of racial superiority caused Christian communities, as well as the existence of independent, native churches in non-Christian lands. Mott's 1912 and 1913 conferences in British India and the Chinese and Japanese Empires helped in this process of recognition by giving both voice and credibility to indigenous pastors in those lands.

In addition, the very holding of the WMC evolved from missionary introspection begun in the nineteenth century and, due to its focus on unity, was

largely responsible for beginning Protestant ecumenism in the twentieth. The efforts of the Continuation Committee helped keep dialogue between denominations open. This ecumenical work was interrupted by World War I, but after its conclusion, continued in the form of the International Missionary Council.

The World Missionary Conference of 1910 met with ambitious goals. Although it did much for Protestant ecumenism, it failed to adequately represent or give voice to members of indigenous Christianity in historically non-Christian regions of the world. Nonetheless, because of its congruity with the surrounding missionary literature, it is an important event from which to gauge widespread missionary attitudes during the Edwardian era. Because it supports an interactive model of mission history, situating various regions of the world into relationship with one another, historians should no longer overlook it.

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