

Historical Precedents and Foundations for the GNMS

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The future, of course, is built upon the past. That is why this effort to found the GNMS is deliberately the result of a “Third Call.” That is, we are consciously attempting to put in place the kind of structure which existed before, which blinked out about a third of a century ago, which was reattempted in 1980 unsuccessfully, but which today has more compelling reasons to come into being again than ever before. Let us rehearse an outline of those events.

At Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1910, the famous “Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions,” (SVM) – born almost

25 years earlier – culminated in a world-level meeting of the kind that had been urged 100 years earlier by William Carey for the year 1810. However, it took 100 years for Carey’s “First Call” dream to be fulfilled in 1910. The meeting, finally, at Edinburgh in 1910, then in turn spawned a whole series of follow-through events – the founding in 1914 of the *International Review of Mission* (IRM), in 1921 the formation of the International Missionary Council (IMC), and in 1948 even the World Council of Churches (WCC). Unfortunately, a little over 50 years after 1910, the WCC, by bringing into vote much of the entire world church, obtained the apparent authority to swallow up both the IRM and the IMC, but lacked the wisdom to avoid doing that. When church leaders try to lead mission efforts, the results are not ideal.

All this is to highlight the fact that the vision for global mission, which had energized the 1910 conference, as well as the following IRM and the IMC, was a *minority vision*. It was the initiative of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign

Missions, which, though strong and widespread, had always been the vision of a minority within the world church. Thus, when a world-church body such as the World Council of Churches took over the IMC, the cutting edge of *missionary vision* was dulled and almost completely forgotten in the midst of the many legitimate but internal concerns of a global church movement.

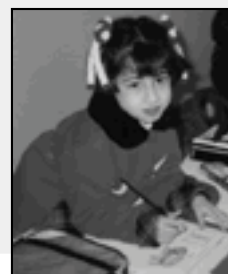
In the light of all this, the “Third Call” for the reestablishment of a global-level association of mission structures focused on both the frontier vision of the 1910 conference

– the “First Call” – and the frontier vision of the second similar

conference at Edinburgh in 1980, the World Consultation on Frontier Missions (the “Second Call”). Unfortunately, Edinburgh 1980 did not quite achieve the re-establishment of a global entity expressing the specific concerns of mission agencies.

By now, however, the idea of specifically mission leaders routinely meeting together both nationally and regionally is a well-established and very helpful activity. It seems obvious that if such meetings have been helpful on the *national* and *regional* levels, they would be of value on the *global* level. The emergence of The Third World Missions Association is already a vibrant example. Its very existence points in the direction of the need for an entity which can specifically express the concerns of the mission structures of the entire world. 🌐

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