From Kuku Hill

Edwin and
Irene Weaver

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Institute of Mennonite Studies

From Kuku Hill

Among Indigenous Churches in West Africa

Edwin and Irene Weaver

Foreword by Eugene A. Nida

Missionary Studies No. 3

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FOREWORD

At a time when many are talking about a "moratorium on missions" and some are shouting "missionary go home!" Edwin and Irene Weaver have written a thrilling account of a new way in which the cause of Jesus Christ may be effectively served by spiritually sensitive and culturally creative individuals who are willing to identify with the needs and dreams of the rapidly growing indigenous churches.

Many persons have discussed and commented on the hundreds of exotic churches which are springing up all over Africa, but no one has written more appreciatively and with deeper insight than the Weavers. This volume is more valuable than an anthropological analysis or a sociological treatise, for it exposes human dimension in a way that most critical treatments completely miss.

This account is a touchingly personal record of the frustrations and victories which the Weavers had in establishing meaningful relations with church leaders and laymen in a number of the churches in Ghana. The experiences in the Church of the Lord, usually called Aladura (meaning "praying people") provide the essential setting for understanding the problems of how leadership develops and operates, how training can be encouraged and carried out, and how the manifestations of the Spirit constitute such a dominant element in the life of these so-called "spiritual churches." Perhaps the greatest value in this fascinating account is the way in which the Weavers have treated the problems of the African prophet – the charismatic leader of the multitudes who look to him for healing, material benefits, and spiritual guidance. In speaking of Prophet Doh, they say that even a prophet of integrity must struggle with the problem of his spiritual power. He has heard the voice of God speaking to him. He has received gifts of the Spirit to heal, prophesy, speak in tongues. His prophetic-healing role has been further authenticated by a series of symbolic predictive visions. Obviously the temptations to abuse such power are enormous and the difficulties involved in exercising such power with humility and restraint are overwhelming. But the Weavers have provided the best insight available as to how these problems are dealt with successfully by some and tragically by others.

The Weavers observe that more and more organizations appear ready to help such indigenous movements, but they are concerned about the outcome. Will the helping organizations have the spiritual humility required to keep them from dominating and will the indigenous movements have the courage to refuse to sell their birthright for "a mess of Western pottage?"

When one realizes that the indigenous movements in Africa represent one of the fastest growing sectors of Christendom, a proper understanding of what is happening is essential. Accordingly, every concerned Christian is indebted to the Weavers for this readable and touching account of real life spiritual struggles and triumphs.

Eugene A. Nida

New York City
December 1974

PREFACE

What's next? In 1959 the Mennonite Board of Missions responded to a call from some independent churches in the Uyo area of what is now South Eastern Nigeria to be "their mission." We worked closely with these churches until civil war broke out in 1967. What happened during those eight years is written in *The Uyo Story*. Though we tried repeatedly, we were never able to get back; we had been in the war area. So in 1969 we were sent on an exploratory twenty-four-month tour among independent churches in other parts of West Africa to discover the viability of working with them.

Why are we writing? While we have a story to tell this is not just a story. Though we spent some time enumerating and observing the growth and spread of independent churches we are not setting out to verify that facet of church growth history. We are not attempting to write a theology of mission. Neither are we researching; but we are on a search, seeking answers. What does it mean for the church to be in mission today?

Since 1960 the Mennonite Board has seconded many of its personnel in West Africa to institutions of other missions and churches long established, rather than concentrating only on our own denominational church. This is good strategy. But now we are asking, is this the only viable mission for today? Is working along with the rapidly growing number of indigenous movements, also, not good?

How find the answers? One doesn't begin with answers; one begins with questions. Certainly we had, and still have, more questions than answers. Our approach to the questions was a search, trying to find answers by experimentation. We recognize that many others are also searching for answers. Two things, even three, we found so important if we were to discover solutions:

1. Our own attitudes: sensitivity, humility, patience. In a word, love for all people.

2. Learner, teacher: Who's who? We had to learn as well as teach; we had to receive as well as give.

3. The Holy Spirit is still the most important strategy in mission today!

The teacher-learner approach to indigenous churches in

West Africa seems so right to us. If this comes through to our readers, then we will feel our mission accomplished and the struggle to write authentically abundantly rewarded. Truly Uyo was a stepping stone to further waiting opportunities in other parts of West Africa. The story we are eager to share covers essentially the two years beginning in mid-1969.

We are indebted to so many who helped us to think through the meaning of our goings and comings *From Kuku Hill.* There were our colleagues in Ghana: Lydia Burkhart, Stanley and Delores Friesen, Erma Grove, Laurence and Marian Horst, Anna Marie Kurtz, Willard and Alice Roth, and Bob and Nelda Thelin.

There were innumerable leaders and laymen from among the many indigenous churches to whom we are most grateful; among them Solomon K. Krow and F. A. Mills whom we will never forget. We also received wise counsel from W. G. M. Brandful, General Secretary for the Christian Council of Ghana; I. K. A. Thompson, formerly General Secretary for the Methodist Church of Ghana now Principal of Trinity College; K. A. Opoku, Lecturer at the Institute of African Studies; and J. R. Anquandah, Associate Professor of Archaeology at the University of Ghana.

We are grateful to the Mennonite Board of Missions and Overseas Secretary Wilbert R. Shenk for sponsoring our writing, and to Willard E. Roth for his careful editorial work on the manuscript and for the encouragement given us to stick with it to the end.

Ed and Irene Weaver

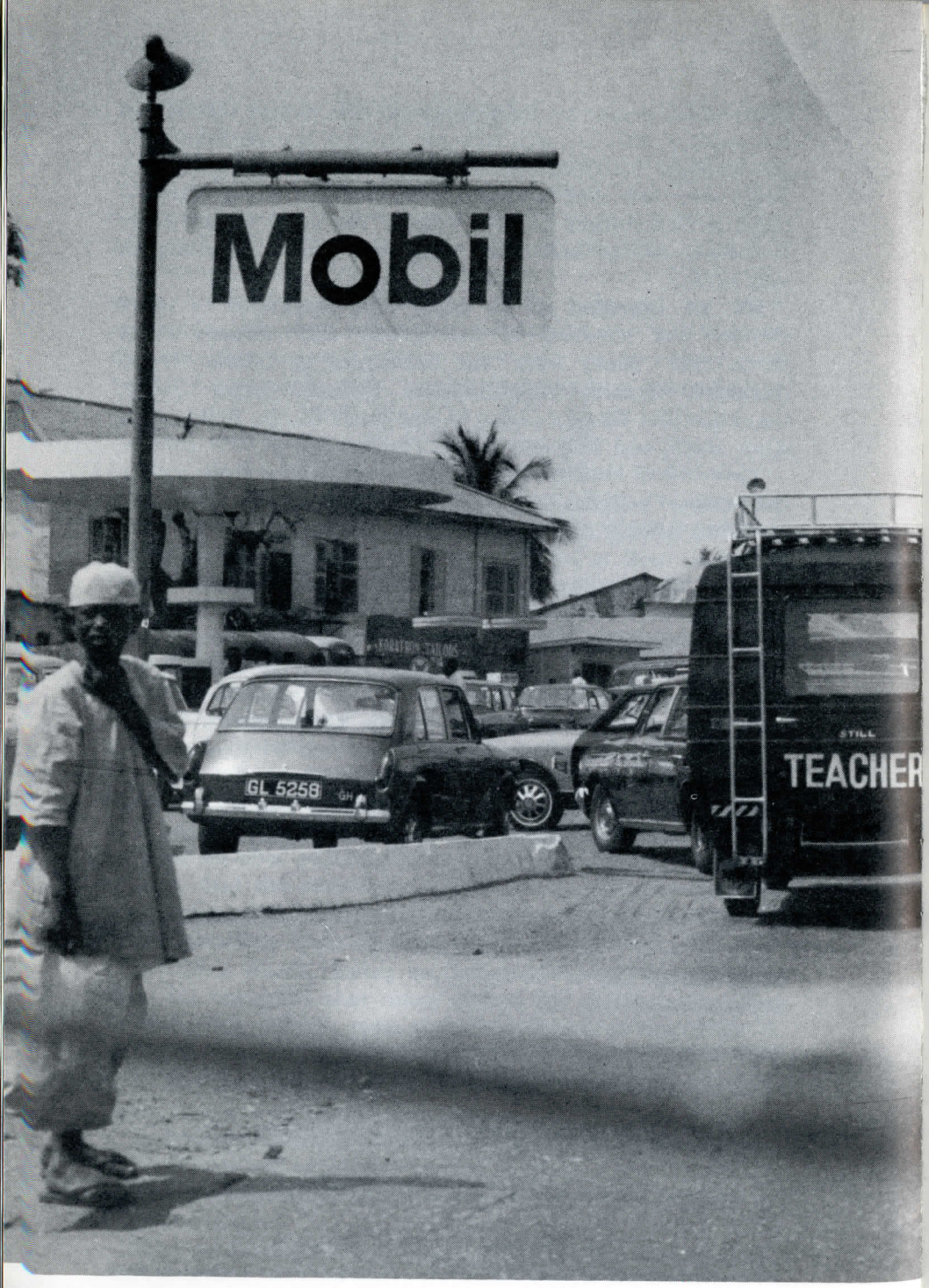
Schowalter Villa
September 1974

DEDICATION

To our children and grandchildren

who lovingly accepted

our long and frequent absences



1

FINDING NEW DIRECTIONS

Many, many people have asked: How did you get started working with indigenous churches? How did you establish a relationship with so much resentment between the older and the newer churches? How did you work? Our stock reply: It is much easier for us to do it, than to tell how it can be done. Still the questions are valid. Our attempt to answer may well be the most important thing we can write about.

Eight years in Eastern Nigeria were important for our understanding of the cultural background and the reasons for African indigenous movements. We learned the hard way – by experience. *The Uyo Story*[1] tells about our struggle. Returning to West Africa in 1969 – ten years after our first arrival in Uyo – we had more than a background of experience, valuable as that was; we had letters of recommendation from Primate E. A. Adejobi himself in our bags. Letters of recommendation are important in winning confidence and acceptance.

Uyo, a stepping stone . . .

In *The Uyo Story* we asked, "Could Uyo be a stepping stone to future involvement with independent churches in other parts of Africa?" The question proved to be prophetic. Just two years later, after our evacuation from Uyo, we were back in West Africa. But not in Nigeria. It was closed to us. We arrived in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in June 1969, when Apostle E. A. Adejobi, Primate of the Church of the Lord (Aladura), came from his Lagos, Nigeria,

headquarters en route to London and New York. Our meeting was planned. This is how it happened.

In the early 1960s, Dr. Harold W. Turner was on the staff of the Department of Religion of the University of Nigeria at Nsukka. At the same time he was continuing research and field work on African independent churches. His investigations frequently brought him to Uyo and, incidentally, in touch with our "different" attempt to relate and work with independent churches, which commended itself to him. In 1961 Turner helped E. A. Adejobi enroll in a two-year study course at the Glasgow Bible Training Institute in Scotland. From his own experiences Primate Adejobi saw the need and value of special training for leaders of his church. Turner then recommended the Mennonites to Primate Adejobi, who after being named head of the Church of the Lord (Aladura), was eager to establish a training school in West Africa for his leaders. The Primate in turn began negotiating with the Mennonite Board of Missions to send personnel to work with him in setting up the Aladura seminary in Lagos.

Now Primate Adejobi had just arrived in Freetown from Lagos, we from New York. Members of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) came to take us to the service. This was to be our first meeting with the Primate. It was also our first Aladura (a Yoruba word meaning "praying people") service. The church's protocol and the manner of worship were strange to us. It helped to remember that Turner and his colleague Andrew F. Walls both frequently preached in this same temple, located on a hillside almost outside the city where the Aladuras had secured a plot of land. Turner first met Mr. Adejobi here in Freetown, on Lumley Beach. This was where Turner's research and field work among the Adaduras began.[2]

For us, too, Freetown was significant. It was the next step in a search for new directions. It could not be research. Not for us. Primate Adejobi helped us to find one of the new directions we were shortly to take. In Uyo some of the independent churches who invited us initially became, at their own initiative, the Mennonite Church in Nigeria. We were not opposed to more Mennonites in the world, but we were opposed to making Mennonites by baiting independent churches. When he opened the door to

Apostle Kalesanwu (sitting third from right) welcomes the Weavers to the Church of the Lord (Aladura) in Monrovia, Liberia.

his churches along the coast, Primate Adejobi had quite a different concept of our mission. He likely was thinking more in terms of our becoming Aladuras. However, he confidentially told us he was hoping that some innovations would come into his church through our relationship. The next step we were about to take included other independent and mission churches. We found the independent churches eager for fellowship and understanding. For the established mission churches in Sierra Leone, our mediating position seemed to be a new idea. But they were more open to dialogue than we had anticipated.

. . . to waiting opportunities

Monrovia, Abidjan, Accra – all were on our itinerary. Everywhere we went Aladura churches received us warmly. Had the Primate not recommended us? In Monrovia Apostle Kalesanwo and his wife, the Spiritual Mother, were gracious hosts for a service in their temple between the heart of the city and the beach. We were not quite the novices we had been in Freetown. At least we had learned two simple lessons. One, take off your shoes when entering the temple. Two, fall on your knees immediately when a

prophet has had a vision about you and comes to tell you. If the vision is going on with the prophet speaking in tongues, then an interpreter of tongues will give you the message.

While Ed was preaching that Sunday, a stranger entered and sat down in the rear of the temple. He did not know about shoes. Immediately someone ushered him out. We thought, oh, oh! But back he came with his shoes off. After the service we got acquainted. He was Lebanese, an Armenian Christian pilot, who had flown into Robertsfield. Coming to the city to look around, by mere chance passing the Aladura temple, he entered out of curiosity. Thinking there were only Muslims in Africa, he was surprised to find Christians. Something happens when people relate to independent churches. We often wondered what happened to the Armenian Christian pilot.

We went to see Bishop S. D. Lartey in Monrovia, head of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in West Africa. An informal meeting was going on in his home when we arrived. A prophet, dressed in white, was prophesying. Suddenly we realized that he was the senior prophet we had met a few days earlier in the Church of the Lord (Aladura). When we returned to Monrovia a month later, we found that Bishop Lartey had died. We wondered, did he have a premonition of his impending death?

African interest in future personal events is so strong that prophetic messages of prophets from the spiritual churches make great appeal even to members of mission churches. By having knowledge of the future they hope in some way to avert approaching evil. There is great faith in the messages of a prophet. We have seen even Primate Adejobi fall on his knees before a prophet of his own church giving messages to him. Something happens when people relate to independent churches. Something happened to us which we hope comes through in these pages.

Why Accra and Kuku Hill?

From Monrovia, temporarily by-passing Abidjan, we hurried on to Accra. Making Accra our base seemed natural for our next step in ministry among West African independent churches. Our Board had been missioning in Ghana since

1957. There was an established Ghana Mennonite Church. Residential visas would be relatively easy to get. We had some background from previous visits. Then too, some of our Nigeria colleagues, who had left with us during the civil war, were now serving in Ghana. Furthermore, there were more indigenous churches in Ghana than in any other West Africa country except Nigeria. How many there are, no one really knows.[3]

Before making any major moves it was necessary to stay long enough in Accra to get our sense of direction. We needed a base. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana offered us an upstairs apartment in their rest house at the top of Kuku Hill. For the thirty-eighth time we set up our home. In the same compound were several residences including that of the moderator, the office of the Ghana Church Union Committee, and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church rest house. Across the street were the offices of the Christian Council.

We were delighted with our location. History was repeating itself. In Eastern Nigeria between 1960 and 1964 we lived in the old mission house of the Scottish Presbyterian Mission in Ikot Inyang. Now in Accra, we were again in a Presbyterian mission house. Our Nigeria Presbyterian friends introduced us to their colleagues in Ghana. We could never have planned this location which proved to be so significant. God's strategy!

A stream of upcountry Ghanaian church leaders and foreign guests moved in and out of the two guest houses on Kuku Hill. We were in the midst of this traffic. We could not have hidden, even if we had wanted. Many times their guests became our guests. Often they would say, "What are you doing? What is the nature of your work?" We would reply: "We are working with indigenous churches." From their "O-o-h?" interesting discussions would develop. Dialogue and understanding has to begin with the leaders of the mission-founded churches if progress is to be made in reconciliation between the indigenous and mission churches. We learned that lesson earlier in Nigeria. On Kuku Hill we were in the right place to meet the right people.

Beyond our enclosed compound on Kuku Hill, along the streets in four different directions are found dozens of prayer groups and healing homes, varying manifestations of

indigenous religious movement. Some came from outside Accra as branches of large indigenous churches. Others grew out of the Presbyterian Church on Salem Street, the original church in the Osu area. It is located between the rest house where we lived and the famous Christiansborg Castle, standing high on a rocky point on the beach. Between the castle and the now equally famous Black Star Square, there is a half-mile of beautiful sandy beach. Often at evening we went to the beach to escape the heat on Kuku Hill. For the Westerner the beach is a place to play, but for the African, a place to pray.

John S. Mbiti noted that in African traditional religion, "Major objects of nature like the sun, mountains, seas, lakes, rivers and boulders are also attributed to have or to be spiritual beings or divinities. Examples of this can be quoted from many parts of Africa."[4] So an ocean beach, for the African, is a natural place to pray and perform religious excercises of various kinds. Turner wrote about the Aladuras' use of the seashore: "The seashore is a place

Christiansborg Castle from the Accra beach.

of quiet prayer, for rolling freely on the sand, for separation from the comforts of life so akin to fasting, and for purification through sea bathing."[5] Many a time we joined groups as they knelt in the sand praying. We looked forward to such evenings on the beach joining any worshipers we found, or meditating quietly alone while the sun silently disappeared beneath the ocean horizon. These were not our first experiences on a seashore. Ten years earlier on Victoria Beach in Lagos, we met prayer groups by the water's edge or in their enclosed prayer areas nearby.

One evening we met Prophetess Rosina Anyomi. She had come to the beach with two of her followers who wanted special prayer. She told us that she was the founder of the Christian Healing Fellowship, just two blocks away from the Presbyterian compound on Kuku Hill. Our meeting led to Bible classes in her church and her later participation in the independent church Leaders Fellowship.

The seashore approach says three things to us. You have to go where people are. You have to meet people on their own spiritual and cultural level. You can expect to find indigenous churches right in the centers of the older mission churches.

Abidjan and the AACC Assembly

Ed returned to Abidjan in time for the second assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches in early September. There were two reasons for wanting to go to the assembly. First, we wanted to become acquainted with the church in Africa. The experience was exciting. Here were 500 Christians from nearly every nation and major tribe of Africa. Excepting some conservative evangelicals, about all the older mission churches were represented. It must have been one of the greatest gatherings of Christian leaders ever in Africa, with even a sprinkling of independent church leaders present.

Second, we wanted to try to discover the attitudes of mission church leaders toward the new independent religious movements of Africa. Feelings of both mission church and independent church leaders came through quickly. In relation to the numerical strength of independent movements, their leaders were conspicuous for

their absence. Again and again in the general assemblies, as well as in the smaller group meetings, independent churches were up for discussion. Some of the most capable African church leaders were very sensitive, sympathetic and understanding. But too many of the delegates freely and openly expressed their deep prejudices. The relatively few independent church leaders present could not but feel rejected and isolated.

For example, a committee was appointed to woo the independents. Most of their leaders boycotted the meeting. The few present showed their resentment. When the term "independent churches" was used, they said, "Don't call us independent churches. We are not independent; we are part of the Christian church in Africa." They were right.

Independent? Indigenous?

For a long time we have felt uneasy about the use of "independent churches." In different African countries we have frequently heard church leaders express their feelings. We have heard leaders of the older churches object to being called "mission churches." They want to be known as "independent churches" for they are not under a mission anymore: They are independent. Yet the older churches have no monopoly on the term.

Our inclination is to call people what they want to be called. But it may not be all that simple. It is helpful to have designations understood by as many as possible. The term "indigenous" best designates most of the churches we have worked with in West Africa. One could identify them a bit more clearly with the label "indigenous spiritual."

Let us elucidate further. There is The Pentecostal Association of Ghana, with the subtitle, National Fellowship of Spiritual Churches. Their use of "spiritual" gives away their indigenous character. We think of them as left wing pentecostals, as contrasted with what we would call the right wing, or western-oriented, pentecostals. Such fine distinctions may seem artificial, but to foreign-sponsored pentecostals real theological issues are involved. They will have nothing to do with the spiritual churches. We will be writing mostly about indigenous spiritual churches. If we use another term, we have another kind of church in mind.

New courage

In Abidjan Dr. F. Raaflaub, Africa secretary for the Basel (Switzerland) Mission, and the Rev. Victor E. W. Hayward of the World Council of Churches staff, gave us support and strong encouragement. They had read *The Uyo Story*. Their keen interest helped us overcome the resentment and opposition we felt on the part of some, because we were relating to indigenous churches. There can be no mission without a cross. Neither can there be life and power without the Holy Spirit. At Abidjan we received strength to go forward. We were on the way. God uses men. This we believe. The Spirit of God helps us to find the right men. Abidjan was not our strategy. It was God's.

We found mixed attitudes among West Africa mission churches toward the new indigenous movements. Some for; some against. Also at Abidjan, we met Pastor Harry Y. Henry, president of the Methodist Church in Dahomey and Togo. He invited us to Cotonou for a joint effort with indigenous churches. This was something new. Here was a head of an old mission church asking us to join him in a common effort with churches, most of whose members were breakaways — from the Methodist Church. His attitude and already established relations with various indigenous churches were exceptional and complimentary. We were eager to go to Cotonou as early as possible.

In the Ivory Coast Methodist leaders were less positive. There are historical reasons for such feelings. They have not forgotten that when Prophet Harris was deported from the Ivory Coast, thousands of his followers joined the Methodist Church; some went to the Catholic Church; remaining thousands went on to develop the Harrist Church in the Ivory Coast. In Ghana most of the followers of Harris became the Twelve Apostles Church, recognizing Harris as their founder.[6]

On the issue of indigenous churches other West Africa mission churches were similarly divided. Understanding and reconciliation all around must become the clear objective of these polarized churches and their leaders. A strategy of mission in West Africa will require much dialogue.

What were we learning about new directions?

1. We could best find answers along the way. To be able

to recognize the signs is important. Philip's "hop, skip and jump" approach to mission might not be too bad after all. Acts 8 traces Philip's presence from Samaria (verse 5) to Gaza (verse 26) winding up at Azotus (verse 40).

2. We have learned to expect and accept opposition – with love. But we thank God for understanding leaders. They should be more vocal. May their tribe increase.

3. The Church of the Lord (Aladura) was wide open to us for contact, fellowship and leadership training. They opened the door to other indigenous churches.

4. We simply had to trust the Spirit of God to direct us step by step. There is no other way.

1. Weaver, Edwin and Irene. *The Uyo Story.* Elkhart, Ind.: Mennonite Board of Missions, 1970.

2. Turner, Harold W. *African Independent Church.* Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1967. Turner's two volumes make up the best and most complete study to date on any one independent church. Volume One traces the history of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) and Volume Two analyzes beliefs and practices. Dr. Turner directs the Project for New Religious Movements (PRONERM), newly established at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, in the Department of Religious Studies, of which Andrew F. Walls is head.

3. "A Directory of 'Spiritual Churches' in Ghana" by K. A. Opoku in *Research Review* (V. 7, No. 1, pp.98-115) published by the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, lists some 200 such churches with the notation "there is reason to expect the figure to be far more than that." Authentic statistics on African independent movements are more illusive than those of the older or younger mission churches, partly because of their constant change (see Chapter 6) and growth. Returning to Accra in 1973 after a two-year absence, we saw again the dynamic of the independent movement. During our earlier residence in Ghana we had worked with the Christian Council of Ghana in gathering data for a country-wide handbook of Christian churches in collaboration with the *World Christian Handbook 1972.* We sensed a three-fold problem as we participated in the Ghana survey: the immensity of the task; the reliability of questionnaires as a research tool; the dynamism of the independent churches. Yesterday's survey of independent churches in a given town or along a certain city street is out-of-date today. In spite of the difficulties, and the need to keep updating, the good work being done by researchers is extremely valuable to all persons interested in the directions, strength and growth of indigenous movements outside the mainstream of Christianity. The greatest danger for those wanting to interpret what is happening to Christianity in Africa is the temptation toward generalization and overemphasis concerning independent churches; their growth must be considered in perspective of total church growth across the continent.

4. Mbiti, John S. *African Religions and Philosophy.* London: Heinemann, 1969. p.77.

5. Turner, V.2, p.104.

6. See Haliburton, Gordon MacKay. *The Prophet Harris.* London: Longman Group, Ltd., 1971. Chapters 10 to 15 are particularly helpful in understanding the present situation.

2

FOCUSING ON THE TEMPLE

Our new home provided a base on Kuku Hill from which we could meet and relate to the right people. Nima Temple was another, a different but related, avenue to indigenous churches. To be understood a program must be worked out in a specific situation. From previous experience we had learned that a scattering of efforts often leads to superficial results which may actually obstruct our objectives. Indigenous churches had been researched and talked about long enough. It was time to initiate another approach.

With letters of introduction from the Primate, contacting the leaders of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) in Ghana was not difficult. We traveled to Kumasi to meet His Grace, the Apostle E. A. Ofosu, head of the church in Ghana. He urged us to begin a period of intensive Bible study immediately. We agreed to return in a month or two. In Accra we went to greet Solomon K. Krow, then Archdeacon. He urged us to start Bible classes at Nima Temple. This seemed to be the right thing to do. We began immediately. In a short time we were so completely involved at Nima Temple, we had to give up going to Kumasi altogether. This was most unfortunate, for we lost the good relation we had with the Ghana head of the church, which we were never quite able to recover. This is a good illustration of the kind of problem one faces in working out priorities. When the whole Church of the Lord (Aladura) in West Africa was open, even eager for Bible classes, we decided on a focus of operation, a concentration on Nima. In retrospect, we feel our approach was wise.[1]

Choir loft Bible classes

We needed a place to conduct the Bible classes. There were no classrooms in Nima Temple. The choir loft in the balcony at the rear of the sanctuary was finally suggested. But there was no equipment. No chairs, no desks, only benches – some high, some low. From somewhere, someone brought a portable blackboard that kept falling apart. This was an indigenous Bible school, beginning with the place and equipment available. The merits of this kind and level of Bible training had already proved itself to us. This was the way to begin.

Krow sent announcements throughout his area congregations that Bible classes were shortly to begin at Nima Temple. The date was also announced. There was keen interest. About twenty-five leaders of the various church organizations, patrons and matrons, prophets and prophetesses, seers and seeresses, laymen of all kinds, and most important, both Bishop and Mrs. Krow, enrolled. Some students were old, some were young. Some were educated, some brought a note-taker along. Classes were held on Monday, Tuesday and Friday from 5 to 7 p.m. This made it possible for persons working in the heart of Accra to attend the Bible classes before going to their homes in the suburbs after a day's work. After initial problems were sorted out we were happy. We had a place, a time, and sufficient students who seemed genuinely interested in studying the Bible with us.

We were two teachers so we began with two courses. In *Introduction to the Bible,* Ed considered such questions as: What is the Bible? How did we get our Bible? How study the Bible? We avoided at this beginning stage analyzing the books of the Bible. Irene taught *Good News According to Mark.* A theme song developed in our Bible classes, "Everybody Ought to Know Who Jesus Is." This is the burden of Mark's Gospel. It is generally considered to be the earliest, the simplest, and the most graphic story of the life of Jesus. If one wishes to teach the Bible to the uninitiated, what better place to begin? Mark wanted everyone to know who Jesus is (Mark 1:1). So did we.

We encouraged those studying with us to go right into their churches to conduct Bible classes of their own. A few

actually did and brought back enthusiastic reports. We wish there would have been many more; we thought the idea was a good one. A Laubach sort of approach to Bible teaching. We would have liked greater success in teaching people to teach others. The need for Bible knowledge is so great.

Then new problems developed. In Africa there is a rhythm of life that goes beyond the physical body; there is also a rhythm of the spirit. Interest among our students was not a steady upward movement. Like a graph, attendance shot up and down. We questioned our teaching ability so we enlisted Willard and Alice Roth, Mennonite missionary colleagues, to assist. Though there was improvement, we sensed that there was something we were not understanding. With time, this something became more clear. It was not so much our lack of understanding the Bible or how to teach it.

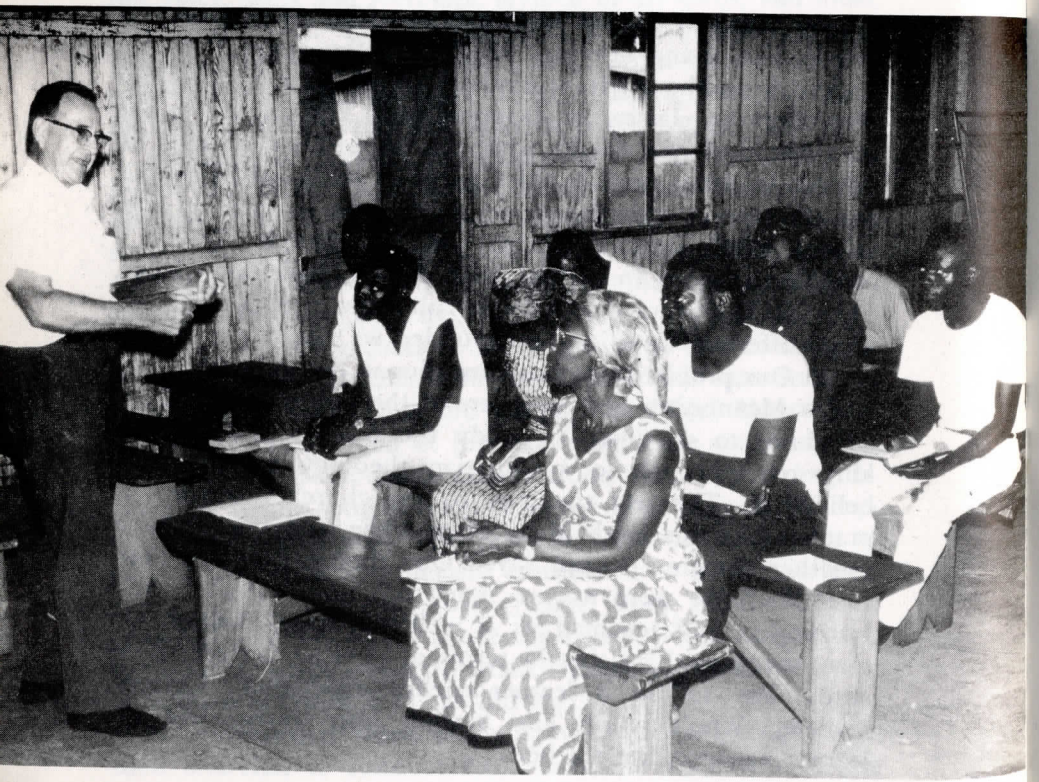
Two things we were not understanding. Why were the top leaders losing interest? Why were the apprentices for leadership in the spiritual ministry of the church either not attending the classes, or dropping out? The answer to the first question had to do with the importance of rank in African societies, and in the Church of the Lord (Aladura), and the second with the greater value given to spiritual over against administrative ministry in the church. To be a prophet is more important than having Bible knowledge. This too is grounded in African cultural concepts. With our very different tradition, no wonder we could not understand. Our problem was not educational, but cultural.

For Mennonites and members of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) to sit down to study the Bible together is the kind of approach to a Christian theology in Africa we believe in. The real theology of the church is made and practiced at this level. Many times while studying the Bible together someone would say: "Our church does not practice this." We were not so much teaching, but they were learning – and teaching us as well. We could sharpen our own theological insights in terms of another culture. Bible study has to be a learner-teacher experience. Learner, teacher: Who's who? The teacher also learns, and the learner becomes the teacher.

In the old temple: teaching . . .

Eventually the Bible class was not happy with their choir loft meeting place, wanting a location with more dignity. In the rear of the church compound stood the old temple, a simple wooden structure where the congregation first began to worship, heal and witness. The altar with its candles and incense holders, its crosses and worship symbols, even the large painting on the altar wall, were all there, much as they were from the beginning.

A grass-roots Bible class in the old temple.



In Africa a place of worship is eternally sacred, never destroyed. So when the beautiful new temple was built in 1965 the old one became the healing temple. A section in the back was curtained for the sick who could come for as long as they desired to pray and be prayed for by the church's gifted ministers of healing. There were always seekers around.

The old healing temple – what a place for Bible classes. But it took a special dispensation of the church administrative ministry to get permission. We liked our new classroom with plenty of space, yet without chairs or desks. We were still a grass-roots Bible class.

Where does one begin teaching the Bible in a spiritual church? Studying the Bible with people who by their own acknowledgement understand little about it, one does not begin with the Book of Romans. Certainly not in Africa, where the approach to religion is not theological. Then where? This was our first teaching problem. One could validly begin with the gospel stories in the New Testament. Or with Genesis in the Old. There really is no one place to begin, but there are certain guidelines to follow.

1. Begin with the Bible rather than with books about the Bible.

2. Begin where people are – their level of knowledge, understanding.

3. Use a simple, direct inductive approach to Bible study, in which all can participate, making possible teacher-learner experiences.

Because we were using *Good News for Modern Man* in our New Testament study, Good News Bible Classes was suggested as a label for the congregational teaching program. The name stuck and continued to be used for Bible classes held later in indigenous churches throughout Accra.

. . . and learning

As we were leaving class one evening a disciple in training assigned to full-time care of the Nima Temple, quietly came asking, "A witch is troubling me; won't you please cast it out?" We had frequently seen exorcisms, but had not ourselves cast out evil spirits. We were Bible teachers, not exorcists – so we thought. But here we were,

face-to-face with a man in distress who needed cleansing and healing. While he knelt on the ground just outside the healing temple, Ed laid hands on him and prayed, but nothing much happened. A few more times the man returned for prayer, then came no more. We felt like the disciples must have felt when Jesus rebuked them, "How unbelieving you people are" (Mark 9:19). We could teach and preach the Bible, but we could not do what Jesus, in John 14:12-14, promised his disciples would be doing. Were we not also spiritual Christians? The temple keeper had every right to expect help from us. But we failed. Why?

What should we have done? Upon reflection we can think of several things. We should have taken the man inside the healing temple. Since we ourselves were spiritually weak, how much better it would have been had we brought him before our Bible class, surrounded him first with loving Christian concern, then together laying hands on him, rebuked the evil spirit in the name of Jesus! This would have been another opportunity for a new kind of teacher-learner experience. Failures teach us valuable lessons.

Summing it up

Focusing on Nima Temple was part of a plan. Concentrating was just as important to our total objective as was the wider Kuku Hill approach. Every effort to develop indigenous Bible classes was important for our understanding of how best to work with indigenous churches.

A measure of success depended on our better understanding the thought patterns and priorities of indigenous churches. Teacher-learner experiences were important in our Aladura Bible classes. We were not just teachers; there was so much we had to learn. They were not just learners; there was so much that they needed to teach us.

1. Turner (V. 1, pp. 172ff) explains the tension between the Kumasi and Accra branches of the church. This background makes understandable how we could inadvertently become involved in the church's inner struggle. The Ghana unit of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) has since been reorganized into two dioceses, Kumasi and Accra-Aflao. Krow was ordained bishop and designated head of the new Accra-Aflao diocese. We will refer to him hereafter as Bishop.

3

WORSHIPING THE ALADURA WAY

There are few clocks in sanctuaries of spiritual churches. Services proceed as the Spirit moves. To predetermine the length of a service is impossible. We soon learned that it was not wise to plan for more than one appointment each Sunday. Ordinarily, services last from two to four hours. Spiritual churches often start around noon. African churches of this kind do not have cushioned seating. Benches, if any, will be backless and hard. Special seating is provided for guests. Even on a backless bench, time does not drag.

As the Spirit moves

A changing variety of action takes place. African worship at its best is experienced in living drama. Sudden outbursts of singing by an inspired worshiper often interrupt the speaker in response to his "powerful" sermon. One strongly suspects that the response was a way of keeping people awake when forced to listen to dry, uninteresting sermons, full of westernisms, being translated into two other languages. For five minutes the whole congregation joins in, singing and drumming and dancing. Everyone now is awake and happy. Even the speaker is given new impetus to push on, or to bring his long sermon to a more rapid conclusion! Worship in the spiritual churches differs from church to church, yet there are common patterns.

We kept in close touch with Nima Temple, attending various services of worship: communions, baptisms, christenings, foundation layings, memorials and festivals. Ed preached regularly the first Sunday morning of each month.

Western and African elements come together in indigenous church worship as Ghanaian tambourine blends with trumpet.

Our relationship with the Church of the Lord (Aladura) particularly through Nima Temple opened doors to other spiritual churches who worship the Aladura way.

A Nima Temple morning service begins in the vestry. About 9:30 the presiding bishop, the spiritual mother, deacons, elders, choir directors and guests, gather to pray. Shoes are carefully laid aside. After a time of prayer the bishop, with his staff bearer, leads the procession out onto the veranda to the main entrance into the sanctuary. Everyone knows his rank and finds his marching position. Guests too are fitted into their place.

As the procession enters, the congregation stands. The band is playing. All are singing. Marchers find their places in the front, the bishop still leading. The little gate to the holy of holies is opened. The bishop falls prostrate before the altar in an initial act of worship and prayer. The whole congregation is facing the altar – some kneeling, some likewise prostrate, faces to the floor. This is a typical worship position.

Rank is quite important. Anyone approaching the bishop in the altar area falls on his knees to speak to him. Likewise, anyone of lower rank approaching someone of higher rank bows in recognition. Anyone passing the altar area during a service, faces the altar and bows. Clearly the church has retained much of the Anglican background of its founder.

The liturgy in the early part is hardly distinguished as an indigenous service. The church has its own hymnbook including many traditional hymns of the church along with new Aladura hymns. Old combines with new as western and African elements are incorporated in indigenous church worship. This is the way the African wants it. He knows what he is doing. He has not rejected everything in the older churches. But he wants freedom to choose – to be African.

As the service moves on, the movement is more "as the spirit moves." In Aladura worship much time is given to thanksgiving, to tithes and offerings. Deliverance from sickness, demons, wicked people, accidents, childbirth, and the little things we so often forget – all are reasons for special offerings to God who blesses and saves. One by one worshipers come forward to present their gifts, silently to

kneel in prayer as each awaits his turn to testify about the great things God has done. It is time consuming; it is also beautiful. Giving thanks to God is an important part of worship. Every experience of life must end in worship. We stand rebuked before such simple faith.

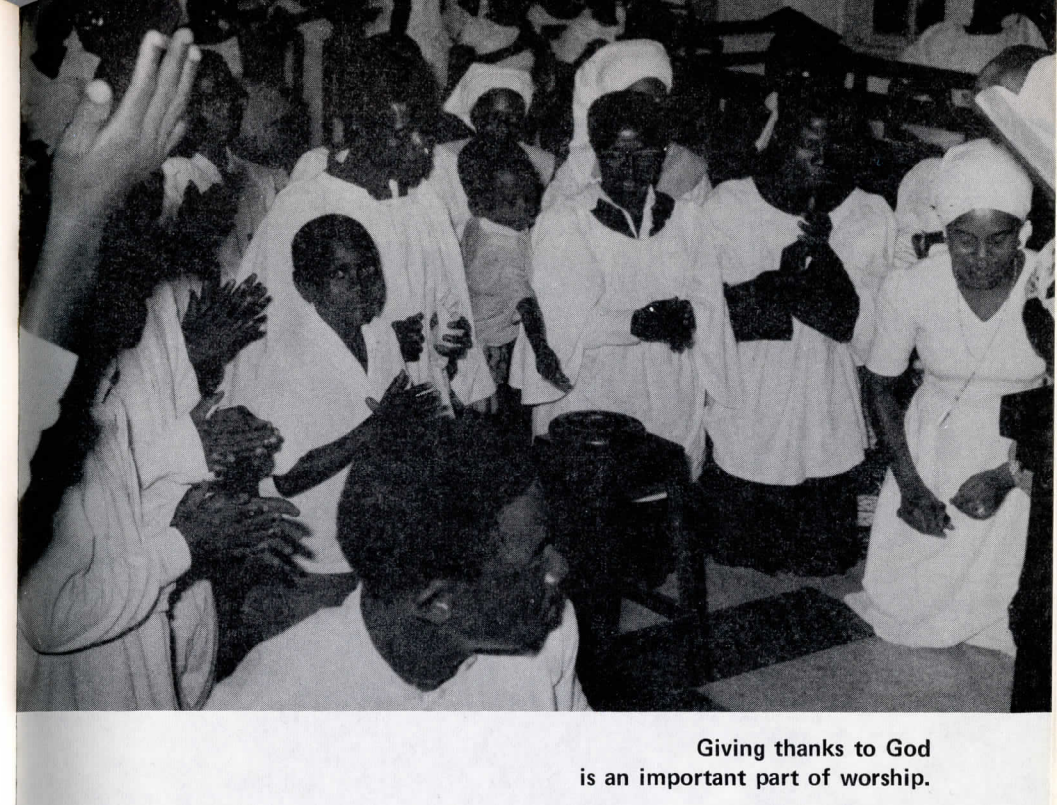
In Aladura worship much time is given to clapping and singing, to drumming and dancing. It is the African way to find release and strength to overcome the struggles of life. The joy on the faces of the participating congregation is evidence of the value of this added dimension of worship. It can go on and on – until body and spirit have been refreshed and filled with ecstatic joy. The bishop leads the recessional; the congregation stands and joins in singing "As the Saints Go Marching In." The service ends, as it began, in the vestry.

Penance during Lent

We could see the crowds gathering as we neared the compound. The Good Friday service of Easter Week was about to start. On other days we would have heard the jubilee of the worshipers long before we actually arrived. But today was different. All was quiet: no drums, no cymbals or any other musical instrument; no clapping, singing or dancing. Everyone was dressed in white including the bishop who wore a simple white robe rather than his usual blue, gold or scarlet.

At the door we slipped off our sandals and quietly entered, joining the worshipers sitting or lying on the floor. To our surprise all the benches had been removed. Some had cloths or mats spread on the floor. Mothers brought cloths on which to lay their sleeping babies. Lucky persons

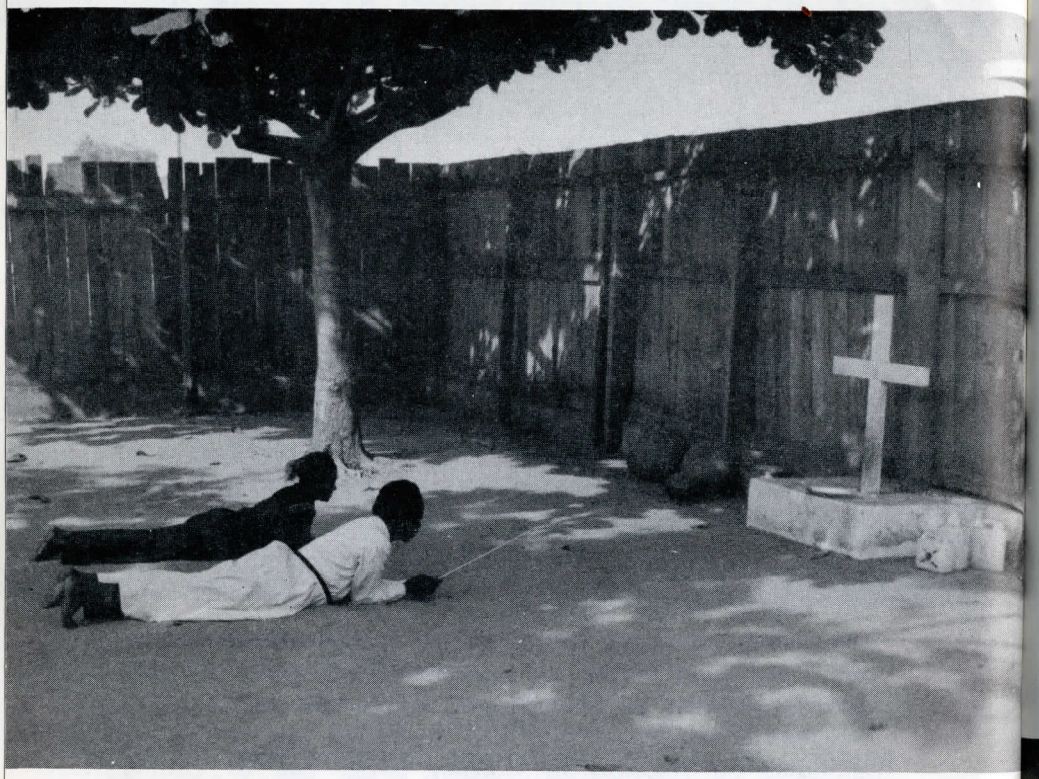
Sandals wait outside during Aladura worship.



Giving thanks to God is an important part of worship.

found places near the wall to rest their tired backs during the long hours of the all-day service. We feared for our foreign guest, who had come along with us. After three hours of sitting curled up without support she found a vacant place against the wall. We knew that the service would last till evening. When one was tired it was quite proper to lie down and go to sleep. The service went right on. If the children got too hungry they could go out to the food stalls just beyond the compound wall to buy bread, peeled oranges, bananas, peanuts or penny candy. Most adults observed a strict fast till sundown.

The whole service was a call to repentance in preparation for the Easter celebration. Throughout the day there were confessions and appropriate offerings of penance and thanksgiving. In the evening the service ended quietly, as it had started. No drumming. No dancing. Everyone went home thoughtfully, to break their fast and to prepare for Easter morning. The subdued expressions of Good Friday burst into a mighty jubilee with the dawning of Easter!



The Aladura mercy ground is set apart for struggling with God in prayer.

On one side of Nima Temple there is a large square area commonly called the "struggle ground." Many Aladura temples have one. Turner calls it the "mercy ground."[1] Perhaps mercy ground could be best applied to the place, and struggle ground to what is done there. On the front side there is always a cross. The ground is covered with six inches of clean sand. Rolling back and forth on sand is a part of the struggle. It is a place to struggle with God, a place of prayer. Though we did not actually try rolling on the sand, we are trying to learn about struggling with God in prayer and fasting. Every believing Christian needs a place of prayer, and a regular time. The earnestness and zeal of African Christians is a lesson.

Room in my Father's house

This was not just an ordinary worship service. It was a memorial for the late Honorable Wotu-Ofei, president of Nima Temple. He had been an important figure in the Nkrumah government, and along with many other dignitaries through the years, was an active member of the Church of the Lord (Aladura).[2] Friends in the church and the government had gathered for the memorial. Outside the temple looked beautiful. Canopies of thatched bamboo branches were shading multi-colored chairs provided for the overflow crowd.

In front of the sanctuary the widow and family sat in mourning cloth. Church members and renowned friends surrounded them with their love. Bands played, choirs sang. Appropriate scriptures, tributes and prayers were offered.

Much worship time is given to clapping and singing, to drumming and dancing.

Bishop Krow, dressed in a splendid gold brocade robe, descended from the altar to the lectern. Solemnly he called the roll of the church cabinet. Each one responded with a Bible verse. At the end he called the name of the late President. But there was no response. Three times he called his name. All was silent. Then the bishop said, "Go look for him; he may be outside." It was a moving moment. The family broke down in tears. Finally, the bishop said, "He is not here; he will not answer." Silence. Then, "I heard a voice saying, 'He is not there; he is in the Father's house'."

With the word that their beloved President was safe in the Father's house, the whole congregation came alive with rejoicing. Such singing, clapping, dancing! We never want to forget. The bishop closed with the words, "In my Father's house are many rooms. I go to prepare a place for you. I will take you there. Let not your heart be troubled. How beautiful it is to know that there is room for each of us in the Father's house."

Pilgrims in white robes

Bishop Krow strongly urged us to go to Kumasi for the annual Mount Tabborrah Festival, always held during August. But going created problems. After all, it was 175 miles to the Holy Mount. The festival starts at 9 p.m., with the first real break around 3 a.m. At Mount Tabborrah in Monrovia, Liberia, the year before, we dropped out sometime after midnight. Knowing that it would be rough, we did not want to repeat the experience. Neither did we want to drive home alone at night. Another complication — the Hobart Campbells had just come from America to be our guests. Hobart, pastor of the Montoursville, Pa., Presbyterian Church, was on a two-month leave to become better acquainted with African indigenous churches. Could we risk taking them along? Would the cultural shock be too great?

Hobart wanted to go. The bishop graciously offered his personal chauffeur. With Mr. Baja at the wheel and Bible class student Jacob Bossman along to interpret Aladura protocol, Hobart and Ed started out for Mount Tabborrah. We arrived at 8 p.m., one hour early. Five thousand people from all parts of Ghana had already assembled. Carefully we had to pick our way through the mass of men, women

and children sitting and lying on the straw covered ground. Our escort ushered us to the front where, along with other guests and reporters, we were given comfortable chairs facing the audience. Just back of us within the holy place Bishop Krow and Apostle Ofosu were presiding over the festival.

Bands were playing and choirs were singing. Finally the service began. Very early the apostle led in the beautiful litany used by all West African churches of the Lord.

Priest: Whence comest ye thou here,
ye pilgrims in white robes?

People: Tabborrar, Tabborrar, the Mountain of the Lord.
Tabborrar, Tabborrar, Holy Mountain of Power.

Priest: What is your first request here,
ye pilgrims in white robes?

People: Forgiveness of our sins, from King Olluffijj.
That God of Tabborrar may forgive all our sins.

Priest: Prayer of Forgiveness.

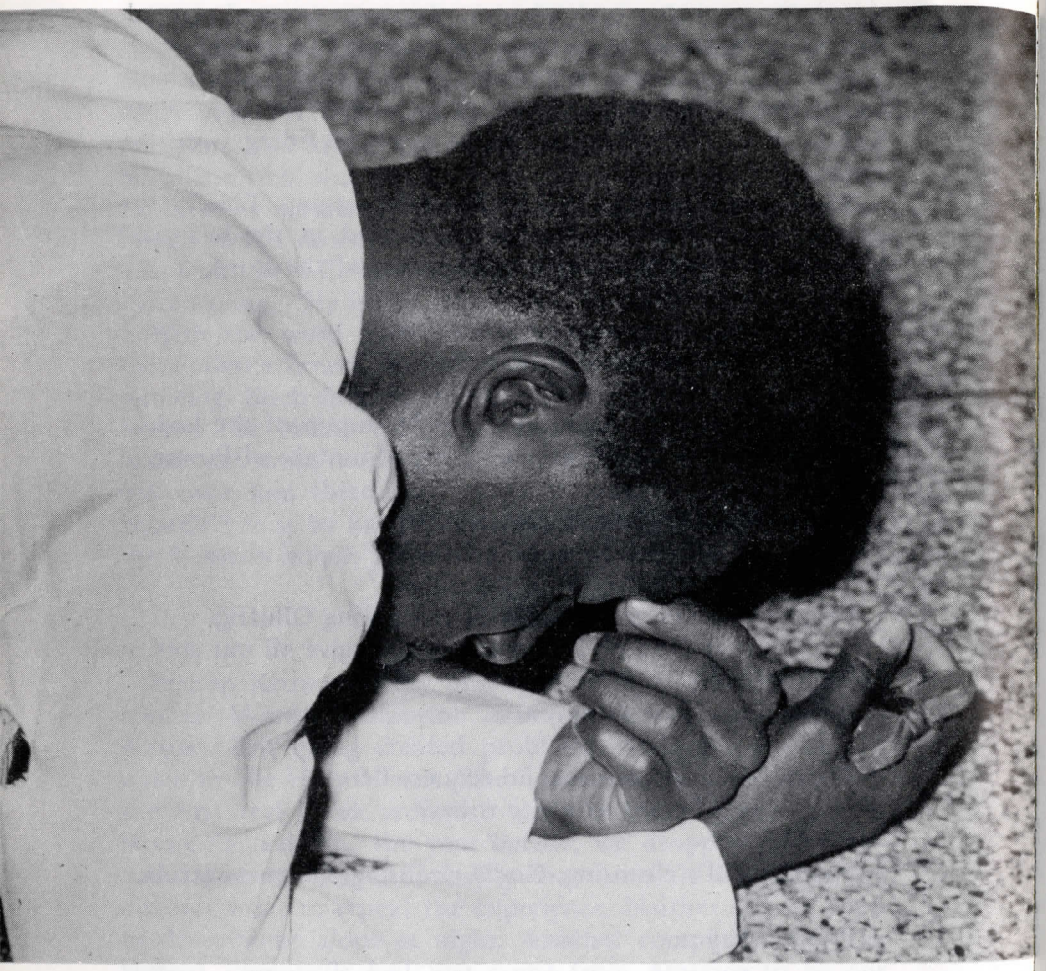
Priest: What is your second request here,
ye pilgrims in white robes?

People: God's cleansing, God's cleansing, Orrewemottola.

Priest: Prayer.

Engrossed by the dramatic movement of the changing scenes, we too became a part of the massive, milling congregation in festive worship. Bishop Krow saw to that as he led us out among the jubilant worshipers. There was nothing else we could do but join in. My Mennonite feet kept getting tangled up. But my Presbyterian friend was more adept, more experienced.

The drumming and dancing, singing and clapping, high jumps and spiritual ecstacies, visions and prophecies continued through the night. About 2:30 a.m. came the break in the service. Though festivities were not completed, some



Prostrate on the floor before the altar, worshiping and thanking God.

of the people were leaving to return to their distant homes. We too felt the urge. We suggested to the driver that we would be happy to return to Accra. He agreed. He apparently had not slept the previous night. The four of us were seated in the car when the distant loudspeaker boomed a message: "One of the prophets has seen a vision. A car accident will occur among those leaving for home. Return to the camp for united prayer to avert the accident." Our Ghanaian companions returned, while we stayed in the car. It was a mistake. We just didn't understand African visions and prophecies.

After the prayer, tired and sleepy, we started back to Accra. At times the driver was dozing and he had difficulty keeping on the road. Even chewing kola-nut didn't help. We tried to persuade him to let us take turns at the wheel but he wouldn't give up. In fear and trembling we held to the seat as we sped around hills and curves between Kumasi and Accra. Then it happened. We were going fifty around a mountain curve, too fast to make the turn. The car slid down a three-foot embankment. Miraculously he was able to pull the car back onto the road again. But we spun around and around and landed backside with tremendous impact into the soft hillside, right side up! We were shocked and dazed with no one hurt. After cleaning out the dirt-packed exhaust pipe we continued our journey. The rest of us had had similar experiences, but for Hobart this was a first. He was petrified all the way home.

We pulled alongside Nima Temple just as a few worshipers were gathering for the Sunday morning service. Most of the members were in Kumasi for the festival. Baja the driver and Jacob the student, sitting in front, got out and entered the Temple. We got into the front seat, preparing to go home. When Jacob saw we were not following he returned to the car, "Aren't you coming in?" A bit confused, we didn't catch the point. Wasn't the trip over? We were exhausted. Hadn't we been in Kumasi worshiping and praying most of the night? So quickly we had forgotten. We forgot to thank God for His miraculous deliverance on the way home! For a spiritual Christian this was unforgivable. Shamefacedly we got out of the car and joined Baja and Jacob already prostrate on the floor before the altar, worshiping and thanking God.

Rolling the Aladura way

In Kumasi we hadn't understood the vision. One prophet saw a vision; five thousand believers joined in prayer for our safety. God delivered us. Arriving in Accra after our unforgetable experiences, we did not think to stop and thank God. We didn't know how to pray as we should, and we didn't know how to thank God when He answered. Kumasi was a lesson!

We didn't realize until later the significance of what was happening to us. We were researching churches but also building relationships with people. Insights we got from our work and associations were more like fringe benefits which fell into our laps. Even though we did not use a research approach, the understanding we gained was valid for us. Researching gives objectivity; relating gives subjectivity. Both are needed.

In our experiences worshiping the Aladura way we were figuratively rolling on the mercy ground saying, "Lord our God have mercy, help us struggle our way through what may well be the most difficult problem facing every person coming into a new culture: to be or not to be like the people to whom you are relating; to accept or not accept their culture, including worship patterns."

It was a struggle. Identifying while retaining one's own integrity is the problem. We now think that answers can only be found by going beyond forms and patterns to the person. In the words of Noel King, "There will be no real meeting until one or the other crosses over."[3] True identity is something spiritual, worked out in actual experiences of two-way interrelationships. On the deeper levels only God can unite believers in Christ. This is what the Holy Spirit does.

1. See Turner, V. 2, p. 103 for additional background.
2. Perhaps more than any other indigenous church, Church of the Lord (Aladura) seems to have attracted to its fellowship persons from among the more elite.
3. King, Noel Q. *Religions of Africa.* New York: Harper and Row, 1970. p. vii.

4

MOVING FROM TEMPLE TO CITY

To identify, or not identify – that is the problem. How far does one go identifying with people in another religious culture? How about one's own identity and integrity? These questions cannot be by-passed easily. So far we have said little about the risks of identifying. This other side, too, must be told. We felt relatively secure in the ways we identified with the Nima Temple Aladuras. Anyone who isn't secure in himself, who hasn't discovered who he is, takes a great risk in identifying with others. Overidentifying is as real a danger as underidentifying. By overidentifying one loses the relationship of the people whose confidence he is seeking to win. It's a two-way street. By overidentifying one actually does harm to the people he is trying to serve. Relationships must be worked out individually and in the context of each situation.

Identification and freedom

In most African indigenous churches it is offensive for a woman to appear in public worship with head uncovered. Cultural feelings of other people must be respected. For us it seems right, in matters that really make little difference, to conform to the customs of other cultures whenever possible. Observing certain traditions is almost obligatory if one wishes to join Africans in worship. As a Mennonite, Irene had no hesitation covering her head. Sometimes Aladura women would help her pull her white veil down over her ears and forehead. In another of the churches, her transparent Aladura veil was much too small. The women

thoughtfully provided a veil covering head and shoulders.

Another strict, still practiced tradition forbids menstruating women entering the temple. Once Irene and Alice Roth were asked by the women of the church – just to make sure. If there had been a problem they would have been invited to sit on special benches on the veranda. Sometimes several benches are full. We have already mentioned the shoe taboo. One good thing – we never lost our shoes! They are carefully guarded and returned after the service. Often someone kneels to help the guest put his shoes on. How does one respond to customs which seem strange? Should we insist on sticking to our own culture? or adjust? break or bend?

Whether or not to wear a white robe was a continuous problem, particularly when attending Aladura services. The two of us felt differently about the matter but we never had robes tailored, although Ed occasionally wore one when specifically requested. We tried to work out such problems as we went along rather than setting a rule in advance. We both strongly believe that what counts is in the heart, not something put on. Can we love and serve people, even experience good Christian fellowship, when we do not entirely agree in all things? We think so. Identifying has more to do with attitudes than what you wear.

Relationships are always two way – like learner, teacher experiences. Right relationships lead to freedom, misdirected ones to bondage. In their understanding of our relationship the Aladuras wanted more identification. We too wanted identification, but also freedom. Freedom for them, and freedom for us. Observations of both ourselves and others in mission – first in India, then in Nigeria, and finally in Ghana – made us acutely aware of the subtle danger when two cultures meet of one dominating the other. Identifying is a two-way experience, so also must freedom be. We wanted our friends to be Christians in Africa, in the milieu of their own culture, not ours.

Our move from temple to city was related to the identification and freedom problem, but much more was involved. One can not irresponsibly drop carefully established relationships with African spiritual churches. Our integrity was at stake. Had we dropped Nima Temple classes the city also would have been closed to us. Neither

should a missionary continue indefinitely teaching and preaching in one church.

Pauline strategy applies well to missioning among African indigenous churches. The Apostle kept moving. The only places he stayed very long were Antioch in Syria (Acts 11:26), Corinth in Europe (Acts 18:11), Ephesus in Asia Minor (Acts 19:8,10). And these were more like centers out of which Paul did his mission work. In spite of his being almost constantly on the move, he did not neglect the most important, certainly most difficult, task of church building strategy: the nurture of the church. He had a whole team of helpers who sometimes stayed behind, sometimes went ahead, and sometimes stayed with him to teach and preach (for example, Acts 20:1-6). But even more important than these helpers, Paul appointed leaders in every church from among new Christians (Acts 15:23). We failed most in teaching our Nima Temple students to become Bible teachers themselves. Though Paul did not stay long in one church, he visited them frequently and wrote letters. Missions and their missionaries have paid too little attention to the simple principle of identification and freedom. Even more important, new Christians must be taught to participate in the spiritual nurture of the church.

Opening more Bible classes

We were determined to expand the Good News Bible classes to churches open to us in the city, some of whom had never had any serious Bible study. Other things were happening simultaneously with the Nima Bible classes, and significantly related. Prophet F. A. Mills, founder and head of the Faith Brotherhood Praying Circle, attended our first classes. He is Bishop Krow's brother-in-law. Their wives are cousin-sisters. Prophet Mills worked closely with us in promoting Bible classes in the city. He was also the mainspring for the weekly Leaders Fellowship, described in Chapter 7. Members of the Fellowship requested classes in their churches. Though the Nima classes were open to all, leaders were wary of their members being drawn away.

Classes were opened at the Church of Bethel with Prophet James Appiah, then at the Church of the Messiah with Pastor E. M. Tetteh. Let Irene tell the story.

Pastor Tetteh said to me one day, "Come, teach the Bible to the women of my church." He started his church only a few years ago, but four times a week 500 to 800 people crowd into the too small, flat roofed, wooden structure, not far from the sea.

The first evening 300 women were present. We studied the Gospel of Mark. Interpreters had to be used for the three languages represented. To cover a few verses took what seemed like endless time.

Something had to be done. "Let us meet an hour earlier," I told the pastor. "Then only those who really want to study the Bible will come." The following week again 300 women, and a few men, were present. After repeated attempts we failed to reduce the number.

"Why not let me have a class of six or eight young women, who know English? I will teach them the Book of Mark and they in turn can teach others in their mother tongue," I finally said.

Studying Mark with Church of the Messiah.

Week after week we met in the pastor's house alongside the church at the going down of the sun. The sound of the sea was a constant reminder of God's love – strong, wide, deep, powerful, always there, always present. One day after sensing so deeply how God's love came through to the woman who touched the hem of Christ's garment, the class said, "Let's write a song about love." Together we wrote.

(Chorus)
O love, love, wonderful love,
O love, love, wonderful love,
O love, love, wonderful love,
The wonderful love of Jesus.

My body was broken, my body was ill,
But Jesus has touched me and now I am well;
My body was broken, my body was ill,
But Jesus has touched me and now I am well.

My soul was all darkened, from sin I was blind,
But Jesus has touched me, forgiveness is mine;
My soul was all darkened, from sin I was blind,
But Jesus has touched me, forgiveness is mine.

My body, my soul, belong unto you;
My Jesus I love you – I love you, I do!
My body, my soul, belong unto you;
My Jesus I love you – I love you, I do!

We struggled with the powers of demons, as it came through in the story of Legion. One of them asked, "Do you think that the evil spirits in Ghana know Jesus?" I learned again the power of witchcraft, sorcery and the whole spirit world in the minds of new Christians. I learned again what a thin veil separates the new from the old. But I learned too, their faith in the power of prayer. They would pray for anything, for anyone.

As I was about to leave Ghana I said, "Please pray for me very specially as I prepare to talk during a meeting of women in my home country." "When will the meeting be?" they asked. "It will be about this time, the time of

our Bible class. When the sun goes down over the sea, that will be the time," I said. "Madam," they said, "We will pray for you. Not only pray, we will fast too." And they did! Teacher, learner – who is who?

Later we experimented with having classes in neutral centers to alleviate the fears of leaders when their members went to a Bible class in another church. Prophet Mills organized one in a Methodist primary school near his church. Many members who attended were firm members of both Faith Brotherhood and the Methodist Church.[1] The Bible teacher was Pastor Paul Fynn, General Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ghana. Members of the class came from the spiritual as well as mission-founded churches. Dr. J. K. Agbeti, then on the staff at Trinity College, united Protestant seminary near Accra, conducted a class in an Anglican girls' middle school in the heart of the city on "Toward an African Theology." Mostly Anglican and Methodist church leaders attended; only a few indigenous church leaders came.

As classes developed we found the teachers. This was possible largely through a team from among the Leaders Fellowship who took responsibility to put things together. Some planning and organizing was necessary. Working together in a team, rather than one person trying to do everything, is good strategy.

There was much greater interest in teaching Bible classes in spiritual churches than we had anticipated. Here is a list of other teachers beginning in 1970: J. K. Agbeti (Methodist, Ghanaian); James Dretke (Lutheran); J. Stanley and Delores Friesen (Mennonite); Paul K. Fynn (Lutheran, Ghanaian); Erma Grove (Mennonite); Willard and Alice Roth (Mennonite); James Sarpei (Anglican, Ghanaian); Walter Schmidt (Lutheran); I. K. A. Thompson (Methodist, Ghanaian); Essien Timothy (Presbyterian, Nigerian). Returning to Accra midsummer 1973, we found some of these same persons still enthusiastically conducting Bible classes in spiritual churches.

God works miracles – today too!

Early after coming to Accra we were challenged to

attempt building a bridge between Trinity College and the spiritual churches. The need for children's Sunday schools in indigenous churches weighed heavily upon us. Trinity had more than seventy-five students; all of them have to do some practical work in churches. What might happen if some students could develop Sunday schools among interested spiritual churches? We saw two things happening. Children who had never had the privilege before could study the Bible. Just as great, students at Trinity would become acquainted with and learn to relate to the very kind of indigenous churches that they would find all about them in their future parishes. Here would be an ideal "learner, teacher: who's who?" setup.

Trinity had accepted about thirty students from a sister institution in Nigeria which had closed because of civil war. Relations between Ghana and Nigeria were strained. Placing Nigerian students in mission-founded Ghanaian churches for their practical work was difficult. Among the churches with whom we were working the problem was less acute. In several churches, for example, Nigerians were among the members.

One of the Nigerian students coming to Ghana was Essien Timothy, an Efik Presbyterian. The Efiks and the Ibos in southeastern Nigeria are traditional enemies. The Nigeria seminary was located in Umuahia, inside Iboland. When the school was closed Essien Timothy was caught inside Ibo country. At the risk of his life, he tried several times to get back to his home in Efik country, but failed. Lines were heavily guarded with soldiers. He was forcibly taken along with the Ibo seminary students to do relief and other work, until finally official arrangements were made for the Nigerian seminary students to finish their training in Ghana. Before beginning seminary training Essien Timothy had served with us on an interchurch, intertribal team working in Eastern Nigeria.[2] Imagine our joy when we discovered him in Ghana. We lost no time getting him busy developing a Sunday school in a spiritual church.

Trinity's principal, Dr. Eugene Grau, a United Church of Christ senior missionary serving with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ghana, graciously arranged for us to meet with students interested in doing practical work among indigenous churches. We were delighted when about fifteen

responded, among them a few Ghanaians.

Along with Bible classes scattered over the city, we now had over a dozen Trinity students available to open new Sunday schools. Interest was good. We had too much on our hands, but we were not alone. Within the Leaders Fellowship a team of three worked together to coordinate the ministry among indigenous churches: F. A. Mills contacted and kept in touch with the churches; Ed worked at finding and placing teachers; Paul K. Fynn took the responsibility to prepare the Sunday school curriculum and to orient the teachers to the curriculum and the churches in which they taught.

Every week Paul Fynn went to Trinity to meet the teachers, go through the lessons, and plan with them. He had a heavy load as the Secretary of his own church, teaching weekly Bible classes in an indigenous church center, and fulfilling pastoral duties. How could he do it all? Talk about Africans sacrificing themselves to mission — Paul Fynn demonstrated it. God uses dedicated men.

Among the men that started Sunday schools, a few couldn't make it. The adjustment was too great. One tried to reform the church in which he was serving. He failed. Though he asked forgiveness from the leaders, we had to transfer him. Most of the men had exciting stories to tell of their new experiences. They hadn't known what these churches were like; it was a tremendous learning experience for them. Some received liberal gifts. Essien Timothy stayed with the Church of Bethel until he completed his course. After the civil war, the church gave him money to travel back to Nigeria to try to locate his family whom he hadn't seen for about three years.

Mr. Shadrach, another Nigerian student, was assigned to Holy Church of the Lord when they requested a Sunday school. He, too, stayed until he graduated from Trinity. Before Shadrach's return to his Anglican church in Nigeria, Holy Church of the Lord had a big farewell with customary speeches and a gift. In his farewell speech, Mr. Shadrach told them he would find another student to take his place. But they replied, "No, we don't need outside teachers for our Sunday school any longer; we can carry on." While Mr. Shadrach was doing his job, he was also training others. This likely was the most significant and important thing he

did. This was exactly what they needed, someone to help them get started. Similar Trinity student success stories could be recounted. It is not difficult to visualize what will happen when these men get into their own parishes.

Erma Grove, a Mennonite colleague, went to Trinity to teach Christian education and assist with students' practical work at just the right time. Fynn's load was too heavy. She took over coordination of schoolwork and Bible classes in spiritual churches. Listen to Erma describe a Sunday morning observation visit:

> Sunday I decided to visit the Holy Church of the Lord, one of the eight independent churches in Accra where students from Trinity College help to operate Sunday schools. The building itself is a smaller temporary one built on the concrete floor of the permanent one being constructed around it. Inside at the front is a large picture of Christ. In the center of the one-step platform is a fenced-off curtain section for the leader and his assistant. On either side chairs face the audience for other leaders in the church.
>
> Members dress in white and if you are a woman you make sure your head scarf covers all your hair. Shoes are removed before entering the building. I asked that I might sit at the back so that I could slip out to observe the Sunday school, but they insisted that I take one of the chairs facing the audience. Here I watched the people as they entered. They found the place where they intended to sit but first they knelt to pray with their faces touching the floor. Then the primate entered followed by about twelve of his helpers. I was surprised to see Mr. Shadrach, the Trinity student, first in the procession after the primate. He was wearing one of their long white robes and sat with the primate in the more honored section on the platform.
>
> The service began and for an hour and a half there was mostly praise to God. This was done either in prayer with their faces touching the floor; or in song when everyone stood singing as many as ten verses to a song; or in scripture reading; or in drumming, dancing, singing

and clapping all together. All this was done in praise to the Lord. I have learned to clap along with them without feeling self-conscious. I noticed that Mr. Shadrach did also. I had come to this service feeling rather low. This time of praise was certainly good medicine for me.

Aware of His guiding presence

In making a rope, one works with all the strands simultaneously; in taking it apart, one strand at a time seems easier. Telling our story is more like taking a rope apart; one strand at a time seems less confusing. We are trying to tell our story chronologically, as it happened. But its different facets makes the telling more difficult. More than anything else, we are interested in a strategy study of the new day in mission. Let us try to summarize the strands developed in Chapter 4.

1. Without identifying there can be no real relationship, but in our identifying, one's own identity and integrity must be preserved. Identification with freedom is the ideal.
2. Working with others is so much more fruitful than working alone. A team approach can be most effective. Foreigners dominating persons and churches should be avoided like snakes. Study the Apostle Paul's approach in Acts.
3. Training others to do the job is ever so much more important than what we ourselves do. The foreign worker should graciously surrender his job to a national as early as possible.
4. God uses people. People are more important than programs.
5. God helps us to find the right people, the open doors, His plans. The Holy Spirit does this for us. We were constantly aware of His guiding presence; in this we rejoiced!

1. Dual church membership is common in West Africa. By design many spiritual churches do not schedule services Sunday mornings but emphasize Wednesday, Friday and Sunday evenings. This pattern permits persons to retain the prestige of membership in a mission-founded church, including assurance of a proper burial, and yet to share the warm spiritual resources stemming from an indigenous church.
2. See *The Uyo Story,* pp. 108-115.

5

GOING BEYOND THE CITY

Explorations for association beyond Accra, even beyond Ghana, began early after our arrival in the city. From the outset, both we and the Mennonite Board were thinking of a West Africa strategy of mission. We had little conception of how really big West Africa was, or how many indigenous churches there were, even in Ghana alone. Earlier we reported our first contact with Pastor Harry Y. Henry, a Dahomean and Methodist Church President. He had warmly invited us to Dahomey, to cooperate in his effort to work with the indigenous churches. We had not forgotten this invitation, but needed a bit more time to work it out. So many doors were open to us nearer at hand. Yet we were determined to get to Togo and Dahomey.

The red Morris Mini

The red Morris Mini belonged to Prophet Mills. He volunteered to take us wherever we wanted to go. African prophets happily share whatever they have. To materialistic, money minded westerners, African generosity is amazing. A time was finally arranged for Prophet Mills and Ed to travel east on a contact making trip. Prophet Mills is a great ecumenist; we valued his assistance. Bishop Krow gave us the names and addresses of Church of the Lord (Aladura) leaders in Aflao and Lome, both within his diocese, on the Ghana-Togo border. Like the capitals of most West African countries, Lome, the capital of Togo, is on the coast. Togo and her eastern neighbor Dahomey are Frensh-speaking, with some German colonial influence. These two countries

are not as developed as Ghana, yet most fascinating to tourists.

In Lome we met the Aladura leaders, who in turn introduced us to other indigenous leaders, including the organizing secretary for an all-churches effort. We were told there was competition between leaders for control. Would we come back and help them, perhaps for a week or two of Bible study? We did go back for another contact, and once Prophet Mills and several Ghanaian colleagues went together. We still feel badly, that aside from stopovers en route to Dahomey, we could not quite make it to Togo for a longer period. The need was there; the door was open.

We left Lome in the little red Mini, traveling to Cotonou along the gorgeously beautiful, palm tree lined coastal road. The thought fills us with nostalgic longing to see it again. The 100 or so miles from Lome to Cotonou seemed very short at the speed Mills drives. We had corresponded with Pastor Henry who arranged a conference of indigenous church leaders at the Methodist headquarters. About a dozen came, including several Methodist ministers, who seemed much at home among indigenous churches. Pastor Henry proved to be a tactful chairman. Obviously, he had the respect of the whole group. They discussed. We listened. They asked questions; we tried to answer. They wanted Bible classes in their respective churches. We settled for a ten-day period of united Bible classes sometime in April or May of 1970. Having completed our objectives, we returned to Accra – in the little red Mini.

A Bible institute on wheels

We needed a Francophone colleague. God provided before we asked. So often God goes ahead and prepares the way. This is one of the joys of working for him. Before we went to West Africa in 1969, the Mennonite Board wisely arranged for Marlin Miller to serve as a theological consultant, especially in the French-speaking countries. He holds a doctorate in theology from Heidelberg University. He and his family were involved in ministry among African students in Paris. Between 1970 and 1973, Marlin made four trips to West Africa; his first was scheduled in connection with the Dahomey Bible institute we had

planned with Pastor Henry and his associates.

With Marlin we arrived in Dahomey on April 25, 1970, in time for a preparatory meeting to make final plans for the Bible institute at the Methodist lay training center in Porto Novo. Porto Novo, ten miles east of Cotonou, is the capital of Dahomey. Thirty persons from nine different churches attended the planning session. The session named a representative committee to assume responsibility for further planning and follow-up.

The week long Bible institute opened Monday, April 27, lasting through Sunday, May 3. Morning sessions were devoted to the early chapters of Genesis and evenings to the Gospel of Mark. Ed was responsible for the studies in Genesis and Marlin for Mark. On alternate days, morning and evening sessions were used primarily for discussion, rather than simply presentations by the leaders. Attendance varied from six to twenty-five persons. Usually eight or ten participated in the morning and between fifteen and twenty in the evening; the variation was due largely to work schedules.

Saturday evening was given to sharing among the various churches, so that groups could become better acquainted as well as to evaluate the Bible institute experience. Sunday morning participants attended their own churches with a group meeting late Sunday afternoon. The Sunday meeting followed a traditional Protestant worship pattern with songs, Bible readings and a sermon by Ed. A long period of spontaneous testimony and singing, however, followed the planned service.

The Dahomey churches participating in the Bible institute were: **African Methodist Elijah**, a separation from the established Methodist Church; **Apostolic**, related to the British Apostolic Church; **Celestial Christianity**, the only truly indigenous church in Dahomey, founded by Samuel Joseph Oschoffa in 1947; **Cherubim and Seraphim**, one of the three Aladura churches founded in Nigeria which came to Dahomey about 1933; **Eglise Protestante Methodiste**, the main Protestant church in Dahomey and related to British Methodism; **Native African Bodawa**, came to Dahomey about 1900 and claims to be the oldest indigenous church in the country; **Orumula Adulawa**, an indigenous African (not Christian) religion called "Fa" which came to Porto

Novo from Nigeria in 1945; and **Primitive Christianity.**

The Dahomey institute might best be evaluated in terms of the objectives we had spelled out in a March 21, 1970, letter to Pastor Henry:

1. To experiment in cooperation with the Eglise Protestante Methodiste in a lay and congregational leadership training program primarily for indigenous churches.

2. To work towards training leaders of these churches who will immediately begin to teach what they learn in their own churches. The courses will be designed with this in mind.

3. Direct inductive Bible teaching will be the emphasis in the courses, on the level of the ability and needs of the students who come. We will not teach about the Bible. We will teach the Bible, presenting God's message revealed through his people and his church.

Participants themselves were positive. During the period for spontaneous testimony on Sunday afternoon favorable expressions were given. The institute had been helpful; they wanted more, perhaps in about six months. Wisely, the representative committee chosen earlier was made responsible for future planning.

In his ability to understand and relate to people Pastor Henry was tremendous. In working with all of us he used an indirect approach. He incorporated his African brethren in all discussions and decisions. He had a deep desire to do something about the separatists, most of whom came right out of his own Methodist Church. He wanted them to make progress. He gave no indication of wanting to win them back. Perhaps best of all, he understood that these rebellious churches had something to teach Methodists. He could see both sides of issues. He was astute and wise.

From the point of view of understanding the problems of interchurch relationships, the institute experience was extremely valuable. There was such a wide range of churches, from the mission-established Methodist Church to the Fa, an African religion whose leaders were the most faithful of all in their attendance in Bible classes and meetings. In between the interested Methodists and Fa there were the Celestial Christianity attendants, cooler in interest and attendance. As the only truly indigenous church in Dahomey, they felt understandably threatened.

Though Pastor Henry (along with the two of us) was concerned to include the Fa, most of the other participants were opposed to the non-Christian Fa attending our Bible classes. From our viewpoint, their coming to Bible classes provided opportunity for indirect evangelism, so different from missionary methods of an earlier day. While we were in India, late in 1972, we came across two incidents of Brahmin Hindus studying the Bible in small groups. In one case a Brahmin convert to Christianity was leading, in the other the Brahmins were studying alone. The full impact of hundreds of years of Christian preaching and teaching may be just being felt, now that the missionaries are leaving.

Another principle of strategy involved in the Dahomey institute has to do with various indigenous churches relating to each other. From each other they learn more than we can teach. The kind of interaction taking place when different indigenous leaders meet in conference is important as the churches move toward maturity and unity in Christ. This is why we have always been slow to work in one church only. Correctives can best be worked out through interchurch dialogue.

One of the greatest mistakes was lack of adequate follow-through. The representative committee in Dahomey found difficulty functioning. There is a narrow margin between doing too much or too little in working with indigenous churches. A situation must be sensed intuitively and relationships developed accordingly. In Dahomey we veered on the side of too little contact, our taking too little initiative.

We never made it back to Dahomey. When Marlin Miller returned in October, a new planning committee was appointed to get things moving. Dr. and Mrs. Miller returned for another visit during the summer of 1971. It was becoming clearer that short, intermittent visits could not effectively meet the needs. Finding suitable persons was the problem. Unless mission boards have available the right kind of persons, it is better not to start programs with indigenous churches.

Abetifi

Prophet Mills and Ed were again in the red Morris Mini,

along with Pastor Tetteh of Church of the Messiah, this time on the way to Ramseyer Training Center in Abetifi, 100 miles northwest of Accra. We had scheduled a meeting with Paul Rutishauser and I. H. Frempong to talk about a plan to open their Presbyterian study program for lay leaders to the indigenous churches. This was a new direction for a mission church institution.

Back in 1964 a study committee had urged the Bawku presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana to initiate contact with spiritual churches, both to learn and to teach. From the spiritual churches, the committee suggested, Presbyterians might learn their way of worship, hymn tunes, healing, emphasis on the Spirit, feeling of community, fasting, testimony and prayers, and stewardship. "We may be able to teach them something too; it is two-way traffic," the report said, noting that spiritual churches lack a sense of belonging to the world church and serious Bible study. "Let there be no iron curtain between them and us. Keep the borders open! Beware of petrified denominations."

A year later the Presbyterian Church of Ghana synod assigned persons to study in more depth "sects, prayer groups and Bible study groups." Both Rutishauser, a Swiss missionary, and Frempong, a Ghanaian pastor, were involved in preparing the comprehensive report, "Prayer Groups and Sects," issued in 1966. The report details reasons for rapid growth in spiritual churches; considers how prophets get started, why people follow them, how they develop big churches, what characterizes their churches; criticizes Bible study and prayer groups within the Presbyterian Church; and suggests what the spiritual movements might teach those who are ready to learn.[1]

It is not our purpose to evaluate the committee's proposals in detail, especially since we do not have more recent synodical decisions at hand. Rather, we are interested in evidence of changing attitudes which finally led Abetifi to open its training courses to leaders of indigenous churches. The Bawku study was one step. The 1966 document, accepted by the synod and circulated in Presbyterian congregations throughout Ghana, was more than a step in the direction we and the churches we were working with wanted to move.

The document proposed that the Ramseyer Center "should provide a forum where discussions with prophets and leaders can take place. Many of them are keen to receive guidance from the older churches, especially on exposition of the Bible." This proposal was made in 1966. Now four years later, we were going round and round up the Abetifi mountain in Prophet Mill's Mini at an impossible speed. We made the top in time for our appointment. The significance of our meeting excited us. They, too, seemed eager as their earlier proposal was about to be put into operation. I. H. Frempong interpreted the training program; we went home to the churches to explain what we had seen and heard.

Theological Education Fund made available a grant for the training of indigenous church leaders. To know how much outside assistance should really be given is difficult. Too much financial help is definitely harmful. The committee administering the fund decided that TEF and the trainees or their churches would each pay one-half of the twenty cedi total. Ten signed up, but only six showed up for the first course, arranged to be held from November 30 to December 14, 1970. The second course was held a year later. Both Pastor Frempong and the indigenous church students were enthusiastic about what happened. The dialogue between the two groups of students was reported to have been excellent and mutually profitable.

The white cross

On the peak of a low mountain range in Ghana near the Togo border stands a beautiful white cross, easily visible on a clear day from the government rest house at Amedzofe. As Ed stood with Prophet Mills and Pastor Tetteh out in front of the rest house, the clouds were lifting at evening time and we could look past the foothills and forests. Far, far distant we could see Lake Volta, largest man-made lake in the world. Turning to the right between the clouds, the evening sun was shining on the white cross in the distance. Then Prophet Mills told us this story:

In the year 1965, on September 14, I went to Mount Gemi at Amedzofe for fasting and prayer. I arrived at

4:30 in the afternoon and went first to greet the chief. That evening I started my fasting of seven days without food or water. I stayed at the foot of the cross day and night, through sunshine and rain, fasting and praying. In the presence of God, one is not conscious of cold or wet or hunger.

On the third day a woman brought her mad child and by the grace of God he was healed. This wonder brought the whole village trooping up the mountain for healing and messages. To my surprise other surrounding villages were informed and they also came up to the mountain to test the power of God.

I wish you had been there to see things for yourself. They brought the blind and crippled children and in the name of the Lord Jesus they were healed. The chief of the village also came with some problems and those were solved.

I left there on the eighth day and returned to Accra with joy and happiness. May the name of God be praised.

We turn to discuss another kind of relationship to the healing churches, as indigenous groups are sometimes called, which may seem to have little to do with theological education. As the spiritual churches see it, healing is a practice of the kind of theology they believe in: their understanding of God and how he works, of man and God's relation to him. Isn't that what theology is all about? In this kind of learner-teacher experience, we again, as so often in Africa, were learning theology.

Both the spiritual churches and the pentecostals practice the gifts of the Spirit. Between the two, however, there is a difference. In Africa we have had a lot of fellowship with both, but here we want to talk about our own experiences within spiritual churches. Although we have fellowshiped among them for fifteen years in meetings where speaking in tongues, prophesying, healings of many kinds and casting out demons were all common occurrences, we ourselves have not spoken in tongues. Some of our charismatic friends have told us: You must try; just start uttering

something, it will eventually happen; you have the latent gift, let it develop.

We want to be open to God, to whatever gifts he wants to give, to whatever he wants to do in our lives. If anything miraculous is going to happen, it will be God working; of this we are certain. Among manifestations of gifts, we have seen the genuine and the phony. Somehow we feel that screaming at God, as did the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, is the wrong approach. We have seen many different ways prophets have tried to heal. Some we could not appreciate.

To distinguish the power of evil from the power of the Holy Spirit working in a given situation, our prophet friends tell us, is one of their greatest problems. For this they need the gift of discernment. There are other problems; but problems do not deny the reality of the gifts of the Spirit of God. How does one receive the gifts? The best and simplest answer to this most disturbing question is Peter's in Acts 2:38, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." We seek not gifts but The Gift in ever increasing measure. In continuing experiences of the Holy Spirit we have found the words of Jesus himself, in Luke 11:9-13, most assuring: The Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. Our greatest concern is to keep receiving more and more of The Gift.

Our charismatic friends in both pentecostal and spiritual churches have taught us valuable lessons. God gives not only the gift of the Holy Spirit, he also gives gifts, "the same Spirit apportions to each one individually as he wills" (I Cor. 12:11). Too often we have not recognized the gifts that God has already given us to be used. Likely, God hasn't given us more because we have not exercised what we already have. We believe in miracles. God has done too many in our family to disbelieve. Some of the phony healings we have seen happening in some indigenous churches are not of the Holy Spirit. Another spirit is working, not of God. But we have been both participants and recipients in beautiful healing services. During these years in Africa, we have learned a new theology and practice of the Gospel. Africans have taught us.

Prophet Doh (center) with other leaders in the White Cross Society lead a procession at the Society headquarters in Etodome.

A healing village

Occasionally there comes inner guidance of mind and heart compelling one to do something. So it was this time. Returning to Accra from Amedzofe, we came upon a rather large church on the left in the village of Etodome. Beside the church stood a tall white tower, and atop the tower, a white cross. None of us were familiar with the church. It turned out to be the headquarters for the White Cross Society. Prophet Frank Kwadzo Doh came out to greet us warmly, speaking by turn in Ewe and French, neither of which any of us understood. A casual, unplanned meeting with the founding head of a spiritual church developed into a lasting friendship.

Many have asked, how do you get in? How do you relate to African churches? The question exposes the problem. You don't break in; you open up! The African, by nature, is open and friendly and generous. It is rather we who are afraid and closed. We are afraid of developing relationships that will cost us something, that may make demands of us that we cannot handle, demands to which we are not prepared to respond. Their doors are open, ours more frequently closed.

Prophet Doh was cordial and friendly. Through repeated contacts in Etodome and Accra, we came to know him as a simple, sincere man of God, humble and of high integrity. Unfortunately this cannot be said of all prophets and healers. Too often we find them healing in the name of Jesus, but giving glory to their own healing power and building earthly kingdoms for themselves. In such cases how does one handle the relationship problem? We wish we knew. Spiritual power in the form of gifts of the Spirit is such a great temptation (see Acts 8:17-24).

Even a prophet of integrity must struggle with the problem of his spiritual power. Prophet Doh has had frequent visions, starting when he was still a young boy. He does not easily talk about these things. He has heard the voice of God speaking to him. He has received gifts of the Spirit to heal, prophesy, speak in tongues. . . . His prophetic-healing role has been further authenticated by a series of symbolic predictive visions. He humbly accepts the prophetic role that God has given him. Through the years people by the thousands have come for healing, for messages, and to have divers problems solved by this man of God.

Notwithstanding, Prophet Doh has remained humble, though he is autocratic in the administration of his church. Even detailed decisions he makes by visions and direct revelations from God. In any service much of the liturgy is

conducted in tongues. His humility must not be taken for weakness. He knows he has been called of God; he has a mission to perform. God is calling him to reform his mother church, the Evangelical Prebyterian. He is seeking to make the various spiritual ministries a part of the life and practice in the church in which he grew up.

Prophet Doh is also a man of peace. Though forced out of his church, he seems to have done what he could to maintain cordial relations. He and his members still consider themselves Presbyterians. Earlier his movement was known as The Prayer and Healing Group of the Presbyterian Church at Etodome. Later it adopted the name The White Cross Society. Calling itself a society rather than a church is in contrast to most splintering indigenous churches, who tend, immediately when relations are broken with a parent body, to take on a new name with merely a word or two added to the old one. It seems that the society wants to do everything it can to keep the door open for possible future reconciliation.[2]

By invitation of Prophet Doh we visited Etodome again in August 1973, during our return visit to Ghana. After the morning service and an abundant meal he took us meandering through the beautifully hutted village, where the sick may come to live until they are well again – without money and without price! But they must keep their houses clean and in repair. If the time gets too long, they are urged to build their own homes on land freely provided across the ditch dividing the sick from the well. How all the members of the community supported themselves was not clear, but there seemed to be plenty of work for all. The people are happy.

Sloping on down towards the valley there is much rich land belonging to the Prophet. He is experimenting with all kinds of crops, fruit trees and herbs. He is a herbalist, believing God can heal in various ways. When necessary he will also send his patients to hospitals. We were led down a winding path, swept clean daily, to the Prophet's private sanctuary where he goes for meditation and prayer early each morning. In the heart of the growing village is a beautiful primary school for the community children. No wonder many want to stay on in this atmosphere of brotherly concern and fellowship after they are healed.

Water from the Jordan

Once earlier we witnessed the ordination of three newly-appointed ministers in Etodome. As usual in his liturgies, Prophet Doh frequently spoke in tongues. Much use was made of symbolism. Oil and water have special significance. In his anointing, in addition to the use of oil, the Prophet poured small amounts of sacred water from the River Jordan. We needed not guess how he got it. Through the years an unusual friendship has developed between Prophet Doh and the Israeli ambassador to Ghana. Christopher Agbalenyo, head of the Society's Accra branch, and the Prophet's right-hand lay leader, told us how it happened:

Before the three-day Israeli-Arab war in 1967, Prophet Doh had seen a vision which indicated that there was going to be a war, but that the ambassador need not be alarmed, because from the vision it was clear that Israel would easily and quickly win. The war came. In three days it was all over. In the eyes of the ambassador, who with his wife are Orthodox Jews, Prophet Doh was just like one of their own Old Testament prophets – whose predictions came true! Was the close relation between an African prophet and an Orthodox Jew so strange after all?

In 1973 there was another Israeli-Arab war that did not end so easily, nor so quickly. At first the relations between Ghana and Israel were strained, then broken. The Israeli ambassador had to go home. On the eve of his leaving we were invited to the Agbalenyo home for a farewell dinner in honor of the ambassador and his delightful wife. The meal was a delicious combination of European and African cuisine; the conversation was happy and free. The evening ended with younger members of the household singing African spirituals about Jesus the Savior. Beautifully and unoffensively, they gave their simple testimony in song.

Several times we had attended one of the society's midweek services in Accra where Mr. Agbalenyo officiates. But this one was to be a special healing service. To really understand the dynamics of African indigenous churches one must attend their healing services. Even though we have attended many, there still seems so little that we understand. When we arrived with our interpreter, John Loglo, a faithful White Cross member studying theology at

the University of Ghana, about seventy-five white-robed worshipers had started the meeting. Their worship is subdued, different from most indigenous churches; we like it. There was singing, reading of the Scriptures and prayer. Ed spoke. There were testimonies. The choir sang beautifully.

It was time for the healing to begin. Mr. Agbalenyo was in charge, though he does not have the particular gift of healing. Someone placed four chairs nearby, two in front and two to our side. John sat between us to interpret what was going on. Anointers (persons with the gift of healing) came forward and sat on the four chairs. The invitation for healing went out to the congregation. One by one members slowly came forward, orderly and without confusion.

Soon persons dressed in street clothes, obviously not members, started coming in the door from the outside. They crowded in the back waiting their turn, knowing that they too were welcome. More than fifty seekers came forward, kneeling before the anointers in turn, whispering their problems to their healer.

Not all had physical illnesses. Their needs were not so different from people anywhere in the world seeking help and healing, not only of the body, but also of the soul and peace of mind. For healing of all kinds the African goes to the healer. That evening the healers listened sympathetically as the troubled ones divulged in whispers why they had come. Regardless of the kind of problem, the patient was anointed with oil on the forehead and prayed for. In some cases it took several anointings and several prayers before the person would return to his seat satisfied that he was healed.

But the evil spirit persisted

It took a long time before all the seekers were prayed for. About ten o'clock a young woman came forward and knelt before one of the anointers. She was anointed and prayed for, then returned to her seat. In a few moments she was back, kneeling before a different healer. The first healer had not helped her. The method was repeated again and again; each time she would return to the front until she had had all four healers anoint her. The woman found no relief. In desperation she refused to return to her seat

until they healed her. Then all four began to work with her, anointing her and praying for her, but the woman's distress continued. The situation was dramatic, the meeting tense.

Finally a man came forward from the audience dressed in casual street attire (John Loglo explained that he was a well-known anointer visiting from another branch of the church) and took one of the anointer's seats. He too anointed and prayed, and prayed and anointed without visible effects. John confided that the woman had a strong evil spirit that refused to come out. At last they admitted defeat. The meeting closed and we returned home.

Meeting Mr. Agbalenyo some days later, we asked what happened to the woman. He quickly replied that she was all right. As soon as she confessed her sin, the evil spirit left her. He said that the woman some months earlier had aborted a child and that the spirit of the child had come back to trouble her. Confession of sin is the first step to healing, he explained.

Jesus too dealt with man's sin problem first. He knew that any healing that did not include the whole man was not real. Prophet Doh begins his healing ministry in Etodome with a worship service requiring the people to confess their sins (see Mark 2:1-12). When asked, "What do you consider the most important aspect of your ministry?", he quickly replied, "Nurturing believers out in the various branches." Dealing with the problem of man's sin and nurturing believers reveals deep insight into what it means to be an authentic prophet-healer. Prophet Doh learned from Jesus.

This is African theology

Our Bible institute in Dahomey was an experiment in theological education on wheels. It was good and had many advantages over fixed institutions set up by missions. But still we were western teachers teaching African indigenous leaders our theology. What else could we teach?

Abetifi was a different approach to theological education for both indigenous and mission-founded church leaders. It too was good, represented real progress, and could well continue.

How does Etodome relate to Dahomey and Abetifi? What did Etodome teach us about theology for indigenous churches? Etodome sharpened the issues. At Etodome the learning process was reversed. We were learning African theology and its application to the problems of life with Prophet Doh as the teacher. In just such Etodome settings will a Christian theology and its practice be worked out in Africa.

Can western teachers contribute to the process? They must certainly wait with the Dahomey and Abetifi experiments in theological education until they have first gone to the Etodomes and sat at the feet of the Prophet Dohs. Along with some other indigenous leaders, Prophet Doh has doubts about the contribution we can make in teaching theology to their churches. John Loglo, for example, studies theology at the University of Ghana rather than at nearby Trinity College. The White Cross Society chose not to participate in the development of the Good News Training Institute, established for indigenous churches (see Chapter 9).

Like all founders of churches, Prophet Doh has a strong sense of the call of God to bring about reformation, both in his mother church and among the other indigenous churches. He receives direct revelations from God. The need to confirm these messages by a balanced understanding of the Scriptures, or by other prophets and leaders of churches, does not seem too strong. Prophet Doh periodically calls his leaders to the Etodome headquarters for training, which he himself gives. Ed was unexpectedly invited to give the opening address for such a week of training. The Books of Timothy and Titus provided the right background for the occasion.

We must open the doors of our own minds and hearts and wait, slowly developing personal relationships. Opportunities for fellowship, dialogue and even theological education will come. We were learning.

1. The complete report is available from the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Box 1800, Accra, Ghana.

2. For a fuller description of the White Cross Society see Baeta, C. G., *Prophetism in Ghana.* London: SCM Press, 1962. Chapter 6.

6

MUST SPLINTERING GO ON?

This chapter looks at the problem of division within African churches. But real insight can come only by looking at the question in broader context. Schism is not unique to a few small religious groups in West Africa. It is an age-old problem. The struggle to bring about change and renewal within social and religious groups has been going on from the beginning of time. The tension between status quo and change is the story of mankind seeking progress. We are attempting here to evaluate our own experiences with groups with whom we have had close fellowship. Because of the vast number of churches in Africa, we are trying to avoid generalizations.[1] To sharpen the question: Does the growing proliferation among the indigenous churches with whom we have had fellowship signify renewal, as some would say, or does it indicate a weakness in the body of Christ, as others would argue?

A universal human experience

For anyone who has traveled in Africa, or is the least bit informed about what is happening in the church in Africa today, the fact of schism needs no documentation. New Christian churches (call them sects, splinter churches, indigenous movements, or whatever you prefer) are increasing in fantastic numbers not only in Africa, but in many parts of the world; no one can keep up-to-date. Further, modern movements in Christianity are not unrelated to what is also happening in modern non-Christian religions.[2] We should recall also the European Reformation of the sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries, with resulting denominations and their splinters. Charismatic movements among both Christians and non-Christians all over the world are also part of the picture. So West African spiritual churches must be studied and understood in their similarity to world-wide religious movements, past and present, Christian and non-Christian. Movements towards reformation, change and renewal are universal and a real part of what makes humanity tick.

Aladura case study

Let us turn to our personal experiences in observing what happens in churches who seek reformation and renewal through schism. We would argue that schism does not result necessarily in renewal; it is not quite that simple.

The Church of the Lord (Aladura) will be our case study since it is the spiritual church with which we have had the closest contact, although we learned to know others quite intimately. It is an international church with headquarters at Ogere, Nigeria, where it was founded by J. O. Oshitelu, in 1930. There are now congregations in Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, London and New York City.

When we were in Monrovia in June 1969, Primate Adejobi, who had founded the Church of the Lord (Aladura) in Sierra Leone in 1947, was consecrating Sierra Leonean Bishop S. A. Floode to replace a former Nigerian as head of the church. The Sierra Leoneans were demanding their own head, though he was not made an apostle. A similar problem arose in Liberia.

Apostle Kalesanwo invited us to Freetown for the annual Mount Tabborrar festival in August 1969. We quickly discovered that national unrest had exploded, splitting the church. An August 22 newspaper carried the details.

> Hundreds of delegates and ministers from several branches of the Church of the Lord have started to converge in Monrovia to join the mother church on Center Street for the annual observance of the Mount Tabborrar fast-breaking service, which begins tonight at seven and will be climaxed on Sunday with a message to the world, including prophecy for 1970. This programme will be led by His Grace, the Most Rev. Apostle Kalesanwo.
>
> On the other hand, a secessionist but nonetheless influential group has challenged the authority of Kalesanwo in officiating at this year's Tabborrar festival, and thus two messages and two different prophecies for 1970 will be heard from what is assumed to be one and only one church.
>
> In challenging the authority and ecclesiastical supremacy of Apostle Kalesanwo, Bishop David Fyneah, founder and head of the Samuel Oduwole Memorial Church in Logantown, Bushrod Island, said in a widely circulated public announcement, "The year 1969 is a peculiar year in that the usual annual Tabborrar Festival of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) is divided into two distinct ceremonies. One part of those ceremonies is being conducted by Bishop David M. Fyneah formerly known as Warden David Fyneah at Point Four Beach. This split is the outcome of maladministration by the present Apostle J. I. Kalesanwo in ecclesiastical matters. Now if you really want to have spiritual satisfaction and enjoy Tabborrar in its true and old-fashioned sense as was celebrated by the late Apostle Samuel Oduwole then come to Point Four Beach."

We attended Apostle Kalesanwo's celebration. The problem in Sierra Leone and Liberia was the same. The Aladura churches were seeking autonomy. But the country where the founding Primate Oshitelu and his successor, Primate Adejobi, have had greatest difficulty with national feelings is Ghana. Here are excerpts from two Accra dailies dated June 2, 1971.

> The Kumasi branch of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) has been temporarily closed for services following disturbances which broke out among its congregation recently. Mr. J. K. Anane, General Warden of the church, said in Kumasi that the trouble started when the Primate of the Church in Nigeria, Dr. Adeleke Adejobi, sent a four-man delegation from Nigeria to Ghana to make policy changes in the church.

Mr. Anane said the Ghanaian elders objected to the arbitrary use of power by the Primate because the Ghanaian church is autonomous. He said the leader of the delegation, Apostle Festus Olanipekun, announced to the dismay of the congregation that the Ghanaian head of the church, Apostle E. A. Ofosu, was being transferred to the United States.

The Primate also ordered that Bishop S. K. Adofo, deputy head of the Ghana church, should be transferred to the United Kingdom. Mr. Anane said that what was very shocking about the whole transfer was that the two Ghanaian leaders were not consulted. According to Mr. Anane, it was a gross violation of the constitution of the Ghana branch of the church which became autonomous in 1965 (*Daily Graphic*).

Mr. Anane said that the autonomy granted to the Ghana branch enabled the Ghanaians to acquire assets which the Nigerian Primate had wanted to send to Nigeria. According to him the two Ghanaians being transferred refused to go because there was an attempt by the Primate to replace them with his own chosen elders from Nigeria.

Mr. Anane observed that the Ghana church would not allow the independence granted it to be abused and had strongly protested against the presence of the Primate in the country "who is seeking to divide the membership." He said it was very disgraceful that the church worshipers should be arrested in a church.

The Primate recently created a new diocese for Ghana, thus separating the Accra Region from the national body. According to Mr. Anane the church has eighty branches throughout the country with over 60,000 members. Meanwhile Mr. Anane has appealed to the members to be tolerant and pray unceasingly for peace *(Ghanaian Times)*.

The Kumasi conference which ended in confusion was Ghana-wide for it included delegates present from all the eighty congregations. Through the *Graphic* and *Times* reports, the underlying differences came through clearly. Yet many facets to the story did not come out in the newspapers. Tension did not just suddenly erupt. Two problems were basic.

The major issue concerned the Primate's relationship with the Ghanaian church which was determined to maintain its independence in both financial and organizational matters. The quarrel had little to do with spiritual and doctrinal issues. The Primate was asking that Ghana churches send money to help support his projects, particularly the church's newly established theological seminary in Lagos. He requested that Ghana provide students and funds to support them, both of which they refused. Compared to Nigeria, the Ghana churches are wealthy, but that was not the real issue. Ghana was insisting on freedom to control its own money, to make its own decisions. This had not been the policy of the heads of the church. Primate Adejobi, following the missionary strategies of his predecessor, was running into difficulties. The Kumasi conference ended in one of the biggest secessions experienced by the Church of the Lord (Aladura) in its foreign missions history.

The other issue which did not surface in the newspaper reports, was the national power struggle between Apostle Ofosu, national head of the church, and Bishop Krow, head of the Accra area. Strong feelings of competition between Kumasi and Accra developed early, from the time that Apostle Adejobi came from Sierra Leone to establish the church in Kumasi and Apostle Oduwole came from Liberia to mission in the Accra area. Both men were strong personalities. Then too, as a Ghanaian, Bishop Krow has strong national feelings. He is strongly in favor of more independence from Nigeria. At the same time he refuses to be controlled or come under the administration of the Kumasi national head. Was he not trained in Ogere by Founder Oshitelu himself? Though Bishop Krow had not founded the Accra church, he had a lot to do with its development, including the building of Nima Temple.

There were, then, two problems the Lagos administrator of the church had to try to work through: the opposition of the Ghana church to his administration and the internal struggle of the Ghana leadership.

To squelch the open rebellion Primate Adejobi did three

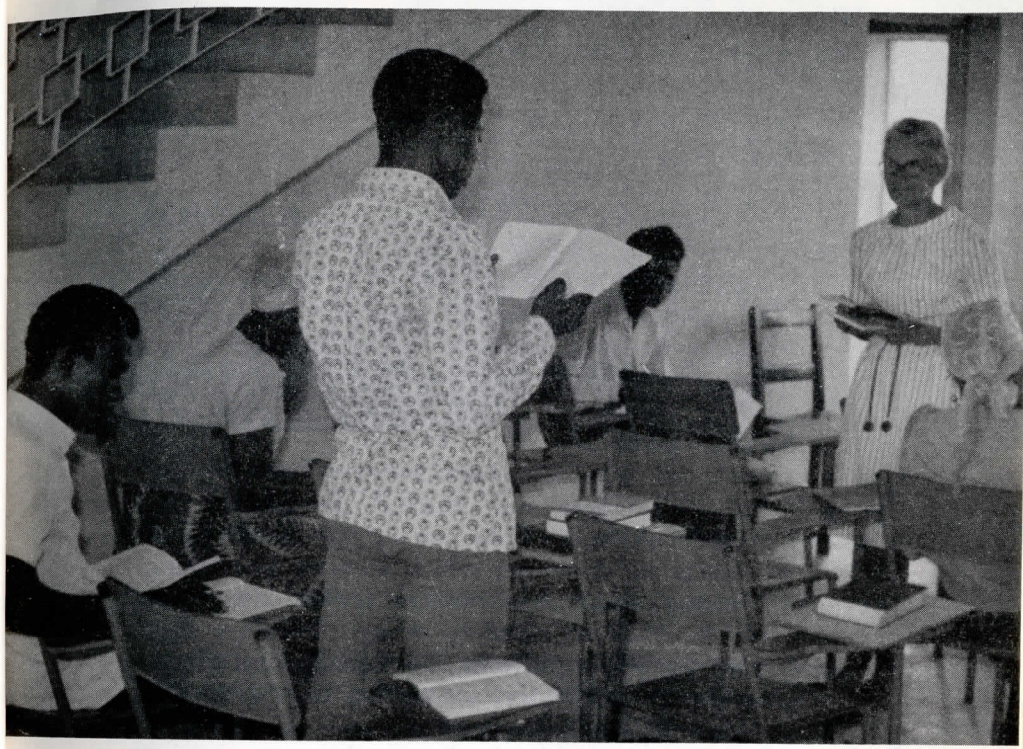
things. First, he transferred the Ghanaians, Apostle Ofosu to the U.S. and his assistant, Bishop Adofo to the U.K., replacing them with Nigerians. Both Ghanaians refused their transfers. The Primate's motives were hardly hidden to the Ghana church and its leaders. Second, rather than going to the Kumasi conference himself, he sent four delegates from Nigeria to represent him. The attempted reconciliation failed. The Nigerians could not understand the Ghana languages. Pandemonium broke loose. Finally, the Primate set up two dioceses for Ghana, one headquartered in Kumasi and the other in Accra. The then Archdeacon, Solomon Krow, was consecrated bishop and made head of the new Accra-Aflao diocese. This move was obviously designed to settle the Accra-Kumasi controversy.

What can we learn?

What does this story have to do with what we are writing? Certainly our objective has not been to highlight the problems that the Church of the Lord (Aladura) faces in its worthy goal of becoming an international church. There is so much that we could learn from the Aladura struggle that could be helpful, not only to the African spiritual churches, but to African mission-founded churches as well.

We feel that our attitude needed to be sensitive and sympathetically understanding. We were relating to and working with the Church of the Lord (Aladura), not to convert them to our denomination, but to strengthen their efforts in becoming a strong Christian church with an international witness. We were not interested in exploiting their inner conflicts. We wanted to be a reconciling influence within the church, and among all divided churches if that was possible.

One of the things blocking progress of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) concerns organization. Centralization of authority is one way to administer, and has some points in its favor. It can make control relatively easy and help keep the organization operating smoothly and its programs moving. Still there are problems for any leader who uses the authoritarian approach. If only African churches had searched their cultural heritage for leadership clues. A chief in an Africa society does not rule dictatorially. He has



Strengthening the Church of the Lord in their efforts in becoming a strong Christian church with an international witness.

counselors who help him to discover the consensus of his people, then makes his decisions.

The Church of the Lord (Aladura) has almost constantly suffered inner conflict and secessions, as Harold W. Turner has recounted in a careful and scholarly manner.[3] We can add our own observations from contacts with the Church and its secessions from 1969 to 1971 and again in 1973. Our experiences were mostly in Accra, while Turner wrote mostly about Kumasi. We associated with two Accra leaders

who early seceded from the Church – I. K. E. Sagoe, founder and primate of the Holy Church of the Lord (Ghana) and A. K. Yamoah, founder and patriarch of the Church of the Lord (Ghana). Bible classes have been going on in Primate Sagoe's church since 1971. Our experiences in the breakaway churches document our contention that administrative problems have much to do with spiritual churches not being able to hold together.

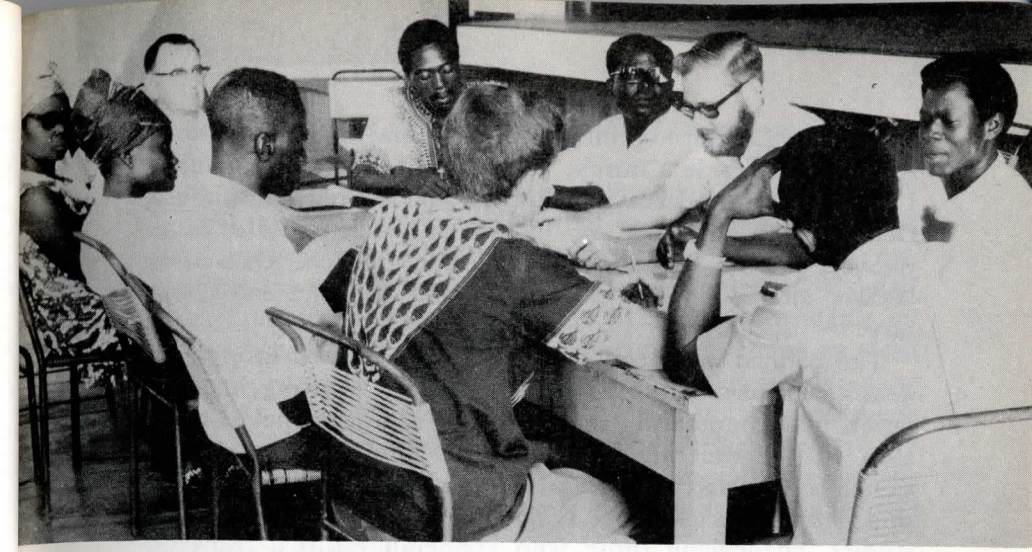
We are ready to participate in mission among the thousands of independent churches scattered all over Africa. Learning to know them – as they are – is the first step. Of course they have problems; their continuous and growing proliferation by splintering is only one. Many have self-seeking leaders. Some are so traditional, so syncretistic, they can hardly be called Christian. But you will also find among them reformation and renewal movements that would be a credit to most of the old historic churches. All have some things in common, which is most heartening. They are seeking wider relationships within the world Christian church. They are open to change. They are eager to make progress. They welcome assistance from anyone who is sympathetically sensitive in relating to and working with them.

Thank God, a new wind is blowing on the vast continent of Africa. Among some of the best leaders of the older churches, there is a growing acceptance of their more indigenous African brethren. There is hope. We must work with what is happening, with situations as they are. There is schism from the older churches; and there is schism constantly going on within the separatist churches themselves. We need to understand and work within the total context.

1. See Barrett, David B. *Schism and Renewal in Africa.* Nairobi: Oxford, 1968. Barrett's estimate of 6000 indigenous churches in Africa may be too conservative. Certainly for example, there are more in Ghana than the 200 he suggests. Our own experience documents what many researchers contend: Contemporary religious movements in Africa are growing so rapidly that statistics are outdated quickly. Although not the major cause, recurring splintering is one of the reasons for the growing numbers.

2. See Fuchs, Stephen. *Rebellious Prophets.* Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1965, and Oosterwal, Gottfried. *Modern Messianic Movements.* Elkhart, Ind.; Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1973.

3. Turner, V. 1, Chs. 5-8.



Accra Leaders Fellowship 1970.

7

THE LEADERS FELLOWSHIP SHOWS THE WAY

Significant contacts and relationships were developing simultaneously. Prophet Mills initiated introductions with other indigenous leaders and their churches in the Accra area and beyond. He was personally acquainted with so many. Keeping in close touch with other leaders was one of his major interests. He seemed to be one others easily trusted. Before we knew what was happening, a nucleus of these men in Accra was forming an informal fellowship. The group was small, and represented the smaller churches at the outset. Later Brother Yeboa-Korie, founder of the larger Eden Revival Church, participated.

How it started

The Accra Leaders Fellowship met first on April 8, 1970, at the Accra Community Center. Fourteen persons representing ten churches were present: E. M. Tetteh, Church of Messiah; Ben G. P. Aidoo, Divine Pentecostal Church; S. A. Mensah and Agyekum, United Church of Lord; J. K. Appiah and F. K. Erwuah, Church of Bethel; S.

K. Krow, Church of the Lord (Aladura); L. K. Godson, Abundant Miracle Church; F. A. Mills and H. B. Adjei, Faith Brotherhood Praying Circle; Paula Warren, Lighthouse Deliverance Church; R. C. Lawson, Church of Lord; E. I. Weaver and W. E. Roth, Mennonite Church. Conveners Weaver and Mills were elected interim chairman and secretary.

The official minutes by F. K. Erwuah record interesting details. Prophet Mills referred to unity, knowing one another, and cooperation in the spread of the gospel as main aims of the meeting. A number of problems were mentioned by the various leaders: administering a prayer fellowship, how embark on a religious reformation using Bible studies, challenging those who condemn spiritual churches in the press, need for brotherhood to avert confusion among the churches, significance of leadership training, and the need for settling squabbles and differences before tackling a leadership training program.

Just as indigenous church leaders were embittered towards the mission-founded churches, so also they did not trust each other. Previous efforts to come together on a united effort to establish a leaders' training program met with dismal failure. (Yeboa-Korie frequently told us how he had spearheaded a meeting involving several hundred leaders for the purpose of planning a leaders' training program. Nothing resulted because they had no real unity; they didn't trust each other.) The leaders who gathered the second Wednesday of April in 1970 were determined that this one would not fail. They would start small; they would build foundations by first learning to know and trust each other. They knew that reconciliation and unity were the foundation on which they would have to build. They also knew that to bring about this kind of relationship they would have to meet weekly for prayer, Bible study and discussion.

When some of the fourteen persons present for the inaugural meeting discovered that no foreign mission would channel large benefits to their churches, they quickly dropped out. We continued meeting in various homes. Others joined us, so that the number attending ranged between eight and twelve. When it was decided that our weekly meeting should be held in a more neutral place, a

room was rented in the Community Center, easily accessible from all parts of the city.

A personal report on the development of the Leaders Fellowship by its most influential member, Prophet Mills, also focuses the Fellowship's wider relationships (see Appendix 1). Our readers will have observed the frequent repetition of names and activities. This is unavoidable by the nature of our approach. We were simply trying to enter doors opening to us, occasionally prying just a bit. We were trying to be sensitive to the direction our leaders were taking. They thought of themselves as bridge builders. So did we. We are not unaware of the importance of the Spirit's leading. Otherwise our growing fellowship could never have happened.

Wider ecumenical relationships

Although a small group to begin with, the Leaders Fellowship was an ecumenical group from mostly indigenous churches. African indigenous churches are seeking wider ecumenical relationships in two directions: with other indigenous as well as with mission-founded churches in their own countries and beyond. In spite of their almost complete rejection by older missions and churches, African indigenous churches are turned toward the world body of believers in Christ, rather than away from it. At the same time they are seeking for a more authentic African identity, while confirming their belief in Christ.

Moving toward building interindigenous church relationships is a natural direction. This is where they feel most at home and accepted. Problems arising out of this kind of family living they know how to handle. And just as families have their problems of misunderstanding, jealousy and power struggle, so in the indigenous church family. Despite the problems attempts to come together with common objectives continue to emerge all over Africa. So too in Ghana where two rather large organizations work with the 300 to 500 indigenous churches: Ghana Council for Spiritual Churches and The Pentecostal Association of Ghana.

The Council for Spiritual Churches aims to be a collective voice in a way similar to the Christian Council which seeks to speak for the mainline denominations. The pre-

amble to its constitution clarifies the purpose and scope of the Ghana Council for Spiritual Churches: to unite all spiritual churches and Christian organizations outside of the Ghana Christian Council "into a legitimate body, armed with a powerful Gospel negotiating machinery for the exercise of spiritual peace with the flock of Christ, the people of Ghana and the Government." The Council anticipates that all churches, organizations, prayer groups and committees related in whatever way to the spiritual church movement in Ghana will eventually come under its influence and control.

General secretary of this massive scheme is the Rev. J. K. Ohene; national chairman is the Rev. Dr. E. M. Ohene Dwamena, founder/head of the Essenes Messianists Church of Jerusalem. But the Ghana Council for Spiritual Churches soon came into conflict with the groups of churches it should have been best able to unite. Most of the spiritual churches refused to come under the Council's domination. They reacted to the strong, centralized organization. They also were not satisfied with the Council's lack of a doctrinal position. In its early years the Council actually called itself the Ghana Council for Liberal Churches which was then changed hoping to gain wider support.

In addition to problems with its own kind of churches, the Ghana Council for Spiritual Churches was deeply aggrieved when the Christian Council of Ghana opened membership to spiritual churches who could qualify. Yeboa-Korie's Eden Revival Church was accepted into the Christian Council in 1970. General Secretary Ohene threatened a lawsuit unless the Christian Council declared publicly that it was reversing its position. Exactly what happened we do not know, but there was neither a position change nor a lawsuit, and Eden Revival still retains Christian Council membership.

One of the most viable efforts we have observed to form an association of indigenous churches has been made by The Pentecostal Association of Ghana, with the parenthetical title (National Fellowship of Spiritual Churches). E. H. Anaman is the general secretary. Every word in the label is significant: It is pentecostal; the churches are spiritual; it is an association; it is national; it is a fellowship. Names have meaning in Africa.

Founded in 1962, The Pentecostal Association of Ghana grew in its first ten years to include some 200 constituent groups. It maintains links with pentecostal fellowships in other parts of the world and was represented at the ninth world pentecostal conference in Dallas, Texas, in 1970. It is ecumenical, reaching out to other Christian bodies for fellowship, without feeling insecure or threatened. Most of the participants in the Accra Leaders Fellowship were members of the Association.

The Pentecostal Association of Ghana is a going, growing association of indigenous churches. On what do we base our optimism? In its first decade, there has been no major breakaway that we know of. What is its secret? We can think of several things. So far they have had no major project on which they were working together which would have sufficiently tested their relationship.

They have had little outside assistance. This is a more important factor than we might suspect. More and more organizations seem eager to help indigenous movements. We keep asking, will African indigenous churches be tempted beyond their endurance to sell their birthright for a mess of western pottage?

We see a third aspect that may well have contributed to the Association's success. Even though it has a constitution and is registered with the Government of Ghana as an association, it is really a fellowship of churches. There is no strongly centralized administration. The general secretary seems more like a counselor who arranges for occasional regional and annual national conferences. He keeps the various areas and churches informed about what is going on.

A new strategy of relationship between polarized churches was slowly developing in Ghana. This was definitely what the Leaders Fellowship wanted. And this is what, we believe, all the best African leadership in indigenous churches is looking forward to. Many of the leaders and their members have come from mission churches. The influence of their background is still strong; they have not lost respect for their mother churches. Another aspect of the total outside influence on the Fellowship leaders came through Trinity College and its students working with the indigenous churches. We doubt if Trinity is fully aware of

the extent of this influence. A further factor was some members of the older churches who became interested in the indigenous churches and worked along with us. A final effective contact came through several foreign travelers who were interested. Prophet Mills, in his report "Fellowship among the Spiritual Churches in Ghana," mentions certain persons who must have impressed him: Hobart Campbell (Presbyterian); Herbert Daughtry (Pentecostal); J. W. Duncan (Lutheran); Anne Luck (Anglican).

From talk to action

By the beginning of 1971 there was a significant build-up of interest in actually doing something about the need for theological education and leadership training. We had been talking long enough. Additional indigenous leaders were becoming interested as was the Christian Council of Ghana. January 28, 1971, marks the transition from talk to action. On that evening a full house gathered in the Community Center's auditorium. In African-style three choirs with their brass bands entertained. Center of attraction was Anne Luck. As a member of the team which is attempting to produce a correspondence course in theology for the leaders of churches belonging to the Association of African Independent Churches in South Africa, Mrs. Luck was asked to observe theological education efforts in Kenya, Uganda, and Ghana.

God used Anne Luck. Before her coming to Accra practically no one in Ghana knew of the Christian Institute of South Africa nor the African Independent Churches Association. The reason for their acceptance and interest in what she had to say was rather because she was speaking their language: theological education and leadership training. God brought her to us at just the right time. We believe in God's timing. Thank you God!

So we have traced how the Accra Leaders Fellowship led the way in initiating leadership training. In our efforts to relate to the Fellowship we attempted to discover the direction which our indigenous brothers and sisters were moving as initiators and bridge builders and move along with them where possible. From every relationship there is so much for us to learn; we learn more than we can teach.

8

INTERCHURCH DIALOGUE

Chapter 8 concentrates on our involvement in the conflict between the mission-founded and indigenous churches. A three-way approach to the problem was essential strategy: to contact and develop personal relationships with indigenous churches and their leaders; to do the same with mission-founded churches and their leaders; to encourage dialogue and understanding between the mission-founded and indigenous churches themselves. Because of deep-rooted antagonism between them, this was the most difficult.

Toward mutual acceptance

Compared to finding our way through to the mission-founded churches, gaining the acceptance of some indigenous churches was relatively easy. We could understand how they felt. When we made our first approach we were living in the Presbyterian Church compound on Kuku Hill, only a stone's throw from the moderator. Across the street was the Christian Council office. The surrounding area was full of all kinds of indigenous churches. We were not working with the mission churches but relating to indigenous church movements, already teaching Bible classes among them.

Attempting to relate to both groups was risky. We were under suspicion by both sides, always vulnerable to misunderstanding. Striving toward their mutual acceptance of each other as brothers in Christ required spiritual perception. Furthermore, to make any progress amid this milieu of diverse relationships we needed to maintain our own

identity and integrity. Before we could work too seriously at the involved problem of interchurch dialogue, we had to win a measure of confidence of the mission-founded churches.

What was the real point in approaching the mission churches? Did they need us? Did we need them? We felt we needed each other. We were impelled to share what we heard God saying to us about Africa:

- God is working among the indigenous churches; they too are a part of the church in Africa.
- Many may need to join the march around the traditional, denominational walls of the churches until they come tumbling down.
- If Africa is to be won for Christ, both the older and the newer churches must come together in a joyful, united witness to the glorious things that God is doing!

Our problem, then, had to do with gaining entree to the suspicious mission-founded churches. Doing something about it was prerequisite to getting them to relate to the separated indigenous churches. How go about it? From our experience in Nigeria we sensed that a direct approach to each of the denominations would not work. We began with an office interview with the General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana. He arranged for Ed to report to the Council in its semiannual general meeting, January 14, 1970. That statement, "Personal Experiences in Work with Independent Churches," which follows, was the beginning of dialogue and interchurch conversations which continued for the next several years.

> I am extremely grateful to the Rev. W. G. M. Brandful for the request to give some personal experiences in our work with independent, or indigenous churches. In what has happened we have a deep conviction that God has been leading the way while we falteringly tried to follow. Many people have asked us, "Why are you working with independent churches?" This may well be what you are asking. This is also what church leaders and councils

asked us as we traveled along the west coast of Africa the past six months. This is, in fact, one of the first questions the Christian Council of Eastern Nigeria asked us when we arrived in Uyo back in 1959, just ten years ago. To tell you the truth, we have often asked ourselves the same question.

Our story began in Uyo when we responded to a Macedonian call, "Come over and help us," made by leaders of some fifty loosely organized indigenous churches. When the Mennonite Board of Missions sent us, neither they nor we realized what we were getting into. Upon entering Uyo we came upon a road sign which read "Go Slow Through Uyo." Through the years we have many times pondered the wisdom of these words. After one week we desperately wanted to get out as quickly as possible. We prayed the Lord to close the door in Uyo and requested the Mission Board to let us return to America. We were wholly unprepared for what we found. We discovered that the leaders of the churches we had come to help were mostly illiterate and polygamous, whose practices seemed to us to be more pagan than Christian. It took us several years before we were humble enough to actually become members of the indigenous churches we had come to sponsor.

Finding ourselves in a dilemma we early contacted leaders of the older churches, who frankly, but firmly suggested that we get out and go somewhere else, anywhere, but not Uyo. Later in a five-mile radius from the center of the town we found no less than fifty denominations with over 300 local congregations, the majority of which were independents. It is difficult to believe but true. There is likely not another place in the world so well churched: Ninety-five percent of the people claimed to be Christians. In some villages surrounding Uyo not an adult person could be found who had not at some time or another been baptized. And now still another mission!

The Secretary of the Eastern Nigeria Christian Council was one of the few leaders to encourage us to stay on.

Christian Council Women's Centre, Accra.

For years he had hoped that someone would come to work with the many independent churches in cooperation with the objectives of the Christian Council. After we found ourselves, this was exactly what we wanted to do. He kept pushing the Council until we got their support for the setting up of an Interchurch Team, to which the Anglicans and Presbyterians each seconded a trained catechist. This kind of team approach to independent churches was one of the most significant things that happened.

Most of the leaders of independent churches come out of the older churches; consequently there are deep feelings of mistrust and resentment on both sides. The problem is more complicated by the fact that many independent leaders left for disciplinary reasons. Why then did we get messed up in this kind of a situation? Certainly not because we wanted to. This is the last kind of a mission I would have chosen for myself. We have greatest respect for the kind of solid work done by the mission churches

for the past more than 100 years. Somehow without our planning we found ourselves unavoidably involved. We were committed to the churches we came to sponsor. We were determined to make the best of that. We were also determined to do everything possible to keep in relation with the older churches. We regularly reported about our work to the Christian Council meetings. Our connections with the older churches was a source of irritation to the independent churches we were sponsoring. And though the Christian Council as such was back of us many leaders of the established churches resented our efforts on behalf of indigenous movements. We could well understand why. This forced us into a role of reconciliation we had not anticipated.

One experience led to another until we were certain that this was our mission. Our convictions were strengthened, in the first place by the many, many requests for help from independent movements. We were not so concerned about the leaders, many of whom were renegades, whom Jesus would have called "hireling." They were in it for the money only. What about the people? They were like sheep without a true shepherd. They were certainly not to blame. We felt that if they could have good shepherds, they too could become good churches. If there were time I could tell you the difference it makes when such churches have leaders with just a bit of training.

The second reason we are in this kind of a mission is the need for reconciliation and better understanding between churches of all kinds. There are walls of prejudice and misunderstanding dividing the older and the newer churches. Also similar walls exist between the independent churches themselves. Often they do not know or trust each other. There is much need for some kind of ministry of reconciliation in the whole body of Christ.

Another question many people keep asking us is: How do you work with independent churches? This too may well be one of your questions. To begin with we are in a new day in mission. Methods of even a decade ago are no longer viable. Any attempt to control these churches,

to bring them back to the mother churches out of which they came, is out. They are fiercely independent. Attempts to make them into patterns of denominational churches will fail. And it should. They are not moving away from the Bible and Christ, only away from westernized forms and expressions of Christianity.

At Abidjan I learned something new about independent churches. They resent being called "independent." They do not want to be thought of as being independent or separate from the rest of the Christian churches in Africa. Any paternalistic attitude or picking them out for special attention is resented. Rather than independent, they want to be called "indigenous" churches. Many reasons are given by anthropolgists, sociologists and theologians for the rapid spread of African religious movements. But why not accept their own understanding of themselves? Are they not indigenous movements? Are they not movements towards more African forms and symbols in their expression of their religious faith? Anyone working with them must understand the dynamics involved.

In the past missions and churches could easily work in denominational patterns. Whether this was best is another question. It likely was the only way they could function. This day is now past. In any effort with indigenous churches the new day must be recognized. There are missions along the coast of West Africa using the same outdated patterns of mission, who are beginning to work with the rapidly growing indigenous movements. The tragedy is that too many of them have a western theological bias, or an entirely denominational approach, taking the new churches down the old familiar patterns of western Christianity.

Indigenous churches are looking for help. They are looking and writing everywhere. Hundreds of appeal letters are going out of West Africa constantly. This is not fictitious, but true, an understatement if anything. In the past ten years many of these letters have been redirected back to us in West Africa. In our constant

contacts with the newer churches, some of the first questions they ask us are: Will you teach us the Bible? Will you train our leaders? Can you help us to better organize our churches? One needs to be very discreet in responding to such appeals. But we still believe doing something, if no more than investigating, trying to know the truth, is justified. Some kind of response is required.

It seems so urgent to us that churches and councils ought to do something, now – before it is too late! If anything much is to be accomplished we must work together. The problems are too vast for a few individuals or even a church to be working alone. Indigenous churches are looking your way; they want acceptance; they want to be recognized as Christian churches. How should we respond? How should we work with them? We believe that an interchurch approach to the problem is the right one. We believe that something tangible happened in Uyo through the effort of the Interchurch Team and the development of an Interchurch Study Group. The Team worked directly with indigenous churches; they participated in a leadership training program. The Interchurch Study Group met quarterly and representatives from about all the churches participated in the preparation or discussion of papers of common interest to all. The older churches, the indigenous churches, pentecostals, Catholics, were all represented in these discussions.

We believe that effort to begin dialogue on the problems we face together should be made in every country in West Africa. We believe that this must be done informally, outside such wall-building organizations as the Pentecostal Association, the Evangelical Fellowship, the Ghana Council of Liberal Churches, even the Christian Councils. Communication and dialogue must begin with interested persons representing all groups, but not in an official capacity. Communication must begin in an atmosphere which is not defensive, but where there is freedom to express differing views. We must freely come together in a sincere effort to break the walls between us in order to build, in their stead, bridges of reconciliation

and understanding. To this end we must work together.

In conclusion, what am I pleading for? Perhaps like the indigenous churches, I too am seeking acceptance. That may be, but I hope this is much more than a personal matter. I am seeking a new approach to mission, one in which I have earnestly come to believe. The time is ripe.

I am not seeking funds, or a budget; I am not seeking an organization. Rather I am seeking the help of interested individuals who feel the challenge of this kind of ministry. Solutions will only come by sympathetic understanding and the building of personal relationships, not by organizational procedures. I am seeking seconded personnel from among the older churches for a united effort to find new ways of working together in a response to the many requests coming from the newer churches. I am seeking your blessing.

A Council approach proved to be effective. Most of the older churches were represented. Here they felt less defensive, less threatened. They could act or react together. Some were opposed to the growing indigenous movements. Some were sympathetic to the ministry we felt called to develop. Opposing views could be discussed frankly and openly.

The next day we were requested to meet the smaller Executive Committee to elucidate further and defend our presentation. Considerable opposition was expressed, but we also discovered friends. Opposition makes good dialogue and is essential to good communication. Most of the discussion dealt with general problems related to the indigenous churches. How little is known or understood about them is amazing.

Waiting

What happened? Like a good strategist, General Secretary Brandful moved slowly and carefully. He asked us to give a second report to the Council on September 8. In the meantime, we were not idle. Bible classes were going on. The Leaders Fellowship was becoming more cohesive and

more open toward the Christian Council churches. With future interchurch discussions in mind, we had homework to do with both sides. The reconciler's role can be lonesome and painful, but nevertheless fruitful.

While waiting for further Council response we contacted leaders among the mission churches. One of the synods invited us to speak during an annual meeting. Although our appeal for understanding and positive action in dealing with breakaways was an offense to many delegates, a leaven of changing attitudes was at work. Growing interest in indigenous churches was evident.

Christian Messenger, published monthly by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, publicized and interpreted the indigenous churches. During our stay in Ghana the *Messenger* carried a series of articles labeled "Introducing the Spiritual Churches" written by leaders of these churches themselves. The November 1970 issue carried a fine article, "Don't Condemn the Power of the Spiritual Churches," with balanced criticism of both the mission-founded and indigenous churches.

Another indication of changing attitudes was the Christian Council's readiness to accept indigenous churches who could qualify for membership. Eden Revival Church was the first to take advantage. The leaven was working. Though certainly not the only factor, our open defense of the cause of the indigenous churches added its bit to breaking down the wall between the two groups.

In our second meeting with the Christian Council, postponed until September 22, we reviewed the possibilities for forming an interchurch team to work with indigenous movements and proposed an organizational plan indicating how the team could relate to the newer churches on the one hand, and to the older churches on the other hand, with the Christian Council coordinating relationships. We were convinced that our plan was realistic and workable – if we all worked together. A similar approach had worked in southeastern Nigeria; we believed it could work in Ghana.

But we had still another lesson to learn. What works in one place may not necessarily do so in another. Neither mission-founded nor indigenous churches are alike in different countries. Churches, like people, are different. Programs

must be planned and worked out in context. It was a good lesson. The Council considered the matter only briefly before referring our plan for a ministry among indigenous churches in West Africa to their Standing Committee.

Open-minded Christians

As the Apostle Paul went from city to city preaching the gospel, he found the people in certain cities more open to his message than in others. As we moved about in Ghana trying to convince people that something ought to be done about indigenous churches, we received both negative and positive response. The open-minded reception of Methodist Church leaders to our appeal in behalf of the indigenous churches will always be gratefully remembered. After several informal conversations with President T. W. Koomson and Secretary I. K. A. Thompson, we were invited to meet with a special study committee on April 16, 1971. With a dozen leading Methodist officers we discussed together their problems with indigenous churches attracting away their members. In a report circulated to all Methodist districts after the meeting, the following points growing out of the interchange were noted:

1. The churches of which we are talking prefer (in Ghana) to be called spiritual churches, rather than independent churches.
2. Spiritual churches are interested in the Christian Council and consider it the most authentic voice of the Christian church in Ghana.
3. Some of the spiritual churches deliberately do not have Sunday morning services so that worshipers can go to their mother churches in the morning and to the spiritual churches in the evening.
4. Spiritual churches have a number of needs: better organization; better trained leaders; better understanding of the Bible.
5. The use of emotion and feeling in worship is universal among pentecostals, not something distinctively Ghanaian.
6. Spiritual churches feel that the orthodox churches lack the experience and power of the Holy Spirit. However, they, unfortunately, emphasize the **gifts** of the Spirit, rather than **the Gift** of the Spirit.
7. There are false, self-seeking leaders in the spiritual churches, but this is only a part of the story.

The committee concluded by asking two questions: What have the spiritual churches to say to us concerning the life and witness of the Methodist Church? What should be the relationship between the Methodist Church and the spiritual churches? In answering the first question, the areas of worship and healing were highlighted. Methodists were urged to put more life and feeling into worship with a greater use of lyrics and prayers for individual members. "We must seek the gift of the Holy Spirit in the church and thus sustain our members through the whole life of the church; we must encourage those with gifts of healing to exercise them within the church," the report said. The committee unanimously agreed that the Methodist Church should adopt a positive approach towards the spiritual churches, learning to work together with them.

What happened among Methodists in Ghana that day was a major breakthrough. The time was right for a happening. Committee members were deeply interested in our experiences with the indigenous churches and felt that they had been missing out on something. One leading member said he had been wanting to attend a spiritual church service but was afraid he would be misunderstood by fellow Methodists. When we spoke about the Good News Bible classes, Secretary Thompson said, "I would like to teach a Bible class in a spiritual church." We assured him it could be arranged. A few months later, he was assigned to the Holy Church of the Lord (Ghana), of which I. K. E. Sagoe is the founder/primate.

When we returned to Accra in mid-1973, we were eager to know what was happening between the Methodists and the spiritual churches; the committee experience had been so exciting for us. In the meantime, the Rev. C. K. Yamoah had been elected president. For years already, he told us, he had been working in close fellowship with spiritual church leaders, whenever that was possible. We were assured that, as President of the Methodist Church, he was continuing an open-minded, positive policy toward his separated brethren.

What about I. K. A. Thompson and his Bible class in the Holy Church of the Lord? His answer would best indicate his real feelings towards the indigenous churches. Here it is:

> They wanted me to teach them the doctrines, but I wanted them to first get a thorough grounding in the stories of Jesus found in the Gospels. So we began studying the first and simplest of the Gospels, *The Gospel According to Mark*. We made detailed study of Mark's stories of Jesus for over a year. Now we are studying Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth, which is full of instruction for a new church struggling with all the problems facing an indigenous church in Africa.
>
> I also teach a weekly Bible class in my Methodist Church, but have no intention of giving up my class in the Holy Church of the Lord. Fifteen to thirty adults attend. Effort ought to be made to publicize the need for more Methodists to conduct similar classes. This could be done by contacting each of the ministers in Accra, encouraging them to make announcements in their churches.

Thompson was as enthusiastic as when he first made his commitment to teach the Bible in a spiritual church. Though he is a busy administrator, and though he has a weekly Bible class in his own church, he will not absent himself from the class in Primate Sagoe's church. We went to Brother Sagoe to hear his side of the story. He is a quiet man who talks very little. By no means did he want Mr. Thompson to stop teaching their Bible class. How could they replace a person with such a good background of seminary training and experience? The tragedy is that there are not more Thompsons in the mission-founded churches with his sacrificial love for indigenous churches and their problems.

Months passed between the September 1970 meeting with the Christian Council and the April meeting with the Methodists. During this time our relation to the Council was moving on low key. With the return to Ghana of Mennonite co-worker Willard Roth in late January 1971,

we initiated serious discussion with the Council's Standing Committee to call an interchurch gathering open to all churches to discuss the urgent request coming from the indigenous churches for help in establishing a theological and leadership training program.

It is significant that the indigenous churches, however, were not waiting for the mission churches to do something. The Accra Leaders Fellowship was moving ahead with plans for theological education for the indigenous churches. But this is the story of our next chapter. Here we are mainly concerned with interchurch dialogue, although theological education and dialogue are interrelated.

Actually, as early as November 29, 1969, an interchurch meeting was held at the University of Ghana on "Avenues of Cooperation between Indigenous Churches and the Historical Churches in Ghana." Professor K. A. Opoku of the Institute of African Studies helped us to plan, and chaired the meeting. About fifteen interested persons, including staff from the Department for the Study of Religions at the University, were present. We planned another meeting in Accra for persons interested in indigenous churches on September 7, 1970; about a dozen attended. Though both meetings bore some fruit, nothing much came of either. Their importance should not be judged so much from what happened, as by what we ourselves learned. In any interchurch dialogue having to do with indigenous churches, they, themselves, must be deeply involved and participate fully in the planning. Our first two efforts were typically colonial.

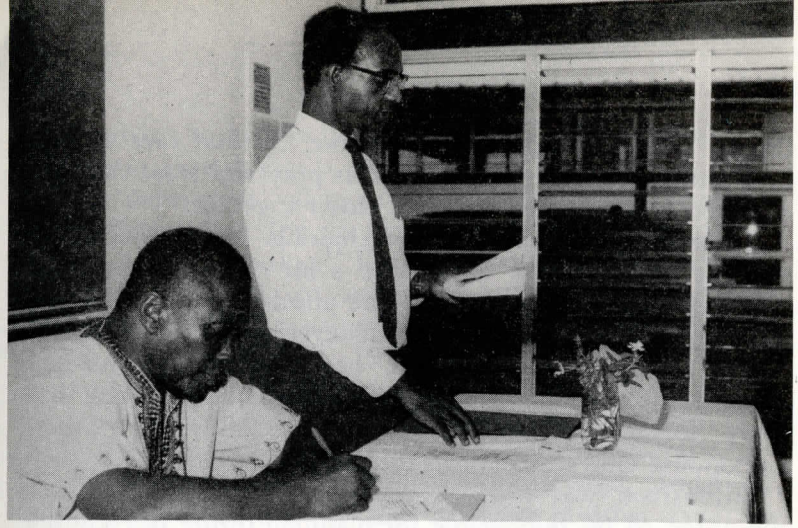
An historic event

Here we were early in 1971, again planning for another interchurch gathering. Working with indigenous churches, one doesn't give up because of failures. One tries to learn the lessons. By March it was evident that both the indigenous and Council churches were eager for an interchurch conference. Willard and Ed's assistance in negotiating procedure for working toward a conference was requested by both sides. Generously and understandingly, the Council's Standing Committee recommended that the Leaders Fellowship take responsibility for planning the program, and

further that the mission-founded churches each appoint two representatives to the conference and the Christian Council five. The suggestions were acceptable so the Leaders Fellowship got busy with the planning.

The day was set. Willard sent notices to the Council and its member churches, inviting their delegates to an inter-church conference on May 25 to be held at the Community Center in Accra. Members of the Leaders Fellowship widely publicized the conference among the spiritual churches. The meeting was programmed to give opportunity for leaders of all churches to become better acquainted with one another and to provide a neutral setting for discussion and dialogue on subjects of common concern. The one specific matter of mutual interest had to do with planning for theological education among indigenous churches. The following press release issued by the Rev. Paul Kofi Fynn summarizes the meeting:

> In an historic event representatives from various segments of the Ghanaian Christian community came together on May 25 at the Accra Community Center for the purpose of mutual acquaintance and discussion. Sixty persons representing the Pentecostal Association, Christian Council, as well as both established and independent spiritual churches attended the meeting organized by a small fellowship of spiritual church leaders.
>
> In clarifying the aim of the gathering, the Chairman, Prof. C. G. Baeta, emphasized, "This is not a matter of anyone joining another, but simply an opportunity to get together informally to exhort and encourage one another."
>
> Although differences were expressed the meeting was cordial and brotherly as those present attempted to understand varying Christian convictions and expressions. The participants unanimously decided that such meetings must continue and named an eleven member group to make arrangements, including Pentecostal, Evangelical, Christian Council and Catholic representatives.
>
> The meeting also heard plans for opening the Good News Training Institute, a lower level theological program among indigenous church leaders. The Institute will begin with an experimental nine-months course in Accra next October.
>
> Presently nine churches have joined together to sponsor the Institute: Faith Brotherhood Praying Circle, Sacred Miracles Clinic Fellowship, The Church of the Lord (Ghana), Divine Healing Church of Christ, Lutheran Church, Eden Revival Church, Twer Nyame (Divine Fellowship), Church of the Messiah, and Church of Bethel. Other churches are considering participation.



Christian Council Secretary Brandful speaks.

What we had been working toward and anticipating for over a year was happening before our eyes. The polarized mission-founded and indigenous churches were sitting down together to get acquainted and listening to each other in frank, but friendly conversation about things of mutual concern. We will never forget the boost in morale and courage it gave us to press on. We now knew that our goals were not impossible. It was a high point in our thirty-five years in overseas mission service. We were now ready to retire!

The attitude of the mission churches was beautiful. They were listening, not dominating. Toward the end of the meeting the Rev. W. G. M. Brandful, Christian Council general secretary, made a significant statement: "God is not the private property of anybody and if we all love Jesus

Christ, calling ourselves by his name, by that fact we can be brothers in God's family. Let us pray and trust that our common concerns may bring us closer together."

Baeta did a masterful job of chairing. In his concluding remarks he said, "We have done a lot of important work this morning. We have shown one another that we do not want to live in isolation, but whatever our differences, we desire to know one another better. Although we are engaged in a common task, we affirm that the task has many forms and one person or one body dare never monopolise God's mission in the world."

Enthusiasm was high. A representative committee was appointed to be responsible for planning future interchurch conversations. We left Ghana shortly after, so for information about what happened later we are dependent on minutes of the meetings.

Almost a year lapsed until another meeting convened. Most members of the committee were also on another planning group, assigned by the Leaders Fellowship, preparing to open the new Good News Training Institute in October. They had too much planning to do. But by April 14, 1972, Interchurch Conversation 2 was held, followed up every three or four months so that by the end of 1973 seven conversations had been held.

Will conversation continue?

What was the real purpose or function of the Interchurch Conversations? The Conversations were never designed to be a programming group, to plan and administer projects, for or with the indigenous churches. Rather it was a forum, a setting, a meeting place for dialogue. It was an occasion where churches could learn to know each other. This concept of itself comes through clearly in the minutes of the meetings from comments made by various participants.

The Rev. A. L. Kwansa, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, summed it up beautifully in the second meeting: "It is the will of the Lord that we should have this forum in order that we know ourselves and come together to sort things out for ourselves in the spirit of appreciation, understanding, tolerance, sympathy, cooperation. We do well to remember

Jesus' advice to his disciples recorded in Luke 9:49-50: He who is not against you is on your side."

What permanent values can we claim for the Conversations? Remember the familiar adage, "The taste of the pudding is in the eating!" That the conferences are continuing may be itself an indication of interest and that something of lasting value is happening. When in Accra during the summer of 1973, we checked with several churchmen for their opinions. Among them were I. K. A. Thompson, secretary, Methodist Church; Eugene Grau, principal, Trinity College; W. G. M. Brandful, general secretary, Christian Council; and G. K. Sintim Misa, moderator, Presbyterian Church of Ghana. All were positive about the value of this kind of interchurch dialogue and the need for its continuance.

Minutes reveal that certain changes are taking place that seem to be for the good. Fewer mission-founded church leaders are attending, and more from among the indigenous churches. It seems to us that the level of the earlier papers and discussions had been more suited to the older churches.

Will the Conversations continue? So much depends on wise creative leadership. Much of the success of these early meetings has been the important role and interest taken by Christian Baeta, a recognized theologian and authority on indigenous churches, who is loved and trusted by both sides. If substantive dialogue is taking place, the Conversations likely will continue. Understanding and dialogue will go on so that the kind of reconciliation Jesus talks about can take place. Our greatest concern would be the danger we see in one person or group so dominating what is happening that effective dialogue breaks down. In that case there would be no further reason for continuing. Wise and trusted leadership is so important.

We confidently believe that promoting interchurch dialogue is a significant part of any ministry among indigenous churches in Africa. A tri-dimensional approach can be an exceedingly exciting way of missioning in the new day: relating to and winning acceptance in indigenous churches through cultivating personal relationships; gaining the confidence of other churches by working through the Christian councils; seeking to build brotherly bridges between the two groups by encouraging occasions for coming together.

9

THE GOOD NEWS TRAINING INSTITUTE

The coming early in 1971 of Anne Luck from the Christian Institute of South Africa to find out what we were doing among indigenous churches in West Africa was most timely. To see how God times events is wonderful. By this time we had established a measure of relationship with Christian Council churches. Something, too, was happening in our weekly Leaders Fellowship as participants invited each other to exchange pulpits without fearing that a guest speaker would proselytise. We had come a long way in trusting one another and learning how to work together. Groundwork preparation toward a theological education program had been made, but we needed something special in order to take the next step.

Anne Luck was our lucky break. She was special. She came from the right place. Ghana's church leaders knew about South Africa and its independent movements, although most of the Ghanaians had never heard of the Christian Institute. But we could tell them that the Institute was the first major attempt we knew of seeking to work with indigenous churches without denominational and theological bias.

Members of the Leaders Fellowship campaigned widely, announcing the coming of a theologian from South Africa to speak on theological education on January 28. Mrs. Luck was well received as she spoke about the Christian Institute and its training program to a full house at the Accra Community Center. The assembled leaders became enthusiastic about getting their own program going. Three churches brought excellent choirs and brass bands. Like any

Like any indigenous church service in West Africa, the meeting stopped as well as started with music and dance.

indigenous church service in West Africa, the meeting stopped as well as started with music and dance. The occasion was a success.

Planning for theological education

A series of what came to be known as Theological Education Planning Meetings over the next months were

organized by Paul Fynn (Lutheran), F. A. Mills (Faith Brotherhood) and E. I. Weaver (Mennonite). The meetings usually included around thirty persons ready to tackle the hard work of forging a workable educational design for indigenous theological training. The character of the meetings is important to an understanding of what was happening.

Neither the Christian Council nor its member churches were officially involved in relating either to the Leaders Fellowship or the Theological Education Planning Meetings. But several Council-related Ghanaians were actively involved, particularly Paul Fynn, secretary for the Lutheran Church in Ghana, and Daniel Tei-Kwabla, a Presbyterian serving as assistant secretary for the Council's Literature Committee. Most of the other participants came from among the indigenous churches.[1]

To prime discussion at the first meeting on March 2 the recording secretary reviewed the call for the gathering: "In West Africa among indigenous churches there is a strong desire to move forward with the rest of the Christian world in better educational opportunities and in wider Christian fellowship. Independent churches cannot survive in isolation. Only through wise planning and a vigorous struggle to reach certain goals can we make progress. It takes planning; it takes effort. Someone wrote on his small bus: **Life is war.** So it is. You were invited to meet here today to counsel with us and to plan a program of action. Let us put our heads together. We well know that we are in no position to greatly expand our Christian witness in the country without adequately trained people." Participants agreed that plans be projected for at least two levels of biblical studies, and that an exploratory committee draft specific proposals for consideration by the next general meeting. Actual planning for a training school was off to a start.

Meeting 2 on March 16 acted positively on the drafting committee's recommendation that a nine-month experimental course aimed at basic pastoral training be launched in October 1971. Overall responsibility for the program was to rest with a General Meeting made up of representatives from the groups participating by sponsoring students. The following schedule was proposed:

Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4
TERM I (Oct. 4—Dec. 10)			
Biblical Introduction	Old Testament: Genesis	New Testament: Mark	Preaching
TERM II (Jan. 17—Mar. 24)			
Old Testament: Survey	Old Testament: Psalms	New Testament: Acts	Pastoral Ministry
TERM III (Apr. 10—June 6)			
New Testament: Survey	Old Testament: Prophets	New Testament: I Corinthians	Exercise of Spiritual Gifts

On May 11 the third meeting heard a report of an informal discussion which the Leaders Fellowship had earlier in the month with visitor Paul Hopkins, Africa secretary for the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Hopkins asked the indigenous leaders: What kind of training do you want? Will this training separate you from your people? The indigenous leaders responded by saying that three needs must be kept in mind: need for disciplined study of the Scriptures, the need for deepening spiritual experience, the need for leaders to keep closely related with members.

Two significant decisions were made that day having to do with two of the most complex issues to be faced in attempting to set up indigenous training for indigenous churches. One related to culture, the other to money. After thoughtful discussion one item proposed by the drafting committee was revised to read: "classes covering both scriptural and practical subjects be taught from a biblical viewpoint which is related to African life and culture." Another item agreed upon was that "teachers be enlisted on a voluntary, part-time basis." The fact that the meeting could anticipate and pinpoint the problems, and start working on them from the beginning, says a lot for their depth of understanding and wisdom.

The meeting also continued working on the organizational problem. So large a meeting could not function well with details. Therefore, "In order to move plans forward as speedily as possible so that classes may begin in October as

projected, an Interim Steering Committee was named to function until such a time as an Executive Board can be elected." Eight persons were selected, who, from this point on, were made responsible for all detailed planning, and to report back to the General Meeting. They were requested to find a suitable location for the school and to bring a budget proposal.

During Meeting 4 on May 18 the Interim Steering Committee was authorized to negotiate with the YMCA for classroom and office space for the school-in-planning. The school was named **Good News Training Institute.** We were pleased with the name and hoped there would be a close tie between the new institute and the congregationally-based Good News Bible classes already organized. The meeting also heard plans for an overnight retreat May 20-21 in the Aburi hills, twenty miles north of Accra. The retreat turned out to be an important fellowship gathering in an ideal setting. Spiritual church leaders, like Jesus, frequently go to the hills to pray; going together was the new dimension.

Planning the structure of the Good News Training Institute continued in the fifth Theological Education Planning Meeting on June 22. The YMCA had agreed to rent the Institute an office and a classroom. The main concern of the meeting related to selection of a qualified director of studies to serve as executive officer for the Institute. Minimum qualifications were set and steps for selection outlined. One cannot help but be impressed by the careful way they went about choosing a director. How right they were to attach so much importance to the leadership of the school for which they had dreamed so long. The Interim Steering Committee must be commended for their wise guidance and leadership. Functioning like an executive committee for the general meeting, it seemed to be able to pick out basic issues and work at them. For example, the steering committee told the June 22 meeting:

> On the matter of African culture it was emphasized that the Institute must break some new ground in cultural awareness among Christians in Ghana. The Institute should take initiative in making a comparative study of cultural background under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We must take time and care not to practice anything which is in conflict with the Christian way and yet bring new thoughts and meaning into our traditional ways. For example, can we not detach the festive parts of traditional festivals and practice the festive parts with a Christian approach? As we move along it will be important that we try to have a common understanding but not demand immediate perfection of one another.

This was a tremendous statement, full of insight and understanding. That ancestor worship and juju or magic are widely believed in by Christians of all denominations is well known. So far the older churches have done little to adapt or integrate their beliefs and practices with traditional religion. The indigenous churches have been foremost in adapting to African traditional practices and ways of worship. The Interim Steering Committee recognized the centrality of indigenous Christian theology for an indigenous theological school. From June 22 on every brochure issued to advertise the Good News Training Institute included a statement of its aims:

a. The Institute has been established to give basic pastoral training to church workers, particularly to those of independent spiritual churches;

b. The Institute seeks to provide scriptural and practical training taught from a biblical viewpoint in relation to African culture.

By the time of General Meeting 6 on July 20 several of the most urgent decisions had been made: The Interim Steering Committee was functioning as an executive board for the time being; the location of the school at the YMCA in Accra was finalized. But an executive officer to administer the school had not yet been appointed. The committee brought the following recommendation which was unanimously approved: "Since we feel that the naming of a single full-time executive officer for the Good News Training Institute at this time would be premature, and in order to proceed with making the plans necessary to open the Institute in October, we recommend the appointment of a three-member directorship to administer the GNTI for the present. Our suggestions for the appointment, after careful consideration, are J. R. Anquandah, K. B. Ellis, and W. E. Roth."

Directors Roth, Anquandah and Ellis.

The joint directors began almost immediately to determine respective responsibilities and relationships. Mr. Ellis offered to be at the Institute site and serve as resident coordinator with Mr. Anquandah serving in educational affairs and Mr. Roth in general administration. Agreeing that a feeling of team spirit must dominate all deliberations and work, the directors told the general meeting, "It will be important for the directors to exemplify both in word and action the unity we profess."

They got busy preparing a *Prospectus* to interpret the Institute to potential students. They needed more than an organized institution; they needed students. During August the directors made a personal visit to each of the nine signed up, sponsoring churches. Their publicity and preparation were good. They were moving with a logical, methodical procedure.

General Meeting 7 took place at the YMCA, the site for the new training school, on September 7. Instead of the Interim Steering Committee, it was now the three joint directors who gave a progress report, which included a provisional timetable with courses of study for two streams of students – one for the forenoon and another for the evening thus making it possible for working persons to attend.

Opening the Institute

After more than eight months of careful planning, in which many, many persons were involved, the informal opening of the Good News Training Institute was held at the YMCA on October 4, the evening before classes began. Twenty students, heads of the nine sponsoring churches, interested friends – nearly 100 in all – met for prayers of thanksgiving and dedication. Resident Director Ellis chaired the service which began with shouts[2] at 5:30 p.m. Heads of churches were introduced who in turn introduced the students they were sponsoring in the Institute. Scriptures were read in English, Fante, Ga and Twi by various students: I Corinthians 3:11; II Timothy 3:16,17; Isaiah 60:1,22. Before the offering, Director Anquandah appealed to the group to give generously. "This is an epoch-making event," he said. "It is the first time we have come together to found a training institute for our leaders." He emphasized the need for preaching Christ in "the language, movements and songs of our culture." Holy Spirit gifts and training are both important, he pointed out. Fifty cedis (about $50) was received. Director Roth thanked the group for their support in money, prayers and participation.

The festive inaugural ceremony came off on November 6 with the Rev. Dr. G. Ansre from the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana as guest speaker. He spoke significantly and prophetically to the founders of the young institution:

> Brothers and sisters, I have looked forward to this inauguration with a feeling half of joy and expectation, and half of apprehension and fear. My joy stems from the fact, and my conviction, that this newly founded Institute, while it symbolizes a rare act of trust and cooperation between different members of Christ's body the Church, also has the potential of filling some essential needs in our midst. The prospect of the impact of the establishment we are now initiating may have on the life and thinking of the people of Ghana and many others outside could be tremendous and lasting.
>
> My apprehension is due to the fact that once again we might be inaugurating yet another religious institution

which could become as many other institutions before it, an object of undue devoted attention, rather than an instrument of expression of our Christian service to God and our fellowmen. Too often organizations set up by man for the purpose of implementing God's will among men have become an end in themselves rather than a tool they were set to be. So my fear may be expressed in a question: How can we make sure that we do not set up yet another idol to worship which could divert our attention from doing the will of God for us today?

Institutions can be places of great honor and prestige. Surely we want this Institute to become successful. Surely we want it to be the best we can make it. But we do not want it to be so prestigious as to blind its members, teachers and students alike, to the aims it was set to attain. The aim of this Institute has been succinctly expressed in the *Prospectus*. . . . This new movement, therefore, of independent spiritual churches in setting up an institution to provide scriptural and practical training for their leaders and members is an excellent move.

Dr. Ansre strongly affirmed the Institute and its objectives. At the same time, and in no uncertain language, he pointed out the danger of its becoming an end in itself – the all too familiar kind of institution, training people to meet their own needs rather than for God's work.

Understanding the Good News

An important extracurricular dimension of GNTI was a series of Monday evening general lectures open to students, staff and friends. Nine of these lectures given during the first year were mimeographed and compiled in a booklet titled *Search and Serve,* which was also the title of Ansre's inaugural address and first in the booklet.[3]

"My People Perish for Lack of Knowledge" was the topic discussed by Educational Director Anquandah on January 17, 1972, during the opening of the second term of the experimental year. On that occasion Mr. Anquandah said:

Human history is a record of about ninety-eight percent bad news and two percent good news. In Ghana today, we taste and eat of bad news as we eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The state of hundreds of suffering inmates in the mental hospital next door to us; the poverty and diseases in the rural areas and towns; the armed robberies on the highway; the casual way people take other people's wives, like plucking mangoes from the wayside; the casual way we give and accept bribes and steal funds from our employers and from the state; the misery of the blind and the deaf – these are all visible signs of bad news. Bad news dominates human history. The Good News can overcome the bad. The Good News is for all.

Do you know God? Do you know the Good News? If you know God you will respond to His Word (the Good News). The Good News demands three things of us: Repentance, Faith, Love (obedience). Without repentance my baptism is valueless. In my Christian work I must bear fruit that shows I have indeed repented from my wicked ways. The Good News requires that we believe in God. My Christian work must always be an act of faith expressing trust in God and not merely intellectual assent. Similarly, my life and Christian work must be an act of love. We must repent and believe and be baptized and love God and our neighbor and leave the rest to the Holy Spirit. The Lord will give us Spirit gifts equal to our problems and equal to the bad news which prevails in Ghana and the world. We must not take up the ministry unless we are prepared to love humanity despite their evils and treacheries. Let us be careful how we receive and spread the Good News!

Building on African religion

Kofi Asare Opoku, a professor at the University of Ghana's Institute for African Studies, has done extensive research and writing on both traditional religion and the indigenous churches. His paper, "Building on our Traditional Religious Heritage," is valuable for the insights it gives on how the Christian church in Ghana can come to grips in the struggle to discover elements in traditional

religion which the church can find useful in making the Good News understandable and relevant to African life and culture. It is this very struggle that GNTI needs to become a part of. Indigenous churches feel that they have some of the answers. Are the GNTI planning founders and administrators giving the kind of guidance that will enable the Institute to exercise this kind of prophetic ministry to the whole church? This was Dr. Ansre's question in his inaugural address and now the concern of Opoku in his April 17 general lecture:

> When we study our traditional heritage closely we find that God showed himself to our forebearers in so many ways. And in their own way they tried to understand and come to terms with God. They used their language in imagining who God could be; their proverbs attributed to God the source of all life, for example. As Christians we have here at our disposal a tremendous heritage which can be placed at the service of Christ. All the imagery and wealth of Ghanaian languages can be used to interpret the Holy Scriptures. We ignore our heritage at our own peril. God didn't express himself only in European fashion.
>
> I hope that Christians in Africa will also want to express our beliefs in God in our own way, so that the richness of God's gifts to all his children may be found out even in our way of worshiping God and propagating his message in Ghana today. The reason why most of the new churches are so popular is that they are making use of something which hasn't been used for a long time, the African heritage!

Continuing beyond Year One

Looking at the kind and level of the Monday evening lectures, other special programs, a reading room and developing library, to say nothing about the teaching staff, one is deeply impressed with the educational resources the joint directors made available to their students. Several other significant decisions and developments need yet to be pointed out.

At a General Meeting of representatives sponsoring the Good News Training Institute on April 15, 1972, it was agreed to continue. The minutes reported, "In the light of the experience of the experimental year, a two-year basic course for church leadership will be developed to run on a continuing basis beginning October 1972. It is hoped that seminars, retreats and conferences can be planned by the Institute both in Accra and in other centers for church leaders who are not able to be full-time students. Such could be held in times when the school is not in regular session." In connection with the two-year training vision, the courses of study leading to a diploma in church leadership was carefully worked out.

A nine-member Board of Governors for the Good News Training Institute was formed by the General Meeting of sponsoring churches on May 19, 1972. Plans for an executive board were already discussed a year earlier; now the directors could turn to the newly appointed board for counsel and confirmation on major decisions. The two-year course was just such a decision. Board members were leaders of the sponsoring indigenous churches along with Dr. E. V. C. DeGraft Johnson, a lawyer who later served as chairman, and Dr. Christian G. Baeta, who in 1971 retired as head of the Department for the Study of Religions at the University of Ghana. So many things put together augured well for the development of a strong theological college for the training of indigenous church leaders. On May 28, 1972, the joint directors enlisted the help of Dr. K. A. Dickson, who replaced Dr. Baeta at the University, and Yeboa-Korie, head of the Eden Revival Church. Educationally, GNTI had about everything going for it available in Ghana.

The directors issued a quarterly news sheet for Institute patrons. The January-March 1972 issue carries several deft definitions written by students:

An African Mother is different from a European mother:
We are always clean and neat.
We have a special care for our children.
We feed our children by heart;
but they give their children a time to be fed.
(Lydia A. Aryee)

A Preacher is a linguist for God.

(Samuel Obli Nmai)

A GNTI Student is an adult who has given himself
for the study of the Bible. He usually
becomes tired because he has other cares at home,
like managing his church and family.
At times he forgets to shave his beard.
He has always to run to school.

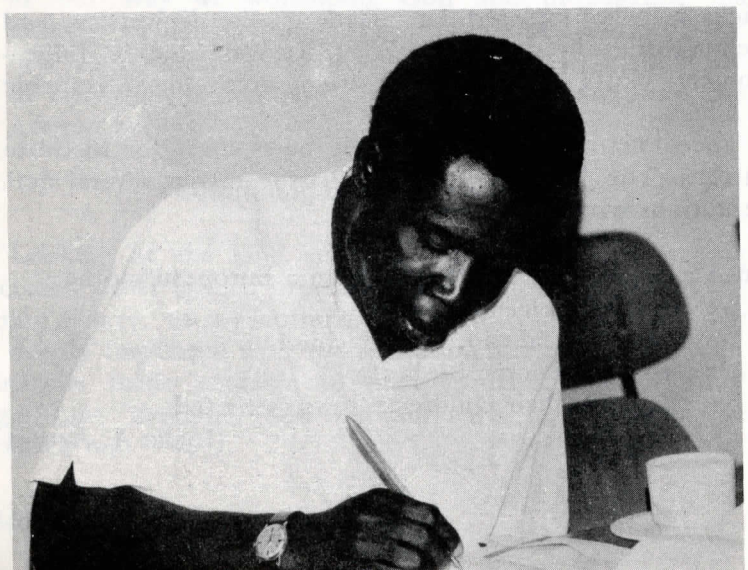
(Joshua Etrue)

A GNTI Student has come to the Institute
to learn more about Jesus.
He wants to know more about the Bible.
He has come to learn how to prepare sermons.
He has decided to do God's work on earth.

(I. K. Buah)

The definitions came out of English class concentrating on how to organize, write and speak clearly and precisely. Students also worked at individual problems of spelling,

A GNTI student is . . .



pronunciation, vocabulary and reading. Teaching English in a Bible school in Ghana is not just a prestigious thing, it is a practical necessity. Students from four different language areas were attending. We can make other interesting observations from the definitions. "A GNTI student is an adult." True most of them were older men, not mere schoolboys. "He has always to run to school." Students were persons with full, heavy schedules. Nearly half of them took the night session – working during the day to make a living. The sacrifices they were willing to make to get their Bible knowledge and leadership training indicates that they were men with some commitment and deep interest in doing God's work as they understood it. By the end of the second term twenty-six students were attending. Enthusiasm seemed to be high.

Concerning finances

Two basic problems are involved in developing an indigenous training school for indigenous churches. One concerns culture, the other, finance. We have discussed aspects of the culture issue and now turn to finance, an issue so much more important than some would think. As planners and helpers we knew that even an indigenous church training school could not function without some money. This was one of the reasons that the Leaders Fellowship from the beginning was seeking financial help from any available outside sources. Minutes, correspondence, and various reports make it clear that the Institute administrators made a strong effort to finance the school indigenously, much as they were determined "to provide scriptural and practical training from a biblical point of view in relation to African culture"; the two go hand in hand and can hardly be separated.

The first recorded mention of finances for the school came up in General Meeting 3, on May 11, 1971. "After a lengthy discussion on finances, the Interim Steering Committee was asked to bring a detailed budget for discussion at the next General Meeting. The principle of regular financial support from each of the participating churches was accepted." General Meeting 4 a week later accepted a NC5,750 (one new cedi equaled about one dollar) budget

proposal and the suggestion of a NC3,000 scholarship fund to be solicited outside Ghana. Fund trustees could issue grants up to three-fourths of a student's fees, the balance to be shared by student and sponsor. The scholarship fund came up repeatedly for discussion and planning, which indicates that the idea raised considerable interest. Letters were sent out to sponsoring churches requesting them to send in the names of their applicants; but at the same time, information about a beginning fee of NC20 was also given. To the credit of GNTI, it must be said that at this same time ads were appearing in daily newspapers from certain independent missions and churches soliciting students, offering them free theological education, and assurance of appointment after training. What a temptation to indigenous church leaders badly needing a job.

During the experimental year, according to the audited records, funds came almost equally from within and without Ghana. Overseas grants, from the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and Theological Education Fund in London, totaled nearly $2,000. Local contributions of over NC1,100 along with student fees of nearly NC400, did not quite balance the overseas grants.

Considerable indigenous money was raised for the administration of the school during the first year. How was it raised? In spiritual churches every possible opportunity is made use of to encourage worshipers to give tithes and offerings. The informal opening provided such an opportunity. A strong appeal was made to the 100 participants by Director Anquandah; over 50 new cedis was received. A month later, the inaugural ceremony provided another excellent, indigenous fund-raising opportunity. Over 500 new cedis was realized. Thanksgiving and fund-raising harvest festivals are typical and successfully used in all churches in West Africa. The appeal of this method of raising funds is cultural.

A widely publicized thanksgiving harvest was held June 3, 1972. The occasion was the end of the experimental year. A directors' report said, "The harvest of the first anniversary celebration was a fiasco financially and very poorly attended." Another fund-raising harvest was arranged for in November at the beginning of the second year, with even less success. The failure of these indigenous

ways of raising money was most disappointing.

Turning over to the expense side of the ledger, only NC3,166 was expended during the first year, as against the NC5,750 budgeted. This was possible largely because of the sacrificial service of many teachers giving their time voluntarily. Only the resident director, responsible for the day-by-day administration, received a small allowance during the first year. The other large expense item was for classroom and office rent.

The second year opened October 9, 1972, with a cash balance of NC276. The harvests were not yielding. Sponsoring churches seemed to have lost their enthusiasm. The financial situation appeared desperate by the time we arrived back in Accra near the end of the school year in June 1973.

Understanding indigenization

GNTI provides background for study of theological perspectives on the level and in the area of leadership training for indigenous churches. The experiment has been instructive. There is so much about the structure of a training center for indigenous leaders that still needs to be learned by experimentation: the location, the building, the organization, the administration. We are grateful for the learning gained from many new experiments currently going on all over Africa. We must go on experimenting and learning, comparing notes with fellow travelers on a similar quest.

Indigenization means more than a dichotomy of mission and church, each going their own jolly way. For us it implies what Jesus taught about the relation of believers in him and what the early Christian church tried to put into practice, though found so very difficult (Gal. 3:28). For us it means not only a close working together, but mutual participation in all that is happening. Differences and difficulties are worked through by sitting around a round table in dialogue. Without mutuality and without dialogue there can be no true indigenization.

The relationship between indigenization and leadership training involves educational method as well as structure. Our particular approach to indigenous churches emphasizes working with people, rather than for people. If this kind of

mutuality is lacking, what will eventually happen is more akin to westernization than indigenization.

A training program with indigenous church leaders begins, not with systematic theologies and philosophies, but with the Good News, opened up to us in Genesis and going right on to Revelation. Christian theology begins and ends with Jesus – the eschatological Son of God and Savior of the world. Leaders of indigenous churches need to see him in true biblical perspective. Jesus is the content of theology, the Bible its source book. But they must see Jesus and know him in terms of their own culture – in a learner-teacher experience.

A curriculum aimed at training indigenous church leaders must be related to their needs. It must take into account the background from which the learner has come, and to which he will be returning. The Bible, God's message to man, must be the heart of the curriculum – the beginning and the end of what is being taught. No, not so much taught as studied and interpreted and experienced in a learner-teacher relationship, in which the learning and the teaching go on simultaneously. For just this approach, what is better than firsthand study of the Bible?

The educational process, too, must be indigenized. The indigenous sponsoring churches must participate in what that process looks like. Good teaching/learning assumes the integrity of both participants in the relationship, regardless of formal academic background, and the dynamic possibilities within the situation.

Indigenization also includes such physical things as housing and location. Alienation of trainees from their people can be a real danger. Everything about their training should be in keeping with the lifestyle of the people to whom they will be ministering. A training school set up in the midst of indigenous churches has many advantages.

Reaching for wider fellowship

The indigenous GNTI-founding churches were seeking not only financial help from the mission-founded churches, they were reaching out for wider, ecumenical fellowship. Mission churches were their only means at hand to gain their objectives. Indigenous churches, by and large in West

Africa, respect mission churches. They simply feel that the latter have sold out to western Christianity in such a way that the mission form of Christianity is not compatible with African cultural patterns. They feel that they can make a contribution towards culturally indigenizing the older churches. They may be right for already changes are rapidly taking place in the older churches.

On the other hand, the indigenous churches acknowledge their indebtedness to the early mission churches. They owe to them their being. The mission churches have much to teach them. They really need each other. They represent two separate contexts in search of each other, yet in one Christian community.

Though deeply interested in the GNTI, neither the Christian Council of Ghana nor its denominational members took financial or administrative responsibility for its development. That was good. Nonindigenous church persons assisted on a personal basis, but not as official representatives of the mission churches. This too was good. How then was the relation between GNTI and the mission churches sustained?

Earlier we reported the Interchurch Conversations initiated by the Leaders Fellowship. It was this same group of indigenous church leaders who initiated and established GNTI and are still largely responsible for the Institute. From the time of its establishment, GNTI had a significant role in the continued development of the Conversations. The two were closely tied, with GNTI taking the lead in keeping interested persons informed, planning the program, circulating the minutes; the meetings were even held in the school. Their significance lies in providing a forum for mutual sharing and learning from each other; here both older and indigenous churches can begin to cross the boundary of their separate contexts toward a unified Christian community.

Certainly both sides are eager to continue their dialogical relationship. When we were in Accra midsummer 1973, one top leader after another of the mission churches told us: GNTI must continue, so must the Interchurch Conversations. Still we have questions. Were the Conversations a monologue or a true dialogue? What really was happening to GNTI's indigenous leadership training program? Who was

learning; who was teaching; and what? It seemed to us that there was real danger of GNTI becoming just another traditional theological college, training indigenous church leaders for a context not their own. The financial crisis may well be a turning point in the Ghana indigenous-mission church relationship. A change of direction in the dialogical process could be emerging.

Let us summarize again what we have been saying:

1. Indigenous churches have to learn to work together, in the same way older churches do.

2. Early concepts of indigenization are no longer valid. A dichotomy of mission and church is wrong, and unchristian. Indigenization as we understand and apply it requires working closely **with**, rather than doing things **for** indigenous churches.

3. Best relations between the older and younger churches are worked out dialogically, rather than unilaterally.

4. Theological education for indigenous leaders should begin at a grass-roots level rather than a higher institutional level.

5. Rather than setting up institutions to which leaders come, go to the people with Bible classes and shorter term training sessions such as those perceived by GNTI but not yet put into operation. Hundreds of lay leaders could be trained rather than the few in centralized institutions.

6. One of the most difficult problems to work out in setting up theological educational programs is finance. Funds, whether local or foreign, need to be carefully budgeted, administered and audited.

7. Indigenization has to do with more than money! It includes theology, educational method, and level, curriculum and structure, as well as finances. It is important to avoid stifling or weakening indigenous effort in all these areas.

1. Careful minutes were kept by Recording Secretary Willard Roth. Quotations and facts in the following paragraphs are taken from that record.

2. Shouts are beautiful outbursts of spontaneous choruses or songs based on Bible phrases or verses suited to the occasion and adapted to African music. Often they are improvised on the spot!

3. Xerox copies of the booklet are available from Mennonite Board of Missions, Box 370, Elkhart, IN 46514 for $3 postpaid.

10

BE THOU OUR VISION

Fifty-two years ago God spoke to Ed, "Go. Go where I will send you." Then he heard the Lord saying: "So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has can not be my disciple." His early years were shaped by the strong mission emphasis of the rural Pennsylvania Mennonite Church near Hesston, Kansas. Sunday school library books about Mary Slessor of Calabar in West Africa and David Livingstone's mission exploits in southern Africa deeply moved him.

Irene's mission pilgrimage began in India where she grew up as the child of missionary parents. So it was India, not Africa, that influenced her pre-missionary years. When we first met on a college campus we discovered our mutual interest in foreign missions. To the one of us God was saying "India," to the other "Africa." How did we work that one out?

We didn't. God and our Mission Board contrived together to send us to a mission church in the heart of Chicago for two years rather than overseas. We always suspected that to have been a probationary period, a planned strategy, worked out by our Board. Whatever the motive, Chicago proved to be full of invaluable lessons for the years that followed. Then by 1935 we were commissioned and sent to India. Irene had won. At least for the next twenty-one years. During 1959, after we considered ourselves retired from foreign service, we unexpectedly received a call from our Board to go to West Africa, in a response to an appeal from some fifty indigenous church congregations in Nigeria who had heard our international Mennonite radio broad-

cast. They wanted Mennonites to come help them. So we went to Africa. This time Ed won.

We were completely unfamiliar with indigenous movements in Africa, or any other place in the world. Arriving in Uyo, Nigeria, we began discovering the milieu of our newly adopted churches. We learned how to relate to them and work with them in their strong desire to become accepted Christian churches with good leadership and good teaching practices. After eight years among the Uyo churches, we evacuated at the beginning of the civil war in 1967.[1]

In 1969, just ten years after our first arrival in Uyo, because we could not get a visa to return to Nigeria, our Board sent us along the coast of West Africa from Sierra Leone to Dahomey to learn about indigenous churches in other countries. Their problems and aspirations were the familiar ones of Uyo: Come teach us the Bible; train our leaders! After about four months we settled in Accra, Ghana, and began contacting churches. Hardly before we knew what was happening we found ourselves teaching the Bible and training leaders at Nima Temple, a local congregation of the Church of the Lord (Aladura).

We discovered that principles of strategy learned from our Uyo experiences could, with some modification and adaptation, be applied in other African indigenous church settings. We learned our lessons as we traveled along the way. We are now summarizing in the simplest way we know how what we learned. At the risk of oversimplification let us begin with three overarching factors we consider essential to any ministry among indigenous churches.

The **GRASS-ROOTS** factor includes meeting people where they are: religiously, educationally, economically, even geographically. Go to them, where they live and work and worship. Do not expect people to come to you. Some of our most exciting, fruitful contacts with the indigenous churches have come from going with them to their special places of worship at a seashore or on a mountain – joining them in fasting, praying, healing. Meeting people on their level of life and experience, as Jesus did, is so right.

The **LEARNER-TEACHER** factor seems particularly significant. In Africa we do well to forget who we think we are. Jesus spoke often about humility with reference to the

Kingdom, a difficult word for western missionaries to hear. We go to teach, not to learn, certainly not from the African. We go to give and not to receive from the African, not knowing that there is so much he could teach us if we were humble enough to learn. There is so much that he would gladly share with us if we would humbly receive.

Mission today requires a greater emphasis on the **PERSON-TO-PERSON** factor. Personal relationships must receive priority. Just as in the rest of the world, African indigenous churches live in a world of broken human relationships, a world in which their deepest needs are acceptance, understanding, forgiveness and love. Reconciliation is possible only when people come close together. Jesus' ministry was effective because He ministered to people. Just see the woman at the well, the prostitute at Simon's house, the man born blind. Jesus has given the guidelines for a person-to-person ministry; and the Holy Spirit gives the enabling love and power for God's mission.

Guidelines for ministry

Without attempting to be exhaustive, we want yet to draw together from our years of living and learning in West Africa some guidelines for ministry among indigenous churches.

1. **Clarify the objective.** Our basic aim was to work toward reconciliation: man to God and man to man. God does not need to be reconciled to man; He already is. God gave his only Son; the Son freely gave himself for us all. To experience this reconciliation man must respond in love and obedience. To bring about man's reconciliation to God is the task of evangelism. But there is more to reconciliation. Man needs also to be reconciled to his fellow-man, even Christian to fellow Christian. And this includes the older mission church to the newer more indigenous church. This, too, is the task of evangelism.

2. **Recognize the need to learn before trying to teach others.**

3. **Learn to know African culture and religion.** Effective

communication of the gospel demands our knowing the culture and religion of the people. Only then can real communication of the gospel begin. One of the major problems of the indigenous churches is syncretism. Working with these churches requires knowing their background, seeing how they apply the gospel to their cultural world. Along with understanding the indigenous churches an understanding of the mission churches is also basic.

4. **Seek to develop more effective patterns of mission.** We understand and appreciate, for their day, older mission approaches. We too participated. But educated African Christians will no longer tolerate a continuation of the past. They are demanding religious as well as political freedom. The indigenous churches are the vanguard of African movement toward being both fully Christian and fully African.

5. **Work within the total context.** Working closely with other churches, with other organizations, and with the new governments, is now more important than missions of the past were inclined to think. A switch to support of new governments as they keep emerging is not easy, but very necessary. The right of ruling governments over their people has to be recognized and accepted. We must understand and cooperate with their objectives and often work under their direction, yet without acquiescing to unchristian demands.

6. **Seek out informed people for counsel and guidance.** What else can a novice do in so new a venture in mission? Wherever we have gone in Africa we have found people who knew more than we did about the indigenous churches. We found them among the missionaries and nationals of mission churches; we found them among Christian Council leaders, as well as among the indigenous churches themselves; and we found them in university circles. Working in what was for us a new mission, seeking counsel was the part of wisdom.

7. **Attempt to meet the total needs.** Though the indigenous churches want Bible teaching and leadership training, as we have been emphasizing throughout, they want much

more. They want and need more education, economic progress, help with social problems in their churches, especially with their young people. The difference in ministry lies in the need for a new approach to these churches, rather than in the content of their need. They want freedom to choose their priorities, to more fully participate in and direct what is happening; they want to be African Christians and churches.

8. **Work cooperatively in program development.** We do not much appreciate a denominational approach for responding to the African indigenous churches, though this is still the way many missions and their missionaries work, even today. The immensity of the task makes this kind of a response seem unwise. But more important, is the strong dislike of African Christians for the divisions of the church along western lines. Although it is much easier to do one's own thing in one's own way, working with others is the better way.

9. **Promote localization.** Train African leaders to replace yourself; remember you are dispensable. Recognize that people are more important than programs; work with rather than for people. Avoid stifling or weakening indigenous efforts by helping people when they really don't need it, even though they may ask.

10. **Remember that attitudes make the difference.** Positive attitudes toward people and their culture are important in determining whether witness is effective. Guard against assuming a fixed time when programs should be completed, or assuming that a project demands indefinite missionary presence. Be humble. Be patient. Be sensitive. Be like Jesus in relating to persons as human beings.

Above all, and integrated throughout, must be continuing sensitivity to the Holy Spirit who guides and empowers all who are involved in God's mission.

Theology and indigenous churches

The most urgent problems facing the church and church workers in West Africa relate to ecclesiology and theology.

Madam Charway of the Divine Healing Church of Christ exercises the gift of healing.

John Mbiti's *African Religions and Philosophy* implies that a new understanding of the nature of the church and its theology opens the way for some correctives; and that this applies to both western and African churches. The church in the west could learn much from African world view. An example of this is the insight an African concept of time could give to our understanding of the incarnation.

A westerner can do little to work out the problem of the African church's relation to its traditional culture, yet strangely, the westerner is often the most zealous to indigenize the church in Africa. This shows that he does not understand the problems involved, or that he does not understand what the African really wants. Though the first step for the church in Africa to take is to come to terms with African culture, Africanization alone is no more the answer than for the church in the west to uncritically accept western cultural patterns. If Africanization of the church means isolation from the rest of the Christian world, Africans will vigorously oppose it. They will be Christians, African Christians in Africa, but at the same time they seek identity with the rest of the Christian world. What then is the direction?

First, the church in Africa **and** the church in the west should each seek a new understanding of their own theologies in terms of biblical theology. Having done that, they will be better able to learn from one another. Substitution, adoption, or syncretism will not solve our theological problems. The gospel must be brought to bear upon and be the corrective for all cultures. The church in Africa will be African, but it must be Christian; so the church in America will be American, but it too must be Christian. The Bible, not culture, must give us guidance in the formation of our theologies.

Second, we must come to a new understanding of the nature of the church and theology by sitting down together in a fresh approach to the Scriptures we have in common. As we listen to God we need to listen to each other. The church in the west, much more than it is aware of, has heard and followed the culture of the west; the mission-founded churches of Africa have largely been imitating their western counterparts; the newer indigenous churches have listened to and followed their own prophets and are

practically ignorant of how in "many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days has spoken to us by a Son" (Heb. 1:1).

Third, a more grass-roots approach to theology is needed. Theology in Africa is not systematized; rather, it is experienced in daily life. This is one of the many lessons the church in the west can learn from the church in Africa. And this concept of truth comes right out of the religious heritage of Africa, as Mbiti has so ably expounded. Theology is life; it is event in the daily experience of men.

Can a distinct theology develop in Africa, a culturally oriented theology arrived at through a fresh approach to the Scriptures? What is the role of the indigenous churches in working on the problems the church in Africa so urgently faces? Can anyone from the west participate in the process? How? These are some of the problems we need to keep working at, for which satisfactory answers have not yet been found. No part of the body of Christ will find its true identity in isolation, be it racial, national or denominational. Both the older and the newer churches must recognize their need for each other and the contribution the one can make to the other.

Postscript: A pilgrimage in mission

The day had been hot and trying, full of interruptions. Having accomplished little and feeling frustrated, Ed and I went down to the seashore to spend the last hours of the evening in the cool seabreeze. We were not alone. Offices and factories in Accra were just closing. On their way home people were stopping at the beach for various reasons: to cool off, to play, to picnic, but mostly to pray. Sometimes we joined a prayer group, kneeling with them in the sand. This time Ed strolled off alone to hunt shells. I sat on a rock watching the mighty drama of the sea, through my salt-sprayed glasses.

The tide was coming in with tremendous force. The big breakers came crashing in on the beach, then quickly receding again, leaving shells, seaweed, fish and debris in their wake. The ocean spray kept blurring my vision. Again and again I would have to clean the lenses. As the receding waves left pictures in the sand all around my feet,

so it seemed that the drama of my pilgrimage in mission over the last forty years was making etchings on my mind. How often my vision had blurred because I had not understood a people, a culture, or because I was too structured, or too ambitious; or because I was misunderstood by my colleagues; or was afraid of failure – and many more things. Continually through the forty years I have had to clean the salt spray from my lenses, so I could see clearly. In a few weeks we were leaving Accra, but the drama before me left a permanent imprint. Like the breakers rushing toward me, so thoughts from far and near flooded my soul.

Only an hour before I had been waiting outside Kofi's garage while the Peugeot 404 station wagon was being repaired. An older lady came walking by with her grandchild cradled on her back. She was a stranger to me, a stranger with a friendly smile. I greeted her and she enthusiastically responded. Our greetings continued, and she asked, "Where do you live? Why have you come to Accra? What is your name? Who is your husband?"

Hesitatingly, I answered, "I come from America. I am teaching Bible classes. I am working in the spiritual churches." It was all true, but this really wasn't what I wanted her to know and feel about me. Something similar to this had happened so often. I tried to step down from the platform I had made for myself. It made me sick.

My new friend saved the situation by saying, "I go to worship in the big church on the corner over there. But when I have sickness I go to a spiritual church; they know how to pray."

As I left in the station wagon, I was ashamed of what my friend might be remembering about me. Would it be that I was from America? Only that I was a Bible teacher among the spiritual churches? Had I simply answered her questions? Or through the dialogue had we reached each other on a deeper level? If we never met again, had something happened in our brief encounter through which the Holy Spirit spoke to both of us?

The water continued to ripple around my feet, still making pictures in the sand. Again I wiped the spray from my lenses. By now the sun was dipping lower on the horizon.

I thought of Auntie Aggie, my loveable and beautiful Ghanaian neighbor in Tema. One morning during our prayer hour, she felt free to quietly, unannounced, enter our house and kneel beside us. Her hands were raised, open heavenward, as if imploring God for something and ready to receive. Her heart too was open. At the close of the prayer we all three embraced; and she went home. "O God, this is the way I want it to be. I want to **be** your person. My **doing** has so often come in the way. Forgive me God."

Then there was Janet, who sold vegetables under the tree near the bakery. She too ministered to me as she put pawpaw and plantain into my basket. We often talked of her little ones in relation to God. I always knew that God was the bond between us. She didn't know me in any other way except as a friend. I didn't know until after her sudden death how much she had freed me to be one with her.

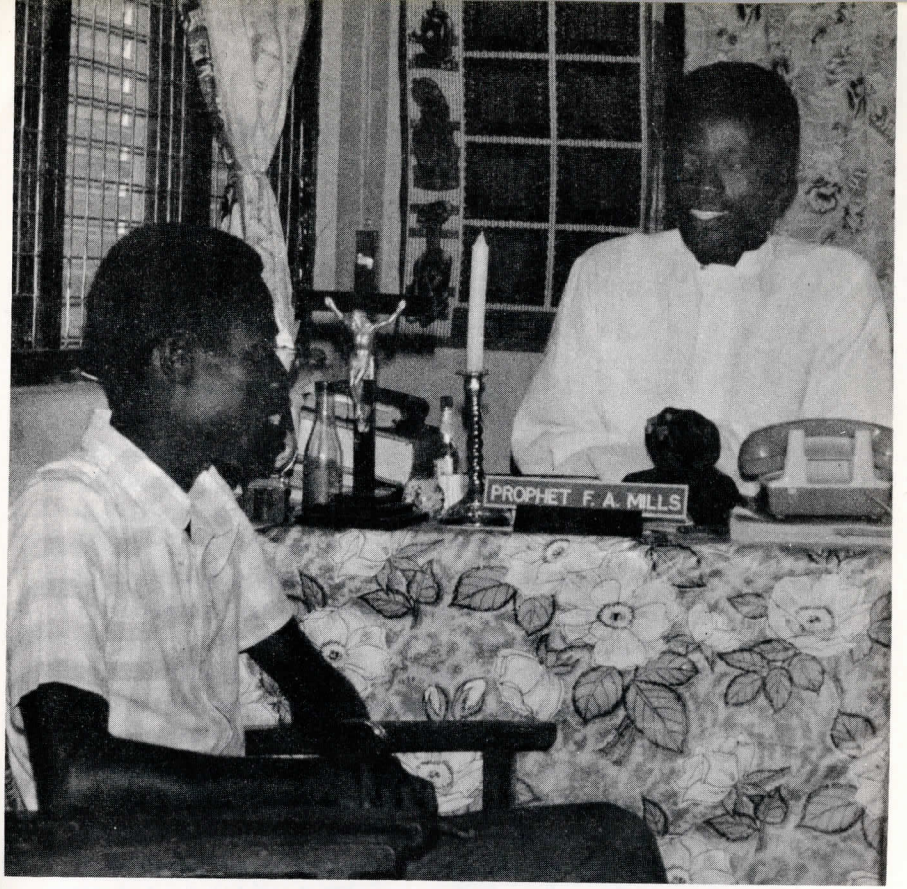
Paulina too was unforgettable, one person in a very special Bible class. I shall always be grateful to have had the privilege of seeing how God was working in the life of this simple village girl, as he freed her and all of us to be God's persons. Paulina was beautiful. None of us in the Bible class around the table were conscious of status, color or church.

During the forty years of our pilgrimage the most wonderful experiences have been those unstructured, spontaneous, free person-to-person relationships. If I were young again, I would love to go to a village in India or Africa, or anywhere; to live simply and unstructured, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; to be God's person in a person-to-person ministry.

Ed was coming back now, with a handkerchief full of shells. Far down the beach we could see the lights of the old Christiansborg castle. In the opposite direction the Jamestown lighthouse was winking its warning signal. Soon it would be dark. We wiped the spray from our lenses and started home.

Lord, be thou our vision!

1. Shenk, Wilbert R. "Mission Agency and African Independent Churches," *International Review of Mission* 63(252), October 1974, pp. 475-91.



Appendix 1

FELLOWSHIP AMONG SPIRITUAL INDEPENDENT CHURCHES IN GHANA

(A Personal Report by Prophet F. A. Mills)
May 1, 1971

Unifying indigenous spiritual and independent churches with the orthodox churches in Ghana has long been one of my concerns. To help bridge the gap, I established a loosely organized fellowship, the Faith Brotherhood Praying Circle, on a nondenominational basis as a reconciliatory agency.

With unity as my aim, I visited some of my colleagues from time to time. One day on my usual rounds, I went to Archdeacon Solomon Krow, who was in charge of Nima

Temple Church of the Lord (Aladura). Brother Krow introduced me to a Bible class which Rev. E. I. Weaver, a Mennonite missionary, who had come to Ghana in mid-1969, had been organizing. Krow asked me to join hands with them by sending some members to participate, which I did, in February 1970.

Association with Rev. Weaver. On 6th April 1970, Rev. Weaver invited me to his residence in Osu for informal talks. Rev. Weaver had been doing research among the various spiritual movements across West Africa. He told me about his particular approach in Nigeria and how he intended to work in Ghana. I was convinced that he could help me carry out my long anticipated aim. Among other things we discussed possible ways of establishing Bible classes at various centers in Accra. We decided a neutral place would be best to begin with and decided to meet at the Accra Community Center.

On April 8 Rev. Weaver and I succeeded in gathering a few spiritual church leaders to discuss our proposal. It was unanimously agreed that weekly Bible classes should be started at the Community Center on an experimental basis, and that all spiritual church leaders should be invited.

It was also the intention of Rev. Weaver to continue his West Africa mission. We discussed at length and decided to travel to Lome (Togo) and Cotonou (Dahomey) to consult with other spiritual and orthodox church leaders. On 15th April we met leaders of the following churches in Lome:

1. Church of the Lord (Aladura)
2. Cherubim and Seraphim
3. Church of Pentecost
4. Roman Catholic Mission
5. Seventh Day Adventist Mission

There was a consensus about inviting spiritual churches and prayer groups to study the Bible together. We continued our journey to Cotonou and discussed our missionary work with Pastor Henry, who was in charge of the Methodist Church. We were successful in our work, returning to Accra on 17th April.

Accra Leaders Fellowship. On 21st April we attended a meeting at the Accra Community Center with eight church leaders present: E. I. Weaver and W. E. Roth, Mennonite Missionaries; J. K. Appiah, Church of Bethel, Kotobabi;

Paula Warren, Jamestown; Rev. Freeman, Pentecostal Church of Christ, Adabraka; E. M. Tetteh, Church of Messiah, Labadi; D. A. Mensah, United Church of the Lord, Town Council Line; Prophet F. A. Mills, Faith Brotherhood Praying Circle, Mamprobi.

We started by discussing Timothy. After discussions the group asked me to be the recording secretary and Brother Weaver to be interim chairman. We confirmed our earlier decision to meet every Tuesday at the Community Center. We rented the Center for one quarter, but thereafter decided to meet in rotation in each leader's house for lack of funds.

July-August 1970 Activities. On 7th July we met in Rev. Weaver's house and were introduced to Rev. Paul Fynn, a Lutheran pastor who had completed his pastoral training in Tanzania, East Africa, and had returned to Ghana. We concluded that Bible classes should be organized in various centers in the city and that arrangements should be made to get students from Trinity College to assist. However, this new arrangement did not disturb our weekly Leaders Fellowship.

On the 14th July we had our fellowship in Rev. Paul Fynn's house in Kaneshie. We continued our discussion on how to organize Bible classes in various centers in Accra and the total West Africa mission.

On 21st July we had our meeting in Mrs. Paula Warren's house at Kokomlemle. Mrs. Warren is the leader of the Lighthouse Deliverance Church. We had our meeting in Mrs. Grace Owusu-Afriyie's house on 28th of July. She had also organized a prayer group at Roman Ridge. We studied the Books of Galatians and Hebrews. The discussions were so interesting that nobody among the group would stay out from any weekly meeting.

Early in August Rev. Campbell, a Presbyterian missionary from the U.S.A. who was touring West Africa to study pentecostal work, met with us. He was happy to see us doing team work.

Rev. E. M. Tetteh of the Church of Messiah, Labadi, and I took Rev. Campbell to Kumasi on 15th August to attend a Pentecostal Association meeting. We had lengthy and varied discussions with our guest en route to Kumasi and most of the points discussed are still fresh in my mind. He

urged us to go ahead, for what had a small beginning would one day turn to be something great. We are yet to realize the fruit of our labor.

West Africa Mission. Brothers Weaver, Fynn and I formed ourselves into a team and prepared the schedule for the Good News Bible Classes at various centers. Students from Trinity College were included in the schedule to organize Sunday schools, children's services and youth fellowships. Women's fellowships were also organized by Mrs. Weaver.

As a team we tried to implement a tentative statement we had prepared. On 25th August we met at Rev. J. K. Appiah's house to discuss possible ways of going about the Good News Bible courses.

On 28th August Rev. Daughtery, president of the pentecostal movement in the U.S.A., talked to us about the movement in the U.S.A. and how he saw it during his tour of West Africa.

On 1st September we returned to the Accra Community Center to continue our weekly Bible Study Fellowship. We discussed the Book of Hebrews. Twelve people were present.

Rev. Weaver organized a meeting at the YMCA Accra on the 7th September. The meeting was successful and it was a step forward in the proposed West Africa mission and theological education program.

On 9th September we had another meeting which was addressed by Rev. J. W. Duncan, a Lutheran pastor from the St. Louis Seminary (U.S.A.). He spoke to us about service to God and mankind.

Leadership Training and Theological Education. In October 1970, Rev. E. M. Tetteh of the Church of Messiah and I traveled to the Ramseyer Training Institute at Abetifi, Kwahu, and negotiated with Rev. I. H. Frempong to organize lay preachers courses for indigenous church leaders. The first course took place in November-December 1970, and the second one in January 1971. The results were encouraging. The second leg of the course for the same people was planned for a year later.

Weaver, Rev. Dretke, and Frempong organized as a scholarship committee and sought help from Theological Education Fund in London to set up a scholarship scheme.

Our team now has three emphases in view:

1. The Good News Bible Classes
2. The West Africa Mission
3. Theological Education Center for pastoral training.

The Good News Bible Classes have started as scheduled on ordinary Bible reading level with certificate. The courses are progressing nicely. With regards to the West Africa Mission, we have found that the proposed Theological Education Programme for Indigenous Churches should be the forerunner. And we are, therefore, seriously addressing ourselves to that effort.

On 28th of January 1971, we organized a meeting at the Accra Community Center, and Dr. A. E. Luck from the Institute of South Africa was our guest speaker. She spoke about leadership training for African indigenous churches. Wide publicity was given to the meeting and many leaders attended.

Theological Institute. From thence, positive steps were taken to realize the establishment of a theological institute for indigenous churches in Ghana following the meeting held on 28th January.

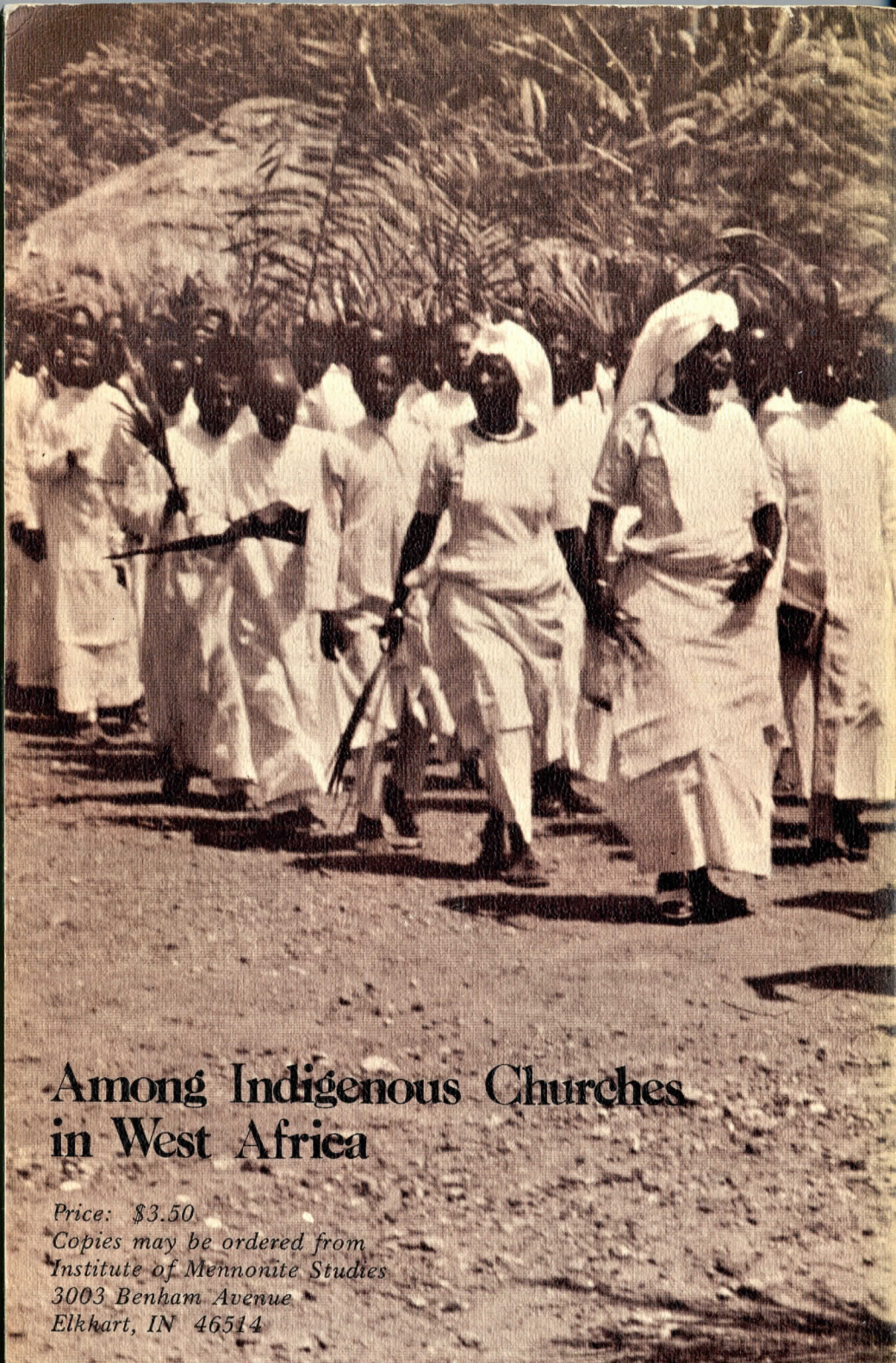
Early in February, after Dr. Luck's visit, Rev. Weaver, Rev. Fynn, Prophet F. A. Mills, Rev. Yeboa-Korie and Rev. W. E. Roth met and had further discussions to find solutions to many of the points raised by Dr. Luck's talk.

Two meetings were held in March to put finishing touches to the proposals. These meetings were also attended by an encouraging number of people, which testified that really there is a dire need for theological education and leadership training.

We are now at the crossroads and need expertise. We need moral support from the Christian Council. We need financial assistance from overseas sympathizers. Something must be done now and some people have to start it. But how do we start?

We cannot achieve if we go about this in our own way. This is an independent, free and autonomous organization, free from any religious domination. We the initiators of the exercises have accepted this and we are working for the good of all churches, and we are ready to discuss further how we may go about it. May the Almighty God bless this work so that it might yield good fruits in the future.

EDWIN AND IRENE WEAVER are veteran overseas missionaries. After serving in India — the land where Irene grew up — from 1935 to 1957, the Weavers responded to a call from a group of churches in southeastern Nigeria. In *The Uyo Story* they recount their involvement in developing a new approach in missionary response during the years 1959-67. They returned to West Africa in 1969 for a 24-month assignment based in Accra, Ghana, which included area survey and study of indigenous spiritual church movements as well as initiating Bible study programs. *From Kuku Hill* — the Accra neighborhood in which they lived — chronicles that era. In 1973 and again in 1975 the Weavers undertook ministry among indigenous churches in southern Africa. Their retirement home is Schowalter Villa, Hesston, Kansas.



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