



John W. Sadiq 1910-1980

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J.E. Lesslie Newbigin

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John Sadiq was the first Chairman of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and he held that office for the first ten formative years of its life. He was the ideal man for that post, being at the time the Bishop of a large Indian diocese, with a background of ecumenical work as an SCM travelling secretary and as a Secretary of the National Christian Council from 1946 to 1957. He confesses in his memoirs that he suffered from a "congenital ecumenism" and few men have been more totally committed to the twin causes of mission and unity.

His parents were Muslim converts, and his home was one of great poverty. He had to overcome formidable obstacles, including constant insomnia. He did not have a brilliant mind, but by sheer devotion and hard work he became a powerful teacher and leader of others. He was Professor of Persian at Wilson College, Bombay, when he was called to be Youth Secretary for the NCC. He led the Indian delegation to the Oslo Youth Conference of 1947, and to the end of his life he had a gift for communicating with young people. Having helped to plan a drastic reorganization of the NCC, which included a reduction of its central staff, he characteristically stepped down to make the transition easy. In the same way, when the Church of North India was formed in 1970, he resigned from his see so that there might be more opportunity for bishops to be appointed from the other uniting churches. In subsequent years he undertook a number of tasks both in India and abroad, as Director of a Family Life Project, as Principal of Bishop's College, as an Indian missionary to Britain and as the priest of an Australian parish where he died this year.

John espoused causes which made him unpopular-pacifism, the ordination of women, the development of a non-professional ministry. But he was never strident. He could note that one of his speeches at a Lambeth Conference was heard "in contemptuous silence", but there was no bitterness. I have seldom known a man who was so utterly simple, straightforward and dedicated to his Lord. He was always as down-to-earth as only a man of God can be. He was never an empire-builder, always a pastor, evangelist and a man of vision. His name is not widely known, but the world-wide Church owes him much. It is good that readers of the IRM should remember him.

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