

Tokyo 2010 and Edinburgh 2010: A Comparison of Two Centenary Conferences

by Allen Yeh

This year commemorates the centenary of the landmark Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference. Edinburgh 1910 was the culmination of the “Great Century of Missions”¹, that 19th-century expansion of missionary endeavor that began with the 1792 publication of the ‘Magna Carta’ of missions documents, William Carey’s *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*. Now in 2010, not just one but at least a *dozen* conferences are being organized in celebration of that 1910 conference, from Aarhus, Denmark, to Pune, India, to Strasbourg, France, to St. Paul, Minnesota, to Yangon, Myanmar, and to Auckland, New Zealand! It was Dr. Ralph Winter, with his keen eye for missions history, who singled out four of these 2010 centenary celebrations as particularly noteworthy: Tokyo, Edinburgh, Cape Town, and Boston. I have the great privilege of being able to attend all four conferences this year, and as a mission historian, I am excited to observe and be a part of history in the making. This paper is a work-in-progress as we have reached the halfway point: Tokyo (in May), and Edinburgh (in June) are behind us, with Cape Town (in October) and Boston (in November) still to come.

Four conferences on four continents—why do we need such a multiplicity? What does each of these bring to the table? And, dare we ask such a question, which does the best job of carrying forth the mission of Edinburgh 1910 today? These are the main questions which I will address in this paper. I will be drawing mainly from my own experiences and interviews with delegates and organizers of the current conferences, as well as referencing Prof. Brian Stanley’s recently-published book, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Eerdmans, 2009), for historical background.

Mission since 1910

This multiplicity of conferences in 2010 may have much to do with the drastically different face of mission today as opposed to a century ago. It is curious that Edinburgh 1910, which was hailed as the “Birthplace of the Modern

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Ecumenical Movement,” should actually be the *end* of the Great Century of Missions. The main differences between 1910 and 2010 have to do with changes in the political, theological, ecclesial, and spiritual landscapes. Although the world remains 1/3 Christian, just as it was 100 years ago, it certainly does not imply that nothing has changed. Let me review some of those significant changes:

- First and foremost, the center of gravity of Christianity has shifted to the non-Western world. Just as recently as a decade ago, this was still news. Today, it is fairly common knowledge.
- It is also worth noting that, though the percentage of Christians is still the same as a century ago, the world’s population has tripled from 2 billion to 6 billion.
- Given these developments, there are almost as many non-Western Christians today as all the Western Christians of the last two millennia combined.
- Also, reverse mission is prevalent: the largest church in London is Nigerian; the Chinese are evangelizing westward with their “Back to Jerusalem” movement; Mongolia is the biggest mission-sending nation in the world *per capita*; and Korea has four of the ten largest churches in the world.
- Pentecostalism, not Evangelicalism, is the fastest-growing form of Christianity around the world (especially in “Global South” nations like Brazil).
- Old paradigms of church and denominations are increasingly irrelevant as we are confronted with African Independent Churches, Latin American base ecclesial communities, and Chinese house churches.
- We have seen the world-level formation of the International Missionary Council (1921), the World Council of Churches (1948), and the Lausanne Committee for

World Evangelization (1974). We are now post-Vatican II, signaling a new era in Protestant-Catholic relations.

- Samuel Huntington’s thesis has proved correct in that there are now three major world powers, with the rise of China and Islam in addition to the dominance of the West.
- Communication, particularly with the advent of the internet, has revolutionized how we do mission, much as Roman roads contributed to the spread of Christianity in the first century, the printing press helped



to further the Protestant Reformation by putting Bibles in the vernacular in the hands of the people, and radio & television helped Billy Graham to become the world’s most prolific evangelist.

- Christianity and wealth are no longer inextricably linked, as Kenya and Brazil are two of the most Christian nations on earth, while Japan and France are two of the most secular.
- The world has shifted from Modernism to Postmodernism, where optimism in the unstoppable progress of humanity has wilted in the face of two World Wars,² the Holocaust, the Great Depression, the Korean and Vietnam wars, the Cold War, genocide in Rwanda and the Balkans, 9/11, the current economic downturn, and an unusually high frequency of natural and ecological disasters.

- Short-term missions are now more prevalent than long-term missions.
- Evangelicals now are more environmentally aware and more social justice-oriented (I see this as a recovery, not a discovery).
- The Western world has gone from modernism to postmodernism, which has at least the following two major implications:
 - Missionaries are far less triumphalistic (which was characterized in 1910 by the phrase “The evangelization of the world in this generation”) than the colonial era of missions because of an increasing pessimism in the unlimited potential of mankind.
 - There has been a shift from *missions* to *mission*, as outlined by authors such as David Bosch³ and Lesslie Newbigin.⁴ The focus on the *missio Dei*, that it is God who initiates and we who are merely partners in the endeavor, is now *de rigueur*. With so many new missiological issues, any one missionary conference would be hard-pressed to address all of them—hence, so many attempts to follow in the footsteps of Edinburgh 1910.

Four Conferences, Four Continents

Secondly, why these four conferences in particular? It is interesting that Dr. Winter has singled out these four. It is not surprising that he would advocate the Tokyo conference, as it was his brainchild and he wanted to give it a place of prominence alongside Edinburgh (the one which bears the namesake of the original conference) and Cape Town (by far the largest of the four, and thus the most impactful by virtue of its advertising, resources, and manpower). The Boston conference, in my opinion, does not quite fit the same mold as the others, but I will explore this in more detail later.

Though there are many possible reasons, there might be a geographical answer: a conference for each continent, covering Asia, Europe, Africa, and North America—but notice what is missing? Latin America. This is confounding for any student of history, as the exclusion of Latin America was the most controversial point of Edinburgh 1910.

Then there is the pragmatic answer: these four conferences apparently meet a particular need, and only taken together as a whole do they adequately take up the mantle of Edinburgh 1910. Tokyo was about missions agencies, Edinburgh was about ecumenical and denominational diversity, Cape Town is about evangelical cooperation in ecclesial structures, and Boston is academic.

Ralph Winter, a Radical Thinker

A note must be made here about Dr. Winter's proclivities: he was a profound thinker who thought "outside the box." He founded the U.S. Center for World Mission to put his ideas into action. My former mission professor said that, for every ten of Dr. Winter's ideas, eight would be crazy and unworkable, but two would be absolute sheer genius and would change the missiological landscape! That's the type of thinker he was.

Two of the key contributions that Dr. Winter was known for, both of which are fundamental to his purposes for Tokyo 2010, were in the reinterpretation of the *panta ta ethne* ("all peoples") and his distinction between *modalities* and *sodalities* in the mission of the church. The former redefines "nation" not as political entities but as ethno-linguistic groups, and the latter makes a distinction between traditional ecclesial structures (modalities) and "parachurch" organizations (sodalities). Ralph Winter preferred sodalities as a more effective means of mission, and saw them as the key participants at Edinburgh 1910.⁵ Interestingly, Brian Stanley concurs that at Edinburgh 1910 "delegates represented not churches or denominations but

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Protestant and Anglican foreign missionary societies."⁶

In a way, Tokyo is the sister of Cape Town, both being evangelical in constituency. Dr. Winter was in attendance at the Lausanne 1974 Congress in Switzerland, and he even signed the Lausanne Covenant. Yet he departed from Lausanne—not in fellowship but in strategy—and blazed his own trail.⁷ That departure is represented today in these two separate strategic consultations: Tokyo, which focuses on unreached people groups using sodalities, and Cape Town, which will be about holistic mission using modalities. The question remains which consultation most accurately reflects Edinburgh 1910.

Edinburgh 2010, of course, would not be considered evangelical. It was firmly ecumenical in its outlook, but included Evangelicals as one of the five major groupings of Christians, alongside Catholics, Orthodox, mainline Protestants, and Pentecostals. In this sense, the word "evangelical" is not used in opposition to "ecumenical," as is sometimes the tendency.⁸ Edinburgh 2010 was thoroughly inclusive, perhaps the most inclusive and diverse mission conference in history,⁹ and certainly much more so than Edinburgh 1910, because it also made an effort to include women, youth, as well as ecclesial, geographical, and ethnic diversity.¹⁰

What is always tricky with ecumenical mission conferences is the balance between unity and action. Sometimes so much effort is made toward unity that the delegates never get around to action! But if "mission is the mother of ecumenism," then action should precede unity, not the other way around. This question needs to be asked of Edinburgh 2010, whether it sacrificed mission for the sake of ecumenism, something which evangelical confer-

ences do not have to worry about because basic understandings of theology and authority are already assumed. By "sacrifice" I do not mean that mission was left out of the discussion, but rather that mission was not addressed in as adequate a manner as it could have been. An inordinate amount of time was required to establish common ground, and the harder questions of mission were not broached for fear of offending one's neighbor. I think that Edinburgh 1910 got it right in this regard,¹¹ allowing mission to give birth to ecumenism. Edinburgh 2010 did the opposite, putting the cart before the horse.

In the following section I will make a comparison of Tokyo and Edinburgh 2010 with positive and negative criticisms of each. I will end with a look toward Cape Town and Boston.

Tokyo 2010

I believe Tokyo 2010 made three positive contributions to the missionary project: discipleship, reconciliation, and the vision for completion of the missionary task. First, discipleship was apparent in the theme of the conference, "Making Disciples of Every People in Our Generation." It clearly echoed John R. Mott's watchword from a century earlier, the only twist being the emphasis on discipleship instead of evangelization. The rationale behind this shift was that "making disciples" is the main verb of the Great Commission, and it implies depth rather than just a shallow "conversion check-off list."

Secondly, reconciliation was wonderfully displayed in a conference jointly organized by Korean and Japanese mission leadership, which is akin to Hutus cooperating with Tutsis, or Nazis cooperating with Jews. It was funded by the three largest churches in Korea, but hosted by Japan, and

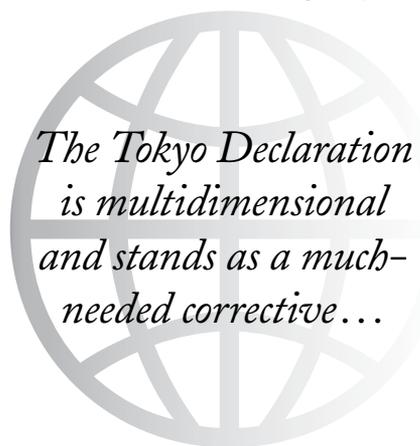
the Japanese and Koreans seemed to equally share the platform. The preacher on the first day, Tsugumichi Okawa, who pastors the largest church in Japan (Yamato Calvary Chapel), is a disciple of Paul Yonggi Cho, the founding pastor of the largest church in Korea (and of the world). Pastors from Onnuri and Yoido also preached during the conference. There was also a great moment of reconciliation when the Japanese and Americans apologized to each other for World War II. But the most moving and memorable moment of the conference was when a Swedish mission leader, Stefan Gustavsson, gave his plenary speech on the state of Christianity in Europe. This was followed by a spontaneous outbreak of prayer, where the non-Western mission leaders cried out for the restoration of the Christian faith to secular Europe. What a reversal of Edinburgh 1910!

Thirdly, Tokyo 2010 emphasized the completion of the missionary task, explicitly highlighting the unreached people groups who have no Scripture in their language or access to the gospel. This push for closure in reaching the final *panta ta ethne* framed the entire conference. They challenged every mission agency to “adopt” one of these ethno-linguistic groups and work to complete the task. Of course, all of the above was accomplished through the unified gathering of evangelical sodalities.

Despite all the good that Tokyo brought to the table, I was surprised at the absence of three things throughout the proceedings, namely, the lack of concern for social justice and the absence of both female speakers and Chinese delegates. Regarding social justice, it was remarkable that there was no mention of it throughout the conference, especially considering that Ralph Winter was in attendance at Lausanne 1974 and signed the Lausanne Covenant, a document whose significance lay, in part, on the fact that it re-forged the twin missiological priorities of evangelism and social justice that was lost during

much of the twentieth century. But perhaps it was *because* Ralph Winter was not in attendance at Tokyo that the social justice aspect was not emphasized. Winter well understood the priority of all aspects of mission, and his emphasis on unreached people groups was meant to fill a gap, not displace other crucial aspects of mission. Had he lived to attend Tokyo, it might have looked different.

There was also not a single female speaker, though many women mission leaders were in attendance. In a subset of the shift of the center of gravity to



the non-Western world, it often seems like the number 1 demographic missing from modern-day mission conferences is white women. The paradox is that white women were the biggest force throughout most of Protestant missions history.¹²

For a conference held in the context of Asia, Tokyo 2010 had plenty of Korean and Japanese representation, but there were almost no Chinese. China, along with Africa, is one of the two heartbeats of World Christianity today, and to have minimal participation from that country (and certainly none from the platform) is an unfortunate imbalance. In contrast, at the recent Yale-Edinburgh conference on the history of the missionary movement and World Christianity (hosted by Andrew Walls and Lamin Sanneh), the most frequent paper contributions are always on China!¹³ The lack of Chinese at Tokyo 2010 may be explained by visa restrictions playing a part, by the delegates' intention to remain “under the radar,”

and the fact that many Chinese house church leaders are already committed to going to Cape Town.

It will take the hindsight of history to accurately assess the document produced from this conference, the “Tokyo Declaration.” Will it have the same impact as the “Lausanne Covenant”? The Covenant¹⁴ is probably the longest-lasting and most far-reaching contribution of Lausanne, so a similar question needs to be asked about the potential impact of the Declaration.¹⁵ Its twin emphases on “finishing the task” and “making disciples of every people in our generation” are both crucial contributions in this day and age where the tendency is to either emphasize social justice *above* evangelism (hence the need to restore evangelism to a place of prominence, especially among unreached people groups), or to have an evangelism that lacks deep social transformation (hence the need to highlight discipleship as part and parcel of mission, not just conversion). The Tokyo Declaration is multidimensional (depth, not just breadth) and stands as a much-needed corrective to some current missiological trends which have lost sight of the ultimate goal of mission, which is to bring the *panta ta ethne* into the worship of God.¹⁶

Edinburgh 2010

Edinburgh 2010 was by far the smallest of the four conferences, having only invited 250 leaders. It could have been utterly insignificant due to its size if not for the fact that it bore the name of “Edinburgh.” At first, one had to wonder how a conference so small could be ecumenical in any way, because 250 people can hardly represent the entire worldwide church! Yet, it managed to succeed on that level. In fact, the small size meant that there was an intimacy and that people could have meaningful interaction with one another throughout the conference. Another benefit was the ability to be a working conference, unlike Tokyo or Cape Town where the work was done ahead of time. As such, the documents were being crafted during the course

of the conference, and everyone's voice was heard.

The diversity among this smaller attendance was compelling. Edinburgh 2010 did a great job of including the demographic representations left out in 1910, namely women, the Global South, and non-Protestants. Maybe the best visible sign of diversity was the music which was led fantastically by John Bell of the Iona community. The songs were drawn from some 20+ countries, mostly smaller nations, such as El Salvador, Rwanda, Taiwan, Malawi, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Malaysia, Ghana, Paraguay, Cameroon, Vietnam, Zimbabwe, and Singapore. This diversity was also felt because Edinburgh 2010 did history well, particularly the final day in which everyone met at the Assembly Hall. They had the Archbishop of York, John Sentamu deliver the address (he as an African serving in the second-highest seat of power in the Church of England being a perfect embodiment of the impact of World Christianity). The conference also introduced the descendants, relatives, and heirs of three of the few non-Western delegates who were present at Edinburgh 1910: Yun Ch'ih, John Rangiah, and V.S. Azariah.

Three controversial points punctuated this Edinburgh conference. First, a Greek Orthodox representative from the U.S., Tony Kieropoulos, delivered a thinly-veiled criticism of the dominance of American Evangelicals and their representative televangelists, especially with regard to the upcoming Lausanne Congress in Cape Town! This raised the hackles of some in the audience. Later in the proceedings, Doug Birdsall, the chairman of the Lausanne continuation, spoke from the platform on the upcoming Cape Town congress, saying jokingly, "And there may even be some televangelists there!"

A second controversial moment was what might be titled "the Azariah moment." In 1910, V.S. Azariah, the first bishop of the southern Indian diocese of Dornekal who was one of

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the 17 non-Westerners in attendance at Edinburgh 1910, spoke at that time about the condescending attitude of Western missionaries toward non-Western Christians. He stated boldly in 1910, "Too often you promise us thrones in heaven, but will not offer us chairs in your drawing rooms," clearly indicating the desire for equal partnership that goes beyond paternalism. He concluded with his famous quote, "You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for *love*. Give us FRIENDS!"

In this 2010 conference, Azariah's name was mentioned more than any other 1910 figure, including John R. Mott. I'm sure most people must have thought, "Who is going to be 2010's V.S. Azariah?" It turned out to be another South Asian, Vinoth Ramachandra, of IFES (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students) from Sri Lanka, who spoke on the last day. His critique could be summarized as follows: though this may be the most inclusive conference of the last 100 years (in itself a very complimentary statement), there were still not enough women, and not enough youth. In addition, Westerners are so beholden to their titles, vestments, degrees, when there really needs to be a breaking down of barriers between clergy and laity and greater steps toward the priesthood of all believers (which really made the Catholics, Orthodox, Methodists, and Anglicans uncomfortable or upset). Also, he noted that non-Westerners criticize Westerners for these things, yet do these very same things themselves! Plus, most of the non-Westerners at the conference were global South people who now reside in the global North. And finally, Westerners always seem to define non-Westerners in religious terms, but today there are many

non-Westerners who are technologically-driven more than anything else (think of India with regard to telecommunications and the Internet).

Ramachandra received much applause, but his speech begs the question: is such a statement appropriate for an ecumenical conference? Some participants would say no, because the point was to encourage unity and consensus. Others say yes, because we ought to be sharpening one another. As one Catholic delegate said to me, we sometimes need to learn to give and take some hits, though gently. Unity does not mean uniformity.

Stephen Bevans, of the Catholic Union in Chicago, who followed Ramachandra on the platform, raised a few other critiques. He offered the lament that the great Scottish missiologist Andrew Walls was not honored in his own country! Bevans also noted that, despite all the conference diversity, Oceania was hardly represented at the conference.

The third controversial moment is in regards to Daryl Balia who was hired three years ago to be the director of Edinburgh 1910. He was dismissed right before the conference began, and was not invited to take part nor was he given credit for his work. There are a number of reasons why he was dismissed, and I am not in a place to pass judgment on the fairness of any of them, but suffice it to say this controversy has been splashed across the media. It has not run its course completely, so history will determine the justice of the outcome.

Some final criticisms of Edinburgh 2010 also need to be mentioned, from some of my interviews. First, there was the local hosting issue. In 1910, local Christians housed the delegates. There was very little of that this time around, and that could have kept costs

down and really helped Scotland engage the world when they appeared on its doorstep. Also, on the Sunday when local churches were meant to be hosting delegates for worship, the two largest churches in Edinburgh, Morningside Baptist and Charlotte Chapel, were left off the list because they are not part of the Churches Together in Scotland. And it was also surprising that, in the final session at the Assembly Hall, there were so many empty seats in the balcony. It was the impression of everyone that those seats would be extremely coveted, and the fact that there were so many empty seats might be attributed to the fact that very few locals knew that the event was even happening!¹⁷

Another observation was regarding Pentecostals. Of course, they were missing in 1910, because the Azusa Street Revival was contemporaneous with that conference. At 2010, they were there, but they were barely heard or seen. For example, one would think that the times of singing would be when Pentecostalism would be most apparent, but hardly anybody even raised their hands! So perhaps there was an international representation of worship music, but not an interdenominational representation.¹⁸

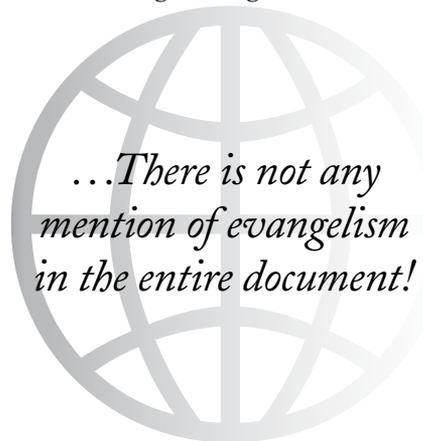
One last criticism is worth mentioning: at the revision of the Common Call document on the last day, one young South African, Sas Conradie, stood up and said there is not any mention of evangelism in the entire document! It is shocking that a missionary document should not have mentioned evangelism, but perhaps that is the actual state of ecumenical missionary work today.

All of the above is not to suggest that the conference was not a success; in fact, Edinburgh 1910 probably had many more problems, and it was still deemed a landmark event. Perhaps the expectations were raised too high for this conference, one hundred years later, to match or exceed the original ecumenism. I heard complaints from some people that there was “too

much evangelical representation” at Edinburgh 2010, and conversely from others that there was “too much WCC representation.” Ironically, perhaps the dissatisfaction expressed by these two camps shows that the conference organizers were doing something right! There were enough evangelicals and ecumenicals that their numbers were worth remarking on.

Cape Town 2010

In 1806, William Carey, often known as the “Father of Modern Missions,” proposed that there be an 1810 ecumenical gathering of Christians in



Cape Town, South Africa, to discuss working together for worldwide missions. He wrote to Andrew Fuller from Calcutta:

The Cape of Good Hope is now in the hands of the English; should it continue so, would it be possible to have a general association of all denominations of Christians, from the four corners of the world, kept there once in about ten years? I earnestly recommend this plan, let the first meeting be in the Year 1810, or 1812 at furthest. I have no doubt but it would be attended with very important effects; we could understand one another better, and more entirely enter into one another's views by two hour conversation than by two or three years epistolary correspondence.¹⁹

This was dismissed by Fuller, amongst others, as unfeasible. Fuller objected:

I consider this as one of bro'r Carey's pleasing dreams. Seriously I see no important object to be obtained by

such a meeting, which might not be quite as well attained without it. And in a meeting of all denominations, there would be no unity, without which we had better stay at home...²⁰

At the time, “conferences of any kind, missionary or otherwise, national or local, were practically unknown!”²¹ As a missionary, Carey took Fuller's counsel seriously, even calling him his “rope holder” (because it was Fuller's theological foundation at home that provided the anchor for Carey's missionary endeavors abroad). Carey's vision never came to pass in 1810 or even during his lifetime, and in time the possibility of such a worldwide gathering faded from the minds of many.²² However, whether or not there was a direct lineage, exactly one hundred years later Carey's vision found a large measure of fulfillment in the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, from where the modern ecumenical movement is usually traced.

The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization is looking to make good on Carey's dream, 200 years after the fact. They chose Cape Town to represent the realities of a truly worldwide Christianity, with one of its heartlands in Africa and the Global South. There is also the added bonus of being in the wake of the World Cup, with South Africa now wired to take on the world, with its hotels, Internet, and transportation all technologically in place, making it far cheaper for Lausanne to host a major conference.

Of course, Lausanne really takes its cue from its namesake, that first Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization which took place in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974. That meeting was called by Billy Graham, and the chief architect of the Lausanne Covenant was John Stott. My hunch is that Lausanne sees itself as a Reformation of the WCC. While the WCC may trace its origins to Edinburgh 1910, Lausanne, though newer, would trace

its origins to William Carey 1810. At the very least, it will probably reference Lausanne 1974 more than Edinburgh 1910.

Cape Town will distinguish itself from the rest by its sheer size. It is by far the biggest of the four centenary conferences this year, anticipating 4000 people. Though it will consist primarily of Evangelicals, it will have participants from just about every nation and race on earth, including a good diversity of women and youth. Kenneth Ross is of the opinion that the LCWE, not the WCC, is actually the spiritual progeny of Edinburgh 1910:

Though in strictly institutional terms it is the World Council of Churches that is the heir of Edinburgh 1910, in terms of promoting the agenda of world evangelization, the Lausanne movement might be seen as standing in direct continuity... As Andrew Walls suggests: "Both 'ecumenical' and 'evangelical' today have their roots in Edinburgh 1910. If each will go back to the pit whence both were dug, each may understand both themselves and the other better."²³

2010 Boston

Boston is the "dark horse" of the four events. It has not been advertised very much, and it seems to be largely a localized effort, organized by and for the BTI (Boston Theological Institute), mainly for academics (students and professors). It traces its impetus to a similar Boston conference that followed the Edinburgh 1910 conference, but really it is not on the scale of the other three (I do not even know how large it will be), and does not even assume that all people attending would be Christians!

Yet, though the impact of Boston 2010 is not quite on par with the others, it does serve a unique function. First of all, Boston will be targeted at university students which, as is explained below, is not historically insignificant. Universities are one of the biggest resources for recruiting missionaries, as well as being among

Both "ecumenical" and "evangelical" today have their roots in Edinburgh 1910. (Andrew Walls)

the most ripe mission fields as exemplified by the work done by organizations such as Campus Crusade for Christ and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Secondly, because Boston is the only one of the four conferences which is not invitation-only, the more open access should draw a unique crowd. Thirdly, Boston is inviting Brian McLaren (of Emergent Church fame) to be one of the keynote speakers, which should offer a singular spin to the proceedings.

As Brian Stanley noted about Edinburgh 1910,

Yet however vibrant the state of missionary passion among the evangelical public may have been in 1910, the intended appeal to the conference was not to the popular Christian imagination so much as to the concentrated attention of serious Christian minds. Almost from the outset, the conference was planned...to be a Grand Council for the Advancement of Missionary Science.²⁴

Thus, there is certainly historical precedence for an academic bent to the task of missions.

Conclusion

I want to end with two observations: one having to do with personalities and the other having to do with geography.

Regarding personalities, the question of "hero" is an interesting one to explore. It is generally acknowledged that Edinburgh 1910 could not have happened, or at least could not have been as memorable as it was, if not for the vision and tenacity of John R. Mott, and his right-hand man, J.H. Oldham. At Tokyo 2010, clearly the parallel hero was Ralph Winter, even though he died a year prior to the conference. His spirit and legacy permeated the conference, and he had worked hard to make it a reality

before his death. Perhaps if we had to trace the major mission conference heroes, we could start with William Carey who had the vision for the 1810 conference in Cape Town in the first place, followed by Mott and Oldham at Edinburgh 1910, then Stott and Billy Graham at Lausanne 1974 in Switzerland, and finally Winter at Tokyo 2010.²⁵

Can we anticipate who might be the heroes of Edinburgh 2010, Cape Town, and Boston? None of those three have a personality as charismatic as Dr. Winter. So, if anything, it would have to be a historical hero. As I mentioned above, it was striking that at Edinburgh 2010 the person mentioned most often was not Mott or Oldham, but V.S. Azariah. In fact, Mott or Oldham were hardly mentioned at all! So maybe Azariah is the hero for 2010, while Mott and Oldham were the heroes for 1910, representing that shift of the center of gravity of Christianity to the non-Western world. So, again, the prophetic Azariah appears to be more the hero for our day than does Mott, the visionary administrator, which may explain why Winter, as a prophetic mission leader, works well as a hero for today.

However, the question must be asked, is it even necessary for today's context to have a hero? Perhaps the idea of a hero is more appropriate in the "Great Century of Missions" where people needed and celebrated their David Livingstone or their Adoniram Judson. In today's post-modern society, maybe this is not a relevant issue. People are more loyal today to ideas rather than people, as the failure of individuals has highlighted their fragility.

The location of these four conferences provokes a geographical question: should we be holding mission confer-

ences in Christian or non-Christian lands? The old paradigm of mission was to congregate in the sending countries in order to plan the evangelization of the receiving countries. The thinking at Edinburgh 1910 was one of Christendom vs. Heathendom, basically the West vs. the East.²⁶ It was natural for Scotland, probably the number 1 missionary-sending country *per capita* of the Great Century of Missions, to be the location of the World Missionary Conference of 1910.

Ralph Winter had a different idea: let a conference on unreached peoples be held in a non-Christian land, namely Japan, probably the hardest mission field in the world outside of the Muslim context. As such, you can accomplish two vital objectives simultaneously: encourage the local Christians, so they realize they are not alone in their missional endeavors, while making headlines to attract the secular media to their evangelical presence. Actually, William Carey had the same idea as Ralph Winter: hold the conference in a receiving continent rather than a sending continent. Ironically, Edinburgh 2010, while trying to imitate 1910, actually subverted the aim of Carey and Winter in that it was held in a largely non-Christian Scotland; and the selection of Cape Town, while trying to imitate Carey's desire for a non-Christian context, actually is doing the opposite by holding the conference in a majority-Christian context.

The Future of Missions and Ecumenism

So, which one of these four conferences will be the real successor to Edinburgh 1910? One way to judge is by the ecumenical nature of the events. Is ecumenism defined by a diversity of church denominations, gender, race, or nationality, or is it, like at Edinburgh 1910, defined by a mission purpose and vision for the future? If ecumenism is setting one's face toward the future, then not only

forward the mission (otherwise a conference will merely be stuck in time), but the next generation needs to be enlisted and given a strong vision for ecumenism and mission.

This enlistment of the student generation was John Mott's great contribution to that 1910 conference. The watchword "the evangelization of the world in this generation"²⁷ appealed particularly to students, enlisting the strength of the Student Volunteer Movement and the YMCA. Undoubtedly Mott was thinking historically of other student missionary



efforts such as the Haystack Prayer Meeting and the Cambridge Seven.

This emphasis on the young is what Ralph Winter also helped channel in 1980 with the Edinburgh '80 World Consultation on Frontier Missions, a 70th anniversary celebration of Edinburgh 1910 that was given initial impetus by the efforts of International Students, Inc., and which promoted and ran a simultaneous International Student Consultation on Frontier Missions.²⁸ This was also true for the Edinburgh 1985 conference,²⁹ the 75th anniversary of Edinburgh 1910, organized by the Student Christian Movement.³⁰ This student emphasis is also reflected in conferences like Urbana, the largest mission conference in North America with 20,000 people, which is specifically geared toward undergraduate students.

Of these four centenary conferences, the two evangelical bodies

(Tokyo and Cape Town) are structured to continue beyond 2010—the former through the Global Network of Mission Structures (GNMS), and the latter through the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. But not everything needs to last forever, so even GNMS and Lausanne are expendable if it has to make way for something more effective. Interestingly, Edinburgh 1910's primary legacy came after the conference itself. A continuation committee was established, and without this Edinburgh 1910 would have faded into history like any other missions conference.³¹

The Excluded Continent

Perhaps the future is not only in youth, but in Latin America, the excluded continent of 1910. This is where Pentecostalism, the fastest-growing form of Christianity in the world, is booming. The fifth CLADE (Congreso Latinoamericano de Evangelizacion) conference is coming up in 2012 in San Jose, Costa Rica. This has historical precedence as well, as Edinburgh 1910 was followed by Panama 1916, a conference in which Latin Americans were able to have their own voice. CLADE will be different from the other four, as it will not have a dominance of the English language,³² and it will be planned by and for people of the Global South. At CLADE the sending countries will also be the receiving countries, traditional ecclesial structures such as denominations will not be as relevant, and both modalities *and* sodalities will be working together. So perhaps the excluded continent of 1910 will be one to help lead the missionary effort forward in a major way.

So which is the "best" successor to Edinburgh 1910? Many would agree with Ralph Winter that all these conferences are needed. Cape Town will undoubtedly be the biggest of the four, but without Tokyo's insistence on bringing Christianity to every last unreached people group, how will the task ever be completed? Without

Edinburgh, there will be no platform where Evangelicals, mainline Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox, and Pentecostals work together! Without Boston, there would be no forum in which voices outside the mainstream church—or even outside Christianity itself—could be heard. And without the upcoming CLADE in Costa Rica, voices from the Global South will not have a conference to call their own that is not dominated by the North. Beyond these five, many more people can add their contributions to the ecumenical missionary enterprise. The Christian church must always have unity in the essentials and diversity in the nonessentials. This reality of Christian unity in plurality is perhaps more appropriate for ecumenism in 2010 than simply trying to replicate Edinburgh 1910 once again.³³ **UJFM**

Endnotes

¹ Dubbed thus by Yale church historian Kenneth Scott Latourette in his 7-volume magnum opus *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (New York: Harper, 1937-45).

² Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), pp. 304-5.

³ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), p. 391.

⁴ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), p. 121.

⁵ Ralph D. Winter, "1980 and That Certain Elite," in *Missiology: An International Review*, April 1, 1976, Vol. 4:2, pp 145-160.

⁶ Stanley, p. 320.

⁷ Winter's original thinking can be seen in the Edinburgh 1980 World Consultation on Frontier Missions which preceded Tokyo in emphasizing unreached people groups and sodalities, as explained below.

⁸ Stanley, p. 323.

⁹ As observed by Vinoth Ramachandra, in his address on the last evening at Edinburgh 2010.

¹⁰ This is not to downplay Edinburgh 1910's diversity, which was utterly remarkable for its time. As Brian Stanley observed: "The World Missionary Conference was unique in modern Christian history in that its delegates spanned the full theological spectrum of non-Roman western Christianity from the most conservative of evangelical

Protestants to committed Anglo-Catholics... Unlike its predecessors in London in 1888 or New York in 1900, the Edinburgh conference was intended to be representative of all sections of the Protestant and Anglican churches, and not merely of those that were happy to style themselves as 'evangelical.'" (p. 320)

¹¹ Stanley, p. 279.

¹² However, as Dana Robert pointed out, it was perhaps the diversion of women's attention toward suffrage and domestic church ordination that drew their attention away from the mission field. See Stanley, pp. 315-16.

¹³ As observed by Andrew Walls.

¹⁴ The Lausanne Covenant can be found at this URL: <http://www.lausanne.org/covenant>

¹⁵ The Tokyo Declaration was drafted by representatives from the Global Network of Mission Structures, Third World Missions Association, and CrossGlobal Link. It can be found at this URL: http://www.crossgloballink.org/Tokyo_Declaration

¹⁶ See www.gnms.net for this full Tokyo Declaration.

¹⁷ An observation made by Margaret Acton.

¹⁸ An observation made by Leiton Chinn.

¹⁹ William Carey to Andrew Fuller, Calcutta, 15 May 1806, cited by Kenneth Scott Latourette, "Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement and the International Missionary Council" in Ruth Rouse and Stephen C. Neill, eds., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, Vol. 1 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1954), p. 355, n. 2.

²⁰ Andrew Fuller to William Ward, Serampore, 2 December 1806, cited by Ruth Rouse, "William Carey's 'Pleasing Dream'" in *International Review of Mission* (Vol. 38, April 1949), p. 181.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² According to Latourette, "Ecumenical Bearings," p. 355: "There is no evidence that the memory of Carey's proposal survived in such fashion as to contribute to Edinburgh 1910. National and regional conferences of missionaries from 1854 onwards made more direct contributions to the ideas from which the Edinburgh Conference developed, and some of them did more to suggest patterns and methods of work than the series of conferences held in the West."

²³ Kenneth R. Ross, "The Centenary of Edinburgh 1910: Its Possibilities" in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (Vol. 30, No. 4, October 2006), p. 178.

²⁴ Stanley, p. 4.

²⁵ An observation made by Leiton Chinn.

²⁶ Stanley, p. 303.

²⁷ Stanley, p. 88: "The ethos of the conference was shaped by the spirituality of the Student Volunteer Movement, which combined zeal for world mission with a consistent emphasis on both private and corporate prayer."

²⁸ with the impetus of Leiton Chinn. See Allan Starling, ed., *Seeds of Promise: World Consultation on Frontier Missions, Edinburgh '80* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981).

²⁹ The organizers of the 1985 Edinburgh SCM conference invited only non-Western speakers, effectively turning 1910 on its head: two from Africa (Mercy Oduyoye of Nigeria and Leonardo Appies of South Africa), two from Asia (Annathai Abayasekera of Sri Lanka and Kosuke Koyama of Japan), and two from Latin America (Enrique Dussel of Argentina and Orlando Costas of Puerto Rico).

³⁰ Stanley, p. 8, 89: "The Student Christian Movement which did so much to prepare the way for Edinburgh 1910 was marked by a continual emphasis on the importance of both private and corporate prayer."

³¹ Stanley, p. 300

³² When recounting the various "heroes" and organizers of these conferences (Mott, Oldham, Winter, Walls, Graham, Stott, Birdsall), it is striking that all are Anglophone—either British or American.

³³ Stanley, pp. 320-1.