

From Edinburgh 1910 to Auckland 2010

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Edinburgh 1910

“The end of the Conference is the beginning of the conquest. The end of planning is the beginning of doing.”¹ With these famous words, John Mott, the chairman of the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference began his closing address.

The Conference was a momentous occasion. Within a month of its conclusion, in far distant New Zealand, the Anglican *Waiapu Church Gazette* described the meeting as “one of the most remarkable assemblies of the Church of Christ since the first century”.² In retrospect, the importance of the Conference has been affirmed by many. Hugh Martin, in a fiftieth anniversary history, described “Edinburgh 1910 ... [as] a fountain head of international and inter-Church cooperation on a depth and scale never before known”.³ Kenneth Ross, the chair of the Edinburgh 2010 organising committee, concluded that “With the possible exception of Vatican II, no event was more definitive for the emerging shape of Christianity in the 20th century than Edinburgh 1910”.⁴

Edinburgh 1910, as Andrew Walls, the noted missionary historian has commented, was “The high point of the Protestant missionary movement”.⁵ The long nineteenth-century was described by the church historian, Kenneth Latourette as “the great century”. In his seven volume work, *The History of the Expansion of Christianity*, he devoted three volumes to this century. From small beginnings and opposition within the churches at the end of the eighteenth century, missionary activity had become by 1910 a central part of church life. No less a person than Randall Davidson, the archbishop of Canterbury, in opening Edinburgh 1910 finished his address by stating unequivocally “that the place of missions in the life of the Church must be the central place and none other.... Let people get hold of that, and it will tell ... it will tell for us at home as it will tell for those afield”.⁶

Churches and missionary societies in the nineteenth-century were challenged by the weakness that their divided Christian witness brought to their missionary activity. The development of “comity”, the mutual recognition of the work of other missions and the avoidance of competition, marked the beginnings of a form of inter-mission and inter-church cooperation. In the Pacific, comity was a notable principle, adopted by Protestant and Anglican missions. With the exception of Samoa, where both the London Missionary Society and Methodists ended up working, each missionary group developed its own sphere of influence. This cooperation did not, however, extend to Protestant and Catholic relationships. The spirit of religious rivalry and competition was reinforced in the Pacific by the extension of British and French colonial forces.

There was a recognition that mission was central to the identity of the church and that there was a need to cooperate, “coordinate and promote the mission to the world beyond Europe and North America”.⁷ Edinburgh 1910 was the beneficiary of this missionary thinking. The way for Edinburgh was also prepared through the promotion of Christian cooperation through such things as national and international missionary conferences, the international student movement and the growth of global denominational fellowships.

David Bosch points out that Edinburgh 1910 was an “‘ecumenical evangelical’ conference [that] had no difficulty in praising in one breath, both the salvation wrought in Christ and the

astonishing progress of ‘secular science’”.⁸ The membership at Edinburgh 1910 brought together “representative of many communions, and of some 160 Missionary Boards and Societies”.⁹ The participants at Edinburgh were not there strictly as church representatives. The denominational and theological dimensions, however, were not entirely absent. The Conference was notable for the participation of Anglicans, particularly from the Anglo-Catholic wing. Charles Gore, the Bishop of Birmingham and leading Anglo-Catholic theologian, was the chairman of the Commission on ‘Education in Relation to the Christianisation of National Life’. Another participant was Bishop H.H. Montgomery, the secretary of the High Church Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, who deliberately had created “‘a sort of Foreign Office’ for world Anglicanism at the SPG”.¹⁰ Anglo-Catholic participation at Edinburgh was only ensured with the “exclusion of doctrine and church order” from the findings of commissions.¹¹ Speaking to the report on ‘Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity’ at Edinburgh, Montgomery declared: “We have no difficulty whatever in conferring with you on almost every point except the nature of the Church and what its essentials are. There is our sharp edge and you all know it, and you must respect our distinctive differences.”¹² Anglo-Catholics also insisted “that the conference must exclude from its scope Protestant activity in contexts where baptised Catholics, Orthodox, or even Protestants ... represented the overall majority of the population”.¹³ As a result Latin America was not part of Edinburgh’s world.

This approach undergirded the geographical view adopted by the Missionary Conference. There was a false division of world into two – the Christendom world of North America, Britain and Europe which was considered “The Home Base of Missions”, and the rest as “the Non-Christian World” to which the gospel needed to be carried. Edinburgh 1910 was designed to be a consultative, rather than a promotional conference to help devise the strategies which could be used in bringing about “The evangelization of the world in this generation”. Eight preparatory commissions using a process of questionnaires drawing on the experience of missionaries overseas and administrators at home investigated (as the subtitle of the Conference indicated), “Missionary Problems in relation to the Non-Christian World”. The eight commissions were:

1. Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World
2. The Church in the Mission Field
3. Education in Relation to the Christianisation of National Life
4. The Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions
5. The Preparation of Missionaries
6. The Home Base of Missions
7. Missions and Governments
8. Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity

The printed material provided rich resources for debate at Edinburgh and a stimulus for missionary thinking around the world. The global became local with a Missionary Conference at Waimarino, New Zealand, in January 1911, where readers presented papers on the Edinburgh material.

The limitations of the global dualism between Christendom and the Non-Christian World were also reflected in the representation at Edinburgh. Temple Gairdner, who waxed eloquent in the celebratory volume published after the Conference, noted that “it is hardly too much to say that its official composition would have been substantially unchanged had it been held in London, New York, Berlin, or Shanghai”.¹⁴ This reflected the myopia of the missionary societies. With 1,215 official delegates, one in six was female, only nineteen were Asian and there was one African. There were no indigenous representatives from Oceania. The conference was overwhelmingly white, male and Anglo-American, with some 170 members

representing continental missionary societies. For its day, however, the denominational reach of the conference was the most extensive to date.

The representatives from New Zealand included one from the New Zealand Church Missionary Association, two from the Presbyterian Foreign Mission Committee, three from the Melanesian Mission and one who was a delegate from the Australasian Methodist Missionary Society. Of these, two were retired missionaries living in England, one appears to be an English delegate acting on behalf the NZCMS and only one, J.M. Steward, later bishop of Melanesia, was an active missionary.

While delegates of Non-Western origin were few in number they had considerable impact. Two speeches in particular had a profound influence on the conference. V.S. Azariah, an Anglican from south India, was from a lower caste. He had been a leader in the YMCA and helped found two indigenous missionary societies in India. Azariah spoke to an evening session of the Conference on 'The problem of co-operation between foreign and native workers'. He named as it were the elephant in the room, commencing his speech with the words: "The problem of race relationships is one of the most serious problems confronting the Church to-day".¹⁵ He concluded: "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!"¹⁶ Gairdner points to the divided response Azariah's speech provoked: "an electric silence, broken now by a sort of subterranean rumbling of dissent, or startled by thunderish claps of applause". With damning praise Gairdner concluded, "and as for the criticism, what does it matter even if criticism passed on us is false? The point is, that in *that* we see the impression we have made on those who pass the criticism".¹⁷ Azariah became bishop of Dornkal in 1912, chairman of the National Christian Council of India, one of the great twentieth century ecumenical leaders and an architect of the Church of South India. His biographer described his address at Edinburgh "as 'the first shot in the campaign against "missionary imperialism"'. "¹⁸

The second powerful speech was from Cheng Jingyi (Chang Ching-Yi) from the London Missionary Society in China, who addressed the subject of co-operation and unity. Speaking from "the Chinese standpoint" he declared, "we hope to see, in the near future, a united Christian Church without any denominational distinctions". Both "self-support" and "self-government" for the Church in China were welcomed; denominationalism was of no interest to "the Chinese mind"; union was not impossible but desirable; the time was right, and theologically there was "one [Christian] family". He reminded those present that they were not working for their "particular denomination" or Mission, "but the establishment of the Church of Christ in China".¹⁹ Cheng became a significant ecumenical leader in China. He was articulating the views already developed over half a century earlier by Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson, that the fruit of missionary activity should be self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating churches. These views were by no means new, but missionary societies influenced by the high age of imperialism had if anything regressed in the implementation of these principles.

The Commission on Education reported that "The ideal method of propagating Christianity" was through indigenous evangelists and "that the Church should pass as rapidly as possible under the control of native pastors and teachers" so that "each local Church should from the first have the opportunity of developing a local character and colour".²⁰ Cheng Jingyi's rallying call for church unity in China voiced a non-Western perspective. The Commission on 'Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity' pointed to the tension in western churches and their mission agencies. One view supported "a type of federation of Christian Churches" recognising "The unity towards which we must strive must be one which allows the largest possible room for diversity."²¹ The other view emphasised "the duty of the Church in the West to transmit to the Church newly planted in the mission field as rich and full and complete an interpretation of Christianity as possible", in other words, the polity and

“essentials of the faith” central to sending church.²² This was summed up in Montgomery’s horror of “undenominationalism”. Charles Gore affirmed that “Westerns should be doing all we can to foster the independence and indigenous character of the Church in Eastern and African countries” and to avoid denominationalising the younger churches. At the same time, he saw the need “to put into all bodies of Christians the consciousness that continuous life depends upon continuous principles”.²³

Edinburgh 1910 highlighted rather than resolved what would become central to the agenda for the international church over the following decades – the promotion of the indigenous church, and both the need for, and the parameters for unity among Christians of different theological and ecclesiological traditions.

Two men in particular were responsible for the success of Edinburgh 1910 and the continuance of its work. They were the American Methodist, John R. Mott and the Scottish United Presbyterian, John H. Oldham. Significantly they were laymen, hugely respected for their work in the international and ecumenical student movement and both without the denominational constraints of church leaders. Mott, through his world-wide travel – he had already visited New Zealand twice in 1896 and 1903 – had cultivated relationships with many emerging indigenous Christian leaders such as Azaraiah and Cheng Jingyi. He brought a no nonsense, American can-do, attitude towards missionary outreach. Oldham was the superb backroom administrator who ensured that the Anglo-Catholic/Protestant differences were resolved, and who oversaw the smooth running of the Conference. He noted in 1960 that his work as a full-time officer on behalf of “a group of churches or of agencies of churches” was the first time such an appointment had been made.²⁴

Mott’s superb chairmanship of the Conference, Oldham’s efficient organisation, the comprehensive nature of the gathering, the impact of the daily half-hour of prayer, the well-prepared reports and the standard of the debate all contributed to delegates experiencing a new vision for a world-wide church. The Conference though was very much of its time. Mott’s closing words, “The end of the Conference is the beginning of conquest” reflected the militaristic language which infused much missionary rhetoric. Words such as ‘aggression’, ‘attack’, ‘conquest’ and ‘crusade’ were not seen as incongruous for the mission of one who said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall inherit the earth”. Mott’s book, *The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions*, published in July 1910 expressed the naive optimism that, “The Non-Christian Nations [were] Plastic and Changing”.²⁵ As Kenneth Ross points out, “The enthusiasm and drive which marked the Conference drew much more than it realised on the optimistic self-confidence of imperial expansion and technological advance.”²⁶

Only one resolution was passed at the Conference and that guaranteed Edinburgh 1910 its place in ecumenical history:

That a Continuation Committee of the World Missionary Conference be appointed, international and representative in character, to carry out, on the lines of the Conference itself, which are inter-denominational and do not involve the idea of organic and ecclesiastical union....²⁷

The vote was unanimously in favour and was greeted with the singing of the Doxology. There was an ecumenical boldness seen in the genuine spirit of cooperation in the cause of world mission. But there was also a denominational timidity as far as a willingness to engage in debates on theology and ecclesiology were concerned. Membership of the Continuation Committee also reflected the American-Continental-British bias with ten members each from those three regions and one each from Australasia, China, Japan, India and Africa.²⁸

Mott’s rallying call: “The end of planning is the beginning of doing” was translated into action with Mott and Oldham taking leading roles. Mott was elected chairman of the Continuation Committee. His global travels in 1911 put him in touch with Eastern Orthodoxy

while his visit to Asia in 1912-1913 resulted in twenty-one Continuation Committee Conferences which promoted indigenous leadership and Christian national councils. Oldham was appointed as secretary of the Continuation Committee. In 1912 he inaugurated the *International Review of Missions* as “the first truly ecumenical, international periodical” which will soon mark its own centenary.²⁹

The past hundred years

The journey from Edinburgh 1910 to Auckland 2010 is a long and tortuous one. In the second part of this paper Here I try to highlight some of the significant shifts which have taken place over the last hundred years which shape the context of the contemporary world in which the church undertakes its mission.

The collapse of Christendom

Within four years of the World Missionary Conference the liberal optimism of Edinburgh fell flat on its face in the mud of the First World War. In the words of Mark Noll:

“The crack that startled all of us
was not the Crack of Doom, but of Christendom.”³⁰

Jonathon Bonk writes of how the Great War

“plunged the ‘Christian’ nations into one of the bloodiest and most meaningless paroxysm of state-sanctioned murder in humankind’s history of pathological addiction to violence and genocide.... Missionaries were unable to offer any credible rejoinder to the charge that the West neither believed nor practiced what the Bible actually taught.”³¹

The twentieth-century was to prove the most violent in human history. The militant language of missionary “conquest”, popular at Edinburgh, was theologically bankrupt, although it has not been completely eliminated from the vocabulary of some missions. Western imperialism, which was at its high point in 1910, like the Christendom it reinforced, was also challenged. After the Second World War, the emergence of former colonial territories as independent countries brought a new character to the new world body, the United Nations. As Andrew Walls puts it, “the whole basis of the secure worldview that underlies the analysis of the world in Commission I [on Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World] was swept away”. By 2010 “Europe could best be described as post-Christian; and Western people were no longer the representative Christians.”³² The letting go of Christendom and imperial thinking did not happen overnight and there are still structural and ideological remnants. The place of humility in contrast to conquest in undertaking mission is worthy of reflection.

The emergence of the world-wide church

The 1910 World Missionary Conference was an early expression of what a later generation would describe as globalisation - the intersection of global forces with local particularity. Edinburgh in its dualism between the Christian ‘home base’, with its sending churches, and the Non-western world, as the receivers of the gospel, constructed a map of the world which reflected an American-British-Continental perspective. The failure to engage with Africa, Latin America and Oceania at any depth showed a bias towards Asia. Brian Stanley has pointed to the way that since 1910 “the centre of gravity of world Christianity has shifted decisively from north to south and from west to east”.³³ Andrew Walls, who has probably done as much as anyone to highlight the growth of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa over the last century, indicates that Africa “has become one of the Christian heartlands, and is quietly slipping into the place in the Christian world that was once occupied by Europe”.³⁴ There were only 11.6 million Christians in Africa in 1910; by 2010 it was estimated that there were nearly half a billion (494m).³⁵

Two new Christian streams which emerged in the twentieth century alongside the older Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, Protestant streams were the Pentecostal and Independent Churches. These two streams were invisible at Edinburgh. Pentecostals have challenged the Catholic hegemony in Latin America. Independent Churches have done the same to Protestants in Africa. In 1900 it was estimated that there were 1,900 denominations. In 2010 this number had reached a startling 41,000.³⁶ The successful growth of Christianity into a global religion in the twentieth century has been marked by denominational proliferation. This has thrown into question the kind of Christian unity and ecumenical cooperation that is possible in this much more complex world. The nineteenth century model of comity has been well and truly bypassed. We see in Oceania the challenge brought by new forms of proselytisation described in the mammoth study edited by Manfred Ernst, *Globalization and the Re-shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands*. This new missionary activity, in an area that was already Christian, has resulted in “an unprecedented number of different and usually competing religious bodies in each island nation”.³⁷

The broadening and diffusion of the ecumenical vision

Edinburgh 1910 was a significant new starting point for an ecumenical journey which transformed the relationships between churches over the next one hundred years. The International Missionary Council (IMC), constituted in 1921, took over the work of the Edinburgh Continuation Committee. In 1926, the peripatetic John Mott was the distinguished speaker at a meeting of the New Zealand Missionary Conference held in Dunedin. It included the presentation of a number of missionary surveys at home and abroad including one with the paternalistic title, “The child races of the Pacific”!³⁸ One of the fruits of this conference was the National Missionary Council of New Zealand linking in with the IMC.³⁹ This was an important forerunner of the National Council of Churches founded in 1941.

The Life and Work and Faith and Order Movements which held their first international conferences in 1925 and 1927 were indirect fruits of Edinburgh 1910. Life and Work was driven by the imperatives of peace and justice and finding ways to live as Christians post-First World War, and then through the challenges of fascism in the 1930s. Faith and Order took up the theological agenda avoided at Edinburgh. It sought to find ways to promote unity between the churches. From its first conference it included Orthodox representatives. The decision was made at conferences in Oxford and Edinburgh in 1937 to bring the two movements together into the World Council of Churches (WCC). The Council’s first Assembly was held in 1948 bringing together churches into an ecumenical and international body. The International Missionary Council delayed joining the WCC until 1961 because some of its missionary society members were fearful that the younger churches would not be given the place they deserved.⁴⁰

This raises the intriguing question – who are the true heirs of Edinburgh 1910? Bosch’s “ecumenical evangelical” description was symbolised at Edinburgh 2010 when Geoff Tunnicliffe, the international director of the World Evangelical Alliance said: “members of the evangelical movement look back to the Edinburgh conference of 1910 and see a meeting that was all about mission and led to new approaches towards world evangelisation. Others see Edinburgh 1910 as the birth of the modern ecumenical movement and trace its outcomes primarily through councils encouraging the visible unity of the churches.”⁴¹

Billy Graham acted as a catalyst for a World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin in 1966 which led onto a further congress in Lausanne in 1974. This became the ongoing Lausanne Movement which will have its third world congress in Cape Town later this year.⁴² While both ecumenical and evangelical voices were heard at Edinburgh 2010, the heritage of the 1910 World Missionary Conference has been divided. Olav Tveit, general secretary of the WCC insisted at Edinburgh 2010 “that it would be a mistake to assign one group of churches

the task of evangelism, and another the task of seeking social justice and peace". Whether "diversity can be a strength" as Tunncliffe from the WEA observed, or whether "we must respond to our common calling together", as Tveit claimed, is an ongoing challenge.⁴³

The other major ecumenical development, perhaps the most significant of all in the twentieth century, was the meeting of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The breaking down of centuries of hostility between Protestants and Catholics, the recognition of other churches as "separated brethren", and the shift from "a dated 'theology of exclusion' to move to genuinely ecumenical commitment" marked a sea-change in relationships between the churches. The presence of Catholic representatives at Edinburgh 2010 was described by Bishop Brian Farrell of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity as an indication that in the face of the "complexities in many areas of dialogue and cooperation....we are totally committed to finding the way forward together". One proof of this commitment is 'the visible reality of our being here today.'⁴⁴

In the face of "the Re-shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands" brought by breakaway groups and new mission and evangelism, Ernst writes about how "The ecumenism of the 1960s has clearly lost momentum and is moribund."⁴⁵ The same could be said of ecumenism in New Zealand. That is not to diminish the cooperation seen in groups such as the Church leaders' forum or the covenant between Methodists and Anglicans. Huge advances have been made over the last century in greater mutual understanding across the denominational divides. There is little energy, however, for the centralised ecumenical agencies of the past which sometimes took on a life of their own almost separate from their member churches. There is a question as to how far the ecumenical movement is a prisoner of the modernist forces which produced it. Given the greater sectarianism and pluralism of the post-modern age the need today is for mission and ecumenical approaches which can comprehend both global and local, social, ethnic, religious, and economic diversity.⁴⁶

Moves to missiological consensus

One of the major missiological shifts from 1910 to 2010 has been in the understanding of mission as no longer "a task delegated to the church" or missionary societies but the recognition of *missio Dei*, that mission involves "joining with God's work in the world".⁴⁷ David Bosch gave one of the most comprehensive explanations of this as part of what he called "an Emerging Ecumenical Missionary Paradigm". Mission is not about Christianising the world as Edinburgh 1910 attempted. Mission is defined in Bosch's concluding sentences as "the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus.... It is good news of God's love, incarnated in the witness of community, for the sake of the world."⁴⁸

The change to the title of the *International Review of Missions* to the *International Review of Mission* in 1969 represented the shifting understanding of the work of the church. Rather than engaging in missions as an offshoot of the church, mission was seen as vital to the church's identity – not only out there, overseas – but here at home. But while there is only one mission – God's mission – "there are many approaches to understanding and participating in mission: 'Mission is complex and multiple: witness, proclamation, catechesis, worship, inculturation, inter-faith dialogue'" and much more.⁴⁹ One of the problems with defining mission in this broad way is that it can end up meaning everything that the church does. There is a tension between an inclusivist-approach to mission which embraces everything to the exclusivist-approach which sees proclamation as the major Christian task.

Old ecumenism, identified with the World Council of Churches, is only a segment of the world-wide church. The Global Christian Forum, initiated by Konrad Raiser in 1998, brings together representatives from the all major Christian streams: Ecumenical, Catholic, Evangelical and Pentecostal. It is working towards "Revisioning Christian Unity"⁵⁰ as indicated in the statement issued at the 2007 Conference in Kenya: "Recognizing that unity is

first and foremost God's gift through the work of the Holy Spirit, our commitment is to press on in promoting ever greater understanding and cooperation among Christians, while respecting the diversity of our identities, traditions and individual gifts (cf. 1 Cor 12)".⁵¹

Race and justice

Edinburgh 1910 was not entirely blind to issues of social concern, naming questions such as "the Opium Traffic, the Liquor Traffic, and Forced Labour".⁵² Missions played significant roles through education in training future leaders. Through their health care missions contributed significantly to the well-being of thousands. While there was often paternalistic dimensions to missionary work, mission leaders were at the forefront of defending native rights and intervening with colonial powers on their behalf.

In drawing attention to issues of race at Edinburgh 1910, Azariah named a particular issue which became a significant part of the ecumenical agenda. Oldham in his book, *Christianity and the Race Problem* in 1924 set what his biographer described as "a standard for all subsequent ecumenical writing on social ethics".⁵³ John Mott addressed "The Race Problem" when he spoke to the Dunedin, New Zealand, Missionary Conference in 1926.⁵⁴ The Jerusalem Missionary Conference in 1928 took up the issues of "race conflict". The 1968 WCC Assembly at Uppsala "stated that 'racism is linked with economic and political exploitation' and then went on to define racism as 'ethnocentric pride'".⁵⁵ This led to the much-criticised Programme to Combat Racism. In New Zealand the Programme on Racism was sponsored by the National Council of Churches.

The affirmation of indigenous agency given at Edinburgh helped counterbalance the racial stereotyping that was endemic in missionary attitudes at the time. The pursuit of the Pauline equality, that all are one in Christ, has not been a smooth journey over the last century. But the pursuit of justice, truth and reconciliation has been seen as deeply grounded in the understanding of mission. As Kosuke Koyama points out, "The crucified Christ upsets all our value systems.... Christ makes diversity a reconciled diversity."⁵⁶

The issue of race in ecumenical history reminds us that mission is about liberation, bringing "good news to the poor" and proclaiming "release to the captives" as much as making disciples. In the words of Koyama, "The gospel cannot be contextualised into a world system that leaves most people of the world in dire poverty."⁵⁷ In the same way he points to the threat to the environment, something not recognised in 1910. "Mother earth" he says, "is our Noah's ark. The destruction of the biosphere augurs global suicide. Humanity is terrorizing mother earth." The words "ecumenical" and "ecological" are linked through the word "*oikos*" meaning "house". "Ecological and ecumenical movements" for Koyama "signify Good-House-Keeping".⁵⁸ He concluded that "If missiology is fully aware of the 'relatedness of all beings' it will have relevance for humanity. The eschatological and the ecological are one."⁵⁹ That has particular relevance in Oceania where small coral atolls such as those in Tuvalu are faced with drowning by the rising seas. Mission, since Edinburgh 1910, has enriched our understanding of salvation as something that is social as well as individual. There has been some convergence between Ecumenical and Evangelical streams as far as affirming these dimensions although the ways in which the different streams prioritise one over the other still causes tension. The division within churches and between different streams over issues of gender and sexuality reminds us that the gospel both divides and unites.

The multi-cultural world

In the nineteenth century there was a huge outflow of Anglo-Irish and Europeans to North America, Australasia and Southern Africa. The 'swamping' of Maori in New Zealand and Aborigines in Australia were a result of this influx of settlers. The development of colonial Christianity alongside missionary Christianity was fraught. The concerns about race relations have not disappeared. They are now often couched in terms of the interactions between

cultures. A new diaspora has been occurring as Pacific, Asian, Middle Eastern and African peoples seek new opportunities in western countries, including New Zealand. Growing ethnic pluralism has been accompanied by greater religious diversity. In the face of secular forces, Christianity has not withered and died as some of the secular seers prophesied. But it now lives alongside other faiths in ways which challenge its truth claims which Edinburgh 1910 could not have expected. There are no blueprints for the highly pluralistic societies in which we now live. The “Statement on Religious Diversity in New Zealand”, sponsored by the Human Rights Commission, is an indication of the need for the countries “diverse faith communities” to have “harmonious interaction with each other, with government and with other groups in society”.⁶⁰ Kirsteen Kim contrasted the Edinburgh 1910 view of other faiths “as inadequate” with the 2010 approach which saw “Christian witness – [as] a matter of actions as well as words – in contexts of religious plurality in which Christianity is regarded as one faith among equals”.⁶¹

Auckland 2010

Edinburgh 1910 was a world of steam-driven trains and steamships, the telegraphic cable, and the international postal service. Auckland 2010 is the world of jet-travel, motor cars, email and the internet. The world population in 1910 was estimated at one and three-quarter billion people compared with close to seven billion in 2010. The Christian percentage of the world’s population was estimated to be 34.8% in 1910 while in 2010 it had fallen slightly to 33.2%. While Christianity has become a global faith it has just held its own in relation to population growth. “In areas that were strongly Christian in 1910 (Europe, Latin America, North America, and Oceania, except for Melanesia) the main trend appears to be secularization, with percentages of Christians decreasing over the 100 years.”⁶² The worlds of Edinburgh 1910 and our world today are very different. Muslims have grown over the last century from 12.6% of the world’s population to 22.4%.⁶³

The ecumenical movement, which was the offspring of the World Missionary Conference has achieved much over the last century that is worthy of celebration. We can point to such things as: the breaking down of barriers between churches, the promotion of Christian unity, the seeking to bring justice and peace to a world in conflict, concerns to promote racial and gender equality and the growing concern about the need to heal the earth.

The high hopes for organic church union have seen success in some countries such as Canada, India and Australia, but unfulfilled expectations in our own country. The Edinburgh 2010 “Common Call” when talking of unity uses the language of “co-operation”, welcoming diversity, recognising the “need for mutuality, partnership, collaboration and networking in mission, so that the world might believe”. The resurgence of denominational identity and the commitment to work with different Christian streams has seen the diluting of Jesus’ prayer “that they may all be one” in favour of the pragmatic recognition of diversity.

Mission is no longer conceived as taking the gospel from the west to the Non-Christian world. Edinburgh 2010 in contrast spoke of the call that comes to “communities of faith to mission from everywhere to everywhere”.⁶⁴ John Oldham, writing in 1960, told how “the perspective in which I see the world mission of the Church has undergone a radical change”. “We cannot assume”, he writes, “that any interpretation of our experience to-day will provide an adequate framework for understanding the world of an unknown to-morrow.”⁶⁵ The context in which we undertake the missionary and ecumenical journey has changed dramatically over the last one hundred years. Finding what mission and unity mean in our day is the task that is always before us. In the words of our opening prayer [of the Mission and Unity Conference]: “we gather seeking a new moment of vision, for new energy, fresh inspiration, and new resources for witnessing to Christ today.” “Let the world see sermons rather than hear them!”⁶⁶

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- ¹ World Missionary Conference (WMC), *The History and Records of the Conference*, IX, p.347.
- ² *Waiapu Church Gazette*, 1 July 1910, p.16.
- ³ Hugh Martin, *A Jubilee Assessment of the World Missionary Conference 1910*, London: Edinburgh House Press, [1960], p.3.
- ⁴ K.R. Ross, "Edinburgh 1910 – Its Place in History", p.3. http://www.towards2010.org.uk/downloads_int/1910-PlaceHistory.pdf accessed 27 July 2010.
- ⁵ Andrew F. Walls, "The Great Commission 1910-2010", p.1. <http://www.towards2010.org.uk/downloads/t2010paper01walls.pdf> accessed 27 July 2010.
- ⁶ Randall Davidson, "The Central Place of Missions in the Life of the Church", WMC, IX, p.150.
- ⁷ P.A. Potter, "Mission" in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Nicholas Lossky, et al, Geneva / Grand Rapids: WCC / Eerdmans, 1991, p.690.
- ⁸ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991, p.336.
- ⁹ W.H.T Gairdner, "*Edinburgh 1910*": *An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference*, Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1910, p.50.
- ¹⁰ Montgomery, Henry Hutchinson, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.auckland.ac.nz/view/article/49302?docPos=28> accessed 11 June 2010.
- ¹¹ Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009, p.39.
- ¹² WMC, *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity*, VIII, p.213.
- ¹³ Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference*, p.66.
- ¹⁴ Gairdner, "*Edinburgh 1910*", p.47.
- ¹⁵ WMC, IX, p.306.
- ¹⁶ WMC, IX, p.315.
- ¹⁷ Gairdner, "*Edinburgh 1910*", pp.110, 111.
- ¹⁸ Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference*, p.129.
- ¹⁹ WMC, VIII, p.197.
- ²⁰ WMC, *Education in Relation to the Christianisation of National Life*, III, p.244.
- ²¹ WMC, VIII, p.134.
- ²² WMC, VIII, p.135.
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