

SPOTLIGHT: The Future(s) of Missions

➔ In 1810, English missionary William Carey proposed a World Missionary Conference. In 1910, his dream was realized in Edinburgh, at one of the most influential Christian gatherings in history (Mark Noll's *Turning Points* includes it as one of 12 "decisive moments" for the church). Devoted to "the evangelization of the world in this generation," Edinburgh 1910 marked the culmination of a century of missionary passion, drew attention to Christians outside Europe and North America, and gave birth to the ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches. This year, four world missionary conferences are celebrating the Edinburgh meeting's centennial, but with distinctly different views of its legacy and future.

CAPE TOWN

OCTOBER 16–25

4,500 evangelical leaders of various stripes. Invitation criteria attempted to ensure that no nationality, ethnicity, age, occupation, or denomination dominates. 10% had to be under 30 (60% under 50), 35% female, 10% not in full-time ministry, and 65% from the majority world.

John Stott, drafting committee chairman for the 1974 Lausanne Covenant, which emphasized the role of social justice in evangelism.

Mobilizing Christians for "global solutions" to HIV/AIDS, poverty, Islam, and other global issues.

"A concerted and well-reasoned response to . . . global issues and opportunities has been difficult because the church, and evangelicalism in particular, is highly fragmented." (From "Why Cape Town 2010?")

While the conference will stream live online, the Lausanne movement is emphasizing simulcasts at 400 sites in 60 countries. Similarly, it is hosting run-up conversation meetings (in the U.S., these are called "12 Cities: 12 Conversations"). CT's own Global Conversation series is part of a similar effort.

BOSTON

NOVEMBER 4–7

TBD The only conference of the four with open registration (the others had carefully screened invitation lists), Boston's academic focus and light publicity means that only seminary students and professors invested in missions studies are likely to attend the Boston Theological Institute's event.

Brian Stanley, director of the Centre for the Study of World Christianity and author of a landmark history of the 1910 conference.

A fascinating subject that deserves much study.

"Apart from intra-Christian and inter-religious critiques of mission, the rise of secular postmodernity challenges the very relevance of Christianity and therefore her impulse to reach out." (From "Call for Papers")

Promotional materials highlight the introduction of the *Atlas of Global Christianity* (though the volume has been publicly available since October 2009). Meanwhile, conference speakers include Brian McLaren and Ruth Padilla DeBorst (who was on Edinburgh's executive committee and is a keynote speaker at Cape Town).

TOKYO MAY 11–14

968 leaders of parachurch missions organizations.

Ralph Winter (1924–2009), the missiologist who focused evangelicals' attention on "unreached peoples."

Completing the task of evangelizing and discipling every people group.

"God has entrusted this generation with more opportunities and resources to complete the task [of making disciples] than any previous one." (From "Making Disciples of Every People in Our Generation")

As the conference ended, Tokyo pastor Reiji Oyama apologized "to countries that Japan invaded and bombed and killed" and to Israel (for Christian anti-Semitism). Global Christian Network head Liz Adleta asked for forgiveness for America's use of nuclear weapons against Japan. More apologies followed.

EDINBURGH JUNE 2–5

300, mostly clergy. 1,000 attended the closing ceremony.

1910 organizer John Mott and V. S. Azariah (1874–1945), the Indian bishop whose 1910 plea, "Give us friends," became a cry for indigenous churches.

"Deconstructing boundaries" in the church: ecclesiological, political, economic, and so on.

"Disturbed by the asymmetries and imbalances of power that divide and trouble us in church and world, we are called to repentance, to critical reflection on systems of power, and to accountable use of power structures." (From "Common Call")

Days before the conference, Daryl Balia was forced to resign as international director and barred from attending. He had publicly accused other organizers of racism and bullying, and admitted, "They asked me to sound out a homophobic bishop from Uganda to be a keynote speaker, but I never contacted him."

ATTENDANCE

HERO

THE FUTURE OF MISSIONS IS:

SAMPLE TEXT

NOTABLE MOMENT