# 12. The World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh 1910 and the Rise of National Church Movements in Asia and Africa

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The World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh 1910 has been repeatedly acknowledged as the starting point of the modern ecumenical movement in the Protestant world. Much less has been realized, that at the same time and in an unprecedented way, Edinburgh tied together developments in the churches of Asia, Africa and the Western world. Edinburgh served thereby as a sort of relay station, which passed on to the missionary headquarters and churches of the West the impetus from the nascent mission churches of Asia and Africa, and later gave back strengthened impulses to its origins. In contrast to the council of Trent, Edinburgh clearly has a prehistory in the nascent overseas churches of Asia and Africa themselves. And similarly to Vatican II, but half a century earlier, Edinburgh experienced an intensive reception not only in the churches of the western hemisphere but even more in those of the non-western world, especially in Asia. In the process of the formation of an interconnected worldwide Christian community, Edinburgh marks an important step.

## *1. Pre-Edinburgh Developments*

The 19th century has been described as the "great century" of Protestant missionary advance.[1] At the same time it saw in many places the emergence of an indigenous Christian elite. These elites were far more important for the genesis of Protestant churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America than has been realised in the traditional, mission centred historiography. They played an important role not only in the religious, but also in the social and political life of their respective countries. With regard to West Africa, the *African Times* in its issue of July 1, 1880 makes a significant statement: "The educated elite, more or less under the influence of the Christian faith, more or less imbued with Christian principles, precept, are and will be indispensable as a vanguard of the great army of civilisation that must be projected upon

1 K. S. LATOURETTE, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*. Vol. 5f: The Great Century (Grand Rapids 1980).

the ignorant barbarism of heathen Africa whenever the means for such projection shall be arranged."[2] These "educated native Christians", as they used to call themselves, had been, as a rule, brought up in mission schools and to a considerable extent were the product of a missionary policy which since the 1850s had aimed at the formation of "self-governing, self-extending and self-supporting" native overseas churches.[3] Christian by persuasion and convinced of the manifold blessings of western civilisation (and occasionally also of western colonialism), those indigenous elites at the same time tried – astonishingly often and surprisingly early – to stress their independence from missionary control.

India may serve as an example. The missionary movement of the 19th century had led in India to the emergence of a small Christian community which, although usually recruited from the lower castes, at the same time also had outstanding members from the middle and upper ranks of society. In the last quarter of the 19th century they began to organise themselves and increasingly to speak out as the spokesmen for the whole Christian community. They came together in diverse regional associations, published their own journals, commented on the political, social and religious developments in the country and demanded more participation in decisions of the mission churches. In Madras, for example, in 1888 the *Madras Native Christian Association* was founded, to which socially high ranking and financially independent Indian Christians such as lawyers, teachers, doctors, clercs etc. belonged. It took on the task of encouraging the "political, social, moral and spiritual development of its members" as well as pressing ahead for the unity of Indian Christians in "social, political and moral matters". It sought to establish contact with similar associations in other parts of India (Bombay, Calcutta, Oudh) and founded its own branches in Bangalore (1895), Palmcottah (1896), Nagercoil (1898), Travancore (1897) and Rangoon (1897). With the *Christian Patriot*, founded in 1890, they published their own journal which committedly offered opinions on many issues of everyday Indian politics. The paternalism of western missionaries was critically commented upon just as much as the many "social evils" of Indian society. Although being only a minority within the Christian minority, this group nevertheless considered itself as being at the peak of India's political and social advancement. Because of its educational advantage, it increasingly enjoyed recognition as a "progressive community".[4] In the initial years of the *Indian National Congress* (up to about 1892), they were represented far beyond proportion.[5]

2 Cf. J. F. A. AJAYI, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841–1891.* The making of a new elite (London 1965); E. A. AYANDELE, *The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society* (Ibadan 1974); K. MANN, *Marrying Well.* Marriage, Status and Social Change among the Educated Elite in Colonial Lagos (Cambridge 1985).

3 Cf. C. P. WILLIAMS, *The Idea of the Self-Governing Church* (Leiden etc. 1990).

4 R. SUNTHARALINGAM, *Politics and Nationalist Awakening in South India, 1852–1891* (Jaipur-New Delhi 1980), 114f.

5 G. A. ODDIE, "Indian Christians and the National Congress, 1885–1910" (*Indian Church History Review* 2, 1968, 45–54).



One of the questions in which this Protestant elite soon raised their critical voice concerned the confessional divisions of Indian Christianity. The multiplicity of western missions active in India had led to a corresponding plurality of crotestant Churches. In urban areas Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran and other congregations frequently were found side by side. Indian Christians complained a great deal about this situation and criticised it as expression of the "sectarianism and denominationalism" of the missionaries. Instead, some of them strove for the union of all Indian Christians in one united Indian Church which also should be Indian in its cultural expression. First experiments of this kind can be seen as early as in the 1860s. In the 1880s such initiatives multiplied. In Calcutta e.g. in 1887 the *Calcutta Christo Samaj* was founded and in 1886 in Madras the *National Church of India* established. It comprised leading representatives of the Protestant intelligentsia of the city, sought to end "the unnecessary and superfluous divisions" in the Christian community and intended to unite all Indian Christians, independently of their denominational affiliation, into one – self-governing and financially independent – national church.[6]

Isolated and short-lived, as those early experiments happened to be, they were not without effect. On the contrary: It was the time of the awakening of Indian nationalism, frequently associated with a revival of Hinduism as the most ancient, "national" religion of the country criticising the "denationalising" effects of Christianity as preached by the missionaries became common practice. And nowhere else was the "foreign", the "western", the "non-Indian" character of Protestant Christianity more immediately visible than in the multitude of rivalling churches which, like the Anglican Church of England or the Lutheran Church of Sweden, often showed their foreign origin in their very names. Both this criticism by Indian nationalists and similar statements and experiments by native Christians were carefully noted at least in parts of the missionary camp. Since the 1890s, the issue of "comity" and closer cooperation increasingly appeared on the agenda of the various regional and national missionary conferences. And with the *swaraj* movement commencing in 1905, the movement towards a national church among Indian Christians considerably intensified. "The modern young man" – so we learn from a missionary report from India in 1907 – "wants a national Church, first and foremost, to attain independence from all foreign sway and its concomitants ... There is a sort of idea floating around that India could start with a clean state and evolve something wholly new and Indian, based, as some of its advocates openly say, on the 'religious treasure' of non-Christian India." And in 1909, shortly before the Edinburgh Conference, the Bishop of Bombay, Edwin James Palmer, commented: "I have heard it said often, that if we, foreign missionaries, left India in a body to-day, *all Indian Christians would very quickly*

6 K. BAAGO, "The First Independence Movement Among Indian Christians" (*Indian Church History Review* 1, 1976, 65–78); G. THOMAS, *Christian Indians and Indian Nationalism 1885–1950* (Frankfurt 1979).

*unite and form one Indian Church.* I have heard said it again and again that it is only we foreign missionaries who keep the Indian Christians from unity."[7]

A new stage in the development of emancipatory movements among Indian Christians was marked by the foundation of the (Indian) *National Missionary Society* 1905 in Serampore. It regarded itself as an alliance of Indian Christians, who in their own strength and free from missionary paternalism wanted to bring the gospel to their own people. "Indian leadership", "Indian methods" and "Indian money" were the watchwords of this movement, which intended to work especially in places where no other missions were yet active. Transdenominational orientation was another of its characteristics.[8] The rise of a national awareness among Christians was regarded as prerequisite for effective evangelisation. "To awaken in our people a national consciousness, to create in them a sense of true patriotism, and to unite in the cause of the evangelisation of our country the Indian Christians of all denominations and provinces, it has been placed in the hearts of all many of our brethren to organize a National Missionary Society of India ... ", states the founding proclamation of the movement, which was initiated, among others, by V. S. Azariah and other Indian Christians later to become prominent. One year after its founding there already existed branches in about hundred Indian cities.[9] Branches were set up in Burma and contacts established with Japanese Christians.[10] – The founding of the *National Missionary Society* has to be seen in the wider context of quite a number of analogous initiatives (mostly of regional character) in Asia of this period, which in a similar way raised the self-expansion of Christianity by nationals to the central item of their program.[11] – Prominent representatives of the Indian national church movement of late 19th century (such as J. P. Cotelingam) supported the new movement because they saw their demands taken up by it.[12] And in contrast to the sporadic initiatives of the earlier Indian national church movement, the missionaries could no longer ignore the new movement. On the contrary, we will meet later leaders of the *National Missionary Society* – such as K. T. Paul, Jnan Ranjan Banerjea, Jahwant Rao Chitambar or V. S. Azariah – as prominent Indian Church leaders.[13] So it is no surprise that such representatives of the missionary movement as John R. Mott, who were committed to the idea of an self-governing native church, soon took keen interest in the leading figures of the *National Missionary Society* as potential leaders of a future Indian church. Very much to the displeasure of many of his British colleagues, Mott, with similar intention, had already earlier made contact with the leaders of the *Indian National Congress* on one of his Indian journeys in 1895. It was also Mott who later invited Azariah to be one of the few Asian delegates to the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, and who assigned to Azariah the main address on "Cooperation between foreign and native workers in the younger churches". The "rebel of Edinburgh" pleaded in his speech for a status of partnership between missionaries and native workers on a basis of equality.[14]

Catholic Latin America – being regarded as "Christian countries" – was intentionally not part of the deliberations in Edinburgh which aimed at debating the situation in "all the non-Christian world". Africa played a far lesser role at the conference than Asia, even though the "black continent" had been standing at the centre of missionary attention for a long time. In addition, it could present in the ex-slave Samual Adjay Crowther, consecrated Anglican Bishop of British Equatorial West Africa in 1864, a visible proof for the success of the concept of a self-governing, self-extending and self-supporting church. But the experiment of Crowther's episcopacy had ended in open dissent and a White was appointed 1891 as his successor, not a Black. This incident led to violent protests in West Africa and gave impulse to the forming of independent churches, among them some (like the *United Native African Church* of 1891 or the *African Church Organization* of 1901) which aimed at a non-denominational union of African Christians.[15] Similar developments at this time are to be observed in southern Africa. Since the turn of 19th century independent churches became a widespread phenomenon in the region, to which Edinburgh also paid great attention. Ethiopianism, as it was called in the minutes of the conference, was reported to be "widespread from the Zambesi to Cape Town" and was regarded as the outcome of "the modern growth of a national Spirit within the Church" of the southern hemisphere, which made a new "relationship of the missionary and native" in the mission churches compulsory.[16]

7 E. J. PALMER, *Reunion in Western India.* Papers and Articles by the Bp. of Bombay (Bombay 1910), 3ff.: ch. II: The Hope of the Reunion of Christendom, 3.

8 Cf. THOMAS, *Christian Indians* 146–154; K. T. PAUL, *The Missionary Spirit in the Indian Church* (Madras 1909); D. F. EBRIGHT, *The National Missionary Society of India* (Chicago 1944); C. E. ABRAHAM, *The Founders of the National Missionary Society of India* (Madras n.y.). A satisfactory analysis of the *National Missionary Society* as emancipatory movement of Indian Christians still is to be expected.

9 The active work began in Punjab in 1907. In 1930 the *Society* had 48 centres with 116 missionaries.

10 EBRIGHT, *National Missionary Society* 105ff. 114ff.

11 Azariah himself was deeply impressed by the example of Tamil Christians from Jaffna, who sent evangelists to south India. Especially in Ceylon several initiatives of this type under local leadership can be identified, such as the *India Christian Mission* founded in 1897, the *Jaffna Students Missionary Society* founded in 1899 or the *Thondi Mission* (1900–1907).

12 THOMAS, *Christian Indians* 153.

13 J. R. Chitambar e.g. became the first Asian bishop of the *Methodist Episcopal Church of Southern Asia* (1930).

14 *World Missionary Conference* (abbreviated as WMC), 1910. Vol. IX (Edinburgh etc. n.d. [= 1910]), 306–315.

15 K. KOSCHORKE/F. LUDWIG, "Einheimische Bischöfe und innerkirchliche Protestbewegungen im Indien und Nigeria der Jahrhundertwende" (*Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 52, 1996, 29–39).

16 WMC 1910. III, 192ff. 195. 196. 197.

## II. The World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh 1910

Edinburgh was by no means the first world missionary conference, but as regards attendance, influence and representation of the participants it was the most important such conference up to that time. 120 societies and churches from the USA, Great Britain and continental Europe were represented,[17] among them groups (such as high-church Anglicans) which previously had declined to cooperate. The number of non-western delegates was still very low (17 Asians), but the weight of their contributions was all the greater.[18] Because Edinburgh set the problem of missionary cooperation within the wider context of a global cooperation between the various missionary societies and churches, it became the "birthplace" and "initial spark for the entire ecumenical movement of the 20th century".[19] Even if one might partly qualify this statement, the enormous significance of Edinburgh for the nascent ecumenical movement in the western Protestant world is beyond reasonable doubt.

Edinburgh was unique for the intensity of its *preparation*. More than 500 correspondents in different areas overseas (missionaries as well as indigenous Christians and local church leaders) were initially written to and asked specifically about the various themes of the conference. Anyone who wants to get a picture of the state of Christianity in different parts of the non-western world around the year 1910 will find abundant material in this correspondence.[20] In its organisation, Edinburgh fol-

17 They sent 1355 delegates, among them 594 Americans, 560 British, 175 representatives from continental Europe and 26 from Australia: W. GÜNTHER, *Von Edinburgh nach Mexico City* (Stuttgart 1970), 11. A report on the conference by a German participant is to be found in: A. W. SCHREIBER, *Die Edinburger Welt-Missionskonferenz* (Basel ²1910).

18 Cf. H.-R. WEBER, *Asia and the Ecumenical Movement 1895–1961* (London 1966), 130–135. From India came V. S. Azariah, K. C. Chatterji, J. R. Chitambar, S. Ghose, Shivram Masoji, John Ragiah, R. K. Sorabji, Thang Khan; from Burma: Ah Sou; from China: C. Y. Cheng, T. E. Tong, D. T. Tsang; from Korea: T. Y. Yun; from Japan: Y. Chiba, T. Harada, Y. Honda, K. Ibuka. – To the very influential (central) Continuation Committee of the Edinburgh conference already belonged three Asians: Bp. Y. Honda (Japan), C. Y. Cheng (China) and K. S. Chatterji (India). – No African representative took part. Rev. Mark C. Hayford from the Gold and Ivory Coasts of West Africa, occasionally mentioned in this context, was no official delegate.

19 Classical research positions: R. ROUSE/S. NEILL/H. E. FEY (Eds.), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517–1968*. Vol. I. (Geneva ⁴1993), 362: "birthplace of the modern ecumenical movement;" A. LINDT (in Neuzeit. Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte in Quellen IV/2; Neukirchen 1980, 54): "Initialzündung für die ganze ökumenische Bewegung des 20. Jahrhunderts;" W. H. HOGG, *Mission und Ökumene* (Stuttgart 1954), 121: "Anfang ... der ökumenischen Bewegung;" R. FRIELING, *Der Weg des ökumenischen Gedankens* (Göttingen 1992), 43–45. Cf. K. KOSCHORKE, "Christentumsgeschichte in globaler Perspektive. Kirchliche Emanzipationsbestrebungen im Asien der Jahrhundertwende und die Anfänge der modernen ökumenischen Bewegung des Westens" (*Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 107, 1996, 72–89).

20 This preparatory correspondance is now generally available as microfiche edition (International Missionary Council Archives, 1910–1961, at: Inter Documentation Company, Leiden).



lowed the pattern of earlier Asian mission conferences, in particular those of Madras 1902 and Shanghai 1907. To a great extent, their specific themes and issues were also taken into the agenda of the World Missionary Conference.

The debates at the conference culminated in a final appeal to worldwide Christianity, in a closing call "To the members of the Church (sic!) in Christian lands". And the urgency of a completely new quality of inter-church cooperation was based on the insight into the current situation, as presented in the deliberations. "During the past ten days we have been engaged in a close and continuous study of the position of the church in non-Christian lands ... Our survey has impressed upon us the momentous character of the present hour. We have heard from many quarters of the *awakening of great nations*, of the opening of long-closed doors, and of movements that are placing all at once more before the Church a new world to be won for Christ." In this, along with the movements in Africa already mentioned, the conference had in view especially the situation in Asia, such as the latest downfall of feudal structures in revolutionary Turkey, Japan's unprecedented jump into the modern world or the strengthening national movements of India or China, where it was still open as to whether they would decide for a way with or without Christianity. In the analysis of Edinburgh, *both* options seem possible. Therefore the urgency for decisive and united action. "The next ten years will in all probability constitute a turning point in human history, and may be of more critical importance ... than many centuries of ordinary experience. If those years are wasted, havoc may be wrought that centuries are not able to repair. On the other hand, if they are rightly used, they may be among the most glorious in human history."[21]

It is this awareness of a unique historic opportunity which for Edinburgh makes a completely new quality of ecumenical cooperation compulsory. Just organisational improvements of the missionary apparatus are no longer regarded as sufficient. Christianity as a whole must act in united action in order to meet the needs of the present "decisive hour".[22] The situation analysis presented by Edinburgh was in no way as unrealistic as it may appear from a later perspective. In 1911 the Manchu Dynasty, which had ruled China for centuries, fell. The first (provisional) president of republican China, Sun Yat-Sen, was a Christian; and "never before existed such an opportunity to win the country for Christ" (as stated at a Chinese church conference in 1912).[23] On the other hand, four years after Edinburgh the First World War

21 *WMC* 1910. IX, 108f.

22 J. R. MOTT, *The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions* (London 1910).

23 In India towards the end of the 19th century mass movements of marginalised groups towards Christianity were to be observed, "and the effect was like a trumpet-call to the entire Indian Missionary World" (K. BAAGO, *A History of the National Christian Council of India 1914–1964* [Nagpur 1965], 4). In China began in "1901 ... the most influential phase of Christian missions" (J. K. FAIRBANK, *Geschichte des modernen China*

broke out, which in the eyes of many Asians and Africans was drastic proof of the moral breakdown of Christianity. The "hour of decision" seemed to have been wasted.

Yet a development had been initiated which could not be revoked. The impulses for the development of Western ecumenism in the 20th century, emanating from Edinburgh, cannot be discussed here in detail. They resulted, among others, 1921 in the founding of the *International Missionary Council*, one of the three main strands of organised ecumenism. At the same time there existed both personal and objective links to the other branches. So for example, with the movement "Faith and Order", whose initiator, the Anglican missionary bishop of the Philippines, Charles Brent, was considerably inspired in this undertaking by his participation and the discussions at the Edinburgh Conference.[24] And when finally in 1948 the *Ecumenical Council of Churches* was founded in Amsterdam, the American J. R. Mott was made its Honorary President, a person who already in 1910 had been the driving force of the Edinburgh Conference and who, as no-one else, personified the ecumenical movement of the 20th century.[25] At the same time J. R. Mott is that person who, long before Edinburgh, had already built up in Asia systematic contacts with future indigenous church (and political) leaders and whose name is inseparably linked with the reception of Edinburgh in Asia. Without Edinburgh 1910 and the network provided by the international missionary movement, the founding of the *World Council of Churches* in 1948 would not have been possible.

## *III. Post-Edinburgh Developments*

The reception of Edinburgh in the emerging churches overseas was realised through a series of local or regional conferences. Especially in Asia, it was accompanied in many places by intensive public debates.

Latin America, as already mentioned, quite deliberately had not been on the agenda of Edinburgh. But in 1916 in Panama the *Congress on Christian Work in Latin America* took place, organised on similar premises as the Edinburgh conference. As Edinburgh, it called for intensified cooperation between the various churches and missions and, similar to Edinburgh, it indicated as the decisive "unifying motive" for concerted Protestant action the growing nationalism of Latin American societies.[26] For Africa, the conferences of Calabar (1911) and Kikuyu (1913) are especially to be mentioned. Kikuyu regarded itself as the "earnest attempt at reunion of the various churches that bear the name of the Lord Christ".[27] But its idea of an eucharist communion between the various Protestant bodies ran aground by the violent protests it evoked within the Anglican Church. *One* reason for the failure of this experiment may lie in the weak participation of African church leaders. Finding less and less room to move with the established church structures, they increasingly committed themselves to become active in church independency.

Quite different was the situation in many parts of Asia. To a considerable extent, the Asian ecumenical movement of the following decades may be described as a process of emancipation[28] which took place partly within and partly outside of established mission church structures. This development is closely linked with the history of the reception of Edinburgh. This process can be seen first of all in the form of the so-called Edinburgh Continuation Conferences of the years 1912 and 1913. Under the leadership of J. R. Mott, 21 such conferences took place on a regional or national level in Ceylon, India, Burma, Singapore, China, Manchuria, Korea and Japan.[29] In each case the debates led to the founding of National *Missionary* Councils, which

*1800–1865* [München 1991], 151; cf. K. BAAGO/K.-C. LIU (Eds.), *The Cambridge History of China*. Vol. 11/2 [Cambridge etc. 1980], 277ff. 465ff. 515ff). "To many Chinese, old and young, in contact with Western missionaries at that time, Christianity appeared to be the wave of the future" (P. WEST, "Christianity and Nationalism", in: J. K. FAIRBANK (Ed.), *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* [Cambridge/Mass. 1981, 226–248], 227). "We recognize in the situation which confronts us all over North China today an opportunity probably unparalleled in the history of missions" (Peking Conference 1913: CCC [cf. note 29], 272); cf. ibid. 324 (China National Conference 1913): "Never have all classes of the people been as accessible as they are now."

24 R. FRIELING, *Die Bewegung für Glauben und Kirchenverfassung 1910–1937* (Göttingen 1970), 20ff.

25 C. H. HOPKINS, *John R. Mott 1865–1955* (Grand Rapids 1979), 696–698. 343–364.

26 *Panama Congress 1916*. Christian Work in Latin America. Published ... by the Missionary Education Movement. Vol. III (New York 1917), 65–68. About the Panama Congress cf. H.-J. PRIEN, *Die Geschichte des Christentums in Lateinamerika* (Göttingen 1978), 798–800.

27 O. U. KALU, *Divided People of God*. Church Union Movement in Nigeria 1875–1966 (New York etc. 1978). – About the Calabar Conference 1911 at which representatives of the *Church Missionary Society*, the Qua Ibo Mission, the Primitive Methodist Mission and the United Free Church of Scotland Mission participated, an extended report is to be found at the National Archives Ibadan, RP 2/3, Foreword: "The Calabar Missionary Conference of November 1911 was one of the numerous results of the Edinburgh Conference of 1910" (Communication Dr. F. Ludwig). – There are other local African post-Edinburgh conferences like that at Lokoja/Nigeria, about which a report can be found in the *Western Equatorial Africa Diocesan Magazine* (Vol. XVII/ n° 88, Oct 1911, 128–130).

28 Cf. BAAGO, *Christian Council* 27.

29 *The Continuation Committee Conferences in Asia 1912–1913*. ... Published by the Chairman of the Continuation Committee (New York 1913; abbreviated as: CCC); important documents also to be found in: J. R. MOTT, *Adresses and Papers*, 6 vols. (New York 1946–1947); J. R. MOTT, *Experiences and Impressions During a Tour in Asia in 1912–1913*, being Extracts from Personal Letters of J. R. Mott, Privately Printed (n.p. n.d.). The tremendous impact these conferences had on the development of national church structures in Asia must be studied separately for the different countries. Cf. WEBER, *Asia* 134–142; HOPKINS, *John R. Mott* 386–404; BAAGO, *National Council* 7ff; ROUSE/NEILL/FEY, *History of the Ecumenical Movement* I, 362–366.

about ten years later were transformed into National *Christian* Councils (first in India, Japan and Korea). Thereby the basic structures of self-government for the Asian churches was laid, which (in further developed form) remained determinative into the present.

When one reads the documents of these Asian continuation conferences today, they seem perhaps little exciting. But in the context of the time they contained potential dynamite. Such for example, the recommendation of the sub-conference of Japanese church leaders in 1913 in Tokyo. Here the cooperation with missionaries from abroad continued to be welcomed. But at the same time it was recommended that *before* each such missionary assignment, the foreign missionaries should put themselves under the guidance of Japanese pastors for one or two years.[30] Similar was the decision of the China Conference of Canton which stated that "the Chinese Church itself, and not foreign organisations", should be a "permanent factor of the evangelisation" of the country.[31] What is remarkable in these debates is the terminology used: "*The* Christian Church in China", without detailed denominational specification, is here presented as the active subject. Similar is the use of language of other conferences, which also speak pointedly of "*the*" one "Church of Christ" in India, in Ceylon or in Japan.[32]

Along with the question of church unity, the development of *indigenous church structures* was one of the central issues at almost *all* conferences. And although the conditions differed considerably in the various countries, the debates generally aimed in the same direction. While in many places the simple demand for greater participation by native ministers in decision making already marked an enormous advance, the regional conference in Indian Madras voted for "complete equality" between Indians and Europeans, both "in status and responsibility".[33] Similarly the Chinese National Conference pointed to the fact that otherwise the "unprecedented opportunity" of the current opening of China would be wasted. The aim for a united church in a national context sensitive to the "strong desire ... for a comprehensive church organisation adapted to the country" are further demands raised regularly. They are understood as the expression of a "solidarity with one's (own) nation". With the development of ecclesiastical structures on a *national* level, the first steps were made in this direction.

30 CCC, 433.

31 CCC, 193ff; HOPKINS, *John R. Mott* 395.

32 "At the national Conference the name Chung Hua Chi Tu Chiao Hui (Chinese Christian Church) was adopted for general use as a common title for all the Christian Churches in China" (WEBER, *Asia* 138). – Cf. CCC, 327: "Church of Christ in China"; ibid., 18: "The Church of Christ in Ceylon"; ibid., 125: "The Indian Church"; ibid., 159: "The Native Church in Burma"; ibid., 391: "The Korean Church"; ibid., 430: "The Japanese Church" etc.

33 "... the time has come for Churches and Missions to make a real and unmistakable advance, by placing Indians Indians on a footing of complete equality, in status and responsibility, with Europeans." (CCC, 32).



That many of these demands remained only on paper for a long time will hardly be a surprise. That they corresponded in only a very limited way to the much larger aspirations of indigenous Christians also should be noted. Indian Christians such as the members of Christo Samaj (1919) or the lay theologian Sri Pandipeddi Chenchia, who advocated both political as well as ecclesiastical independence for his country, similarly criticised the church union project as still being too much orientated on European models. Instead, they demanded a radical alignment of Indian Christianity with the cultural and religious traditions of the country.[34] So the Indian church union movement was not only exposed to conservative missionary criticism. At the same they saw themselves confronted with the much further reaching efforts of Indian Christians towards indigenisation, who were active partly within and partly outside the established ecclesiastical structures.

Yet the discussions set in motion by Edinburgh led quickly to *practical results*. In 1912 the Indian V. S. Azariah was consecrated Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Dornakal – the first Asian bishop after more than 250 years. The situation in China was similar, where Ching-Yi Cheng, another Asian delegate to Edinburgh in 1910, was called into a church leadership position.[35] In Japan the national church movement of indigenous Christians was so far advanced, that independent conferences of Japanese church leaders were organised. With the First World War the issue of "indigenous leadership" gained in Asia a great leap forward in significance. The developments of the years 1922/23 marked another decisive turning point. In India, Japan and Korea the change from National *Missionary* into National *Christian* Councils (as organs of prospective self-government of the Asian churches) occurred at that time. At the same time it was determined in India that in this Council at least 50% of the seats should be reserved for Indian delegates.[36] The situation in Japan and in China was similar.[37] At least as theoretical question the debate about the relevance of indigenous church leadership had come to an end.

The *Church of South India*, founded in 1947, the year that India gained political independence, marks a preliminary conclusion to the development to be discussed here. As the first union of episcopal and non-episcopal churches it has to be consid-

34 These voices later rallied in the Madras "Rethinking Group".

35 Cf. N. BITTON, "Cheng Ching-Yi, Christian Statesman" (*International Missionary Review* 31, 1941, 513–520).

36 BAAGO, *National Council* 33: "Regarding membership it was made a constitutional rule that half the members in both the National and the Provincial Councils should be nationals."

37 In Japan it was decided "to form a National Christian Council for Japan, with a membership of 100 of whom at least 51 should represent the Japanese Churches and 34 the missions, the remaining 15 being co-opted members" (*International Missionary Review* 12, 1923, [191–223: "A missionary survey of the Year 1922"] 196). In China at the inauguration of the National Christian Conference in 1922 "the chairman and more than half the delegates were Chinese Christians, representatives of Christians groups in all parts of the republic" (Ibid. 203; cf. WEBER, *Asia* 140f).

ered a decisive date not only in the history of Asian Christianity, but of global ecumenism as well. Not surprisingly, it gained world-wide attention. Much earlier than in the historical churches of the West, the ecumenical movement in Asia had led to concrete results.

## *IV. The Linking Together of Indigenous Christian Elites of Asia and Africa and the Emergence of a Global Christian Community*

The modern missionary movement has been occasionally – and ironically – labelled the "first multinational trust". What holds true in this remark is the observation that the modern Protestant missionary movement from its early pietistic and evangelical beginnings onwards was international and interdenominational in orientation. What further holds true is the observation that very much earlier than other branches of organised Protestantism, the missionary movement built up global communication networks which transcended the borders both of nation and denomination. Through the process of missionary expansion, the different confessional forms of European and north Atlantic Christianity were exported worldwide. At the same time, it was in the so-called mission fields that different church traditions interacted with each other, which in their respective home countries had hardly any contact. Swiss Reformed, American Baptists, German Lutherans or British Anglicans saw themselves confronted with common challenges very much more quickly overseas than at home, and this is the reason why the international missionary movement became the mother of the modern ecumenical movement. Edinburgh 1910 demonstrates this in an impressive way.

The global communication network of the Protestant missionary movement, however, did not serve only the respective mission headquarters for the implementation of their strategic aims. At the same time it increasingly made possible contacts, or at least some mutual awareness, between the indigenous Christian elites of different countries and regions. Much earlier, than has generally been assumed, there developed something like a common south-south awareness or the beginning of a kind of transcontinental solidarity. Already in the year 1745 Jacobus E. J. Capitein – an ex-slave, a graduate, and an ordained minister in the service of the Dutch West India Company – complained about the miserable working conditions and discriminatory treatment to which he was subjected on the Gold Coast. In contrast, he pointed to the much better treatment which his Indian colleagues in the ministry enjoyed in south Indian Tranquebar in the service of the Danish Lutheran Mission.[38] In 1887 Indian Christians organised a collection and sent a letter of solidarity to their persecuted fellow Christians in Uganda.[39] The gradual deprivation of S. A. Crowther's of powers and the appointment of a white successor for the black bishop in 1891 arouse storms of protests not only in West Africa (Lagos, Sierra Leone) but also in India and Ceylon. On the other hand, it was West Africa which in the debates about indigenous leadership continued to serve as a model for India. "When is India to have her own native Bishops?" was the headline of an urgent appeal by the *Indian Christian Patriot* in 1898. This organ of the Protestant elite of Madras was pointing to the example of the West African church where, in contrast to India, a considerable number of native Christians had been raised at least to the position of an assistant bishop. Conversely, the appointment of V. S. Azariah in 1912 as the "first Indian Bishop" attracted notice and lively comment in West Africa too. His critical remarks on missionary work, his pointing to the significance of the Indian national movement for the Christians of his country, as well as his demand for a "truly Indian church", were given great attention in the press.[40]

Much more important, of course, were early instances of direct contacts between Christians from one continent. 1905 was the year of Russia's defeat in the Russian-Japanese war. This victory of an "oriental" nation over an occidental power, at the mid-peak of colonialism, gave enormous stimulus not only to the nationalist forces in the whole of Asia. It also led to a remarkable action by Indian Christians who invited Japanese Christians, in order to learn from them how "India may profit by the experience of Japan". The seven-week tour in 1906 of a small Japanese delegation to all large cities of India, organised by the Indian YMCA in cooperation with the *National Missionary Society*, turned into a triumphal procession. The Japanese guests pointed to the significance of Christianity for the resurgence in their country and recommended to their hosts autonomy and the reduction of dependency on foreign missionary forces.[41]

This kind of contact between Christians from different Asian countries intensified considerably in subsequent years. Along with local initiatives, such as the Indian *National Missionary Society* and the Asian YMCAs or various Christian student associations, it was particularly the network provided by the National Missionary (and later National Christian) Councils, stemming from the Asian Edinburgh Continuation Conferences, which made such contacts easier. Of great significance, of course, were the conferences of the International Missionary Council in particular, in which an increasing number of non-European delegates took part. In 1938, at the World Missionary Conference of Tambaram, which took place on Indian soil, the number of delegates from Asia, Africa and Latin America exceeded those from

38 D. N. A. Kpobi, *Mission in Chains*. The life, theology and ministry of the ex-slave Jacobus E. J. Capitein (1717–1747) with a translation of his major publications (Leiden 1993), 246–249.

39 F. Ludwig, "Ein Solidaritätsbrief indischer Christen an die Christen Ugandas", in: A. Eckart (Ed.), *Lesarten eines globalen Prozesses* (Münster/Hamburg 1998, 187–196).

40 *Christian Patriot* (Madras, India) 16.6.1898.

41 K. Koschorke, "Der Russisch-Japanische Krieg 1904/05 und die indigen-christlichen Eliten Indiens", in: D. Becker/A. Feldtkeller (Eds.), *Mit dem Fremden leben.* Bd. 1 (Erlangen 2000, 213–225).

northern countries for the first time. At the same time, it offered not only opportunity for intensive ecclesiastical (and political) contacts between African and Asian church leaders. It also saw, for the very first time, an attempt by the African delegates to break down, in an alliance with the Asians, the cultural and theological dominance of the West. The attempt failed lamentably because the Asians refused cooperation. The issue at stake was the African practice of polygamy as a legitimate form of Christian family life.[42] At the same time, however, this incident illustrates to what extent the communication structures of the international missionary movement became used increasingly by the Christian elites of Asia and Africa for their specific purposes.

Edinburgh stands at the beginning of this development. It is a decisive turning point not only in the history of the churches of the West, but also of Asia (and to a lesser extent of Africa as well).

## *Abstract*

The World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh 1910 has been repeatedly described as the "birth hour" of the modern ecumenical movement in the Protestant world. At the same time and in an unprecedented way, Edinburgh brought together developments in the churches of Asia, Africa and the western world. Edinburgh served thereby as a sort of relay station, which passed on to the missionary headquarters and churches of the West the impetus from the nascent mission churches of Asia and Africa, and later gave back strengthened impulses to its origins. Thus in contrast to the council of Trent, Edinburgh clearly has a prehistory in the nascent overseas churches of Asia and Africa themselves. And similarly to Vatican II, but half a century earlier, Edinburgh experienced an intensive reception not only in the western hemisphere. Its effects were felt much more directly in the churches of the non-Western world, especially in Asia, where the Continuation Committee Conferences 1912/13 rapidly developed as nucleus of national native church organisations and the ecumenical movement gathered strong momentum. In the process of the forming an interconnected worldwide Christian community, Edinburgh marks an important step.

## *Die Weltmissionskonferenz Edinburgh 1910 und das Aufkommen nationalkirchlicher Bewegungen in Asien und Afrika*

Die Weltmissionskonferenz in Edinburgh 1910 ist wiederholt als "Geburtsstunde" der modernen ökumenischen Bewegung in der protestantischen Welt beschrieben worden. Zugleich verknüpfte Edinburgh in bislang einmaliger Weise Entwicklungen



in den Kirchen Asiens, Afrikas und des Westens. Edinburgh fungierte dabei als eine Art Relaisstation, die Impulse von den entstehenden Missionskirchen Asiens und Afrikas an die Missionszentralen und Kirchen des Westens weiterleitete und später verstärkend in die Ursprungsländer zurückgab. Im Unterschied zum Konzil von Trient hat Edinburgh so eine Vorgeschichte in den entstehenden Überseekirchen Asiens und Afrikas selbst. Ähnlich wie das Zweite Vatikanum, aber ein halbes Jahrhundert früher, erfuhr Edinburgh eine intensive Rezeption nicht nur in der westlichen Hemisphäre. Seine Auswirkungen waren insbesondere in Asien sehr intensiv, wo die *Continuation Committee Conferences* der Jahre 1912/13 den Kern späterer nationaler einheimischer Kirchenstrukturen darstellten und die Ökumenebewegung eine ungleich größere Dynamik als in den Kirchen des Westens entwickelte. Im Prozess der Bildung einer weltweiten vernetzten christlichen Gemeinschaft markiert Edinburgh eine wichtige Etappe.

42 F. LUDWIG, *Zwischen Kolonialismuskritik und Kirchenkampf.* Interaktionen afrikanischer, indischer und europäischer Christen während der Weltmissionskonferenz Tambaram 1938 (Göttingen 2000), 36ff. 66ff.