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## Tokyo 2010: Global Mission Consultation

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At least a dozen conferences last year celebrated the centenary of the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference. Before his death (in May 2009), Ralph Winter, founder of the U.S. Center for World Mission, singled out four of them as being particularly significant: those being held in Tokyo, Edinburgh, Cape Town, and Boston.<sup>1</sup> Tokyo was the first conference of these four, meeting May 11–14, 2010, at Nakano Sun Plaza in western Tokyo. In many ways, it was fitting that Tokyo be the first, because its emphasis was on evangelism of unreached people groups—what is often termed “finishing the task” or “frontier missions.” Much as the first European settlers in America had to blaze trails through the wilderness in their expansion westward, the organizers of Tokyo 2010 had the vision of pioneering Christian work in places that have never before heard the Gospel. It almost seems anachronistic today to think about “unreached people groups” in our overglobalized world, but there are still almost 7,000 people groups that have never heard the Gospel.<sup>2</sup> (In 1974, at the first Lausanne Congress, Ralph Winter famously redefined “nations”—the *panta ta ethnē*, “all the nations,” of Matthew 28:19—as ethnolinguistic groups, not political entities.) It was at Lausanne that two streams of evangelical missiology emerged, what might be termed “frontier missions” and “holistic mission.”<sup>3</sup> Tokyo 2010 was the former; Cape Town 2010, the latter.

Some people think of frontier missions as being the child or the younger sibling of holistic mission, but really the two are more like twins birthed from the same mother: mid-twentieth-century Neo-evangelicalism (which itself was a reaction against early twentieth-century Fundamentalism).<sup>4</sup> Because Winter, the frontier missiologist, was the one to single out these four conferences, it is appropriate that Tokyo, the conference focused on frontier missions, serve as the vanguard. Winter also was the one who had a vision for all four conferences as serving different purposes in fulfilling the legacy of Edinburgh 1910.<sup>5</sup>

The conference was organized by the U.S. Center for World Mission (USCWM) through local churches in Japan and in partnership with churches in Korea. The reconciliation between these two heretofore bitter East Asian enemies was but one of the desired outcomes of the conference. Another clearly radical move was having the conference in one of the most resistant mission fields on earth, as many people have regarded Japan as the second-hardest mission field, after the Muslim world.<sup>6</sup> As with Edinburgh 1910’s Continuation Committee, which was considered its greatest legacy (the main reason why it was considered the “birthplace of the ecumenical movement,” not because of the breadth of representation at the conference itself), Tokyo 2010 aims to keep its momentum and fulfill its stated goals via the Global Network of Mission Structures (GNMS), much as Cape Town has the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization as an ongoing movement. The planning committee chairman was Yong Cho, a Korean who works for the USCWM. Korean megachurches such as Onnuri Community Church and Yoido Full Gospel Church provided speakers and financial backing. The chairman of the whole conference was Obed Alvarez from Latin America, the chairman of the Japanese host committee was Minoru Okuyama, and Hisham Kamel from Egypt was the



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general coordinator, thus ensuring intercontinental representation within the leadership team.

The theme of the conference, "Making Disciples of Every People in Our Generation," clearly harkens back to John Mott's famous watchword of 1910, "The Evangelization of the World in This Generation," but with the twist of replacing the word "evangelization" with "making disciples," which is the main verb in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19–20). One of the outcomes of the conference was a major document, the Tokyo Declaration, just as the Lausanne '74 Congress produced the Lausanne Covenant.<sup>7</sup> The declaration makes its own version of a holistic statement—not in reformulating mission as evangelism + social justice, but in emphasizing depth in mission as discipleship, contrary to the false stereotype of frontier missions as having merely a "shallow" evangelistic emphasis. It also contains a pledge on the part of all the signatories (not individual people, but mission organizations) to aim for the completion of the task as set forth in the Great Commission, which requires cooperation for its fulfillment.

Another one of Winter's contributions was the distinction between modalities and sodalities.<sup>8</sup> He saw the greatest amount of cooperation as coming from sodalities, a view that provided the basis for the selection of delegates to this conference: no individuals were invited, but rather missionary societies and organizations, which sent their own representatives. Tokyo 2010 had about 1,000 attendees, larger than Edinburgh 2010 (300

people) and smaller than Cape Town 2010 (4,000 people). The different sizes contributed greatly to the strengths and weaknesses of each conference. For example, Edinburgh 2010's small size encouraged intimacy and efficiency—everybody had the opportunity to meet everyone else, and everyone had a voice in formulating policies, strategies, and theologies. Cape Town 2010 brought together perhaps the most diverse representation of Christians in history, representing perhaps the most effective manpower. Tokyo 2010's size was between the two and had a correspondingly fine balance of both.

It is obvious that much of Tokyo 2010 cannot be spoken of apart from the legacy of Ralph Winter, whose spirit pervaded the conference. His contributions to frontier missiology were not meant to be divisive, however. He still attended Lausanne conferences and was friends with holistic mission people. A perfect example was the inaugural Ralph D. Winter Lectureship at William Carey International University, Pasadena, California, in March 2010—René Padilla, a firm advocate of holistic mission, was invited to deliver the series. Tokyo and Cape Town, as the two major evangelical conferences celebrating the centenary of Edinburgh 1910, can likewise stand side by side, with a sense of cooperation rather than competition. Winter did not tout Tokyo 2010 as the best successor to Edinburgh 1910, but as one of several contributors to the monumental task of world mission, one that requires the resources of all of God's people.

## Notes

1. For an explanation of the rationale behind these four conferences, see Allen Yeh, "Tokyo 2010 and Edinburgh 2010: A Comparison of Two Centenary Conferences," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 27, no. 3 (2010).
2. According to the Joshua Project ([www.joshuaproject.net/](http://www.joshuaproject.net/)) when accessed on October 8, 2010, 6,847 of the 16,562 people groups on earth have no Gospel access. That is, 41.3 percent of all people groups are unreached. It is important, however, to distinguish between these facts and the world's population. Some people groups are tiny, so the percentage of unreached *people* may sometimes differ slightly from the percentage of unreached *people groups*, though at the moment the former (41.2 percent) is nearly the same as the latter.
3. Even the singular/plural distinction is significant, as missiologists such as Lesslie Newbigin and David Bosch have pointed out.
4. The term Neo-evangelicalism was coined by Harold Ockenga to encompass the thinking and ministry of people such as himself, Billy Graham, Harold Lindsell, and Carl F. H. Henry.
5. Not only this present publication but other periodicals such as *Christianity Today* and *Missiology: An International Review* discussed this "multiple conference" idea.
6. Edinburgh 1910, in contrast, was held in the most Christian land at the time. The same might be said now of Cape Town, as sub-Saharan Africa is one of the heartlands of world Christianity today, along with China and Korea. So, in this sense, Edinburgh 1910 and Cape Town 2010 might be more akin because of having the conferences in the center of gravity of Christianity, whereas Tokyo 2010 and Edinburgh 2010 had the unintentional commonality of holding their conferences in lands largely devoid of Christianity. An interesting corollary observation is the relationship between Christianity and wealth, which has been turned on its head. A century ago, Christian nations were wealthy nations. Today, in contrast, wealthy Japan is one of the most secular nations on earth, while Africa is one of the most Christian regions.
7. The Tokyo Declaration can be found at <http://gnms.net/declaration.html>.
8. Modalities are church structures; sodalities are parachurch organizations.

â€œTokyo 2010: Global Mission Consultationâ€ in Todd Johnson, Rodney Petersen, Gina Bellofatto, and Travis Meyers, eds., *The Changing Contours of World Mission and Christianity* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011). Articles. â€œA.J. Gordon and Social Actionâ€ in *American Baptist Quarterly* (Vol. 34, No. 2, Summer 2015), issue in honor of the 175th anniversary of his birth. â€œHispanic and Asian North American (HANA) Theologians Together: A Groundbreaking Consultationâ€, co-authored with Octavio Esqueda, in *Lausanne Global Analysis* (Vol. 4, No. 4, July 2015). â€œMissionsâ€ in Brian C. Stiller, Todd M. Johnson,