Dear Reader,

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Pope Benedict XVI praised the pioneers of the 1910 World Missionary Conference. Looking forward to the centenary celebrations in June, the Pope called for 'a new, intense work of evangelisation, not only among people who have never known the Gospel, but also among people for whom Christianity is part of their history.'

It's just another four months to go, and we are overwhelmed with positive news related to the centenary. Numerous articles, books, videos and other resources are now available on our website (www.edinburgh2010.org), and conferences around the world shape a new perspectives on mission in the 21st century.

Best wishes

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Reverse Mission: Europe - a Prodigal Continent?

By Afe Adogame, The University of Edinburgh, UK

The religious ethnography that took me from Germany to Nigeria in the summer of 1996 led to a striking and unprecedented finding, an advertorial captioned ‘Europe: A Prodigal Continent!...Europe: A Mission Field in Need of Church Attention’ adorning the Missions Office notice board of the Redeemed Christian Church of God’s (RCCG) International Headquarters. It retorted: ‘Why has Europe’s spiritual light grown dim? A mission force of years ago, becoming another missionary field at the moment!’ Christians from the two-thirds world employ similar narratives of representation deploying the illusion of a ‘Christian’ Europe as ‘the dark continent of Europe’, or ‘a dead and secularized Europe’. Controversial and puzzling as such assertions may be, they cast our minds and gaze to a new, emerging global religious phenomena.
‘Reverse mission’ or ‘reverse flow of mission’ is increasingly becoming a buzz phrase in academia, mission circles, and among Christians from the ‘two-thirds world’. The (un-)conscious missionary strategy by churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America of (re-)evangelising the ‘West’ is a relatively recent one. The enterprise was aimed at re-christianising Europe and North America in particular, the former heartlands of Christianity and vanguards of missionary movements from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. The rationale for reverse mission is often anchored on claims to divine commission to ‘spread the gospel’; the perceived secularization of the West; the abysmal fall in church attendance and dwindling membership; desecularisation of church buildings; liberalization; and on issues around moral decadence.

It is so far unclear whether ‘reverse mission’ is simply operating as rhetoric, and or what shape, structure and dynamic will emerge through this process in the long run. It will suffice at this point to underscore a certain public ignorance and ecclesial conspiracy that has left unnoticed this emerging mission trend, partly characterised by church proliferation in the South and from there to the Northern hemisphere. Nonetheless, reverse mission as ‘rhetoric’ or ‘an evolving process’ is of crucial religious, social, political, economic and missiological import for the ‘West’ and the global church, as the non-western world were hitherto at the receiving end of missions till the late twentieth century. The emergence of the ‘global South’ as the new centre of gravity of Christianity provides the watershed for the reversal and/or multidirectionality of missions.

The initiative that entail sending African missionaries abroad came partly as a backdrop of the moratorium call by the Lutheran World Foundation, to awaken ‘two-third world’ peoples to their responsibility, creating new goals and of formulating a viable evangelical strategy towards Europe. In 1971, the Western missions circle was stunned when Rev. John Gatu, a leader of the Presbyterian Church in East Africa, called for a moratorium on Christian missions from the Western world to the two-thirds world. This call which took a revolutionary stance generated heated conversation, rebuttals and criticisms from various quarters, particularly from the Western world. Legacies of the moratorium discourse eulogized by Gatu and his contemporaries are still fresh and resilient within world mission circles. Although the moratorium failed to produce a formal radical and systemic halt of the influx of Western missionaries and mission resources to Africa, it nevertheless raised a question mark that resulted in self-reflexivity and structural adjustment by Western missionaries and on their mission resources.

The moratorium also produced a new consciousness about dependence and strategies for self-reliance that has challenged definitions of mission but also altered the unidirectionality of missions that characterized earlier conceptions. This empowerment process of two-third world churches brought significant changes in mission praxis as issues of co-operation and partnership were promoted as new mission strategies at the International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland in July 1974 and in subsequent congresses. Southern Christians participated in these congresses and held continental/regional conferences, which provided those challenges and global opportunities.

The reverse-mission agenda is becoming a very popular feature among mission churches, African-led Pentecostal/charismatic churches, with pastors and missionaries commissioned to head already existing branches or establish new ones in Europe and North America. In the early 1980s, Tanzanian Lutheran pastors served in German parishes. African groups, clergy and laity existing within American and European Episcopal, Methodist, Lutheran and Catholic churches now further characterise the religious mosaic. There are growing numbers of African Roman Catholic and Anglican priests in the USA, Ghanaian Methodist Episcopal, Methodist, Lutheran and Catholic churches now further characterise the religious mosaic. There are growing numbers of African Roman Catholic and Anglican priests in the USA, Ghanaian Methodist Episcopal, Methodist, Lutheran and Catholic churches now further characterise the religious mosaic. There are growing numbers of African Roman Catholic and Anglican priests in the USA, Ghanaian Methodist Episcopal, Methodist, Lutheran and Catholic churches now further characterise the religious mosaic.

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The implications of reverse mission for world Christianity are not far to seek. First, reverse mission has brought a major shift in mission understanding; provided better sensibilities to, and appreciation of the multicultural nature of Christianity in the 21st century. Two, new definitions of mission are emerging in which traditional ‘missions fields’ now form ‘mission bases’ of renewed efforts to re-evangelize Europe, North America. Missions changed to become multi-lateral rather than unilateral, itinerant missionaries grew, while missions moved from cultural transplantation to contextualization. Third, as European churches are declining in number and in missionary significance, the impact of non-Western missions looms large in the revivification of Christianity in Europe. Fourth, this trend helps in the deconstruction and demystification of ecclesiastical paternalism that characterise global Christianity. Lastly, the proliferation of priests/missionaries from the two-thirds world may help fill a spiritual/administrative vacuum that often occasion the dearth of European clergy.

Andrew Walls’ remark: ‘Europe needs immigrants but do not want them’, aptly captures European public attitude towards immigrants in Europe. This reverse trend in missions now offers the ‘old heartlands of Christianity’ a model for renewal, and calls for a structural reform of the Church to grapple with the challenges of migration. In this vein I am persuaded to leave us with a question to think with: If and when
European churches finally decide to ‘see’ or ‘discover’ the new Christians in their midst, what will be their attitude towards them: ‘Fellow Labourers for Christ’ or as ‘Strange and Exotic Bedfellows?’

What's New?

2010 team member in Rome

Rev. Mitchell Bunting (Bungie), who is part of the Edinburgh 2010 team, was recently in Rome attending the Continuation Committee of Ecumenism in the 21st Century. The meeting which is organised by the World Council of Churches was on this occasion hosted by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. As part of the programme the group attended the weekly General Audience with Pope Benedict XVI. He made clear references to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and the Centenary of the 1910 World Mission Conference. Bungie was interviewed by Vatican Radio about Edinburgh 2010. He emphasised the contextual changes since 1910 and also the wider representation of churches and mission agencies. On behalf of churches in Scotland, he indicated that a warm welcome was waiting for the delegates and stressed the unity of churches in Scotland.

2010.global brochure now available in Amharic, Chinese and Kiswahili

The Edinburgh 2010 team invites Christians all over the world to celebrate and commemorate the centenary of the World Missionary Conference. The 2010.global brochure can be downloaded from our website (www.edinburgh2010.org). It is available in several languages, including Spanish, French, Korean and Chinese. If you are interested in translating the brochure into your native language, please contact us (jadam@cofscotland.org.uk).

New deadline for Youth Multimedia Contest

The deadline for the Edinburgh 2010 Youth Multimedia Contest has been extended to 28 February 2010. Projects should engage in the contest theme, 'The Changing Face of Mission'. We accept diverse forms of media, including but not limited to: video, photos, music, painting, drawing, sculptures etc. The winner receives a sponsored invitation to the Edinburgh conference. For more info, download the contest flyer from our website or contact our Youth and Mission Coordinator (2010youth@googlemail.com).

Media Accreditation now open


2010 in the news

'The Pope praises Pioneers of Edinburgh Conference', 'Fra Edinburgh 1910 til Edinburgh 2010', 'Gebundelde inspanning van christen in Afrika', 'World church leaders head for the capital' - a number of articles has recently been published on Edinburgh 2010 and other events related to the centenary. A selection of articles can be found in our news section.
Study Process Update

Theme 4: Mission and Power

A Canadian Case Study

The subject of power dynamics in mission resonates loudly in North America. Here the Christian community has grown acutely aware of the damage perpetrated in the name of Christ among the indigenous peoples of our continent. In Canada, the Roman Catholic and three Protestant denominations signed a binding legal agreement to mandate a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to examine this history.

With this historically significant and sacred moment of national reflection in mind, a core group of eight Canadians, and one expatriate living in the U.S., our co-chair Jon Bonk, commissioned a case study on the specific mission story of Indian residential schooling - a story of collaboration between the governing powers of Canada and four powerful churches from the mid-19th through most of the 20th century - a missionary endeavour to mould indigenous peoples in the image of the colonising peoples. Different kinds of power imbue this story, and so we hope it will be instructive and will resonate with mission practitioners around the world. Indeed, we solicited responsive reflections from individuals who hail from Cuba, Ghana, Kenya, Nicaragua, Malaysia, Palestine, Peru, Romania, South Africa, and Wales. These international responders worked hard to listen to the Canadian case study and to respond from their location of power. We are indebted to them for their many insights and deeply felt observations.

Our study is also a story of the call of mission churches to repentance and to reconciliation. We see reconciliation as a journey, a journey of relationship, and one that is intergenerational. Repentance is a process, built on many acts of atonement, and transformation of behaviour, hearts and mind. The act of confession is iterative as understanding between individuals and between peoples deepens. Our indigenous contributors suggest Ezekiel 37 as a metaphor for their journey to restore lost identity, an identity intrinsically connected to the land.

Ultimately we ask how should Christians look at power? How do we use the Power of the Holy Spirit faithfully in mission? And what value do we place on the power to receive from and be transformed by those whom we encounter in mission?

Lori Ransom, Convener

Working with the Mission and Power case study committee provided an all-too-rare opportunity to view the 'progress' of Western 'civilisation' from the underside. From that angle, the self-congratulating official histories of nations are so visibly tangled and untidy as to be virtually unrecognisable. The inspiring tales of intrepid explorers, fearless adventurers, heroic pioneers, resourceful settlers, selfless missionaries, compassionate clergy, far-sighted politicians and hard-fighting soldiers - all duly transmitted from generation to generation - seem but a cover for a tragic epic of global proportions. Such is the effect of stories told by the ancestors of those whose territories were taken, memories destroyed, languages decimated, cultures obliterated, and whose sons and daughters were forcibly enculturated and deliberately ghettoized. Whether related by a member of Canada's First Nations, an Australian aborigine, a Central European Gypsy, a Mayan or any one of scores of other people whose fate it was to be overwhelmed and subjugated by superior force, that all of this should have occurred usually with the complicity or acquiescence of Christian clergy and missionaries gives profound pause for theological thought: if this was what it meant to be 'Christian' then, just what do we mean by 'Christian' now? The answer to this question is not as simple as it once seemed.

Jon Bonk, Co-Convener

Events & Opportunities

6 and 27 February 2010
Edinburgh 1910-2110: Past and Future. 200 Years of Mission and Theology
Venue: Holy Trinity Church, Church Street, Haddington (Scotland)

The Diocese of Edinburgh of the Scottish Episcopal Church presents 'Edinburgh 1910-2110' - Two conferences on 200 years of mission and theology to be held on Saturday 6 February and Saturday 27 February 2010. The aim of these two Diocesan conferences is to reflect on mission in the 21st and 22nd century by considering how theology and mission have changed in the past 100 years. For more information and registration, please follow this link: http://www.edinburgh.anglican.org.
25/26 February 2010
International Mission Conference
Venue: Seminario Internacional Teológico Bautista, Buenos Aires (Argentina)

Red de Misiones Mundiales/ Comibam Argentina, Asociación de Seminarios e Instituciones Teológicas (ASIT), Programa de Entrenamiento Misionero Bi-vocacional y Ministerial (PEMByM) and Escuela Ministerial de Plantación de Iglesias (EMPI) invite to a three-day mission conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Commemorating the centenary of the World Missionary Conference, the consultation seeks to explore mission in a contemporary context. For more information on speakers, programme, costs and venue, please download the event poster from our website www.edinburgh2010.org.

11-15 May 2010
Global Mission Consultation & Celebration - From Edinburgh to Tokyo
Venue: Nakano Sun Plaza, Tokyo (Japan)

The May 11-14 consultation in Tokyo will mark Christian missionary activity in the 100 years since the 1910 Edinburgh gathering, and set priorities for the future. It will take as its basis the 'Lausanne Covenant', which resulted from the 1974 International Congress on World Evangelisation held in Lausanne, Switzerland. The Tokyo meeting is organised by the Thrid World Association, a Seoul-based organisation that has members in Asia, Africa and Latin America. For more information and registration visit the website of Tokyo 2010 www.tokyo2010.org.

New Mission Resources

Kirsteen Kim on Edinburgh 1910/2010
An interview with Kirsteen Kim on behalf of Global Connections
Available on Youtube

Kirsteen Kim is Senior Lecturer in Theology at Leeds Trinity and All Saints and works as Study Process Coordinator for Edinburgh 2010. In this two-part interview, produced on behalf of Global Connections, Kim talks about the 1910 World Missionary Conference and its significance today.

Atlas of Global Christianity now available

Atlas of Global Christianity

The Atlas of Global Christianity is a thorough visual reference of the changing status of global Christianity over the 100 years since the epoch-making World Missionary Conference. It is the first scholarly atlas to depict the twentieth-century shift of Christianity to the global South. It is also the first to map Christian affiliation at the provincial level. For more information visit the following website: http://www.atlasofglobalchristianity.org/index.html.
Pray with us

You are invited to join in prayer with all those who look forward to the celebrations of Edinburgh 2010 with faith and hope.

Take time to listen to the Word of God

I take no pleasure in your sacred ceremonies.
When you bring me your whole-offerings and your grain-offerings
I shall not accept them.
Spare me the sound of your songs;
I shall not listen to the strumming of your lutes.
Instead, let justice flow on like a river
And righteousness like a never-failing torrent.

You thrust aside all thought of the evil day
And hasten the reign of violence.
You loll on beds inlaid with ivory
And lounge on your couches;
You feast on lambs from the flock
And stall-fed calves:
You drink wine by the bowlful
And anoint yourselves with the richest of oils;
But at the ruin of Joseph you feel no grief.

Amos 5:21 – 6:6

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst to see right prevail:
They shall be satisfied.

Matthew 5:6

Take time to ponder that Word, and to pray

Almighty God, Creator of all, enlighten our minds and move our hearts with understanding of your will for this world and its peoples. We hear the challenge of your prophet in times long past. We hear the voice of your Son and ask the grace to follow his way in our lives. We see the distress of the suffering poor, these days in Haiti. We give you humble thanks for the courage and love of those who go to help. We see the destruction on the earth worked by greed and pride. Move us, o God, to a missionary faith that acts justly and seeks justice for the poor, in the Spirit of your Son.

Amen