

The First Call

The Granddaddy Meeting: 1910

Kenneth Scott Latourette

The following is from *A History of Christianity* by Kenneth Scott Latourette, pp. 1343-1345 (Harper & Brothers, 1953).

The most notable in the succession of the international, interdenominational assemblies was the World Missionary Conference, held in Edinburgh in 1910. It became a landmark in the history of the Ecumenical Movement, for it influenced profoundly some of the most important developments of the next forty or more years. In several ways it was in contrast with its predecessors and was an advance beyond them.

First, it was more strictly a delegated body, made up of official representatives of the missionary societies. Second, it was a deliberative body, seeking to formulate policy for the years ahead. While it possessed no legislative authority, it could suggest, and because it was composed of leaders of the various societies there was reason to hope that its recommendations would be followed by action. In the third place, as a preliminary to the deliberations prolonged and extensive studies were made of the several aspects of the missionary en-

terprise and in their preparation hundreds of correspondents were enlisted in many different parts of the world,

later, the International Missionary Council emerged. In the sixth place, the Edinburgh gathering also was in part responsible for the two organizations, the World Conference on Faith and Order and the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work, the two bodies which, after 1914, merged to form the World Council of Churches.

A seventh feature of major significance was the fashion in which "Edinburgh 1910" either brought to the fore or enlisted men who were to have an outstanding part in the growth of the Ecumenical Movement. John R. Mott was active in the preparations for the confer-

ence, presided at most of its sessions, and became the chairman of the Continuation Committee and then of the International Missionary Council. By deliberate choice, the Edinburgh conference confined its attention to missions to non-Christians and therefore did not in-

clude Protestant missions among the Roman Catholics in Latin America. As an eighth result of the gathering, some who believed that this huge area should be covered in cooperative fashion in 1913 had the Foreign Missions Conference of North America call a meeting from which emerged the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America, a body which was to have a notable history. ☉



John R. Mott

thus stimulating widespread thought. In the fourth place, the gathering was more comprehensive ecclesiastically than its predecessors. The latter had, in general, enlisted only Evangelicals. At Edinburgh several Anglo-Catholics were present and took part. Moreover, members of what later came to be called "the younger churches," namely, those founded by eighteenth and nineteenth century Protestant missions, while few, were prominent. Of first-class importance, in the fifth place, was the fact that provision was made for carrying forward the work of the gathering. A Continuation Committee was appointed. Through it conferences were held in 1912 and 1913 in various centres in Asia preparatory to more permanent cooperative bodies, a comprehensive scholarly journal, *The International Review of Missions*, was inaugurated, and, after 1914, as we are to see

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Latourette felt compelled by the Student Volunteer Movement. He went to China, got terribly sick (kerosene is not an effective cure for dysentery), came home with broken health and broken faith, revived, became, as a Yale professor, the foremost church and mission historian of all time.

