



Blogging from Tokyo 2010

ALLEN YEH

The most powerfully moving moment of the conference:

Stefan Gustavsson of Sweden gave a Macedonian call (“come over and help us”) lecture about how to evangelize secular Europeans, the “prodigal sons” of Christianity today. It was a good lecture, if a bit academic, but the organizer of the conference, Yong Cho, had a remarkable response. Tearfully, he called for the entire conference to spontaneously pray for Europe to regain its faith, and he invited all the European delegates to come up to the stage. In a remarkable turn, all the Two Thirds World Christians cried out on behalf of their brothers and sisters in Europe — in particular, two Koreans and two Africans (representing two of the strongest centers of Christianity) led the prayers. The Holy Spirit was moving; that was the most authentic and unforgettable part of the whole conference. I thought, if only the Edinburgh 1910 delegates could have seen this — what a difference a century makes! The Two Thirds World churches have come of age, while Europe has declined; who would have believed this a century ago? However, a Korean-American delegate said to me after that session, “What a sobering reminder to the Korean church that we should not rest on our laurels — I can already sense that we are going the way of Europe, so we should not become arrogant.” I think I, as an American, can also say the same thing of the U.S.

Biggest glaring gap:

Lack of any mention of social justice. This is surprising, considering that Ralph Winter was at the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Switzerland, where he signed the Lausanne Covenant. That Covenant explicitly reformed the bond between evangelism and social justice as equal partners in mission. This reparation was in response to the 20th century, so often dichotomized

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by schisms like the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy and the Creation-Evolution debate. Today, evangelicals have tried to return to a holistic 18th- and 19th-century evangelicalism similar to that of John Wesley, Charles Finney and William Wilberforce. I was just at the Urbana '09 missions conference last December, and one of the criticisms of that conference is that it seemed to be all about social justice but hardly any talk of evangelism. I would say the opposite was true of Tokyo 2010.

Biggest contribution of this conference:

In my previous blog, I had mentioned two of the three distinctive features of Tokyo 2010 as being the emphasis on unreached people groups, and the focus on discipleship as the theme. You may wonder how these go together, since unreached peoples seem to need conversion first and foremost. But it just goes to show that Ralph Winter was about depth, not just quick fixes, as one of the seminar speakers pointed out. Americans have too often been just about conversion, but real Christians need discipleship. It is interesting to compare Tokyo 2010 with Cape Town 2010, as these are the two most evangelical conferences of the four. Tokyo's contribution is to see mission as discipleship; Cape Town's contribution (I would guess based on past precedent) is to see mission as evangelism + social justice.

Second biggest contribution of this conference:

They had everyone fill out a Tokyo 2010 commitment form in the hope that every mission agency would adopt at least one unreached people group, to help complete the task of evangelizing every people group on earth. 🌐



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