

CONTINUING THE LEGACY OF EDINBURGH:

The Edinburgh 2010 Series from Regnum Books

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The year 2016 saw the completion of one of the most remarkable ventures in missiology in our day: the thirty-five volume “Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series,” published by Regnum Books of the Oxford Center for Mission Studies in Oxford, UK. Unfortunately, I am not completely sure that this series—published by a relatively small Evangelical publishing house—has gotten the “press” that it deserves in the missiological world. I know it has certainly not in the theological world at large. What I would like to offer in this article, therefore, is to trace the background of the series, sketch the series’ content, and offer a few reflections on both its importance and limitations. In this way I hope that this series, acclaimed by former CWME¹ director Jacques Matthey as “the best and widest missiological material available to scholars and missionaries,”² might be better known and more frequently used by scholars and practitioners as they engage in the thinking and practice of mission today.

Origins

1 CWME: Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

2 Jacques Matthey, “Review of the Series: In Humility and Hope,” *Transformation* 33, 4 (2016): 293.

As every missiologist knows, the World Mission Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 was the high water mark of what eminent mission historian Kenneth Scott Latourette named “The Great Century” of the church’s missionary activity.³ Four years later the optimism of the nineteenth century was completely undone by the Great War of 1914-1918, but the cry at Edinburgh 1910 was loud and clear: “the evangelization of the world in this generation.”⁴

Although the Edinburgh Conference was neither the first or the largest international conference on mission ever to be held, it was undoubtedly the best prepared.⁵ In the years leading up to the conference, eight study commissions were established, each of which produced a volume of its findings. The commissions covered a wide range of concern for missionaries. They reflected on the missionary mandate (Commission 1), local churches “on the mission field” (2), education and national life (3), non-Christian religions (4), preparation of missionaries (5), the “sending countries” (6), missions and governments (7), and cooperation and the promotion of unity (8). As the opening statement of the Regnum Series notes, each of the volumes produced by the commissions continue to be of “abiding value” to missiologists, even today.⁶

3 Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937-1945). Volumes 4, 5 and 6 cover the “Great Century,” which Latourette designates as 1800-1914.

4 John Raleigh Mott, *The Evangelization of the World in this Generation* (1900), https://archive.org/stream/evangelizationof00mottuoft/evangelizationof00mottuoft_djvu.txt.

5 David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross, “Introduction: The Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference: Its Eight Commissions and Their Continuing Significance,” in ed. David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross, *Edinburgh 1910: Mission Then and Now* (Oxford, Regnum Books, 2009), Volume 1 of the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, 4-5.

6 See the statement on the “Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series” that appears at the beginning of each of the thirty-five volumes in the series. For the listing of the commissions and a summary of their reports, see Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avtzi, and

As David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross recall, in the year 2000 the eminent churchman and theologian John Pobee of Ghana delivered a lecture at New College, Edinburgh in which he recalled the Edinburgh 1910 conference and challenged the Scottish Church to do something in terms of the conference's coming centennial in 2010. In response to this, the Scottish Towards 2010 Council was formed, a central activity of which was a series of conferences held at New College around each of the eight Edinburgh 1910 Commissions.⁷

Then, in 2005, the Council sponsored a gathering of twenty scholars from around the world and a "great diversity of backgrounds" that developed eight themes, eventually nine, that became the basic themes of the conference held in Edinburgh itself in June of 2010 at the University of Edinburgh to commemorate the conference of 1910. These nine themes in turn became the basis for the "Edinburgh 2010 Common Call," approved at the end of the 2010 conference, and eventually the basis for the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series.⁸ One has to understand the Regnum Edinburgh Series as reflections from a wide variety of perspectives—missiological, theological, denominational, geographical—on the nine basic themes of (1) foundations for mission, (2) mission and other faiths, (3) mission and postmodernities, (4) mission and power, (5) forms of missionary engagement, (6)

Roderick Hewett, ed., *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conceptions of Mission* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2016), Volume 35 of the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, 7-42.

⁷ Kerr and Ross, ed., *Mission Then and Now*, xii.

⁸ Kenneth R. Ross, "Review of the Series: Major Findings and Key Trends," *Transformation* 33, 4 (2016): 298. The "Edinburgh 2010 Common Call" is included in Kirsteen Kim, Wonsuk Ma, Tony Gray, and Knud Jørgensen, "One Christ—Many Witnesses: Marking the Completion of the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series," *Transformation* 33, 4 (2016): 268-69.

theological education and formation, (7) Christian communities in contemporary contexts, (8) mission and unity, and (9) mission spirituality.⁹

Underlying the entire Edinburgh 2010 Conference, its “Common Call,” and the large and originally unexpected number of volumes that the Regnum Series produced is—at least in the estimation of one of the conference’s and series’ key organizers, Kenneth R. Ross—is the late twentieth century “pneumatological turn of *Missio Dei* thinking.”¹⁰ Contemporary mission is rooted in the conviction of the radical missionary nature of the church resulting from Christians’ participation in Trinitarian life and mission through Baptism. As the Spirit, always active in the world, descended on Jesus at his Baptism in the Jordan and called him to mission to the pleasure of the Father, so the Spirit calls Christians as beloved sons and daughters to participate in and continue that same mission. As the often-quoted saying goes, the church does not have a mission; the mission has a church.¹¹ Despite, therefore, the wide variety of perspectives in the series, it is perhaps this basic theological conviction that unifies it.

The Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series

9 See Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson, ed., *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2011), Volume 3 of the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series. This volume contains the Proceedings of the Edinburgh 2010 Conference.

10 See Ross, “Review of the Series: Major Findings and Key Trends”: 299. The quotation is on 298.

11 While there are many attributions of this saying, it is not clear who actually coined it. See, however, my chapter in *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow*, “The Mission Has a Church: Reflections of a Roman Catholic Theologian,” 201-207, for an articulation of a pneumatological perspective on the *Missio Dei*.

There is no way, of course, to summarize every one of the thirty-five volumes in the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series. Such a task would be far beyond the limits of a journal article and would in fact be simply too tedious. What is possible, however, is to offer a “bird’s eye” view of the series, and focus on several of what may be considered the key volumes in it.

The first task of this section is greatly helped by an article, already cited, by the four editors of the series—Kirsteen Kim now of the Fuller Seminary School of Intercultural Studies, Wonsuk Ma, now of Oral Roberts University, Tony Gray of Words by Design in Oxfordshire, UK, and Knud Jørgensen of the Norwegian School of Theology in Oslo. The content of this article was originally given in September of 2015 at the Oxford Center for Mission Studies (home to Regnum Books) at the celebration marking the conclusion of the series (although several more volumes, in the works then, have appeared in the meantime).¹²

As the editors point out, most of the volumes in the series relate in some way or another to the nine study themes at Edinburgh 2010. Others focus on missiological thinking from various church perspectives: Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Pentecostal, Evangelical, and Protestant. Still other volumes reflect on themes that ran through all the study groups at Edinburgh 2010 (called “transversals”), and other current themes under discussion in mission today: Bible and Mission, women, reconciliation, and diakonia, for example. Some volumes reflect specific geographical or regional perspectives like Latin America, Eastern Europe, Korea, Africa, and, finally, two volumes are reflections on two

¹² See Kim, Ma, Gray, and Jørgensen, “One Christ—Many Witnesses”: 262-69.

other major events that commemorated the 1910 Edinburgh Conference: in Tokyo, Japan and in Cape Town, South Africa.¹³

The first volume appeared in 2009, and the series concluded, as noted at the beginning of this article, in 2016. At the 2015 celebration the editors reported that the then twenty-eight published volumes in the series ran to 9,582 pages, with 3,388,465 words, composed of 17,921,768 characters (not including spaces). The volumes then included 62,846 paragraphs running 333,141 lines. One set of books, laid end to end, would stretch two kilometers. As the editors say wryly, “Perhaps the theological issues raised by this use of resources may be addressed in the Care of Creation volume” that had not yet been published in 2015! I do not have the statistics for the next seven volumes to be published to round the series off at thirty-five, but these 2015 statistics still give a sense of the immensity of the project.

One of the important aspects of the Regnum series is that it is a truly international project, with contributors from all parts of the globe. The editors’ 2015 report show that contributors from Europe and North America still dominate the lists, with 218 coming from eighteen countries in Europe and 109 from North America (mostly the USA, with only three contributions from Canada). However, contributors from Asia come from nineteen countries and number 120, while sixteen countries from Africa are represented by 61 contributors. Australia and New Zealand are well represented with twenty-two contributions (although New Zealand only has two), but, sadly, Latin Americans—no doubt because few know English and prefer their native Spanish and Portuguese—number only twenty-four, ten of whom are from Brazil. The fact that relatively few Catholics had been

¹³ Kim Ma, Gray, and Jørgensen, “One Christ—Many Witnesses”: 263.

asked to make contributions might also contribute to this small number from Latin America.

One factor that might contribute to the series not being well known is that the volumes are quite expensive—most of them sell for around £31, and some are even more expensive. Nevertheless, as a recent newsletter from Regnum Books points out,¹⁴ when all thirty-five volumes are ordered they can be purchased for half-price, which would be a little more than £500. In addition, all the volumes may be downloaded for free at <http://www.ocms.ac.uk/regnum/list.php?cat=3>.¹⁵ As the advert reads: “We are happy if you buy the books, but we want to make sure that particularly students and teachers in the Global South have easy access to the series.” While I, for example, have access to a good number of the volumes as personal or library copies, I have availed myself of their online availability in writing this article. Also, although they will not substitute for the richness and diversity of the entire series, the same advert alerts readers that quite soon two compendium volumes will be published—either late in 2017 or early 2018—“with selected articles from around the world and from among the many topics dealt with” in the thirty-five volumes.

The Regnum Books Newsletter cited above lists all thirty-five volumes, and so readers who would like to see the list can access it there. Rather than repeat that list here, I will try to give an overview, including most of the volumes. The first three volumes focus

14 *Regnum Newsletter* No: 15, accessed at:

http://www.ocms.ac.uk/regnum/Regnum_Newsletter_Vol_15.pdf.

15 This address will take the reader directly to the list of books and the possibilities for downloads. At the moment (late September, 2017) not all the books are available for download, but they will be eventually, and most of them are already available.

on the two Edinburgh conferences—the first reflects on the eight study volumes that Edinburgh 1910 published, the second and third contain the proceedings of the Edinburgh 2010 conference. Volumes 9, 12, 15, 17, 20, and 22 are collections that reflect on Evangelical, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Orthodox understanding of mission, and how mission is approached within the Lausanne Movement. Volume 13 lays the foundations for mission today, and various themes and issues in contemporary missiology are dealt with in many of the volumes. Many of these correspond directly to the nine study themes of Edinburgh 2010, and other are related. For example, Volume 4 deals with holistic mission, Volume 6 focuses on globalization, Volumes 7 and 8 reflect on issues around interreligious dialogue and interfaith relations, Volume 14 contains essays on Mission Spirituality, Volume 19 unpacks the notion of “mission from the margins,” Volume 23 explores the phenomenon of migration and mission, Volume 27 spotlights education and formation for mission, Volume 29 engages thinking on mission and the care of creation, and Volume 33 reflects on the complex issues around mission and power. As I mentioned above, several volumes focus on mission in particular regions—for example Volume 26 on Korea, Volume 30 on Latin America, and Volume 34 on Central and Eastern Europe. Although Bible and Mission is a theme that runs throughout the volumes, one volume (Volume 18) focuses on the topic specifically. Volume 25 offers essays on “Unity for the Sake of Mission.”

The series’ final volume runs to over six hundred pages and is, to my mind, the series’ crowning achievement. Edited by Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum (director until 2018 of the CWME), Kyriaki Avtzi (of the CWME staff), and Roderick R. Hewitt (former CWME commissioner), it is entitled *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New*

Conceptions of Mission.¹⁶ The book is meant as a textbook of ecumenism and mission and is aptly suited for it. In a first section, Kenneth Ross takes the reader on a tour of every Mission Conference held under the auspices of the International Missionary Council (IMC)—the continuing body established after Edinburgh 1910—and then under the CWME when the IMC merged with the WCC at the New Delhi Assembly in 1961. Section 2 surveys “Core Themes across a Century,” including Evangelism, Worship, Culture, Other Faiths, Contextualization, and Environment to name only several of the sixteen themes treated. A final section offers the full text and an in-depth reflection on the CWME’s 2013 Mission Statement, *Together Towards Life: Mission in Changing Landscapes*. As far as I know, this is the most comprehensive reflection on the document available, and could also stand—at two hundred pages—as a volume on its own.¹⁷

In their report at the 2015 celebration of the series at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, the series editors claim that it is “the most wide-ranging series on mission and world Christianity in our century.”¹⁸ This is truly no idle boast.

Reflections

16 Ross, Keum, Avtzi, and Hewitt, ed. *Ecumenical Missiology* (cited above, note 6).

17 I should mention, however, a number of the *International Review of Mission* (104.2, [November, 2015]) that I edited together with Jooseop Keum entitled *Evangelii Gaudium and Ecumenism*. The volume reflects on Pope Francis’s Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* together with *Together Towards Life* and *The Cape Town Commitment*. At an papal audience in early 2016 this issue was presented personally to Pope Francis by CWME Moderator Metropolitan Geevarghese Coorilos.

18 Kim, Ma, Gray, and Jørgensen, “One Christ—Many Witnesses”: 263.

At the 2015 celebration of the end of the series at the OCMS, several of us who had participated in significant ways in the development of the series were asked to offer a “review” of the series from our particular perspectives. In his review that I have cited several times already in this article, Kenneth R. Ross notes the “special quality” that he senses in the entire series: the series is certainly academic and scholarly, but there is also a sense of community that is evident, combined with a sense of “faith, worship, spirituality, fellowship, and a shared passion” for the enterprise. In this way, says Ross, these qualities combined to embody “the mission which was the focus of its attention.”¹⁹ Such a combination of the academic and scholarly with the convictions of faith are, I believe, a real hallmark of mission studies in our time, and I would wish that this kind of engaged scholarship could be more evident in the field of theology in general. It is perhaps evidence of the Pentecostal/Charismatic turn in missionary activity that, Ross and his co-editor Wonsuk Ma point out in the preface of the volume on spirituality, has so strongly marked mission today.²⁰

Jacques Matthey’s reflections as a veteran of the ecumenical movement affirm the ecumenical advance of the series. “After serious clashes in the last century, many of us have been drawn by God’s Spirit to reconsider the Christian ‘other’ as brother and sister rather than as enemy in mission.”²¹ Matthey refers to (an unpublished) summary by Darrell Jackson that is quoted in Volume 24 by Mark Oxbrow, a summary that he thinks summarizes the present state of agreement among most Christian churches. Mission,

19 Ross, “Review of the Series: Major Findings and Key Trends”: 298.

20 Kenneth R. Ross and Wonsuk Ma, ed., *Mission Spirituality and Authentic Discipleship* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2013), Volume 14 in the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, 232-33. Quoted in Ross, “Review of the Series: Major Findings and Key Trends”: 298.

21 Matthey, “Review of the Series: In Humility and Hope”: 293.

writes Jackson/Oxbrow, centers today in the love of God and neighbor; it is richly Trinitarian and focuses on the dynamism of the Trinity's mission, the *missio Dei*; this then points to the essential missionary nature of the church, a great part of that mission is new concern for creation care and mission to the entire cosmos.²² Such agreement notwithstanding, Matthey points to the fact that, while *holistic* mission appears in many of the essays in the series, it does not always mean the same thing. And while the Trinitarian *missio Dei* approach is fairly well universally acknowledged, one senses "different convictions regarding soteriology," rooted in differing approaches to Christology and pneumatology.²³ In addition, he writes, "how to interpret the Bible and how to handle hermeneutical issues in contemporary cultures remain contentious issues on which much more dialogue is needed, in due recognition of the polycentric nature of Christianity."²⁴

Another ecumenical movement veteran, Rose Dowsett, asks and answers affirmatively the question "Has all this work been worthwhile?" First, she says, echoing others, the series "probably uniquely...gathers in one place a snapshot of understanding of mission today, from right across the world church spectrum."²⁵ Second, Dowsett emphasizes, the volumes are very representative of "voices from many different traditions, reflecting on the same topic."²⁶ You don't have to agree with everything, of course, but you

22 See Mark Oxbrow, "Christian Mission: Contemporary Theology and Practice with Reference to Children," in Bill Prevette, Keith J. White, Rosemary Velloso Ewell, and D. J. Konz, ed., *Theology, Mission, and Child: Global Perspectives* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2014), Volume 24 in the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, 54. Referred to in Matthey, "Review of the Series: In Humility and Hope": 294.

23 Matthey, "Review of the Series: In Humility and Hope": 294.

24 Matthey, "Review of the Series: In Humility and Hope": 294.

25 Rose Dowsett, "Review of the Series: Major Findings and Trends," *Transformation* 33, 4 (2016): 291.

26 Dowsett, "Review of the Series: Major Findings and Trends": 291.

can learn a great deal nevertheless. Third, it is the chance to encounter such differing opinions that makes the Edinburgh Centenary series unique; and such disparity of opinions appear in some volumes as existing within distinct traditions themselves. This is helpful: “Not all Orthodox are the same, not all Pentecostals, not all within the Anglican Community, and so on.”²⁷ Finally, she says, with some sorrow, the series “highlights the differing convictions we hold about what mission is and not.”²⁸ Dowsett tells of her offense and disturbance of being told by one delegate at Edinburgh 2010 that we should never engage in evangelism, that all faiths are the same, and that we should not witness to or preach Jesus Christ. Dowsett concludes on a rather pessimistic note. Asking whether the volumes in the series will “shape and change mission in the future,” she replies that she does not think so. The differences are “probably too wide to bridge easily.”²⁹ In many ways this is probably true, but her answer points nevertheless to the rich and frank conversation and debate that is present throughout the thirty-five volumes.

Bishop Graham Kings, Mission Theologian of the Anglican Communion, praises the series highly, noting the series’ international, ecumenical, and generous character in the felicitous phrase that “it takes the whole world to understand the whole gospel.”³⁰ He helpfully surveys the “changing landscapes” of contemporary mission, the context in which the series is written. Such landscapes are Digital—instant communication, Doctrinal—with missiological implications beyond missiology, Bloody—filled with martyrs, and

27 Dowsett, “Review of the Series: Major Findings and Trends”: 291.

28 Dowsett, “Review of the Series: Major Findings and Trends”: 291.

29 Dowsett, “Review of the Series: Major Findings and Trends”: 292.

30 Graham Kings, “Sent into Changing Landscapes,” *Transformation* 33, 4 (2016), 303.

Biographical—with new resources like the *Dictionary of African Biography* and the *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity*.

My own contribution to the various reviews of the series at the Oxford celebration³¹ lamented the fact that there were few Catholics involved in the writing of chapters in the various volumes—although the volume I edited on Catholic Mission (Volume 15) has all Catholic contributors (except for one, who is Presbyterian). As far as I know, only Robert Schreiter and I have edited or co-edited volumes in the series, which is too bad—Schreiter co-edited Volume 16 on reconciliation with Knud Jørgensen, and I edited Volume 15 on Catholic Mission and co-edited Volume 27 on Education and Formation with Teresa Chai, Nelson Jennings, Knud Jørgensen, and Dietrich Werner. I think such paucity of Catholic participation shows that Catholics are still not fully integrated into the ecumenical mission discussion, the fault of which I believe lies on both sides.

Conclusion

To repeat Rose Dowsett's question: Has all this work been worthwhile? To my mind there is no doubt. The series is a truly worthy vehicle to carry the legacy of Edinburgh. I only hope that the result of so much work will not be in vain—that in the coming years the Regnum Centenary Series will become more and more well known and the volumes read, reviewed, discussed, and cited by other missiologists in their own work. At the end of my review of the series at the Oxford celebration I quoted Rowan Williams's Foreword to

31 Stephen Bevans, "Review of the Series: A Roman Catholic Perspective," *Transformation* 33, 4 (2016): 300-302.

Volume 12 on Anglican Mission. I think it is worth quoting here as well as a fitting conclusion to this short history, sketch, and reflection on the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series. The church does not always look like it should, Williams concedes. But a lot is going on as it renews the world and the world community “in every imaginable respect.”

Williams refers to the particular volume that he is introducing, but I think his words could apply to the entire series: “our authors challenge us all to imagine a biblical Church, that, because it has all these things in the forefront of its mind and the depths of its heart, is patiently and steadily seeking to find ways of meeting, talking, even disagreeing, that look more like what God longs for, more like the profile of Christ’s Body.”³²

32 Rowan Williams, Foreword to *Life-Widening Mission: Global Perspectives from the Anglican Communion* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2012), Volume 12 in the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, ix, quoted in Bevans, “Review of the Series: A Roman Catholic Perspective”: 302.