

KLAUS KOSCHORKE

University of Munich

“Absolute Independence For Indian Christians” – The World Missionary Conference Edinburgh 1910 In The Debates Of The Protestant Christian Elite In Southern India¹

The Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in 1910 has been repeatedly described as the peak of the Protestant missionary movement of the 19th century, as well as the “birth hour” and starting point of the ecumenical movement of the 20th century. At the same time, it reacted in an unprecedented way to developments and debates in the emerging overseas churches, particularly in Asia and Africa, as I have tried to demonstrate on various occasions (Koschorke 2011; 2012; see also Stanley; EMW). It was the “awakening of great nations” which, in the analysis of the conference, posed a singular challenge and therefore required new forms of cooperation not only between the Euro-American *missions* but also between the *churches* of the Western world themselves. Through an intensive preparatory correspondence with both missionaries and local church leaders, the conference sought to explore the situation and the prevailing mood in the so called “mission fields” and then used the results as a basis for its discussions. At the same time, the impulses received from the churches overseas were taken up and returned to them in an intensified way. This can be seen, for example, from the Edinburgh Continuation Committee Conferences in Asia during the years 1912/1913, which resulted in the establishment first of National *Missionary* Councils, which were later turned into National *Christian* Councils. Issues such as the need for national (instead of denominational) forms of organization, the urgency of “indigenous leadership”, and a changed attitude towards non-Christian religions and local cul-

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tures were from then on topics on the agenda. Experiments to develop an “indigenous character” and a “national form” of Christianity, for example in the fields of church music, religious architecture, or the development of Christian ashrams, became more frequent. Quite differently from the Second Vatican Council fifty years later, the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference 1910 experienced not only an intensive reception and *post*-history in the churches of the continent. In addition, it also had an identifiable *pre*-history in the debates and controversies of Asian Christians, which can be described very precisely.

This essay will deal with the debates which the Edinburgh Conference triggered among Protestant Christians in Southern India. The main source used for this purpose is the journal *The Christian Patriot* – which has become subject of a major research project sponsored by the German Research Foundation (DFG) that has been settled at the University of Munich.² During the last quarter of the 19th century, Madras (now Chennai) became the center of a small but influential elite circle of South Indian Protestant Christians. This group consisted of lawyers, teachers, employees, journalists, and other socially high ranking and financially independent persons. They formed their own societies, such as the ‘Madras Native Christian Association’, founded in 1888, and established contacts with related organizations of Indian Christians in other parts of the country as well as overseas (for example in South Africa and Great Britain). They started various initiatives (such as the trans-denominational ‘National Church of India’ [NCI], established in Madras in 1886) and published their own journals and periodicals, which commented critically on the religious, social, and political development of the country.

The most important of these periodicals was *The Christian Patriot: A Journal of Social and Religious Progress* (CP). It was launched in 1890 and existed until 1929. The journal’s name signified its agenda: as Christians to be engaged in uplifting of the nation, in times of a growing Indian nationalism and increased charges of “denationalization” raised against the Indian Christians. At the same time, it intended to promote the “moral, social, intellectual and spiritual progress” of the country’s Christian community. In contrast to other journals of native Christians in Asia and Africa that initially had been established under a missionary umbrella before being taken over by local Christians, the *Christian Patriot* was started as a “purely indigenous venture” from its very beginnings (CP 10.01.1903)³. “Owned and conducted entirely by members of

² Title of the research project: “Indigenous Christian elites in Asia and Africa around 1900 and their journals and periodicals. Patterns of cognitive interactions and early forms of transregional networking”, carried out in cooperation with the University of Applied Sciences, Intercultural Theology, Hermannsburg (where the subproject on West Africa has been settled).

³ This and following references indicate a particular issue of the magazine, sometimes with the addition of the page number.

the Native Christian community the *Christian Patriot* will give expression to the sentiments and aspirations of Native Christians” (CP 01.02.1896). Thereby, the journal claimed to speak for the Indian Protestant community “as a whole”. The *Christian Patriot* criticized missionary paternalism (and racism), on the one hand, and, on the other hand, tendencies in parts of the “Indian National Congress” to equate the national cause with Hindu revivalism and to demand only political (and not also social) reforms. The journal circulated not only in India but also among the Indian diaspora (and missionary readers) in South Asia, in South Africa, and in Europe. In South Africa, the journal was quoted by Gandhi’s *Indian Opinion*. Among the American subscribers of the CP was, incidentally, also J.R. Mott, the *spiritus rector* and later organizer of the Edinburgh Conference.

The articles and comments on Edinburgh in the CP were based on a variety of sources. Apart from the statements of the conference organizers (CP 16.09.1901, 6), news in the missionary journals, circulars of the various churches represented in Edinburgh (and in India), such as Anglicans, Methodists, etc., you can also find reports on the conference in the Indian political press, such as the *Bombay Guardian* (CP 09.07.1910, 6) which are quoted at length. But fresh news reached the CP also directly from Great Britain and Edinburgh with detailed accounts provided by a conference participant on various sessions or the speeches of the Asian delegates. Letters to the editor commented regularly on the progress of the proceedings in the Scottish metropolis (see CP 16.07.1910, 5-6; 23.07.1910, 5; 6.8.1910, 5-6). Petitions and appeals from India to the participants of the Edinburgh Conference were printed in the CP, as well as the – partly highly controversial – debates in the readers’ letters columns in other Indian magazines. The reception given in India to returning conference participants was featured in much detail, and the Edinburgh continuation conferences in India, and particularly that in Madras, attracted special attention (CP 1.10.1910, 4; 19.11.1910, 4-5). Even when the CP reprinted news from other media word by word this was, nevertheless, often done with a specific emphasis and within a particular context of discourse. Repeatedly, it was only a few commenting words, which indicate the specific perspective of the Indian readers. Often this was derived from the missionary rhetoric but went far beyond the intentions of, at least, the conservative section of the *missionary body*. This becomes evident particularly when looking at the debates on the concept of a self-supporting, self-extending, and self-governing native church („Three Selves”). In India and elsewhere, this formula (which originally was a missionary concept) gradually developed into an emancipatory slogan of indigenous Christian elites.

In the following, I would like to briefly comment on some articles of the CP (in extracts) that deal with certain aspects of the Edinburgh Conference. A more comprehensive selection of articles from the CP, as “mouthpiece” of

the South Indian Christian intelligentsia, can be found in a documentary history (*Discourses*), which was recently published as one of the results of the research project mentioned above. It includes articles from indigenous Christian journals from India, South and West Africa and the Philippines.

1. High expectations: “This conference ... is destined to dwarf all other problems of the 20th century” (CP 15.01.1910, 3)⁴:

This Conference which will open next month in Edinburgh is destined to dwarf all other problems of the 20th Century. From the Christian point of view, the ferment of ideas in the world of human thought which has risen from the contact of the East with the West, and the national spirit which is awakening among the non-Christian people, have given the impulse to form this great World Missionary Conference. The completion of the mystical Body of the Lord Jesus Christ through the ingathering of nations, and the clergy understanding of the Son of man when sons of men have found themselves in Him will be the great aim of the coming Conference. The different branches of the Christian Church today are conscious of the obligation that rests on them to evangelize the world and the Conference sets this task before it. [...] A proper estimate of the work could only be arrived at, when workers from different spheres, and among different people meet together ... Until now there has not been apparently a convention of workers from *all* the mission fields throughout the world. The coming Conference therefore will be quite different from all [former] Missionary Conferences for, this promises to be a thoroughly representative one which will not leave one stone unturned to arrive at proper conclusions. [...]

With such subjects on the boards, and such eminent names as Presidents and Vice-Presidents we are sure that the forth-coming World Missionary Conference will make the twentieth century an epoch in the history of Missions, and a fresh starting point for various successful endeavours for the establishment of the kingdom of Christ throughout the world.

This text could have originated from a missionary source. More probably, however, it is an editorial comment by the CP on the conference’s program. In any case, the text contains various aspects which played an important role in the debates of the Protestant intelligentsia of Southern India (and in the CP columns). These include:

- The perception of Christianity as a global movement and the Edinburgh Conference as an ecumenical event with representatives from “all mission

⁴ Original title: *The World Missionary Conference*.

- fields” and “the various branches of the Christian Churches” (with a focus, however, on the Protestant world only);
- The “leaven” – theory: Christianity and Christian civilization are seen as a ferment that permeates the traditional societies of the “East” and sets in motion profound processes of transformation, even though the Christian communities in Asia still were small in many places;
 - The awakening “national spirit” among the colonized peoples of Asia as a core challenge faced by Christianity worldwide and especially by Christians in India;
 - The 20th century as a crucial “epoch in the history of missions”: In the debates among Indian Christians, it remained controversial whether Western missionaries or local Christians should be the main actors. Discussions also arose about the style and methods of interreligious encounter. The objective of a global evangelization as such, however, was not questioned in any way. In the CP’s presentation of the various Edinburgh commissions (not listed above), special reference has been made to the role of the “native church”: “That the work must be carried on by the self-governing, self-suffering and self-propagating *native Church*” (ibid. – on the topics of Commission II).

2. *Edinburgh as an universal gathering: “Every race represented”* **(CP 01.10.1910, 4)⁵:**

The first dramatic little scene to catch the eye at Edinburgh was the vision of a Chinese man, in flowing blue-gray robes and a black cap surmounted by a scarlet button, in conversation with a Hindu under a voluminous turban. As they strolled along together they met a full-blooded Negro pastor, and in a trice were in close and laughing talk. My first tea was in company with Dr. Julius Richter, as humorous as he is learned, and chief of German authorities on world-missions, together with Dr. Boehmer, a splendid Dutch editor and author from Furstenfelde. By the side of a Swiss one saw a Korean who rubbed shoulders with a Japanese principal. A brown-gowned member of a Hindu brotherhood strolled with a Singalee, while a Borman fraternized with a delegate from the Punjab. Racial difference was absolutely lost in a glowing sense of brotherhood of aim and spirit. And quite apart from the influence of the discussions in the conference, these tea-table talks and strolls under the evening sky have cemented international friendships and opened floodgates of sympathy.

Source: *The Christian Patriot* 01.10.1910 p. 4 ()

⁵ Original title: *Every Race Represented*.

This text (here unabridged) by an unnamed participant at the conference, probably a missionary, draws attention to the global representation of the meeting: Apart from Euro-American delegates, there were also (Afro-) Africans, Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, Indians from the north and the south of the country, as well as Singhalese (from Sri Lanka). “Racial difference was absolutely lost” – this statement is especially noteworthy in view of the fact that it was in stark contrast to the everyday experience of Indian Christians. But it was in accordance with the spirit of other Christian associations perceived as being progressive (such as the Asian YMCAs), and regional ecumenical conferences (like, for instance, the Tokyo Conference of the ‘World Students Christian Federation’ in 1907, which saw for the first time a majority of Asian delegates). From there a direct link led to the Edinburgh Conference.

3. Demand for “Absolute Independence for Indian Christians” – following the “example of Japan and Uganda” (CP 30.04.1910, 4)⁶:

In a rather lengthy article in the *Madras Mail* of Tuesday last, a sympathetic writer, evidently a Low-Church clergyman, after a few introductory paras upon the great importance of the coming Conference in June, dwells on the Indian section of the Anglican Communion in South India and pleads for its early autonomy. Even after a century’s existence, the Indian Church is kept in leading strings. This is the case with all mission, whether Anglican or not; though it is slightly improved in the latter. “It is true”, says the article, “that of late years there has been among the leading Missionary agencies a considerable advance in the way of giving Indian Christians more control over their own affairs, yet the reform movement is all too slow. Is it to be wondered at that young Indians of ability turn aside to the various secular professions where the powers they feel they possess will find a fuller scope for their exercise?” This is an important utterance as coming from an Anglo-Indian editorial. It is the spirit of true statesmanship that has uttered these pregnant words. “It is obviously unwise”, says the writer again, “to go on from year to year drifting along in the old way, for it leads to the drifting away of the flower of the Indian Christian youth from the Ministry of the Church”. Therefore a ‘bold step’ ought to be taken once for all by the Anglican Church, and independence granted to the Indian church, and the writer suggests that the coming conference, following the example of Japan and Uganda, should express in an authoritative manner its conviction that the “Indian section of an ancient Church, linked with the history of the past, and inheriting many great and precious privileges, can meet the needs of the present, can rise to the full measure of its opportunities, and, because it is a part of a living body, can change what is not essential

⁶ Original title: *The World Missionary Conference*.

to its being, and can live its own life free from the dwarfing influences of State control.” Bold words these! But fervently and devoutly as we pray for their early fulfilment, we cannot help expressing our fear that the reasons for the tardiness, if not actual unwillingness, to grant *absolute independence to Indian Christians of whatever denomination*, lie far deeper than appears on the surface. But of this we are certain: the question is pressing itself with greater force year after year; and if only the Indian Church took it up in right earnest, the solution might soon be within the range of possibility.

In India, the Edinburgh Conference raised manifold expectations, both among missionaries and local Christians. Among other documents, the CP published an ‘appeal’ by the “Calcutta Missionary Conference” (11.06.1910, 6). This text emphasized the necessity of intensified missionary cooperation and underlined the importance of the “indigenous church” of India, stressing in particular “the significance of its existence, the determination of its present strength and equipment, the absolute importance of its spiritual and intellectual training, and its present day potentiality... in the wider problem of India’s non-Christian millions”. What is remarkable about this document is both the stress laid on the crucial importance of the Indian “indigenous church” in a missionary document, and its publication (amongst other topics) in the CP, the “mouthpiece” of the Madras elite.

Much more extensive demands were made by other voices for which the CP served as platform. So, for example, in the document cited above (text 3), an Indian clergyman deplors the “excessively slow” pace of reform in the mission churches. He demands an “early autonomy” for the “Indian part of the Anglican Communion” in South India and, therefore, requests the Edinburgh Conference to make an ‘authoritative’ decision in favor of “the absolute independence for Indian Christians” – thereby following “the example of Japan and Uganda”.

The reference to Japan and Uganda is by no means coincidental. In the debates of the CP, the Christians and churches of both countries played an important role. A particularly close relationship existed with Japan which – after its victory over Russia in 1904/05 – quite generally was regarded as a shining example of Asian progress and attracted the attention of nationalists all over the continent. This applied also to Indian Christians. So, in 1906, “at the special request and invitation of the Indian YMCA”, a delegation of Japanese Christians visited India. During a celebrated lecture tour across the subcontinent, they discussed the issue of “What can (Christian) India learn from Japan?” They gave three answers: (1) “Indigenous leadership”; (2) Overcoming of missionary denominationalism; and (3) “Female education” (Koschorke 2015). Similarly, also Uganda and its Christians were often presented in the

CP as an “Object Lesson to Indian Christians”. The reason: “because the [Anglican] Church of Uganda has made gigantic strides towards self-government. The key to self-government is self-support and as the [Ugandan] Church is self-supporting, so practically it is self-governing” (CP 11.03.1905, 5). Thus Japan und Uganda were considered – rightly or wrongly – to be paradigms of a successful realization of the “Three-Selves-Principle”. At the same time, they were used to support analogous claims for Indian Christians (as in the case of the reader’s letter to the editor cited here). The CP itself, however, had reservations about the call for an *immediate* “absolute independence”. On other occasions the journal supports the position that, prior to any demand for religious independence, first the urgently needed “social union” among Indian Christians should be realized.

4. Asian delegates at the Edinburgh Conference: “Western friends have difficulties” (CP 10.09.1910, 7)⁷

The *L[ondon] M[issionary] Chronicle* reports the remarkable speech made by Mr. [Cheng] Ching-Yi at the World Missionary Conference. He spoke on seven subjects: (1) Why do we want a union? We want it (a) for the things that really help forward the growing movement of the self-support and self-Government of the Church. (b) Denominationalism has never entered the Chinese mind, nor are they interested in it. (c) The force of heathenism outside and the feebleness of the Church inside, necessitates a union. (2) From the Chinese point of view, there is nothing impossible about such a union, Western friends have difficulties. We should not allow such difficulties to influence us. (3) In China and for the Chinese, such a union is highly desirable, China loves unity and national life. (4) There is no time more important than the present. These are days of foundations for religion and politics. The future of China depends upon union. (5) The Church of Christ is universal, not only irrespective of denominations, but also irrespective of nationalities. “All one in Christ Jesus.” The world is, to use a Chinese expression, “one family”, and China is a member of that family. [...] In conclusion, let us go up, with our Divine Master, on the top of Mount Olives, and there obtain a wider, broader and larger view of the world’s need. Mr. Ching Yi was but 4 years old when he was baptized with his father and he is now only 30 years old. The above sentiments speak highly of his Christian growth.

The CP reports on the speech delivered by the Chinese delegate Cheng Ching-Yi (1881-1939) (see the extract cited above) by reprinting an article from the *London Missionary Intelligencer*. Cheng Ching-Yi was a 28-year-old

⁷ Original title: *Rev. Cheng Ching Yi’s Seven Minutes Speech on Chinese Union*.

pastor serving, at that time, at the Mi-Shih Hutung Church in Beijing. Later he became, inter alia, the Secretary General of the Chinese National Christian Council (1922-1933). He called for a union of all Chinese Christians („denominationalism has never entered the Chinese mind, nor are they interested in it”) and placed this program, despite all difficulties of understanding between Asians and the “friends from the West”, in a global context: “The Church of Christ is universal, not only irrespective of denominations, but also irrespective of nationalities”.

As it is well known, there were only 17 delegates from Asia present at Edinburgh. Eight came from India – V.S. Azariah, K.C. Chatterji, J.R. Chittambar, S. Ghose, Shivram Masoji, John Rangiah, R.K. Sorabji, three from China – C.Y.Cheng, T.E. Tong, S.T. Tang, one came from Korea – T.H. Yun, and four came from Japan – Y. Chiba, T. Harada, Y. Honda, K. Ibuka (Weber 130ff; Stanley, 91-131). It was a very limited number compared to the total number of about 1215 official participants. On the agenda of the conference, however, the Asian delegates were placed by the committee, J.R. Mott and J.H. Oldham, in a prominent position. Later, they gained leading positions in their respective home churches. For all the delight at the universal composition of the conference (cf. text 2 above), the CP assumes a critical tone in view of the limited number of Asian delegates. “It is a pity”, it states in an article of July 16, 1910, “that Indian Christians were not more fully represented in Edinburgh”. The “oriental speakers” from India, China and Japan, however, made “a deep impression on the Conference”. The article, finally, expresses its hope that the Conference will prove to be “an epoch in the rise and growth of many indigenous churches in Asia and Africa” (CP 16.7.1910, 6).

In the report of the session on June 16, the reader learned that the Japanese delegates spoke on “the strong feeling in Japan in favor of one ‘national’ Church”. “The same feeling” – as the same rapporteur stresses – “was growing in China”; and the Korean speaker stated that “Yun Chi Ho, and several missionaries followed, insist[ed] on the need of taking the Native Church in full consideration”. The article concludes: “The indigenous Church, whether in Asia or Africa, should have a correct idea as to what were [the] essentials” (and what were mere cultural variations) of the Christian faith (CP 16.7.1910, 6).

Among the Indian delegates specific reference was made, apart from V.S. Azariah (see below), to K.C. Chatterji (1839-1916) – not only because of his seniority and prominence, but also due to other events that took place during his visit in Great Britain. He received an honorary doctorate from the University of Edinburgh and preached in several churches following the Edinburgh Conference. In his letter to the editor, a reader from Hastings (U.K.) reported on the discussions that took place there. Chatterji, who came from the North Indian Lahore (today Pakistan), spoke quite critically in “private conversations”

about the ‘National Missionary Society’ that he had co-founded in 1905, as an initiative of Indian Christians. In his opinion, he is quoted, the central office in Madras exercised excessive control: “More authority and confidence should be placed in its local boards” (CP 06.08.1910, 6).

5. Controversies over V.S. Azariah

In retrospect, V.S. Azariah (1874-1945) certainly was the most important Indian representative at the Edinburgh Conference. Two years later, in 1912, this son of a poor village pastor was ordained bishop of the newly erected diocese of Dornakal. He was the first Indian bishop of the Anglican Church and became a leading figure in the emerging Asian ecumenical movement. He played a pivotal role in the Asian context, quite comparable to that of the first black African bishop in West Africa, S.A. Crowther, 50 years before. Thus he became “as great a gift to India as his African predecessor [sc. Crowther to Africa]”, as the CP wrote already in 1912, on the occasion of his elevation to the see of Dornakal (CP 07.09.1912, 5). His participation at the Edinburgh Conference, however, was anything but undisputed. From the perspective of some Indian critics, he was too young and inexperienced. The indigenous ‘Indian Missionary Society’ in Madras, initiated by him in 1903, “has yet to stand the test of time“, as one letter to the editor complained (see text 5a below). Other voices considered his appearance at the conference as far too “timid”. The author of the second text given below (see text 5b) emphasizes that Azariah should have more firmly expressed the concerns of the ‘National Missionary Society’ of India, which he had co-founded in 1905, thus bringing this Indian initiative to the attention of the representatives of global missionary Protestantism as gathered at the Edinburgh conference. In line with the motto “Indian men, Indian money, Indian leadership”, this society sought to place missionary responsibility as far as possible into the hands of Indian Christians. The writer of the letter concludes: “The Rev. V.S. Azariah missed a great opportunity” (see text 5b below). Above all, Azariah’s famous second speech at the Edinburgh Conference almost caused a scandal. It dealt with the “relationship between the European missionaries and the Indian workers”. Azariah called on the missionaries to practice equal “friendship” rather than patriarchal goodwill. His words – as an eyewitness reports – hit the assembly “‘like a bomb’, with half of the audience being delighted ‘and the other half very angry’”. The speech “caused such a sensation that an informal meeting was called to discuss what should be done. Some pressed for ‘something in the nature of a public protest’” (Stanley 127; full text: *World Missionary Conference* 306-315). Azariah’s speech received a critical response also in parts of

the Indian missionary press. In *The Harvest Field*, the most important voice of the missionary community in South India, a certain Mr. Newham complained about this “unfortunate address from an Indian minister” (cf. text 5c below). Thus, a glance at the Indian Christian press around 1910 reveals a wide range of different opinions in the country’s Christian community on Azariah’s performance at the Edinburgh conference.

It was, by the way, not primarily the problem of European racism, but rather the paternalism of many missionaries which set the tone of the debates in the CP. “It has been our painful experience” – as an editorial put it, referring to the relation between Indian and European Christians in general – “to note that so long as Native Christians allow themselves to be patronized by Europeans the utmost cordiality and sympathy exist between the two classes, but the moment the Native Christian claims equality he is snubbed and kept at a distance” (CP 20.02.1896, 4). Here are the abovementioned texts ([a] CP 15.01.1910, 4; [b] CP 23.07.1910, 5; [c] HF September 1910), 345):

5a) Azariah as a delegate:

“Why was a young person chosen to go to Edinburgh?”⁸

SIR, there is a rumour that a Native missionary of the Indian Missionary Society [V.S. Azariah] is to go as a delegate to the great Missionary Conference to be held this June at Edinburgh. This is surprising, that a raw young clergyman should be selected in preference to the other more experienced and much abler clergymen in India. There is the Rev. J. Lazarus of Madras, with 44 years’ service in two Missions, a distinguished scholar and an authority of the Indian Missions, and there is Rev. Mr. D. Anantham of the Telugu Missions who is highly respected and who has put in about 35 years’ experience in the Mission field, and there is Archdeacon Chandy of Travancore, a well known dignitary of the Malayalam Church. In Tinnevely there are Rev. Mr. P.G. Simeon of the C[hurch] M[issionary] S[ociety] and Canon Gnanakan of the S.P.G. and a few others who are much abler than the delegate in question. Among the laymen there are many such as Mr. J.P. Cotelingam, M.A., the President of the South Indian Presbyterian Church and Mr. E.S. Hensman, an Honoured Member of the C.M.S. Committee, who have greater experiences than the one in question. These are the men who could speak with authority and who could be more helpful to the Conference by their counsel and advice. Without selecting such men it is simply astonishing to send a young man of a newly formed Missionary Society who has managed to get the favour of certain people. The Indian Missionary Society is still in its infancy and has yet to stand the test of time. People are beginning to have divided opinions about it. [...]. Palamcottah, 6th January, 1910. A. Layman.

⁸ Original title: *The Edinburgh Missionary Conference*.

5b) Disappointment: “The Rev. V.S. Azariah missed a great opportunity”⁹

As far as I can learn from the reports of the Edinburgh Conference, which unfortunately are necessarily not verbatim, but only summaries of speeches, the Rev. V.S. Azariah missed a great opportunity. Perhaps he was shy of speaking of the National Missionary Society, for which I understand he has done so much; but if he had risen above such feelings, however natural, and in a fitting way told of what that new organisation has already accomplished in its brief infancy and given some really statesmanlike suggestions as to how such independent efforts toward united national efforts might be helped and facilitated, he would have struck a note which would have called forth generous response and raised the hopes of many of India’s best friends, who are longing to see greater fruit in the shape of such indigenous effort as he, amongst others, is endeavouring to foster. I hope that I am not doing him injustice, for, as said above, my information is scrappy; but of this, I am sure, that if any brave words of the kind indicated above had been uttered they would have secured prominent notice in the public papers. Thousands beside myself have doubtless largely looked to see what the Indian, Chinese and Japanese delegates had to say.

After all, one must remember that the spirit of nationalism is new in China as well as in India and has to combat immense difficulties from the enormous extent of the two great countries and from the varieties of languages in the different provinces and perhaps also from differences of temperament and ideals in North as compared with South, or East as compared with West. These differences and obstacles seem to be greater in India than in China. One must have patience. It is not words but acts which are wanted. Time and freer intercourse between distant parts of the two countries are required. Meanwhile let us rejoice in the new spirit of heroic independent effort which is arising and which is typified in President Ibuka of Japan, Rev. Cheng Ching Yi of China and, let us hope also, in Mr. Azariah of India, and perhaps still more in other workers behind the scenes, whom circumstances as yet have not brought so prominently forward.

5c) A missionary criticism: “One unfortunate address from an Indian minister”¹⁰

[...] There was one unfortunate address from an Indian minister [V.S. Azariah], which, in regard to the impression produced, was most unfair. Facts regarding the unbrotherliness of missionaries towards Indian Christians were adduced without any reference to those circumstances, which all on the field know might considerably modify the meaning of the facts [...]

Source: *The Harvest Field* 30 (September 1910), p. 345 (original title: “The World Missionary Conference”, by H.H. Newham, pp. 336-345)

⁹ Original title: *Our Foreign Letter*.

¹⁰ Original title: *The World Missionary Conference*, by H.H. Newham.

6. *The Indian Continuation Conference in Madras: A call for “complete equality as to status and responsibility” (CP 30.11.1912, 5)*¹¹

The Mott Missionary Conference [Continuation Committee Conference] which took place in Madras last week [November 18–20, 1912], was in several respects a unique gathering. I desire to say a few words regarding the part of the Indian representatives took in it. Of the 76 delegates (excluding a few visitors) 19, or one fourth were Indian Christians, a larger proportion than has ever sat in any former Missionary Conference in India. The personnel included such well known men as Messrs. K.T. Paul and E.S. Hensman of the National Missionary Society; Dr. [J.] Lazarus, Editor, *Christian Patriot*; Messrs. Paul Appaswami and M. Devadoss of the Madras Bar; Mr. John Mathai, representing the Y.M.C.A.; experienced educationalists like Mr. J.P. Cotelingam and Mr. P.J. Devasahayam; Bishop-designate Rev. V.S. Azariah; Pastor W.D. Clarke, Dr. T. Narayanaswami and others. The Mar Thoma Syrian Church sent delegates for the first time to a [Protestant] Missionary Conference, the Metropolitan himself being present. [...] Under the Chairmanship of Dr. [J.R.] Mott, no distinction was made between Indians and Europeans in according the privileges on the floor. [...]

On two subjects at least, what the Indian delegates brought to the Conference was a distinct asset. One was in connection with the subject of Co-operation and Union work. [...] Dr. Lazarus well remarked that our denominational affiliations were mere accidents of birth, and in nine cases out of ten were not held with any firm conviction. Mr. K.T. Paul pleaded for more conferences on unity, and urged to keep as our goal a National Church.

Another subject on which the Indian Christians stood practically as a unit, was that of the value of higher education as an evangelistic agency. The proposition was advanced from high quarters that the Missions should concentrate on the mass movements, and place less emphasis on the high schools and colleges. The Christians who spoke, emphatically dissented from this view, and gave their testimony to the great importance of higher education as a Missionary agency. Indeed they could hardly do otherwise, when we consider that so many of them are the fruits of such schools. It is a cause of satisfaction that Indian Christians support this view. [...]

Nothing was more pleasing to me than to be able to vote for the Resolution presented by Rev. V.S. Azariah, that the time had come when the Indians should be admitted to positions of complete equality as to status and responsibility with Europeans in the Councils of the churches and the Missions, if they showed a capacity for it. I was glad that the Indian brethren had an opportunity of expressing themselves freely on this subject, and to clearly and fully state their grievances. I am in deep sympathy with them, and pray that the day may speedily come when this vexed question will be settled, and the highest aspirations of Indians shall be satisfied. [...]

¹¹ Original title: *Indian Christians at the Mott Conference*, by Rev. Dr. J.H. Wyckoff, Vellore.

The Edinburgh Conference became known in India through the press, through the reports from returnees, and through a range of local events at which the “message“ of the Edinburgh Conference was discussed in its relevance for the Indian context. In its edition from November 19, 1910, the CP reports on such an event: “There was a large attendance of Europeans and Indian Christians representing the various Churches in Madras”. The Rev. C.H. Monahan, M.A. from Tiruvallur, “one of the delegates present at Edinburgh”, spoke, inter alia, on “the great importance of the raising of Native leaders”. This topic had previously been addressed by the World Mission Conference (CP 19.11.1910, 4). In another article on the decisions made by the Edinburgh Conference reference is made to the word ‘Native‘. This word was no longer considered opportune, due to its “offensive application” (CP 15.10.1910, 6).

In the long run, the Edinburgh continuation conferences, which took place in various Asian countries in 1912/13, were of major importance. They led first to the formation of National *Missionary* Councils, later to be transformed into National *Christian* Councils, and thus established structures of self-organization among the Asian churches which, in more developed forms, continue to exist till today. In the article quoted above (text 6), the CP reports on the Madras-Conference held from 18.-20.11.1912. Especially remarkable here is the first-time participation of the Saint Thomas Christians (in the form of the Mar Thoma Church) at such a meeting. Among the delegates was J. Lazarus, editor of the CP. V.S. Azariah’s draft of a resolution that demanded the “complete equality as to status and responsibility with Europeans in the Councils of the churches and the Missions” was adopted at this meeting. The resolution of the Madras Conference was: “[...] the time has come for Churches and Missions to make a real and unmistakable advance, by placing Indians on a footing of complete equality, in status and responsibility, with Europeans [...]”(*The Continuation* 31)¹². Further studies of the Indian National Christian Council as an emancipatory movement could be consulted, some published by the outspoken mission critical authors (e.g. Baago).

ABSTRACT

The high expectations expressed in the missionary press for the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh frequently determine also the discussions of South Indian protestant Christians, which are reflected in their journal, “The Christian Pa-

¹² (in: *The Continuation Committee Conferences in Asia 1912-1913*, New York 1913, 31). – On the Indian National Christian Council as an emancipatory movement (originating from the Asian Continuation Committee Conferences), see the study of the otherwise outspoken mission critical author K. Baago, *A History of the National Christian Council of India 1914-1964*, Nagpur 1965.

triot” (Madras 1890ff). Edinburgh is perceived here as a “universal” event, in which “all branches” of (protestant) Christianity are represented and racial barriers are “absolutely lost.” At the same time, further expectations are directed at the conference which go well beyond the agenda of conservative missionaries. These include the demand for the swift granting of “absolute independence for Indian Christians.” In addition, the selection and role of Indian representatives at the Edinburgh Conference are discussed with much controversy.

Keywords: World Missionary Conference Edinburgh 1910; Indian Christians elites; Indigenous Christian Press; Emancipatory movements; Church independency; National Church Movement

Słowa kluczowe: Światowy Kongres Misyjny; Edinburgh 1910; chrześcijańskie elity Indii; chrześcijańska prasa rodzima; ruchy emancypacyjne; niezależność kościelna; kościelny ruch narodowy

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- CP – “The Christian Patriot: A Journal of Social and Religious Progress” (1890-1929). [The leading organ of the Christian community in India, Burma, Ceylon, Straits and South Africa, see <<https://pl.scribd.com/document/180058767/C>>, p. C 72, accessed August 2016]
- HF – “The Harvest Field” [Wesleyan Mission Press]

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KLAUS KOSCHORKE PROF., born 1948. Studied Protestant Theology and other subjects in Berlin, Edinburgh, Tübingen and Heidelberg. In the years 1993-2013 was Professor and Head of the Institute of Church History / Chair: “Early and Global History of Christianity” at the University of Munich. His recent guest professorships and academic teaching include China (Shanghai 2012), Myanmar (2011), Sri Lanka (regularly), Korea, Singapore, East Africa (Ethiopia/ Uganda 2014), United States (Fall 2014), South Africa (Pretoria – Spring 2015). In March 2014 appointed as Permanent Visiting Professor at Basel University (CH) [from the website <http://www.en.evtheol.uni-muenchen.de/professors/koschorke/index.html>, accessed August 2016].