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Editorial

"MONTREAL, 1963"

IN JULY of this year the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order is to be held at McGill University, Montreal. This conference, successor to the notable gatherings at Lausanne (1927), Edinburgh (1937), and Lund (1952), will be the first major event of the modern ecumenical movement to take place in Canada.

The program of the conference will be based on the work done over the past decade by a number of theological commissions in Europe, North America, and Asia, set up by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches to study a wide variety of ecclesiological problems: "Christ and the Church," "Tradition and Traditions," "Worship," "Institutionalism." Five comprehensive themes, loosely grouped under the general heading of "Christ and his Church," will be studied by as many "sections" of the conference and discussed in plenary sessions. Specific questions to be investigated within this framework range from "the ecclesiological implications of the discrepancy between apparent agreement in christological doctrine and the residual forces of disunity among the churches" to "the effects on Christian unity of such things as conventional moralities, congregational rivalries, political pressures and population mobility." Considerable attention will be given to such practical issues as the function of councils of churches, the place of the ordained ministry in the total ministry of the Church, and the relation between intercommunion and unity.

The Montreal Conference is to be essentially a study conference, and its members will be protected from any excessive pressure to produce reports and resolutions at the expense of sustained and penetrating study. (Delegates to some earlier conferences have ruefully remarked that they were kept too busy formulating statements to think of anything worth stating, and their complaint has evidently been heeded by the W.C.C. Faith and Order Department.) Consequently, while the Conference may well arrive at some important conclusions and will be quite free to publish its findings for consideration by the churches, its chief value will presumably lie in two areas: (a) the experience of concentrated ecumenical study enjoyed by delegates, observers, advisers, and visitors; (b) the direction given to the ongoing process of Faith and Order studies.

The Canadian churches will certainly get more than their fair share of ecumenical experience out of the Montreal Conference. For one thing, in addition to a full slate of official delegates, a special group of Canadian visitors will be invited to the Conference, and many other Canadians will

be involved as interpreters, translators, stewards, etc. Furthermore, some effort will be made to inform the Christian public of Montreal and the Canadian radio and television audience of what is going on. Inevitably, a good deal of ecumenical information will be fed into our Canadian churches and at least a little fresh ecumenical interest aroused among their members.

Whether Canadian Christians will become more deeply and widely involved in the ongoing study process remains to be seen. Canadian theologians are now active in the W.C.C. Faith and Order Commission, in two of its study commissions, and in two Faith and Order agencies of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., as well as in the Canadian Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission and in local groups in Halifax, Montreal, and other centres, and no doubt most of these activities will continue after "Montreal, 1963." But if the Montreal Conference is really to advance Faith and Order studies in this country, theologians, pastors, and laypeople who have hitherto remained more or less aloof from the ecumenical "dialogue" will have to commit themselves to disciplined study of the great issues of the ecumenical movement.

It would be little less than tragic if the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order were to come and go without producing tangible results in the country which had played host to it. Fortunately, all that is needed for a real step forward is a combination of sufficient resources for study, adequate leadership, and a willingness to set to work. Our current Faith and Order studies are producing enough material to keep any study group going for a long time. During the past thirty-five years the Faith and Order movement has created a good supply of experienced ecumenists who are able and willing to help others take their first steps along the same road. "Montreal, 1963" offers an unprecedented opportunity to get our Canadian churchpeople interested and working. If the Canadian churches as a whole are really concerned about the issues of Christian unity and disunity, now is a good time for them to show it.

E.R.F.

Annual Meeting

THE ANNUAL MEETING of the *Canadian Journal of Theology* will be held at Waterloo Lutheran University, Waterloo, Ontario, on Wednesday, May 15, 1963, at 2 p.m. All subscribers and friends are welcome.

NORMAN E. WAGNER
Secretary