

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

THE JERUSALEM MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL.

BY THE REV. W. WILSON CASH, D.S.O., Secretary of
the Church Missionary Society.

ABOUT thirty years ago the Student Volunteer Missionary Movement adopted as its slogan "The Evangelization of the world in this generation." These words had a wide interpretation and they were criticized in some quarters, but they served the purpose of fixing the attention of the Church upon the great unfinished task before it. By 1910 the situation abroad had so developed that it was decided to call a United Conference in Edinburgh. Out of this remarkable gathering there sprang a Continuation Committee and a group of missionary statesmen, the most prominent of whom was Mr. J. H. Oldham. Four years later when war broke out it looked as though missionary co-operation was permanently shattered, but the events of those terrible years of conflict only showed more clearly how God had led the Church to draw together in co-operation in 1910 in preparation for the war days when missionary work was in danger of collapse in many lands.

After the war it was necessary to review the whole situation, and if possible to re-establish those links of fellowship with German and other continental societies that had been snapped from 1914 to 1918.

In 1920 the old Continuation Committee came to an end and in its place was set up the International Missionary Council. A survey of the previous ten difficult years showed some notable achievements by this co-operative body, the most outstanding of which was the securing of liberty of conscience in all mandated territories. The post-war conditions both in the political and the religious spheres made co-operation even more essential than before. Through the League of Nations the world was organizing itself internationally. Serious problems affecting missionary work were from time to time under discussion at Geneva, and if the Church was to make any appeal it must be in a position to speak unitedly.

For six years the newly formed International Missionary Council perfected its organization, studied the changing conditions and quietly laid its plans for the gatherings at Jerusalem. In 1926 the Committee of the Council met at Rattvik in Sweden and there, after an exhaustive inquiry, decided to call the Council together in 1928. When the Conference met in 1910 in Edinburgh the great majority of the delegates were from what are called the sending countries, and representatives of eastern lands were very few indeed. In the intervening years remarkable changes had taken place in the growth of young Churches in Asia and Africa. At Rattvik it was at once found to be impossible to hold a conference in any sense similar to Edinburgh. To do so would have been now a retrograde step. Churches in China, Japan, India and elsewhere were to a large extent

self-governing and self-supporting bodies. This new situation demanded not only recognition by the Committee but a bold and courageous policy that would bring all the younger Churches within the Council's deliberations. It was therefore decided to double the size of the Council, thus enlarging the membership to about two hundred. It was further agreed that half of the delegates should be members of the young Churches, nationals from Eastern lands, and that they should be invited to Jerusalem upon a basis of equality with their Western brethren.

The ensuing two years, 1926-28, were spent in the detailed planning of the Council. The National Christian Councils in Asia and Africa were asked to send delegates. A large fund was raised, chiefly by Dr. Mott, to enable the young Churches to send their representatives. The German Hospice on the Mount of Olives was placed at the disposal of the Council for the meetings, and huts and tents were erected as sleeping quarters. In the meantime the programme was being minutely considered both in America and England. The subjects for discussion had to be kept within reasonable bounds, otherwise the value of the Council would have been dissipated by a diffuse discussion of many matters. It was finally decided to restrict the work to a few outstanding subjects of world-wide importance. The principal ones were the Christian life and message in relation to non-Christian systems, religious education, the relation between the younger and the older Churches, the Christian mission in the light of race conflict, Christianity and the growth of industrialism in Asia and Africa, and the Christian mission in relation to rural problems.

In preparation for the consideration of these subjects papers were written by a number of experts and circulated to delegates. The late Canon Gairdner wrote a treatise of outstanding value on Islam, and among other writers there were Dr. Rufus Jones of America, Mr. Oldham, Mr. John Hope, a member of the negro race in America, Dr. Jesse Jones and Dr. Mott. Before the first session opened every delegate had had the opportunity of reading these carefully written papers. The meetings thus commenced with much preliminary preparation having been done.

Over fifty nations were represented at Jerusalem and all the main branches of the Christian Church, with of course the exception of the Church of Rome, which always refuses to take any part in such gatherings. The British Dominions of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa all sent delegates. There were Germans and French, Swedes and Dutch, British and Belgians, as well as members of other European countries. Asia was represented by Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Burmese, Indians and others. Africa sent Bishop Howells, a native of Nigeria. From Uganda came Mr. Sirwano Kulubia. Egypt and the Sudan both sent delegates. and in this gathering all parts of Africa met probably for the first time. The Anglican Church formed a powerful group, headed by that great leader in the missionary cause, the Bishop of Salisbury. The Bishops of Manchester, Uganda, Persia, Egypt and Palestine were present.

All the leading missionary societies of the West sent representatives, and in addition to these there were co-opted on to the Conference such experts as Mr. H. A. Grimshaw, Chief of the native labour section of the International Labour Office, Geneva; Dr. Hocking of Harvard University; Dr. Jesse Jones of the Phelps Stokes Commission; Mr. R. H. Tawney of London University; Dr. Atkinson, the secretary general of the Continuation Committee of the Stockholm Conference of 1925, and Dr. Ispir, professor of Bucharest University.

It is difficult to single out personalities in so unique a gathering of world leaders, but perhaps the most remarkable group was that composed of women of the Orient. Their picturesque costumes immediately attracted attention, but their contribution in discussions was one of the big fruits of the Conference. They spoke in fluent English, and they always spoke to the point and never failed to command the close attention of all present.

In preparing for the Conference the language problem had to be considered, and arrangements had been made for the translation of speeches, but throughout the meetings hardly any interpretation was necessary. Every one seemed to speak English with remarkable ease. Dr. Mott was the Chairman throughout the Conference, and in his opening address he reminded us of God's purposes for the world. "We represent," he said, "not so much Churches or Societies as great fields of work." Dr. Mott has been a prophet among all the Churches for more than a generation. He has led the missionary cause in vision, plans and policy for many years. It fell to his lot to chair the Edinburgh Conference in 1910, and it was out of a rich experience that he called upon us to keep our faces Godward. He knew the difficulties of so mixed a gathering and the perplexities and the problems before us, and he rightly placed in the forefront of all the spiritual resources available through prayer. Delegates were asked to keep one hour free, from 9-10 every morning, for personal and private prayer. The spacious grounds on Olivet were ideal for meditation, and every day we scattered over its slopes after breakfast with Bibles tucked under our arms, and in surroundings so sacred we prayed and waited upon God for guidance and help. Many delegates attended one or other of the devotional meetings arranged before breakfast, and again there was no desire to talk or to give addresses. Every one felt the need of prayer and in a wonderful way the spirit of prayer was poured out upon us. Every day half-way through the sessions all work was suspended and we gave ourselves to prayer. These meetings were generally thrown open and each prayed in his own language. It is no exaggeration to say that the Conference was prayed through innumerable difficulties, until Christ's presence was so manifest that all felt a spiritual unity that only comes through the illuminating power of the Spirit.

Dr. Speer opened the discussion on the Christian message, and he struck the right note when he spoke of Christ as the sufficient, absolute and final Saviour of the world. "To-day," he said, "there is a great body of conviction behind this statement," and one had

only to look round the assembled people to realize that through missionary work there had come to the Church a new evidence for Christianity, an evidence born of the spiritual experience of Christ's saving power in the lives of men all over the world.

For two days the message was considered. Many points of view were put forward more or less related to the background investigations on the non-Christian systems. One startling fact emerged that while Christian missions are making inroads into these systems, yet secularism from the West is making a far greater impression upon the East than the combined forces of the Church. The message therefore had to be related not only to these other religions but also to a changed condition in Asia and many parts of Africa. Materialism in life combined with agnosticism in faith is regarded by many, who formerly were Buddhists, Moslems and Hindus, as the essence of civilization to-day and the necessary path to national progress.

The missionary therefore in considering his message is increasingly concerned with a secular way of life, and this is becoming a greater obstacle to Christianity than the old faiths once so stoutly defended. Thus in Turkey, for example, the battleground has completely shifted from the old orthodox Islam to a new mentality through which the Turk regards all religion as the superstitions of derelict faiths, of no concern to the State and with little value for modern requirements. The attack upon Christianity is therefore not based upon the denial of a divine revelation, but upon the way of life the Christian faith expounds. Eastern people see in Christian character not the spirit of Christ but a Western domination which seeks an overlordship in the rest of the world. Delegates from China and India therefore emphasized the life of love and the reproduction of a Christ-like character as the first requisite in the message. The Christian life cannot be divorced from the message, and the wave of secularism can only be met by a new devotion to the claims of Christ upon us. It was both an illuminating and humiliating experience to see the West through the eyes of some of the best thinkers of the East. There is a paganism of the Western world which has to be faced if the East is to find in Christ the highest and the best that life can offer. The speakers as they followed one another brought home to us anew that the missionary task is world-wide, and includes our own countries as well as those on the other side of the world. This secularism so dominant at present does not fill the whole picture. There is a heart-hunger for God in many lands, and we were reminded of this by an Indian who said what we need in India is not only "Christ of the Indian Road" but Christ of the Indian heart. What in religion are men searching for in these days of change and transition? There is no doubt, as many Asiatic delegates affirmed, that the East is looking for a religion that brings with it spiritual experience and makes God not a theory for discussion but a reality in facing the complex life of to-day. It was a Chinese who said, "Christianity when lived can produce all the values of other faiths. China is seeking for a reality upon which it can anchor its individual and social life, and this we find in Christ." One speaker

quoted Mr. Ghandi as saying, "Christians should live more like Christ," and asked what difference it would make if Mr. Ghandi became a Christian. This was answered by Dr. Stanley Jones, who said, "If Ghandi became a Christian it would meet his deepest longings and his search for God. In Christ he would combine certainty with sympathy." Later on the Bishop of Manchester referred to the same question and said, "If Ghandi became a Christian he would have *found* God and peace, and his Christianity would affect his whole social policy." These contributions to the discussion led us deep into the heart of our message, and in the findings which were adopted we read, "Our message is Jesus Christ. He is the revelation of what God is and of what man through Him may become. In Him we come face to face with the ultimate reality of the universe; He makes known to us God as our Father, perfect and infinite in love and righteousness; for in Him we find God incarnate, the final yet ever unfolding revelation of the God in whom we live and move and have our being."

When some one asked, "What has Christianity done for the East?" it fell to the lot of the women of the Orient to answer the question. They faced it from the standpoint of the practical application of our faith to the emancipation of women. A Chinese woman said Confucius argued that the ignorance of woman is her virtue. Christ has brought to us equality of the sexes with one moral standard for both. A Japanese told us that "neither Shintoism nor Buddhism nor Confucianism ever gave woman a place in life. Only Christianity has done this." A young Korean woman made a great impression upon the delegates. She lifted the discussion up to the place of Christ in womanhood. Her words are worth noting: "It was only as the message and life of Christ was brought to Korea that the women of Korea found that life had a value."

For two days these workers from many lands looked out upon the world and sought to gain a new vision of the faith "once delivered to the Saints." It was no wonder therefore that the debate was wound up upon the note of a universal faith. The last speaker expressed the conviction of the whole Conference when he said Christianity is either truth or nothing. It is either for all or nothing at all. The uniqueness of Christ was again emphasized. "Only a fulcrum outside the world can lift the world," and this fulcrum is Christ, calling to us all for a new loyalty to Him and for a more heroic interpretation of the Gospel.

With all the inspiration of our message brought home to us afresh through the manifest presence of Christ in our midst, we turned the following day to consider the relation between the younger and the older Churches. These Churches are the visible expression of a message that has won a place in many nations, and a right understanding of the problem must mean more effective service for the Kingdom of God. A band of pioneer missionaries in the first instance is sent out say from England. Funds are supplied from home and in course of time converts are formed into a new Church. They multiply and from their number men are ordained. They are taught

to give to their Church, and the next stage comes when money is supplied both from the young Church and from home also. The period of infancy in a native Church passes and these Christians grow into a vigorous youth. The old tutelage has gone. No longer can the missionary dominate the situation. The Church in the mission-field asks for self-control, for equality in council and for freedom in its growth and development. What has the home Church to say about it? Can we deny to these young communities that liberty that we in the English Church wrested from Rome at such cost? What is the apostolic principle underlying this problem? We met in Jerusalem from both East and West and we faced these issues together. The new nationalism to-day coloured the outlook and policy of delegates from more than one country. A national form of Christianity occupied a much bigger place in their thinking than any policy for the Church universal.

Where China or India fear politically the strong hand of England, there in much the same way the Church fears an ecclesiastical control over their religious life. The demand put forward was for an indigenous Church. A Chinese delegate defined this by saying, "By indigenous we mean a Church congenial to Chinese life and culture. We seek for the co-operation of missions in attaining this, but a mission can only be regarded as a temporary organization. The relation should now be between the Church at home and the Church in the field. The missionary may have a permanent place in China, but if so it must be a place under the control of the Chinese Church." From Japan we were reminded that this demand for independence did not mean that there was any anti-foreign or anti-missionary feeling.

Great stress was placed upon the need of a trained native leadership, and again and again missionary societies were urged to bend all their energies to this end. It was an Indian who gave balance to the discussion by reminding us that a native Church is a part of the Body of Christ, and the emphasis should therefore be upon interdependence rather than independence. Instances were given where a Church had lost its power of initiative through a prolonged Western control, and one speaker said that the dependence of the native Church upon the West after a certain stage is reached becomes a positive hindrance. A Korean pleaded for more sympathy from the older Churches and for a simplification of Church organization suitable to Korean conditions. We were frequently reminded that only qualified men and women were wanted in the mission-field, and more than one Oriental speaker gave the impression that in some cases missionaries from home were not always the right sort, and these young Churches asked for the power to send back to England any missionary they felt was unsuitable. It was a novel experience to some in the Conference to be told that a missionary's work and life should be within the control of the young Church, and that a society should only send a worker abroad after obtaining the sanction of the Church in the field. Mr. Kulubia, a Uganda Chief, spoke of the Church in Uganda built up by the Church Missionary Society, and said

that many of the difficulties mentioned by Chinese and others did not exist in his country because policy was not dictated from outside but from within the body of the Church itself. His tribute to the far-seeing policy of C.M.S. leaders was a refreshing interlude in a critical debate.

When Western speakers entered the discussion they spoke of the need of shifting the emphasis in missionary policy from paternalism to partnership. One delegate told the story of a small girl who was trying to persuade her father to consent to something. When she failed to gain her point she said, "Daddy, you will not give way to my point of view because I am not financially independent." Many of the young Churches feel that their point of view would receive much greater attention if they were not financially dependent upon Churches in the West.

Out of this discussion emerged the most vital problem of all in the relation between East and West. To devolve responsibility upon native Churches, to give them self-control and independence is not after all an insuperable difficulty and is already being done in many countries. But these things are only stepping-stones to the demand for freedom from our ecclesiastical systems. One speaker said, we are not interested in your denominational differences and we want a united Church in our country. The whole debate seemed to me to lead to but one logical conclusion—that having granted to native Churches independence, nothing can prevent their seeking and obtaining a new unity that may or may not conform to our own particular ecclesiasticism. In China the United Church formed by the amalgamation of Presbyterians and Congregationalists has a communicant membership of over 120,000, while the total Anglican Church membership for all China is less than 30,000.

Reunion was considered to be outside our province at Jerusalem, but the young Churches represented there knew nothing of watertight compartments labelled Stockholm, Lausanne and Jerusalem. For them the great problem was how to form united national Churches, and they made it abundantly clear that while they would go patiently they would not wait for ever in the hope that the West would give a lead to them on reunion. There were unmistakable signs that patience is running out and many of these Churches have decided to join forces. This they hope may be done with the goodwill of the West, but they will not allow the road to reunion to be permanently blocked because Western Churches cannot agree. These young Churches think they can agree, and before very long they will go ahead with us if possible, but if not in spite of us. One delegate said bluntly, "We will wait until Lambeth 1930 but no longer." Thus a discussion which began by seeking to define an indigenous Church ended upon the only possible note if we are to face facts at all. We sin in fettering our denominations upon the East, and the East knows it and has determined to end it.

In this connection the findings on this subject have a significance which should not be overlooked by evangelicals. "This statement would be seriously incomplete without reference to the desire which

is being expressed with increasing emphasis among the younger Churches to eliminate the complexity of the missionary enterprise and to remove the discredit to the Christian name, due to the great numbers of denominations and the diversity and even competition of the missionary agencies now at work in some countries. It is fully recognized that it is not the function of the International Missionary Council to pronounce upon questions of ecclesiastical policy. At the same time the Council is only performing an inescapable duty when it appeals to the older Churches to adopt a sympathetic attitude towards the longings expressed by the younger Churches for a more rapid advance in Christian reunion." Two sessions were devoted to industrial and rural problems. Seventy-five per cent. of the world's population live in rural areas and apart from the great currents of life. These peasant folk often have a civilization of their own, and the problem as it faced us at Jerusalem was whether this civilization shall be Christian or secular. Take India for example : ninety per cent. of the people live in villages on the border-line between poverty and starvation. They are mostly in debt, illiterate and live under bad housing conditions. Into their midst comes a messenger of the Gospel. What has Christianity to say about the people's social welfare ? No Church can satisfactorily be built up which ignores great social evils and which does not seek to bring the Gospel to bear upon housing, poverty, child labour and insanitary conditions of life. The study of the place of the missionary in such an environment produced some practical points. Missionaries have too often occupied large towns to the neglect of rural areas. When work has been established in villages mission organization has been too expensive for village life and too foreign, thus making rural work depend upon foreign support when of all others it ought to be self-supporting and mainly carried on by voluntary peasant help. Missionary educational systems have too often trained village boys for town posts, and have thus helped to swell the number of the unemployed would-be government officials. Training work in rural areas has often been done in town institutions, and the pastor or catechist when located to a village has found little in common with his flock.

Perhaps the most serious criticism of all was that our evangelism has too often ignored the social needs of the people. The appeal of this session was for the training of pastors for rural areas in rural areas, for a recasting of our village school system and the development of vocational schools. Most of the Eastern countries are faced with the task of building up a rural community Christian life.

The day we discussed the race problem has left memories that for some of us are ineffaceable. A negro from America, a South African, an Indian and a delegate from the Philippine Islands were the principal speakers. They spoke with deep emotion yet in a calm moderate and restrained manner. Here were men who had suffered from a white domination and who had felt the barrier of colour throughout their lives. They told of the two standards for whites and blacks in the U.S.A., of the colour bar bill in South Africa and of the vested interests of American financiers in the Philippines.

In South Africa, we were reminded that Islam is making converts from Christianity because of the race question. Mohammedan propaganda to-day is largely based upon the claim of Islam to a brotherhood that is more genuine than Christianity. "Join Islam," they say, "and protect yourselves against the West." What struck me most was the fact that these men, feeling as they do, could speak without a single trace of bitterness. They were Christian men and their faith had removed all bitterness, but the lesson of it was that while these men as Christians can live above the unfairness and injustice of race differences there are millions who are not Christians and who, feeling as strongly, cannot rise above their sense of wrong. It burns within them and nothing but Christianity can meet their need. The discussion was wound up by an Indian lady who said, "We must solve the problem in our own lives by a desire to know our neighbours."

I come back in closing to the Home Base. Every country to-day is becoming a home base and we in England are chiefly concerned with our own problems. There is no short cut to the solution of any of the big issues raised at Jerusalem. There is certainly no paper scheme or organization that will meet the need. We are brought once more face to face with the fundamental fact that spiritual life is the only way out. Revival in England is the great need. The home Church does not respond to world service because the level of spiritual power is so low. There is in so many quarters a lack of spiritual certitude in the universal message of Christ. Jerusalem said, "Our message is Jesus Christ," and if this is so, the Church is faced not only with a common task but a common loyalty to our Lord as Master and King.

Much of the fruit is lost and the vitality of the Church lowered through our divisions. Co-operation in missionary service does demand therefore a new discovery of the spirit of Jesus. Either we believe that unity of the Spirit is an attainable ideal or we deny that Christ's prayer that we all may be one has any answer. Jerusalem stands for co-operation not because it is sound policy but because unity is of the mind and will of Christ.

The challenge of the Conference to the Church at home is for a quickening of spiritual life, for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit and for a frank study of the situation. Open doors abroad and a deep hunger for God are proofs of the work of the Spirit. This is a day of God. Will the Church see the signs of the times and gird itself to the great task before it?
