

Editorial

IN July of this year there will be held at Willengen, in Germany, an enlarged meeting of the Committee of the International Missionary Council at which some 200 delegates from many parts of the world will be gathered.

The previous Conference held at Whitby, Ontario, in 1947, had a double purpose. *First* it met to discover how God had been dealing with His Church throughout the world in the dark years which had intervened since the great meeting of the Council at Tambaram in South India in 1938. *Second*, there was a deep concern to discover what God was saying at that moment with a view to the future of the missionary enterprise.

Those who were present at Whitby were immensely encouraged and inspired by what they learnt of what had been happening during the previous ten years and in particular at the reports from Churches whose life had been largely disrupted by war.

With regard to the future two convictions were formed. One was the conviction that much more rapid steps should be taken in every country where representatives of the Older and Younger Churches were working together to translate this co-operation into a much more intimate partnership. The Conference believed that it was led to the choice of the words "Partnership in Obedience" as expressing this conviction. Since Whitby much effort has been directed towards discovering what these words imply.

The second conviction, prompted in no small measure by the insistent demand of those present who came from Churches which had endured the greatest suffering, was that evangelism must be treated as the first priority in the years ahead. It was from debates on this subject that the phrase "expectant evangelism" emerged as indicating the spirit in which the Church should prosecute its world task.

Now the new Conference meets in a situation far more perplexing for the missionary enterprise than was even that which confronted the delegates at Whitby. But whatever new lessons God may have to teach in this forthcoming Conference, His Word, already spoken, demands a continuing obedience.

The Willengen Conference will have as its general theme "The Missionary Obligation of the Church". It will aim to restate the universal missionary obligation of the Church both as grounded in the eternal Gospel and as seen in relation to the present historical situation. Within this study it will also re-examine the nature and importance of personal vocation to missionary service: it will seek to assess the present position and future vocation of the Western missionary societies in the fulfilment of the Church's mission: it will aim to define the missionary task of both Older and Younger Churches in such terms as will take due account of the revolution of our time: and finally it will consider what changes in policy and organization may be required to carry out this task.

That is an ambitious programme. Our prayers are asked that within the limits of such a Conference the task may be fulfilled to God's

glory. But the out-working of any such Conference depends upon the understanding co-operation of the rank and file of the Churches. It is therefore as preparation for our own obedience, and as some small contribution by way of thought and prayer on behalf of those who will meet at Willengen in July, that this number of *THE CHURCHMAN* is dedicated.

The articles which follow have been designed to focus attention on certain of the features of the missionary enterprise which will be under review at Willengen. The first presents an interpretation of the contemporary scene in its inwardness as being genuinely and profoundly cataclysmic, a veritable day of darkness and not light, and yet for all its qualities of judgment being no less a day of mercy. This is followed by three articles each in its own way theological in character. One examines the need for a fresh theological approach to the Christian Mission. Another studies the close relationship between the Church's worship and the setting forth of its Gospel. The third is a sturdy reminder that theology must be related to life as a whole if it is to be in any sense of the word redemptive theology. The article which follows these is an enquiry into the nature of 'the new missionary' demanded by new circumstances and very properly this enquiry is pursued through the light of those insights which came from the Whitby Conference in 1947. Finally the series ends with a study of the importance of America in the Missionary Movement of to-day. No student of the outreach of the Christian Church in this generation can have any doubt of the significance of America for the world-wide Church. This article will serve well to point some of the questions to which answers must be sought.

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As a background to the articles that follow, Canon Max Warren's excellent study of *The Christian Mission*¹ should certainly be read and pondered. The value of this book is that it relates the Christian mission to the contemporary situation in a thoroughly realistic manner. The Church is concerned with the real world of to-day—with the *felt* needs of men, not merely with their theologically defined needs. And it must meet those needs by the *demonstration* as well as by the proclamation of the Gospel. Word must become Act. For as Dr. Warren so strongly insists, the Gospel touches every part of life. It recognizes no distinction between the secular and the sacred. The God of the Church is also the God of politics and society. "The Christian Mission in the world is concerned with marking every point in time and every place in nature with the Cross of Jesus Christ, because redemption is for the whole of man, for the whole of human society, and for the whole of the created universe" (p. 71).

From beginning to end this little book—little in size only—is marked by that depth of knowledge and breadth of outlook that we have come to expect from the General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society. Not its least valuable feature is the wealth of illustrative material gathered from many sources which lights up its pages. F.C.

¹ S.C.M. Press, 1951, 7/6.