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Theological Issues at Evanston*

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THE second assembly of the World Council of Churches will be held at Evanston, Ill., August 15—31, 1954. The 161 member churches will be represented by 600 official delegates, 600 accredited visitors, 150 theological consultants, 120 youth consultants, fraternal delegates, and official observers from nonmember churches. The Christian world is vitally interested in the Evanston assembly, because the chief concern of this gathering will be to agree on the "Christian message" which the member churches of the W. C. C. will proclaim to the world. This message comprises a main theme and six subthemes, which will receive intensive study in plenary and sectional meetings at Evanston.

I

The main theme is: "Christ — the Hope of the World." In its Toronto meeting in 1950 the Central Committee adopted the "Evanston theme" and reported as follows:

The time has come when the World Council of Churches should make a serious attempt to declare, in relation to the modern world, the faith and hope which are affirmed in its own basis and by which the Churches live. The world is full of false hopes, of fear and of despair. Religious indifference is widespread. In the Churches, spiritual power and triumphant hope are not clearly manifest. Though there is much active evangelism, the old paganism still maintain their power in many parts of the world, while on the other hand there are very few points at which the Church is breaking out of its isolation into the world of those who hold to such modern substitutes for the Gospel as communism and other political messianism, scientific humanism, and certain forms of existentialism, or are indifferent to every religious or quasi-religious faith. The presence of secularism within the Churches is

* This study is based on articles published in the *Ecumenical Review*, especially October, 1953, and on study materials issued by the Council. Cp. also F. E. Mayer and Richard Z. Meyer, "The World Council of Churches, a Theological Appraisal," *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, XXIV (March, 1953), 161 ff.; "Eschatological Discussions in the W. C. C.," *ibid.*, pp. 224 ff.

deeply marked. Now as always, man's greatest need is God's greatest opportunity. We think therefore that the main theme of the Assembly should be along the lines of the affirmation that Jesus Christ is the only hope of both the Church and the world.

The first report on this theme caused considerable tensions, because divergent and even contradictory views on eschatology are current among the member churches. Because of their dreadful experiences, the European churches felt themselves under the judgment of God and saw the hope of the world chiefly in an apocalyptic event. They had lived under such fear and human cruelty that their only hope seemed to lie in the triumphant return of Christ. The American churches were divided into at least two camps, one espousing the premillennial coming of Christ and the other viewing Christ's second coming as symbolic of a final victory of righteousness in our social order. Some do not seem to be quite sure why Christ should return at all, since "we Americans never had it so good." — The Central Committee issued a second report on the Evanston theme, which substantially declares that Christ is the Hope of the world both because He has come and because He will come. Christ is presented as a present reality and a future hope. The Evanston assembly will endeavor to answer the question whether "the Church offers any hope for this world apart from an invitation to join a society which will be finally redeemed?" The W. C. C. hopes to arouse Christians to "a new sense of their responsibilities in the world, and not to lead them to consign the world to the devil, and sit with folded hands to await the millennium." The Church has hope because "Christ *is* conqueror over sin and death and God's kingdom *is* already established." But the Church lives also "in expectation . . . a hope of its final consummation." The message of the churches of the one Hope must replace the illusory hopes of man-made utopias. This means that Evanston will endeavor to make "biblical imagery and symbolism" of the Christian hope intelligible to modern men in their own experiences. It must enunciate clearly a "valid hope, applicable to the world; a message proclaiming a fulfillment of men's hope and God's promises both in the present time and in the end of history . . . making clear the continuous coming of Christ — a prolongation of the incarnation, the partial anticipation of His final triumph. . . . Since sin is the

cause of our hopelessness in this life and the fear of nothingness afterwards, Christ is the redeemer of both time and eternity, and this is the theme of hope in Christ we read in the Bible."

It is too early to state how Evanston will resolve the soteriological and eschatological tensions existing in its midst. The Advisory Committee's final report on the central theme will not be published until June, and no one can predict how the delegates will amend or change this report. In any event it is of the utmost importance that the delegates do not get lost in eschatological problems, but that they become agreed on the soteriological work of the God-Man. Christ is the Hope of the world only in His vicarious atonement. There is no purpose in discussing the "already — not-yet" of Christ's kingdom unless we know and believe that His kingdom is the gracious rule in the individual which liberates the individual from the curse of the Law, the bondage of Satan, the fear of death.

II

In the light of the central theme the Evanston assembly will study six subthemes on the basis of study materials prepared by various commissions. These studies take up the various tasks of the Church as the respective commissions envision them in relation to the central theme.

1. "Our Oneness in Christ and Our Disunity as Churches," the first topic, was prepared by the Faith and Order Commission. On the one hand the leaders maintain that the member churches find their unity as an existing reality in the common confession of Christ as Lord. On the other hand it seems that the W. C. C. is a massive effort to create Christian unity among the 161 member churches. But in its pronouncements the W. C. C. has declared repeatedly that it is not a superchurch, nor an agency to negotiate church unions. The member churches are asked to take their respective denominations seriously and need not regard other member churches as churches in the full sense of the word. In reply to the question wherein the unity in Christ consists, Ralph Douglas Hyslop replies:

We are members of Christ's Body and the events in history which are decisive for us are His Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Return in glory. In the *Incarnation*, Christ the eternal Son of God assumed a body through which He is one with man, and

through which He is given to be the Head over all men and all things. Through this Body, He gathers all who believe in Him into one Body with Him. In His *Crucifixion*, this oneness of Christ with us is consummated, for He became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh that through the sacrifice of Himself for us He might destroy our body of sin and death. Through His *Resurrection* of the body from the dead, and by the gift of the quickening Spirit, the Church is made to be One Body and One Spirit with Him. Because the oneness of the Church is grounded in Christ who has ascended to the right hand of God the Father, its full manifestation awaits the day of Christ's Return to meet His Church and complete His work of redemption and judgment. Yet it is forever true that Christ and His Church are one and indivisible. There can no more be a number of Churches than there can be a number of Christs, of incarnations, crucifixions or Holy Spirits. The Church is one as Christ is one.

The Commission states that the oneness has been realized as follows: the common dependence on the Bible as an authority for all; the common treasures in the Lord's Prayer, the witness of the saints, the hymns and prayers of the universal Church; the vestigial elements of the true Church in the other churches; the co-operation in alleviating human suffering; joint worship in various areas. It is assumed that at one time the Church was one and that some elements of this unity are still visible, especially in the fact that all member churches recognize in each church or denomination some marks of the true Church. It is evident that in spite of extensive studies by the committees on Faith and Order since 1937 there is still hopeless confusion as to the essence of the Church and a continuous mingling of the visible and invisible Church.

Evanston will attempt to find the answer to the perplexing question why the churches are divided while they are allegedly united in Christ. The Commission submits several questions for study and answer. Are the churches divided on the proclamation of Christ, the ministration of the Sacraments, on the understanding of Holy Scripture as guide and norm, on the doctrines of Church and ministry and the conditions of fellowship? — Or are the churches divided on issues which are no longer relevant; or on issues which have no place in the unity of Christ, such as those dealing with

color, race, political loyalties, cultural and economic status? The member churches are to be confronted by the reality that the divisions are deep and that they cannot be removed by mere amiable fellowship or by abandonment of the truth.

Several steps are suggested to remove the division of the churches. In the first place, churches will be asked to subscribe to the principle that "unity is fundamental and dividedness is superficial," and that there is unity in diversity, since all churches or denominations are one in origin, though each has had its divergent historical growth. Second, the churches must repent of the conflicts in their midst, which lead only to factious strife and aggressive self-seeking. Third, each church must re-examine its own position in relation to every other church and learn, on the one hand, that all churches are one in spite of the outward diversity and, on the other hand, that these divisions are serious wounds on the body of Christ.

The significant questions at Evanston are: Since unity is of the essence of the Church, how can the Church ever be divided? Which Church, or denomination, constitutes the "body of Christ"? Is the unity of the churches only spiritual? Is "being in Christ" *eo ipso* to be in the Church? The Faith and Order Commission believes that the questions can be answered in the light of eschatology, for "in many parts of the world and of Christendom in immense historical catastrophes and persecutions God has already begun the eschatological time of sifting and examination. . . . Let us direct our eyes toward the much deeper divisions which the Returning Lord will effect in all churches, and toward the unity of the eternal splendor which He will bring with Him."

The solution to the problems enumerated lies solely in a Scriptural study of the doctrine of the Church, the *una sancta*. And there is no better guide to such a study than Martin Luther.

2. "Evangelism: the Church's Neglected Vocation" is the topic of study in the second section. According to the study materials on this theme, evangelism has achieved new emphasis as the primary function of the Church and is viewed as the main function of the Christian. At the same time there is a feeling of frustration and an increasing awareness that the Church has failed to evangelize. Therefore the Evanston assembly will be asked to take

a realistic view of the entire situation, critically to examine the current methods of evangelism, and to study new approaches so that the Church may be a truly Apostolic Church, the Church sent by Christ to proclaim the hope of the world. This witness must completely absorb the energy of the entire Church. And this will be the case if the hope of Christ is really alive within the Church. The assumption is that the evangelical message of Christ as the hope of the world will inevitably lead to evangelism and compel the Church to witness that good news.

The study materials point out that the mission of the Church to those outside her life is, in substance, to bring to them the message that they must take Christ seriously, for all men are sinners and filled with the intolerable frustrations and dilemmas of which only Christ can relieve them. The Church must proclaim to mankind that only in Christ our pattern of perversity is changed to one of obedience and man need not wrestle with the problems of life alone. The world is to understand and accept Christ so that man will see what God is, and what man is, and that man can never find completion apart from God. Only when the Church proclaims this evangel will mankind be saved from the alluring heresies of Communism, secularism, and intellectualism and will man find his peace in the hands of God.

At Evanston the churches will be asked to submit themselves to a critical self-examination. The basic area for such examination is the mistaken view that evangelism is a specialized activity to be performed by the "professional" evangelist or missionary and that as a result the Church has completely forgotten that the Church in its entirety is Apostolic and therefore charged with the task of evangelism. The average congregation is apt to be an introverted community with no consideration of its obligation to bring the knowledge of Christ to its entire neighborhood and, in reality, to the whole world. In fact, this introversion has marked the life, thought, and leadership of the entire Christian Church to such a degree that even in a normal theological study of this problem one thinks primarily of a static rather than a missionary church. The question which will be put before the member churches of the W. C. C. at Evanston may be formulated as follows: Are the churches ready to take on the momentous task which will require

an army, not only the isolated foot soldier or the professional volunteer? Are the churches prepared for a warfare in which the church must wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but with the principalities and the powers of this present darkness?

The leaders of the W. C. C. will remind the delegates at Evanston of the great problems which confront the churches in the program of evangelism. First of all, in our era evangelism dare not be confined to the conversion of an individual, since we are in the midst of a war between rival communities of faith. This is said to be most evident in the social revolution of our contemporary history. But the churches have failed to evaluate properly the significance of this social upheaval and therefore have failed to evangelize the world. As a result whole sections of our population which until recently were at least nominally Christian have become alienated from the Church; other groups have appeared in our social turmoil which have never made a living contact with the Gospel; others, especially in Asia and Africa, have again fallen under the sway of the ancient religions of their ancestors. Communism, scientific humanism, the secularized eschatology of hope looking for a utopian golden age, constitute the rival churches with which the Church is in mortal struggle. In its conflict with these rival hosts and spiritual powers the Church must be on the alert to meet the needs of the underprivileged of our social structure.

Equally disastrous is the problem of isolationism, which reduces the Church to a mere bourgeois ghetto. The study materials claim that class drive is carried over into the Church and has become a major obstacle to the conversion of the working class. Worse still, the Church is in danger of becoming a close community, like other community cells, e.g., of professional or laboring men whose interests center in the office or the factory. In such cells there is no room for love of the neighbor. The churches must learn — so the Evanston delegates will be instructed — that it is the function of the Church to transcend these social cells and to create a Christian community which penetrates into all areas of our social structure.

A final difficulty in the way of evangelism is said to be the problem of semantics and theological illiteracy. The world of today does not understand "the language of Canaan," and the

Church must spell out the Christian message in modern concepts. For many, theology is said to be no more than a heightened version of the Golden Rule, and Christ no more than "the First Christian," whose perfection unredeemed man cannot imitate. The Church is therefore confronted with the task of bringing the message of Christ as the hope of the world to the intelligentsia alienated from Christianity as well as to the unskilled working group.

The committee which prepared the report on evangelism sees signs of hope. It believes that theology is being restored to its place of honor as the queen of sciences. And this, so it is said, applies not to any type of theology, but to the theology of the Bible, for only such a theology entitles the Church to enlist in, and equips the Church for, its warfare against the secularist heresies. In the opinion of many a more significant sign of hope is the emergence of the apostolate of the laity. Increasingly signs become evident that evangelism no longer is confined exclusively to the clergy. The laity is beginning to "gossip" the Gospel, and one sinner who has experienced the grace of God speaks to another sinner. Both the clergy and the layman are sent to preach and therefore are apostles, though their functions may vary. Another encouraging sign according to the committee is the establishment of the so-called evangelizing community, a Christian "cell," where the dynamics of the Gospel are clearly demonstrated. As an example one could point to the Roman Catholic priest-worker communities in France. It reminds one of the noble experiment of Wilhelm Loehe in founding the Franconian colony in Michigan to do mission work among the Indians by establishing a Christian community among the pagans. Another hopeful sign is said to be the use of the secular drama and the cinema to bring the Gospel message to those who ordinarily do not come under the sway of evangelism. In short, evangelism, as it will be presented at Evanston, will call the member churches to alert the laymen to use all the modern forms of a specialized ministry to touch all those groups which are today outside the influence of the Christian Church. The delegates at Evanston will attempt not only to give a graphic picture of the gravity of the situation as they see it, but also to offer a strategy and to prepare a message to meet it. According to the preliminary studies, the Evanston assembly hopes

to integrate its central theme with its program of evangelism and to make it clear that the kingdom of God, the "abundant eternal life," is here and now and forever and that the continuing Kingdom life is possible now for all those who are in Christ looking forward to a final consummation.

3. The third series of studies will be presented under the topic "Social Problems: the Responsible Society in a World Perspective." The study section which will discuss the social problems which confront mankind in all portions of our modern world will be asked to answer such questions as: Has the Church any positive guidance to offer in determining the pattern of economic and social development in the future? What is the relevance of the Christian faith and hope for the economic and social problems of our time, especially for the large segments of our society which today are in desperate economic and political need? The presupposition is that Christians must provide a realistic hope for the world in grave trouble. But to do so the Christians must be aware of the complexities of the issues in the political, social, and economic spheres. The relatively simple economic issues which confronted the Christian churches in the past have been replaced by issues which require decisions of tremendous complexities. The outcomes of these decisions are vital for millions of people. For that reason the Christian must become thoroughly acquainted with the complicated economic and social questions of our time. The churches dare not despair of fulfilling this task but must rather find an answer in order to help society in its great problems. The main theme of Evanston: "Christ the Hope of the World," is said to place upon the churches the task to show that the lordship of Christ as the Hope of the world is really related to every aspect of the world situation and to every human predicament. To all—the hungry, the poor, the bound, the socially disinherited—the Church must become the servant of the Lord who heals all manner of diseases and proclaims liberty to the captives. The churches must support every effort of people and individuals to still their hunger, gain the respect of their fellow men, and achieve the full stature of their manhood. The churches must struggle everywhere to achieve a free and "responsible society" in which the members acknowledge individual and common responsibility for one another. At the same time the churches must

guard against the danger of making political programs gospels of final redemption.

The term "responsible society" is used in the place of such familiar terms as democracy, free society, because these terms have been used as propaganda slogans. The World Council of Churches defines the "responsible society" as a society "where freedom is the freedom of men who acknowledge responsibility and justice and public order and where those who hold political authority or economic power are responsible for its exercise to God and the people whose welfare is affected by it." The term is used primarily in antithesis both to a *laissez-faire* capitalistic society and to totalitarian Communism. In a "responsible society" Christian guidance in dealing with political and economic problems will lead to responsible action by people and responsible exercise of power on all levels of society. The delegates at Evanston will be told that the Christian churches must be prepared to serve as the conscience of society and to pass judgment on the concrete and difficult social issues confronting us today; but that unfortunately there is a tendency among the churches to be complacent and to accept the economic forces as essentially good or to take a negative attitude toward our society. It will be urged that modern man can become, in fact, has become, the master of his own social destiny and that man must remove insecurity, poverty, and all forms of exploitation, so that man may increasingly learn to dominate the economic and social forces which will improve his lot.

The study lists instances where tremendous changes have taken place in our social structure. If the churches are to influence the proper reconstruction of our society, they must become thoroughly acquainted with the causes and effects of these social upheavals. In the first place, tremendous strides forward have been made in all parts of the world in state social security measures so that today the state intervenes more than ever before in the economic life for the welfare of the public and of the individual. The churches must recognize the need for increased state power to deal with our economic and social problems, but at the same time recognize the fact that such authority must be checked wherever essential human freedoms are threatened. In most countries the goal of social policy is the establishment of an economic system which embodies both

security and flexibility. This means that the churches at Evanston must center their attention on the values and the dangers of the new function of the state in our social order instead of dealing with such abstract controversies as capitalism vs. socialism.

A second factor which the churches at Evanston will be asked to take into consideration is that national economic and political stability are dependent upon world economic and political stability. The interdependence of the world economy has become a greater reality than ever before and deeply affects the national policy of each portion of the world. This international interdependence of all the people and countries of the world for their economic and social well-being is said to compel the churches to review their responsibility and re-evaluate the Christian witness in view of the complex interrelationship between the nations. This means that the economic stability in the United States is more than a matter of physical life and death to the whole world, or the slow development of backward countries is more than a political challenge to the more privileged nations. Under these conditions it becomes the obligation of the churches to work toward the creation of a "responsible society" equipped to meet the desperate human needs growing out of poverty and frustration.

A third factor responsible for this tremendous change is the development of a new sense of human dignity, fundamental human rights, and social justice, accompanied by a revolt against such conditions as would politically, economically, and socially enslave people. At Evanston the churches will be asked to recognize their responsibility in working toward a responsible society which recognizes man's deep-seated urge for justice and equality.

The tension between the Communists and the non-Communist nations of the world is a fourth area of social problems which will occupy the attention of the churches at Evanston. They will be asked to examine the extent to which they can make a common witness regarding political and economic problems in view of the great political and ideological divisions in the world today. The tremendous appeal which Communism exerts in those regions where poverty and misery rule supreme prompts some to think that there is little hope that the Christian churches can make an impact toward establishing a responsible society and prompts them

to suggest a *via media* for co-operation with Communism as a method to reach greater material abundance and greater justice. At Evanston the churches will be asked to answer the questions: Can Communism be an effective instrument to improve the political and economic life of the nations of the world in spite of the totalitarianism which always accompanies Communism? Or must the churches reject Communism because it requires such a totalitarianism as will dominate not only man's institutions, but also his mind. At Evanston the churches will be asked to avoid two pitfalls in presenting its message as a "responsible society": On the one hand the temptation to engage in "sterile anti-Communitic hysteria" and self-righteous adulation, and on the other hand the temptation to accept the promises of Communism.

In the light of the present want, insecurity, fear, world economic interdependence, the delegates at Evanston will be invited to give serious thought to the following issues: The role of the state in economic life and its limits; the place of the worker in modern industry; the role of organized labor in modern society; the place of the businessman in modern society; economic and social development of the underdeveloped countries; the economic responsibilities of the West; the responsibility of the member churches in relation to the challenge of Communism.

The preliminary studies point out that as the Christian works for the responsible society in a world perspective, he has an impossible task unless his faith is firmly grounded in the Church's central message: the reconciliation of the world to God by the incarnation of His Son. The delegates at Evanston will be asked to consider all the ramifications of this message affecting the problems of economic and political life and to present to the member churches specific and positive directives for them to follow. The opinion prevails that while the "responsible society" cannot suggest a single pattern of economic institutions for all nations, it can suggest criteria by which such patterns must be judged. This means in particular that the Christian churches state their social convictions positively and not merely as echoes of the interests of the Western nations. It does not mean that they will take a political neutral attitude and remain indifferent to the social and spiritual effects of Communist power.

It seems to us that all these problems can be solved only if the delegates find the correct answer to the question regarding the basis of Christ's lordship. Are the churches to proclaim the lordship of Christ in the Calvinistic sense of God's sovereign and absolute majesty or in accord with the Lutheran view, which sees Christ's lordship chiefly in His vicarious activity?

4. "Questions in the Struggle for World Community" is the title under which the churches at Evanston will discuss the Church's attitude toward international affairs. It is presupposed that unless the Christians understand the tense situations in international affairs and offer remedial action, the world of nations will be so completely divided as to bring about the ruin of mankind. In the opinion of the commission the churches must find a basis for the peaceful co-existence between conflicting power blocs and social systems. The churches will be asked to discuss and evaluate from the Christian point of view the strength and the weakness of the United Nations and related bodies, the tremendous upsurge of the peoples in Asia and Africa, and to find adequate definitions of human rights. In particular, the Christian churches will be asked to study ways and means how they can best undergird the basic principles set forth in the charter of human rights adopted by the United Nations. The churches at Evanston will wrestle with questions such as these: What are the rights to which all men are entitled in whatever society they live? How can these rights be best secured in relation to particular social structures? What freedoms must the Church have in order to retain its rights? What can the churches do where these rights are denied?

Two basic problems on the international level are said to plague mankind. The first is the conflict between the Soviet and the non-Soviet societies. Weapons for mass destruction are being stockpiled at an ever-increasing rate. The various military preparations tend to limit or even prevent constructive undertakings which make for peace. Worse still is the fact that the two conflicting ideologies are not agreed as to a common basic moral principle. Therefore the churches at Evanston will seek to find the least common denominator on the basis of which the two conflicting ideologies can meet. The second international problem stems from the rise of nationalism and the opposition to colonialism, especially in Asia and Africa.

Tremendous differences in culture, religion, and living standards exist between the East and the West, which constitute a distinct barrier to mutual understanding. It is assumed that the churches are unable to solve these problems in the struggle for a world community unless these barriers can somehow be overcome by the churches.

The Evanston assembly will endeavor to integrate this problem with the central theme. This is said to mean that Christians must be ready to testify to the judgment of God upon human idolatry and inhumanity as well as to the mercy and forgiveness of God as revealed in Jesus Christ; that the churches must become aware that God's purposes in His world cannot fail; that we live in the hope that the hearts of men may be transformed by the grace of His Spirit, since history is always an open process where new beginnings are ever possible whenever men turn from the service of false gods to the worship of the living God. Therefore the churches must learn to see through the particular political questions to the larger ethical issues which underlie them. The churches must therefore endeavor not only to improve the political and economical situations of less-developed countries, but also to bring these countries into a full-fledged participation in the life of a world community. It becomes the Church's obligation to see to it that men are not deprived of their basic rights but are given conditions in which they can grow into the full life which God wills for His children. This is said to be implied in the theme "Jesus Christ, the Hope of the World." This message assures men that God is working out His purposes for men through the times in which they live. The kingdom of God is here and is also coming. This is said to mean that in the Church there exists a fellowship in which God has already transcended every barrier which divides men and has brought them into a community of common faith, hope, and love. Though this life in the Church is still imperfect, the churches are to see this pattern of life as God's will for all His people.

The delegates at Evanston will be asked to give serious consideration to the purposes of the United Nations and similar specialized agencies. They will attempt to draft a program which will bring

effective Christian influence to bear on international decisions, such as safeguarding human rights, the care of refugees, the problem of migration, the regulation and reduction of armaments, the dangers and the potentialities of such regional institutions as NATO, Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (C. C. I. A.).

The leaders of the World Council of Churches hope that at Evanston the relevance of Christian doctrine to the concrete issues of international affairs will be more clearly seen, so that the state and the citizen will play a more responsible role. The member churches will be asked to answer questions such as these: What are the essential prerequisites for reconciliation between Soviet and non-Soviet sovereignties? What are the moral and political preconditions for an effective disarmament program? How can Christian fellowship help establish the moral foundation of world order? How can the Christian churches help to establish supernational loyalties according to the principles of the United Nations charter?

It seems that the preceding program is based on the idea of social redemption rather than stated in terms of the individual's redemption from sin, the wrath of God, death, and eternal destruction. The final reports at Evanston will show whether the W. C. C. conceives the kingdom of God as a moral, ethical kingdom of this world rather than the gracious rule of Christ in the heart of the individual Christian.

5. "The Church amid Racial and Ethical Tension" has been selected as the topic in which an answer is sought to the question: How can the Church contribute to the correction of racial prejudice and injustice? The delegates will be asked to answer such questions as these: How can the message of the Gospel be presented so as to correct the chief springs of race prejudice? How can the Christian Church solve this problem within its own membership? How may the Christian community co-operate with governments and other agencies to remedy racial injustice?

The problem is tremendously wide. To some it is merely a problem of "color caste," or of ethnic origin, or an economic problem, or merely a psychological phenomenon. To others it is a problem of inherent inferiority or superiority. Still others consider the current pattern of race relation a part of God's design.

The churches are said to be vitally involved in this problem because, on the one hand, the churches are deeply embroiled in the conflict and tension of color and ethnic distinctions and because, on the other hand, they are under the mandate of a universal Gospel which offers the ultimate solution to all injustice and all conflicts, including the racial discriminations.

6. "The Laity — the Christian in His Vocation" is the topic assigned to the sixth study section at Evanston. It will be pointed out that the very word "vocation" has a religious emphasis, while the secular world uses the term as an equivalent for "occupation." For the Christian therefore the various jobs with which men occupy themselves in human society have a close relation to God's call into the Kingdom. Therefore all the problems which confront the Christian layman demand the Christian answer. Today the Christian is involved in problems that concern not only individual morality but also the very structure of society and of life. Unfortunately, so this study group will be told, the Church on the whole has failed to understand the problems confronting those who do the work of the world. In particular, the churches have not taken proper cognizance of the characteristic features which have come upon society during the last century as a result of the industrialization of society. The Evanston assembly will be confronted with some of the results of industrialization, particularly with mechanization, which places the emphasis on high organization rather than on individual decision, on mass production rather than on the individual's work, so that today the pride of the individual craftsman in his work is rarely present.

The assembly at Evanston will be asked to view the Christian's vocation in the light of the general theme "Jesus Christ, the Hope of the World." This is said to mean that vocation is not primarily a task or an obligation imposed on man, but a gift associated with the new deliverance which has its ultimate purpose in the coming kingdom of God. The Christian must realize that work is not only necessary to sustain life but also significant as a service to the neighbor. It is, moreover, an expression of man's creative power. Above all, the vocation provides man with the opportunity to be obedient to God's call, which comes to all believers into whatever occupation they may be placed. In short, the question

confronting the Evanston assembly will be: "What bearing does Christian faith have on the daily life of Christian people?"

It will be pointed out that in the "lay ministry," in which the world and the Church make contact, the Church unfortunately only too often conforms to the environment in which it lives. Therefore the lay people must learn to realize that the Church is both apart from the world and a dispersed community within the world.

In the past the Christian churches have given three answers to questions concerning the relevance of the Christian faith to the world of work. Some hold that the Church has no particular message to the workingman beyond the general injunctions to be honest, sober, and industrious. Others hold that in every occupation something beyond the technical skill is required and that all kinds of personal relationships and ethical attitudes are involved. The Church must concern itself with all the truly human relationships which so vitally affect the life of a working community. The third view maintains that only the Christian faith can give the true meaning of life and that the Christian message actually affects not only the ethical decisions but also the proper molding of human society, including its work.

Evanston will attempt to evaluate the manner in which a Christian is to understand his work. Is secular work to be seen primarily as opportunities for evangelization? Or is it an occasion for obedience to God expressed in the faithful performance of the job according to its secular nature? This consideration will raise the question as to the relative importance of the various jobs in which the Christians are engaged. In the light of the over-all theme at Evanston the assembly will be asked to consider whether in his work the Christian is to be guided only by a rigid and ethical code concerning a specific type of work or also by the ultimate hope that God will triumph over evil and that the Christian may have to take a definite stand in his present employment, so that in his acts of obedience he gives enduring testimony to his faith. This question applies especially to the problem of competition and similar temptations, to the Christian standards of ethics involved in the Christian's particular occupation, e.g., the soldier, the worker in producing war matériel.

The Evanston delegates will be asked to answer these questions: Does the Bible contain criteria by which specific modern occupations can be judged as to their place in God's design for the world? What needs to be changed in certain occupations to meet God's will? How can such changes be effected? What part are the churches to play in making the necessary changes?

It remains to be seen whether Evanston will commit itself to the social gospel, whether it will correctly emphasize the social implications of the Gospel, or whether the Evanston message in this area will be so ambiguous that either view may find its adherents.

The leaders of the World Council of Churches believe that: the Second Assembly will be of singular importance in the history of the Ecumenical Movement, for it will be the first regular assembly since the constituting of the World Council at Amsterdam in 1948, and will thus be a testing point for this new ecumenical venture. Have the Churches which are members of the World Council of Churches learned to go forward together as well as "to stay together"? Have we learned to understand each other better? Have we learned to be active witnesses of Christ and servants among our neighbors?

The tensions of both a theological and a sociological nature are great, since the delegates come from widely scattered areas with hardly more in common to unite them than a desire for some sort of unity. It is therefore not pessimism when some express the fear that the theological divergence is so great that at Evanston the member churches may find more areas of diversity than of unity. At the same time it is a hopeful sign that the ecumenical movement is wrestling with real theological problems and that large segments of the churches are seeking to find a real Biblical theology.

St. Louis, Mo.