

**THE CHRISTIAN LIFE  
AND MESSAGE  
IN RELATION TO  
NON-CHRISTIAN SYSTEMS**

Report of the  
**JERUSALEM MEETING**  
of the  
**INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL**  
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## PREFACE

**T**HIS volume contains both the account of the discussion at the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council on the Christian Message and its relation to Non-Christian Systems of Thought and Life, and the material on which that discussion was based. Preliminary papers were written by men widely known for their scholarship and experience on the relation of Christianity to the several non-Christian religions and to the system of thought and life which has been designated secular civilization.

The spirit of the inquiry to which these writers addressed themselves may be discerned in two paragraphs of the statement prefaced to their papers :

The mission of the Christian Church in the world stands or falls with the conviction that the revelation of God in Christ is something unique, possessing supreme value and providing a real and satisfying answer to the problem of the meaning and purpose of life and a complete response to the needs of men everywhere. The question of the message with which the Church has been entrusted, and of the contribution which it may bring to the lives of those who have not yet heard or heeded it, touches the heart of the missionary movement. To meet the perplexities on this subject which are found to-day both in Western Christendom and in the rising Churches abroad, especially among the younger generation, a fresh inquiry and statement regarding the distinctive character of the Christian message in relation to non-Christian systems is urgently needed.

To afford the help that is wanted, such an inquiry must not remain within the region of merely intellectual argument and definition. It must penetrate into the deeper regions of the things by which men live. 'The strength of Christianity,' it has been well said, 'consists in its being primarily not a view, but a life, a spiritual, religious life, requiring implying, definite doctrine concerning God and man, and their relations to each other, but never exhausted by these doctrines in their collectivity, inexhaustible though these in their turn are by their union with the life of the spirit, their origin and end.' It is in regard to the vital forces of religion that a clearer and deeper understanding is needed.

These papers have been revised by their authors in the light of the record of the Jerusalem discussions.

This volume contains also an account of the discussions both in the plenary sessions of the whole Council and in the different sectional groups which dealt with the special religions in their relation to Christianity. The general discussion by the Council, as a whole, of the preliminary papers and the central theme of the Message was followed by five sectional meetings dealing respectively with Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Mohammedanism and Secular Civilization, and the discussion in these meetings was very similar to the debate in the full Council meeting. It was intended that each of these sectional meetings should, if possible, arrive at findings to be submitted to the Committee on the Message. Only the sections on Buddhism and Mohammedanism resulted in such findings. Accordingly, in the chapter reporting these sectional meetings these findings are presented, and in the case of the other three sectional meetings a brief summary of the discussion is supplied.

Certain issues were shown by the discussions to be of such importance as to demand fuller treatment than they received in the preliminary papers. Additional

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essays have been written on these subjects and are included in the present volume.

This volume contains, as indicated, the statement on which the Council after long discussion and much searching of heart united in its endeavour to express its conviction of the grounds of the world-wide Christian evangelistic movement, the motives which inspire it, the spirit in which it should be carried on and the end at which it should aim.

A word of appreciation must be added in recognition of the thought and work contributed by Dr Robert E. Speer to the editing of this volume.