

THE CHURCHMAN

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Islington Clerical Conference. "CONFERENCE," not "Meeting." The change may not seem to mean much, but in reality it stands for a great deal. During the years of war, the "Meeting" was held in Islington Parish Church, and was arranged to fit the hallowed environment. By no stretch of imagination could the gatherings thus held be called a Conference. Yet in pre-war days the "Meeting" was essentially a conference, and there was a general desire that, with the coming of peace conditions, it should resume its former characteristics. To emphasise, therefore, the fulfilment of this desire, the name of this historic gathering was changed, and henceforth we shall know it under the title of the Islington Clerical Conference. With the change in name came also a new departure, or rather the revival of an old custom—the inclusion of "discussion" on the programme, but, frankly, it was not a success in spite of the fact that the subject assigned for consideration—"The Catholicity of the Church of England"—almost provoked debate. Three speakers volunteered their contributions, but it may fairly be said that none of these rose to the occasion, and it is at least doubtful whether general discussion can really be profitable at a gathering of this kind, whether it is called a "Meeting" or a "Conference." One of the three speakers, however, performed a useful service, as his comments upon the proposed changes in the Communion Service drew from the Dean of Canterbury a very effective statement of his own position in regard to that important question. Dr. Wace said :—

He was no advocate for the introduction of the words agreed upon by the recent Conference into the Prayer of Consecration at all. It must be borne in mind that their adoption by the Conference gave them no authority whatever. They had to come before Convocation, where they would be fully debated. Whether he would vote for their insertion or not he did not

know, because it depended upon various considerations that might be introduced. If he voted for them it would not be because he liked them, but because it might be—or at any rate, it was said it might be—a means of making peace. But one thing he would like to say with respect to the speaker's association of those words with transubstantiation. There was one very striking fact about them. Those particular words had never held a place in the Roman canon of the Mass. It was absolutely the characteristic of the Roman canon of the Mass that it did not call the Holy Spirit down upon either the elements or the worshippers. He could not get out of his mind the idea he had had for a very long time—that the omission of that reference to the Holy Spirit in the Prayer of Consecration had had something to do with the purely material, corporate conceptions out of which transubstantiation had grown. It was possible—though he was not laying this down positively now—it was quite conceivable that a proper reference to the Holy Spirit might be, not a means of leading to transubstantiation, but the best guard against it.

This reply gave great satisfaction to those who heard it. The attendance, it should be added, was very large, and there was a "go" about the proceedings which augured well for the future of the Conference.

What is "Catholicity"? The papers at the Catholicity. Islington Conference, strong and able as most of them were, did not supply any one clear definition of the term. The phrase was variously interpreted by different speakers, and it would seem almost to defy an absolute definition. There is a certain advantage in vagueness, so long as there is no uncertainty on questions of principle, and in this respect the Islington papers rang as sound and as true as a bell. The Rev. J. Gough McCormick (whose recent nomination to the Deanery of Manchester was referred to with pleasure at the Conference) analysed four points in Canon Lacey's vol., *Catholicity*, and said that "if this is Catholicity we are Catholics all the day and all the way." But he went on to point out that when we came to deal with the practical developments of this common Catholicity differences sprang up. He referred, for example, to the question of worship:—

You see an elaborate system of ceremonial and so on in operation in some of our churches, and you will hear that worship described as "Catholic." In other churches you will find a simplicity that is even severe, but the *Church Times* at least would never dream of calling the worship of those churches Catholic. And yet when I look back to the original deposit I see no warrant for this distinction. I base myself upon no particular texts, I accept to the full Canon Lacey's description of this deposit, that it is the total impression that Jesus Christ made on His day and generation. And when I ask myself with regard to this matter, "What was that impression?" I am driven to

the answer not that He said that ritual and the rest of it were wrong, but that they were comparatively immaterial. If you give to this elaborate system of worship, and to this alone, the enormous title of "Catholic," then you have reached a point at which you do, in an essential particular, contradict the total impression which Jesus Christ made upon His day and generation. To call it Catholic is to make it truly universally applicable. Observe, I am not arguing in the least against an elaborate practice of religion. It is in another quarter that we must look for the sanction for that or for simplicity too. It is in the diverse needs of human nature which will lead different kinds of men to offer different kinds of worship. It is the exclusive appropriation of the biggest word we know to one particular form of service which seems to me to make "Catholic" un-Catholic. We must claim for every type of worship which is in accord with the deposit of faith and owned by the Holy Spirit of God that it is Catholic worship.

The Rev. G. D. Oakley, who followed, dealt, as Mr. McCormick had done, with the "Ideals" of Catholicity, and enumerated three—spirituality, liberty, and unity. Canon E. A. Burroughs read an able paper on the "Boundaries" of Catholicity, which seemed as difficult to indicate as the word "Catholicity" is to define. He was against an "exclusive policy":—

Instead, what we need to look out for and exclude is that which is itself, in its working, exclusive. Exclusiveness—especially exclusiveness on principle—is the only irremediably un-Christian and un-Catholic thing. Especially in a time of transition and confusion and creation like the present, it is far more dangerous (both for ourselves and for the Kingdom of God) to exclude what may be partly true, because we know it is partly false, than to admit provisionally—note the word—even what we know to be partly false, because it shows signs (by its fruits, for instance) of being partly true. That is where inspired sympathy and faith come in; the first to feel for and want to welcome any particle of Christ—His truth, His beauty, His love—which we light on anywhere; the second to believe that such particles need not be rejected because they are mixed up at present with much that is "of the earth, earthy," since He Who is the Truth, is still here to guide us, gradually, "into all the Truth," if, abiding in love, we abide in Him.

The Rev. H. B. Gooding, the new Principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, who followed in a speech which showed something of the strength of his keenly analytical mind, referred to the Lambeth Quadrilateral as furnishing four corner-stones, "and if, in imagination, we draw lines to connect up these four we get a fairly clear and definite picture of what we may call the boundaries of our catholicity." But his examination of these four corner-stones showed that "there is what we might call a narrower and a more liberal view, and of course the amount of space or the number of people whom we can include within our quadrilateral varies according as we take the one or the other of those views." Indeed any and every examination of the question raises difficulties. There must be some

limit, and the old problem recurs, "Where are we to draw the line?" If the Islington papers had any weakness it was to be found in the failure to indicate precisely where the line should be drawn, or—and this view found expression in some circles after the Conference—in the desire to draw it too low down. The result of the proceedings at the morning session was to leave one with the impression that "Catholicity" is a very great word, but that its "Ideals" are very difficult to interpret, and that its "Boundaries" are somewhat uncertain.

The afternoon session brought to our notice the **The Catholic Message.** "Purpose" of Catholicity, and we were at once transported to a different atmosphere. Here, certainly, there was no room for vagueness or uncertainty, and the personal appeals made by the several speakers made a profound impression. First came the Rev. W. E. S. Holland, who, declaring that "the Church is Catholic in order that it may manifest the complete glory of the Son of Man, and that it may inform the entire life of all mankind," gave one of those eloquent rousing addresses so characteristic of the Director of the Church of England Recruiting Campaign for Service in the Kingdom of God. He was followed by the Bishop of Chelmsford, who at very short notice took the place which should have been occupied by Prebendary F. S. Webster, so suddenly taken from us just eleven days before the Conference. In an address of great power, which manifestly "gripped" the clergy present, the Bishop urged that the purpose of the Church—the purpose of each clergyman and each member of the Church—must be the same as that which actuated, occupied and dominated the mission of Christ. And what was that? "It was surely the determined will of God, it was surely the purpose of Christ when He left heaven to come down on earth, to win the world into right relationship with God, and, by so doing, to bring it into right relationship with itself." This purpose the Bishop applied to the facts of the world to-day, and he appealed to the clergy even as he appealed to himself "to go back from this Islington Conference determined that we are going to leave little things alone and concentrate on the biggest job that ever any men undertook, the conversion of men through the power of the Holy Ghost by preaching and living out the Cross of Jesus Christ." Prebendary Burroughs in a wonderfully impressive

summary dwelt upon the relation priest and pastor holds to his Lord and Master; and then the Bishop of Truro, in an impromptu speech which touched all hearts, urged that the Catholic message is and can only be the simple Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, he added, after all, I am going to dare to say, at the end of our day's discussion, that what we mean by the word "Evangelical" we also mean by the word "Catholic." The Catholic message is the Evangelical message—the message of the Christ. The Gospel of the Saviour gives us pardon and power also to fulfil the function of the Church of God. God send us forth in the splendid power of that message to get rid, as the Bishop of Chelmsford has suggested, of those smaller things which worry the lives of our parishes and fill the post-bags of our Bishops, and to preach over again in all its largeness and its power the Catholic message, believing that if this is preached it is still, as it has always been, the power of God unto salvation!

It was a fine ending to what had been a really great meeting. Viewed as a whole it may safely be said that the Islington Conference of 1920 was a triumph, and, unless we are altogether mistaken, it will make history.

An announcement of the utmost significance has appeared in the public press:—“By the invitation of the Dean of Durham (Bishop Welldon), Dr. J. H. Jowett, minister of Westminster Chapel, will preach in Durham Cathedral at evensong on Sunday, February 15.” The announcement is the more notable in that it comes at a time when the proposal for interchange of pulpits has received something of a setback, since the Archbishop of Canterbury's suggestion that action upon such questions should be deferred until after the Lambeth Conference. It will not come as a surprise, however, to those who heard Bishop Welldon's speech at the Leicester Church Congress. He is one who holds that no corporate union with the Free Churches is possible except upon the condition that Nonconformists should accept the principle of episcopal ordination, but he holds also that it is essential that something should be done *now* to show that the Church is one. In his Congress speech, therefore, he suggested that the Church, without waiting for the great step of re-Ordination which must be a good while delayed, should meet the great desire of Nonconformists for reunion by some conciliatory measures, including the admission of Nonconformist ministers to the pulpit on special occasions. This invitation to Dr. Jowett is, therefore, a practical illustration of his desire, and we hope he will be strongly supported.

Of critics there will be many ; let those who sympathize with Bishop Welldon not fail to make their voices heard. It may safely be assured that his own Diocesan is at one with him in this matter, for, in a recent letter to *The Times*, the Bishop of Durham said in regard to the suggestion that the full consideration of Interchange should be deferred till the Lambeth Conference that he " cannot think that that counsel lays it as an almost injunction upon diocesan Bishops to allow no occasion, however great or special, or however otherwise appealing, to be used for the promotion of Fellowship in the great mission of the Christian prophet." For himself it would be impossible to take such a course. It will be a great event—a distinguished Nonconformist preaching from the pulpit of one of the Church's historic Cathedrals ; and we trust that Bishop Welldon's courageous example may be followed by Dean Inge at St. Paul's, and Bishop Ryle at Westminster Abbey.

National Church League. One of the most interesting, as well as one of the most important, London gatherings in " Islington week " was the Reception held at the Church House by the National Church League. The President, Sir Edward Clarke, K.C., received the guests, and at the subsequent meeting gave an impressive address from the chair. Excellent speeches were made also by the Rev. W. Stanton Jones, Vicar of Bradford, the Rev. H. A. Wilson, Rector of Cheltenham, and the Dean of Canterbury. Reference was made during the meeting to the great work accomplished by the National Church League—especially in connexion with the Memorial against the proposed changes in the Communion Service—and also to the many opportunities for further service which are opening out so wonderfully before the League. It was, however, very clearly pointed out that if these opportunities are to be taken advantage of, the League must receive a much larger measure of support. It is of the utmost importance, therefore, that the appeal for £10,000 should receive a generous response.

