

Pacific Coast Theological Conference

NOTE: Our own representative having been prevented by other duties from attending many of the meetings of the P.C.T.C., the secretary of the Conference, Rev. J. R. Robertson, has been good enough to supply us with these notes.

All the more because of their source, it is right to record the fact (which, naturally, is not mentioned by Mr. Robertson) that the president of the Conference for this year, Rev. W.H. Vance, at the opening meeting, stated very clearly that the revival of the Conference (after war-time interruption) was due to the work of one man, namely, the secretary, Mr. J. R. Robertson.—(Ed. B.C.M.)

The Pacific Coast Theological has awakened to new life. After an interregnum of four years, brought about by war conditions, it is now seen that the Conference has not been dead but only sleeping, with the many casualties of war it was thought by many that the life of the conference had expired but it is now seen to be alive with vigorous health and rigorous strength.

The Conference held in St. Andrew's church the other week was from the standpoint of the executive officers very gratifying in every particular. The lecturers had responded with great readiness to the requests for programme papers. The subjects dealt with vital themes in masterly manner, bringing honor to the speakers and help to the hearers. There was also a new readiness to sign the register and pay the membership fee which greatly aided the treasurer in meeting accounts. The 90 paid members and the 15 other honored visitors making a signed register of 105 is statistical evidence of the 1920 Conference being one of the best, if not really the best, in its history. It was also very gratifying to note the attendance by the public at the three night sessions. On the first night there was a fine gathering to hear Dr. J. B. Silcox of Seattle who opened the Conference with a lecture of great interest and power on "The Place of Personality in Moral Reform and Social Progress." This lecture raised the Conference to an high altitude which was maintained through all the sessions. On the second night the attendance was larger when Prof. Chas Bieler, D.D., of Montreal lectured with great interest on "The Evolution of Religious Life in France During the Last Fifty Years." The audience listened with keen interest and appreciation to the lecturer who from his birthright inheritance and personal knowledge proved that "France is not a godless nation." The third and closing night was the largest session of the Conference and Prof. Howard, D.D., of Montreal delivered the lecture on "The Essentials of Christianity in the Light of Modern Thought." It was a great subject, a masterly lecture, and a worthy conclusion to a Theological Conference.

There are in the main three ideals which give character and purpose to the Pacific Coast Theological Conference. These ideals make it quite unique among the various religious gatherings of the west. First, is the ideal of "open forum" in its theological point of view. It belongs to no special school of theology. In spirit it is absolutely loyal to Christ, in teaching it is earnestly seeking after truth, but in manner and matter it is open and free. It is neither orthodox nor heterodox, liberal, nor conservative, revolutionary, nor evolutionary, nor reactionary in theology. Each one, whether in lecture or discussion, speaks for himself alone. No motions are passed approving or condemning any man's lecture on theology. As freedom of speech is the safety valve of British democracy and as this freedom, conditioned only by loyalty and love to King and country, has given British democracy world leadership, so in theology the ideal of freedom of speech and open discussion conditioned only by loyalty to Christ and love of truth, must help to make Christian theology the queen of sciences in the world of thought.

The second ideal is international friendship. The Conference constituency is the "Pacific Coast" on both sides of the line and while its membership is drawn chiefly from the

Province of British Columbia and the State of Washington there are always some who come from Eastern Canada and the Southern States. This year outside of B.C. they came from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Montreal, Toronto, and also from Seattle, Tacoma, Everett, Walla Walla, and San Francisco. These all meeting together on equal terms and on friendly grounds in the common pursuit of the queenly science of theology must be productive of international good-will. If the U.S. Senate could have met in some such Conference with the Allied Peace Makers probably the League of Nations would have been signed, sealed and delivered long before this.

The third ideal is interdenominational fellowship. A glance at the programme does not indicate what communions are represented in the Conference but it is of great interest to glean the following facts. The President of the Conference, Rev. W. H. Vance is Principal of the Anglican Theological College in Vancouver; Dr. O. W. Howard of Montreal is Professor in the Anglican Diocesan College there while Rev. E. A. McIntyre is professor in Wycliffe College, Toronto; Dr. Silcox, the first lecturer, is Congregational from Seattle; Dr. Penrose of Walla Walla, is President of Whitman College, Congregational; and Dr. Dyer of Tacoma is Minister of the First Congregational Church there; Dr. Landen of Seattle is Methodist Episcopal Superintendent; Dr. Harper Coates is a Methodist Bishop from Japan and Dr. Sanford is Principal of Columbian College, Methodist, of New Westminster; Dr. Kennedy of Tacoma, Principal Smith of Westminster Hall, Rev. A. F. Munroe of Duncan, and Rev. J. R. Robertson, Secretary of the Conference, are all Presbyterians. Rev. W. S. Ryder is a Baptist; Rev. M. R. Ely is of the Christian Church; Rev. Chas. Bieler of French Blood, is Professor in the Presbyterian College, Montreal. The register also shows that the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian Chinese missionaries in Vancouver—three splendid Christian Chinese, signed the roll and paid the fee.

It is enough to say in conclusion that the Conference members and officers believe that these ideals are not only worthy but are being in some degree attained and that the success of this seventh Conference warrants the executive in making large and hopeful preparations for the Conference of 1921, to be held in Tacoma.

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