

THE CHURCHMAN

July, 1933.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

The Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen.

THE Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen held at St. Peter's Hall, Oxford, last April, was in many ways a remarkable gathering. In a year when the attention of Church-people is being directed to the Oxford Movement, it was good for Evangelical Churchmen to meet to set before all who are interested the debt which the Church owes to the great Evangelical Revival, and to those devoted men who led a revival of the religious life in England during the closing years of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth centuries. The Conference considered not only the great debt owed to the leaders of the past, but discussed fully the important problems which face the religious world to-day, and the help which Evangelical teaching and practice are able to offer for their solution. We regret that we are unable to fulfil our promise to give all the papers read at the Conference in this number of THE CHURCHMAN. We have been able to do so for many years past through the courtesy of the readers of the papers, but this year we found that other arrangements had been made for the publication of most of them, and we are only able to offer to our readers the papers of Preb. Hinde on "World Evangelisation" and of Mr. Robert Stokes on "A National Church." A summary of the other papers was given in *The Church Gazette* for May.

The Findings of the Conference.

These two papers will give our readers some idea of the important subjects discussed at the Conference, and the value of the contributions made to the discussion of the best methods of making Evangelicalism effective as a power in the religious life of our day. The Findings of the Conference were of special interest and for the purpose of future reference we append them.

The following Findings were agreed upon at the final session of the Conference. They are to be taken, as in previous years, as expressing the general sense of the Conference, and not as representing in detail the views of individual members.

1. The Evangelical Message is the Good News of Salvation from sin through the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ realised in a personal relationship between the individual believer and God.

2. The tradition of this Evangelical Message has been continuously maintained throughout the ages—a fact which has been largely obscured by some presentations of Church history—and was re-affirmed at the Reformation.

3. The outstanding characteristic of the Evangelical Revival was conversion through the preaching of the Gospel, bringing an assurance of Justification by Faith and peace with God; and experience shows that the Gospel has ever the same power in changing lives. The call to Evangelicals to-day is to preach the same message and to aim at the same result.

4. The new life in Christ of those who have been born of the Spirit through Faith issues in the common life of the Church, which is the whole body of those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, and the expression of their corporate action.

5. As Evangelicals have in the past been leaders in new movements in Church life and worship, they should be prepared still to be pioneers in the endeavour to meet the changing needs of the day, provided that all expression in doctrine, ritual and ceremony conforms with and represents the truth of the Gospel message.

6. The Evangelical Revival resulted in a larger vision of Christian life and work. The Gospel was applied to the problems of Human Welfare with lasting results; and the Church was awakened to the duty of World Evangelisation. The call to-day is to press forward to an ever fuller application of the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ to every department of life; and also to greater self-sacrifice and devotion in the face of the challenging need of the whole world for the Redeemer.

7. It is the ideal of a National Church to act as the conscience of a Christian nation. But the fact that the nation is not fully Christian calls for a much more intense campaign for the Evangelisation of our own land, particularly in this day of opportunity. This requires greater unity among Evangelicals as well as larger unity in the Christian Church.

Bishop Knox's History of the Tractarian Movement.

Bishop Knox's great book on the Tractarian Movement has been recognised by many competent judges as a valuable contribution to the Church history of the nineteenth century. Its special value is that it represents the Oxford Movement as "a Phase of the Religious Revival in Western Europe in the Second Quarter of the Nineteenth Century." No one, so far as we know, has treated the whole subject before from this point of view, and the importance of the wide background of religious thought in Europe during the early part of the last century gives a perspective of special value. It helps to place in their true position the reactionary influences at work, and the narrowing tendencies of ecclesiastical thought which resulted in the condition which Dr. Brioth in his impartial account of the Anglican Revival describes as the Static Conception of the Church. The consequences that followed from this view of the Church are evident in many of the opinions which the Anglo-Catholic section of the Church regard as truly "Catholic" although they are in reality borrowed from Romanism. There are signs that modern scholarship is breaking down the narrow Medievalism which has for so long hampered the true development of real Catholicism, and many of the party are abandoning the shibboleths which did duty with the advanced Churchmen who came under the influence of the later Tractarians.

The Unity of the Church.

As the centenary of the Oxford Movement is being used as an opportunity for an appeal to all sections of the Church for unity, it ought to be made quite plain that the principal obstacles to unity are those which arise from the teaching of those who follow that Movement. In the first place they are wedded to a theory of the Apostolical Succession as the normal method of the transmission of the grace of the Sacraments, which was unknown in the English Church for at least three hundred years after the Reformation. The theory has no foundation either in the teaching of Our Lord, or in that of the Primitive Church. This is the chief obstacle to unity, and harmony can be in large measure restored to the Church when the claims based on this theory of Succession are abandoned as untenable. Following from this theory is the sacerdotal conception of the ministry, involving belief in a change in the elements of the Holy Communion, and the doctrine of the sacrifice of the Mass. The valuable volume on the Evangelical Doctrine of the Holy Communion shows clearly that these are merely medieval developments, and ought to have no place in a full and true Catholicism. There is probably no more misused word in the English language than "Catholicism" and the best way to secure unity would be for all parties in the Church to join in a great endeavour to restore the word to its rightful meaning.

Lord Brentford.

Our readers will be glad to have their attention drawn to the biography of Lord Brentford which has recently appeared. It is described as *The Authoritative and Official Biography of William Joynson-Hicks. First Viscount Brentford of Newick*. It is written by Mr. H. A. Taylor, who has had access to memoranda prepared by Lord Brentford in gathering materials for his own memoirs, and he has also had the assistance of members of the family. It is a most interesting record of a remarkable career, and gives a vivid account of the many difficulties which Lord Brentford had to encounter on his way to the great position which he ultimately occupied in the government of the country. We have no doubt that some of those difficulties were due to his firm and uncompromising Protestant principles, and Churchmen owe him a deep debt of gratitude for the courage and perseverance which he displayed in defence of their cause. The National Church League has opened a Viscount Brentford Memorial Fund which gives an opportunity to all who appreciated his work to perpetuate his memory. It is proposed to raise £3,000 to provide a "Brentford" Exhibition Fund for ordination candidates tenable at a Theological College or at the Universities, and another £5,000 as a "Brentford Endowment Fund" for the advancement of the educational work of the League. Gifts may be sent to the N.C.L. Office, Wine Office Court, Fleet Street, E.C.4.