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THE CHURCHMAN

April—June, 1939.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

THE present number of **THE CHURCHMAN** is devoted to the Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen held at St. Peter's Hall, on March 27th, 28th and 29th.

A full report is given of the papers read at the Conference. The subject was "Spiritual Rearmament," and as it is of so great current interest, we believe that many will value the opportunity of being able to read the important contributions made to the various aspects of the subject by the speakers at the Conference.

THE FINDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE.

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 call to Moral Rearmament will be ineffective unless it is the fruit of Spiritual Rearmament. The first necessity of such Spiritual Rearmament is the re-establishment of God at the centre of our national life. The resort to prayer by a nation on its knees in time of crisis only would be perilous without change of heart. To seek God's Presence in time of trouble carries with it the obligation to walk in the light of that Presence in daily life.

2. The only possible basis of spiritual rearmament is the Word of reconciliation—"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." That Word of reconciliation is committed to the Church in trust, not for a favoured nation only, but for the whole world, and not for one generation only but for every age; and the Church to which it is committed is not the particular national Church of one people or a collection of churches of one polity, but the whole congregation of faithful people in whom the Holy Spirit dwells and works. The truth of God is unchanging, but its application to each age must be expressed in language familiar to the people of that day, and adapted to the conditions of the times.

3. Christianity is the revelation of God in Christ, His will and His purpose, seeking and finding man. The Gospel of Salvation for the world surmounts all barriers of race and speech and transcends all

limitations of ecclesiastical organization. It is found in the Holy Scriptures alone, irradiated and made effective by the Holy Spirit of God ; the Mission of the Church with the Scriptures in its hand is to proclaim that Gospel to every creature.

4. God wills unity in His Church. This is not primarily a unity of visible organization, but the unity of the Spirit. Unity of spirit must precede unity of framework. If it be true (as stated at Lambeth in 1923) that the ministries of non-episcopally governed churches are "real ministries of Christ's Word and Sacraments in the Universal Church," then it is inconsistent and unreasonable to demand episcopal re-ordination of those who exercise such ministries in order to recognize their validity. It is the Holy Spirit Who validates the Ministry and not the Ministry that constitutes the Church. The Conference is of opinion that the time has come for the spirit of fellowship produced by the Oecumenical movement to be translated into action in a carefully regulated practice of Intercommunion, which ought not to be delayed as if it were a goal only to be reached after organic union has been otherwise attained.

5. The Conference is of opinion that the historic relationship between Church and State in our land is of vital importance. We need to recover the conception of the Church as the soul of the nation ; for the nation as well as the Church has in God's Providence been put in trust with the Gospel. The nation needs to learn that none of us liveth to himself and none of us dieth to himself and that the whole world, East and West, is bound up in the bundle of life and suffers from the same sin and needs the same Saviour. This is not to impose upon the younger churches the burden of our own traditions but rather to assist them to develop the expression of their spiritual life in accordance with Holy Scripture consonantly with their own national or racial genius.

6. The strength of the nation is in the home. It is there, in the individual relationships of the family that the problems of sin and of saving health are most acutely felt. The Gospel begins with the personal relationship of the individual soul with the personal God. As it confronts the home the Gospel sanctifies the marriage bond, and hallows the relationship of parent to child, and brother with brother, and master with servant. Then will its power be adequately seen in the larger relationships of the community, the nation and the world.

7. The Gospel of salvation, the message that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself is the authentic and final message of God to man. This only can meet and adjust the fallacies alike of authoritarianism and of communistic idealism, and dispel the prevailing religious apathy. The Christian must take his Christianity seriously. His life is his Lord's. The claim of God is upon the entire service and devotion of every individual and demands the complete abandonment of all claims of self "for Christ's sake and the Gospel's." He cannot abdicate or delegate his individual responsibility. In the ultimate challenge he must choose between God and the prince of this world, between the way of the Cross and the enticements and fascinations of the age.