

# THE CHURCHMAN

July, 1932.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS.

### *The Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen.*

THE Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen, held at St. Peter's Hall on April 6th, 7th and 8th, maintained the traditions of useful discussion and instruction already established at these Conferences. The Committee, feeling that not only is the present a critical time in the history of the country—and indeed of the world—but there is a widespread feeling abroad that a revival of religion is impending, chose for its subject "The Way of Revival" in the hope that its papers and discussions might prove of practical help to the clergy in reaping in their parishes the fruits of quickened spiritual life. The Committee also selected as a sub-title, "Ruin, Redemption, Regeneration." The Conference opened with an affirmation that the Cross is central to the whole discussion. After that, as the great purpose of the Conference was to be practical in character, three Movements which are exerting undoubted influence in revival-thinking and practice were examined, the three chief sessions of the Conference being applied to the teaching of Professor Rudolf Otto, Professor Karl Barth and Dr. Frank N. D. Buchman. Very useful discussions took place after the reading of each paper, in which many members of the Conference took part. We regret that we are unable to give the addresses of the speakers who contributed to these discussions, but they formed a useful contribution to the final drawing up of the Findings.

### *The Findings of the Conference.*

For the convenience of readers we give the Findings of the Conference :—

1. The Conference holds that in view of the present critical time in the history of the world a revival of personal religion, which is imperatively needed, must be the work of the Holy Spirit, and the Church must prepare itself more fully to be used for the carrying out of God's purpose for humanity.

2. The Conference thankfully recognizes the value of the "Way of Renewal" that is being carried on by the Bishops and Clergy,

but suggests that it should include a clearer call for the conversion of the sinner.

3. In regard to the tendency to-day to present the offer of salvation through the life of Christ as distinct from His death, the Conference emphasizes the objective nature of the Atonement and the centrality of the Cross as the vital factors in man's salvation.

4. The Conference recognizes with thankfulness that in the movements associated with the names of Otto and Barth, as well as in the Oxford Group Movement, the controlling thought is the supreme power and sovereign authority of God.

5. The Conference appreciates the value of the numinous element in man's approach to God as a means of elevating the idea of worship, but feels the difficulty of associating it with ideas which can be conceptually and rationally apprehended.

6. The Conference recognizes that the value of Professor Barth's teaching on the sovereign power of God is important as restoring the true conception of God's relation to man, but in its present stage it is incomplete as an adequate interpretation of all the elements in that relationship.

7. The Conference appreciates the work of the Oxford Group Movement in bringing into prominence the value of the power of complete self-surrender to God and of the exchange of religious experiences, and would appreciate the opportunity of discussing the elements in it which appear to many to be inconsistent with Christian experience and teaching throughout the ages.

8. The Conference recognizes that the urgent need of the present day is to bring the sinful nature of man under the saving power of the atoning death of Christ, and that when this is effected, renewal and regeneration are experienced by the individual soul.

9. The Conference believes that by this means the "Way of Revival" will be opened up, and to this end it emphasizes the importance of continual believing prayer on the part of all Christians.

#### Intercommunion.

At the last session of the Conference Canon Guy Rogers moved the following resolution:—

"That this Conference, recognizing the great need of Reunion with Free Churchmen if the Church of England is to give an effective witness to the Nation, emphatically re-affirms its former findings on the subject.

"And believing that unity is promoted by giving sacramental expression to fellowship already existing, welcomes as a growing manifestation of the Christian spirit the specific proposals made by the Bishops for the cordial reception on occasion of Free Churchmen at the Holy Communion Service."

In moving it Canon Guy Rogers pointed out that it was difficult at first sight to see how the proposals of the Bishops for admitting Nonconformists on occasion to the Holy Communion would arouse more than a flicker of interest in a world grown accustomed to far-reaching proposals for Intercommunion and Reunion. He expressed

the firm belief that we are called in a special way to give this witness with our Nonconformist brethren in a United Church in this country, just as the Churches in South India believe that God has called them to give a United Witness to the power of the Gospel in that country.

Canon Guy Rogers' speech was reported in full in the *Record* newspaper on the 15th April last, and was trenchant and powerful in character; and the resolution being wholly in accord with the general principles of the Conference it was formally seconded by Dr. A. J. M. Macdonald and carried unanimously.

#### Disestablishment.

In view of the effort being made by the Bishop of Durham and others to force the question of Disestablishment into the realm of practical politics, the issue of Sir Lewis Dibdin's collection of Essays entitled *Establishment in England* (Macmillan & Co., 7s. 6d. net) is very welcome. Its publication just as this number of the *CHURCHMAN* was going to press compels us to defer our review of the book until October, but we very cordially commend it to the notice of our readers. It will be invaluable to those who may have to take part in discussions on the subject and to all who wish to have a clear and just view of a question which is being obscured by partisan prejudice and by heated declamation with regard to the connection between Parliament and the affairs of the Church.

Our own view is that the connection between religion and the State which is involved in and secured by the establishment of a National Church is of the utmost practical value and benefits the nation in ways none the less real because they are not always apparent on the surface. It remains true that "righteousness exalteth a nation and sin is a reproach to any people." Whatever therefore makes for the rational recognition of God and of the fact that "He ruleth in the affairs of men," helps towards the attainment of national righteousness and the avoidance of national sin, and should be preserved at all costs. It is not by their conduct alone that we should judge either individuals or communities, but by their ideals; and to destroy those ideals or whatever helps towards their maintenance is to that extent a lowering of the stimulus to moral and spiritual achievement.