

THE CHURCHMAN

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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

The Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen.

THE Committee of the Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen has done well in choosing "Evangelicalism Yesterday and To-day" as the general subject for this year's meeting. The Conference will be held at St. Peter's Hall on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, April 6, 7 and 8, and it is anticipated that there will be a large attendance of members. The intrinsic interest of the subject will be an attraction to many, and the Committee has succeeded in bringing together a strong platform of speakers who will do full justice to the various aspects of the subject. Evangelicalism in the past has made a valuable contribution to the life of the Church. It must never be forgotten that in the days of the high and dry Churchmanship of the eighteenth century the Evangelical leaders inspired the country with new religious life. And while they shocked by their "enthusiasm" the dull moralists of that rationalistic age, they brought to the masses of the people a fresh realisation of the meaning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Most students of history who are not blinded by prejudice do justice to the value of the work of the Evangelicals in social reform and the general improvement of the condition of the masses. The rapid industrial development of the early nineteenth century with the immense wealth that it brought to many was an impediment to the growth of spiritual religion. But it must never be forgotten that many of the great industrial magnates were amongst those who contributed most generously to the work of the Church both at home and abroad. In this they resembled the great leaders of the Clapham Sect who gave most liberally of their means to support good causes.

The Future of Evangelicalism.

The Conference will not deal solely with the influence and work of Evangelicalism in the past. There is still a great field open for the efforts of Evangelical Churchmen, and they have as valuable a contribution as ever to make to Church life. In a day when undue emphasis is being laid on the institutional aspects of Christianity

the thoughts of men require to be brought back to Christ Himself, and concentrated on His personality, His life, death and Resurrection with all their significance for mankind. It will be the aim of the Oxford Conference to bring out as clearly and as definitely as possible this teaching of the Evangelical School and the best method of applying it to the special problems of to-day. The names of the readers of papers are a guarantee that the essential elements of the Evangelical interpretation of Christianity will be ably enunciated, and that valuable suggestions will be made as to the best means of making the witness of Evangelical Church-people most effective. The work of the Evangelical Revival still goes on and its power is needed as of old in "Preaching and Conversion," in "Church Life and Worship," in thought for "Human Welfare" and in care for "World Evangelisation." Its aim is in the best sense to produce "A National Church" and "A Christian Nation." We hope to print in our next issue the papers read at the Conference on these interesting aspects of an important subject.

The Importance of the Evangelical Ideal.

This Conference may help to remove the one-sided impression that may be produced by the celebration of the Centenary of the Oxford Movement this year. Attention has been so extensively concentrated on the work of the Tractarians that it is necessary to recall people to the true relation of their teaching and work to the life of the Church as a whole. The Evangelical Revival was in the true line of succession from the great leaders of the Reformation. It represented the principles for which they stood, and the New Testament ideals which they maintained. The endeavour to represent the Oxford Movement as a continuance and development of the Evangelical Revival is a complete misrepresentation of the facts. The dread of Liberalism which inspired Keble's sermon on National Apostasy in July, 1833, and the subsequent developments under the leadership of Newman led to a conception of the Church which has proved disruptive and divisive in our Church life. The progress of the Evangelical influence was checked by this new and disturbing element. Attention was turned from the inner and spiritual interests of religion to the outward and institutional character of the Church. The result has been a conflict between the two ideals of Christianity represented respectively by Protestantism and Romanism. No one can see yet what the future will bring, but the future of Christianity in view of the development of materialism in Russia and other causes must be precarious unless there is a strong reaction towards the Evangelical ideal and the spiritual emphasis.

The True Significance of Tractarianism.

To those who study the Movements of the first half of the nineteenth century the reason of the unsoundness of the Tractarian position is clear. Their whole position is based on an untrue conception of the nature of the Holy Catholic Church. This is amply

demonstrated in Bishop Knox's great book on *The Tractarian Movement* which has just appeared. Our reviewer points out in this number of *THE CHURCHMAN* the value of this account of the causes, development and teaching of the Movement, and we recommend the work very heartily to our readers, as the most satisfactory explanation of its various phases which has yet appeared. It is shown that the Reformation was largely a movement for the emancipation of the laity from the control of the clergy. One of the essential elements in Tractarianism was an endeavour in the name of the restoration of discipline to bring the laity again into subjection to the clergy. This claim was based on the theory of Apostolical Succession put forward by Keble, Newman and their associates. Keble wrote of "the Apostolical Church" in this country, and claims were made for the Church of England as representing that Church which were narrow and intolerant, and which could not be sustained. The researches of modern scholarship have demonstrated that there is no evidence to support the Tractarian teaching on the nature of Apostolical Succession.

Views of Contemporaries on Tractarianism.

It has recently been pointed out in the *Church Gazette* that Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, showed in the early days of Tractarianism that "To say our Lord has expressly sanctioned Apostolic Succession is to make Him to say what He has not said, unless they can produce some other credible record of His words besides the books of the four Evangelists and the Apostolical Epistles. . . . It cannot be deduced from His sayings 'because the doctrine in itself bears no mark of having had Christ for its author.'" He said of the Movement as a whole: "Its doctrines resemble the teaching of no set of writers entitled to respect either in the early Church or in our own; they tend, not to Christ's glory or to the advancement of holiness, but simply to the exaltation of the clergy; and they are totally unsupported by the authority of Scripture"; and finally: "The notion of Mr. Newman and his friends that the sacraments derive their efficacy from the Apostolic Succession of the Minister is so extremely unchristian that it actually deserves to be called anti-Christian." It was also pointed out that Archbishop Whately, after a thorough examination of the claims made for this theory of Apostolic Succession, came to the conclusion that it is fallacious "to rest the powers of the ministry on some supposed Sacramental virtue transmitted from hand to hand in unbroken succession from the Apostles in a chain, of which if any one link is even doubtful a distressing uncertainty is thrown over all Christian ordinances, Sacraments and Church privileges for ever."

Views of Modern Scholars.

Modern research and scholarship have only confirmed these views of the earlier opponents of the Tractarian Movement. Several writers have shown that if the claims made for the Episcopal Succession are to be substantiated much clearer evidence is demanded than

that which its supporters can deduce from the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament. Canon Streeter in his book, *The Primitive Church*, has shown the variety of Church organisation that existed in the early centuries. Others have shown that the emphasis laid on tracing the succession from the Apostles in any primitive Church was not as a means for the transmission of grace but as a guarantee of the transmission of sound doctrine. The mechanical and almost magical view of the efficacy of the laying on of hands is contrary to the whole spiritual conception of Christ's teaching. The Bishop of Gloucester has recalled St. Augustine's view that the manual acts were in the nature of a prayer and that the succession is one of Office and not of Consecration. Dean Inge has emphasised the view that the true succession in the Church is the succession of Saints. Even High Churchmen now decline to assert that the Church confers the *power* to celebrate a valid sacrament on the clergy, though it does confer *authority* to do so. It is on the ground of the narrow and exclusive theory of Apostolic Succession that a small band of advanced Churchmen have sought to wreck the South India Scheme of Reunion. We trust that sounder views of the true nature and value of episcopacy will prevail.

Our Contributors.

We have the pleasure of offering our readers this quarter a statement on the supposed relationship between the Evangelical Revival and the Oxford Movement by the Rev. T. C. Hammond, M.A., the head of the Irish Church Missions in Dublin. Mr. Hammond is already well known as a student of medieval theories, and their bearing upon modern religious developments. The Rev. F. Bate, D.D., has a special interest in the various phases of English Church work on the Continent by virtue of his office of Secretary of the C. and C.S. He tells the story of "How the English secured Liberty of Worship in Hamburg." The Rev. E. Hirst, Vicar of St. Paul's, Stockport, was formerly a colleague of Archdeacon Thorpe, and shared his studies. He presents a useful study of "The Priesthood of the Laity." The historical studies of the Rev. R. Mercer Wilson, M.A., Secretary of the Religious Tract Society, are already well known to many of our readers. Wycliffe's work, with which he deals, is always of interest to those who value the early origins of the Reformation. The Rev. T. C. Lawson, M.A., contributes a useful piece of exegesis on "The Five Faithful Sayings" in St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy and Titus. Mr. A. E. C. Prescott is a member of the Bar who supplies some information relating to the Law regarding Tithes that will be found useful at the present time when questions are being raised in regard to them. We regret that we have not been able to give as much space as we should like to do to the review of the numerous important books that have recently appeared.