

THE CHURCHMAN

January, 1938.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

“The Churchman.”

ONCE again we take the opportunity afforded by the opening of another year, to thank our readers for their continued support and for the many kind expressions of appreciation which from time to time we receive, testifying to the value and practical usefulness of THE CHURCHMAN. We are encouraged by this support to ask that our friends will help us to make THE CHURCHMAN more generally known by commending it to the notice of others and thus secure for it more subscribers and a wider circulation. THE CHURCHMAN has from its inception stood for the maintenance of those Evangelical principles which lie at the root of the Reformation in the sixteenth century and are the very foundation of spiritual and intellectual freedom. The Reformation turned upon the question whether the medieval or the New Testament conception of Christianity should prevail and by its success the latter was restored to us. There is great need for such an organ as THE CHURCHMAN to keep these vital issues before the minds of church people when they are being beclouded by sophistry and by misrepresentation of the character and aims of the Reformers, and of what the Reformation actually did for our Church and nation.

It is, moreover, important that evangelical principles should be maintained, expounded and defended against the fire of criticism which is constantly directed against them. But they are inherently their own defence where they are candidly studied; they make for social as much as for individual righteousness, for the well-being of the nation as much as for that of the Church, and no school of thought has less need to apologize for either its principles or its achievement than the Evangelical.

The English Bible.

The present year will see the culmination of the special effort to commemorate the fourth centenary of the Reformation. It was in the year 1538 that the order for the setting up of the Bible in the English

tongue in all the parish churches of the country began to take effect. This, which was the greatest gift of the Reformation, and the most beneficial in its results, has been wisely chosen as affording a point both in time and in event upon which our minds may concentrate. The Council has been well advised in this concentration upon the Bible, for it is a point of unity in which all are interested and are concerned. Christian people of the most diverse views on many other points are agreed upon this, and vast numbers who may not enrol themselves as Christians acclaim the moral influence, the literary charm, and the permanent value of the sacred Scriptures. It is thus possible to speak of the Commemoration as National and every effort has been made to give it this character. The Council responsible for the carrying out of the movement has been very actively at work for the past two or three years in securing the co-operation of leaders of thought and action in all the Churches, in the educational world and in the Press and wherever opinion could be influenced. Though they have not prematurely sought publicity, yet a large amount of attention has been already aroused and there has been published a considerable amount of valuable literature dealing principally with the Bible from the point of view of its history and power. For many years past observant people have drawn attention to the great decay among all classes of the habit of reading the Bible, and to the consequent loss of spiritual power, and of moral force. Standards are lowered, self-indulgence is condoned, and the idea of duty as a moral imperative more than as a matter of convention or practical utility is lessened. We need not exaggerate such signs or ignore all that is still making for righteousness in our midst, but it is widely admitted that need for a fuller and deeper recognition of the claims of God, both upon the individual and the nation is very great. And there is nothing which will meet that need more than a return to the reverent study of God's Word and a sincere response to its teaching.

It has been arranged that there shall be a great united service of thanksgiving in St. Paul's Cathedral on Friday, June 17th, and that the following Sunday, June 19th, shall be devoted in every church and chapel throughout England to thanksgiving for the blessing of the English Bible, and of freedom to possess and read it. It is much to be hoped that clergy, ministers, and leaders of Bible classes and Sunday School teachers will, moreover, take the opportunity throughout the whole of this year of commemoration and thanksgiving, and not only at special seasons or on special days, so to preach and teach as to lead their hearers to catch some vision of what the Bible is in its appealing power, its authority, its simplicity and its greatness, and to make it their own. As Sir Arthur Quiller Couch said in one of his lectures at Cambridge, "Very well, then : my first piece of advice *on reading the Bible* is that you do it." He proceeds, a little later, to express strongly the view that the young read the Bible less and enjoy it less—probably read it less because they enjoy it less—than their fathers did. And it is significant that the late Dr. A. S. Peake wrote in 1913,

“ One of the most ominous signs in the life of the Churches at the present time is the ignorance of Scripture which meets us on every hand,” and he wrote further, “ The consequences of this neglect are disastrous. It is unquestionable that neglect of the Bible is coincident with a lowered spiritual vitality.” If this year’s effort succeeds in dispelling this ignorance and neglect, its purpose will have been accomplished. It will require energy and much sacrifice of time on the part of everybody who is really interested to do this, but it will be worth while, for it is eternally true that “ man doth not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

The Reformation.

Though for various compelling reasons the official commemoration, if it may so be called, will almost exclusively be concerned with the Bible, yet that gift, great as it was, was not the whole of the Reformation and there is much beyond for which we may thank God and which we desire to keep in remembrance. The very release from the tyranny which would have made it impossible for us to have or to read the Bible, is one that must not be forgotten when we see at the present day how active is the Church of Rome in countries under her domination in keeping the Scriptures from the people. At the same time the Reformation brought us the true light of the Gospel of Christ and delivered us from the falsities and superstitions by which it had been hidden. Indeed, it is not easy to measure the extent of our debt to the Reformation. It was a chief source of the civil and religious liberties which we enjoy to-day ; to it we owe more than to anything else the educational advantages and philanthropic activities and the humanitarian sentiment which are such marked features of modern civilization. It may be true that some of the fruits of the Reformation ripened slowly, but habits of thought and life which are long ingrained take long to change. We can see the change progressing through the four hundred years which have elapsed since then, and though there is much yet to be done we may be devoutly and sincerely thankful for what has been accomplished. In order to bring this before a people which has almost forgotten its past, and is unmindful of the dangers which forgetfulness involves, it will be necessary to provide in lectures and sermons and speeches, and by the agency of the Press, some worthy and adequate account of the great spiritual struggle against the well-armed and entrenched forces of sacerdotal domination and superstition. The most interesting avenue of approach is furnished by the many excellent biographies of the Reformers which are now accessible, of which Mr. J. F. Mozley’s *Life of William Tyndale*, reviewed in another column, is a capital example. There are lives also of Luther, of Cranmer, of Wycliffe, of Latimer, of Calvin, and of the other Reformers which are of the profoundest interest, and which should make us ashamed that these men to whom we owe so much should so easily have been consigned to oblivion. The best modern account of the Reformation as a whole is still that of Dr. T. M. Lindsay, and though the space devoted

to the English Reformation is small as compared with that given to Germany, yet it is not easy to speak too highly of it. And there has just been published a *History of the Reformation*, by Dr. L. Elliott-Binns, which, in about 250 pages gives us a clear and valuable introductory sketch by a scholar who is thoroughly acquainted with the whole field. The National Church League is taking an active part in this year's commemoration and the Secretary will gladly furnish information regarding literature, lectures, courses of sermons to any who may desire it. Application should be made to The Secretary, N.C.L., Dean Wace House, Wine Office Court, London, E.C.4.

Our Contributors.

We are glad to be able to present to our readers an interesting article by the Rev. S. C. Steer, Vice Principal of St. John's Hall, Highbury, on "Unity in Principle," in which he discusses the fundamental elements in any schemes for the reunion of the Churches. Mr. Geddes MacGregor contributes "A Study of the Confessions of Saint Augustine," in which he examines the great classic from a modern point of view. The Rev. C. T. Harley Walker adds to a recent contribution on some aspects of the Eastern Church an account of a further episode, concerning the relations of "Pope Pius IX and the Orthodox Patriarchs." One of the most important philosophical works recently published is Dr. G. Dawes Hicks' *The Philosophical Basis of Theism*, and we have been fortunate in securing the expert help of Dr. A. R. Whately to examine the book at some length for the benefit of our readers. The Rev. F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock is the author of many well-known works on theological subjects. His *Donnellan Lectures at Dublin University on The Atonement and Modern Thought* has been recognized as one of the most satisfactory studies of a difficult subject. His treatment of the meaning of "Justification by Faith," will be found an instructive analysis of New Testament teaching. Dr. R. F. Wright deals with some facts that are often neglected in considering "Strength and Beauty," in connection with the words of the Psalmist, "Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary." Lieut.-Col. F. Molony brings to the notice of our readers some interesting speculations, based upon the work of the Rev. T. Torrance, a Presbyterian Missionary in connection with the American Bible Society, who has visited the remote parts of the mountainous regions of Western China, in regard to customs which may be based upon some of the Old Testament practices of the Jews. He regards it as "An Important and Remarkable Discovery." We regret that we have been obliged to hold over notices of a number of recent books owing to the limitations of our space. We have drawn the attention of our readers to some which we believe will be useful to them. As the year of the commemoration of the Fourth Centenary of the English Reformation, attention has been given to some books that may help to a better understanding of the meaning of that great Movement.