

THE CHURCHMAN

April—June, 1938.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

To Our Readers.

IN accordance with our promise we present our readers with a full report of all the papers read at the recent Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen (formerly the Cheltenham Conference), held at St. Peter's Hall, Oxford, on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, April 4th, 5th and 6th, 1938. In order to include the complete text of all the papers it has been necessary to increase the size of this number of **THE CHURCHMAN**, and we have accordingly added a number of pages so that the account of the Conference will be found fully reported. The importance of the subject: "The Bible and the Reformation" and the informative character of the contents of the papers give a permanent value to the Report, and we trust that our readers will secure for them as wide a circulation as possible. We regret that in spite of the increase in the size of this issue we have been obliged to hold over a large number of reviews of books, which is a feature that we know is much appreciated by very many of our readers. As the Report of the Conference and of the Findings filled all the available space, we felt that we were consulting the wishes of the members of the Conference and the wide circle of those interested in its proceedings in giving the Report as we have done in *extenso*. For reference we append The Findings of 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. This Conference, meeting under the chairmanship of the Master of St. Peter's Hall who originally suggested the celebration of the Fourth Centenary of the Reformation, records its thankfulness to Almighty God for its blessings, more particularly for the gift of the open Bible in our tongue, and rejoices that the celebration is being so widely supported.

2. The Conference affirms its conviction that the only solution of the world's political, social and religious problems will be found in the recognition

of the redemptive work and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in Holy Scripture.

3. While thankfully noting the statement of the Commission on Christian Doctrine that "The Church has always claimed that its doctrine is based on Scripture," and that "the religious and moral teaching of the Gospels . . . possesses supreme authority," the Conference regrets that the Commission did not put this principle into practice by loyally applying the criterion of Holy Scripture to all doctrine on which there is disagreement among Church people.

4. The Conference takes its stand, with the Reformers, in reasserting the central truth of the Gospel that whereas "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," the believer is justified freely by God's Grace "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

5. Those who are thus justified by faith alone have personal and direct access to God through Christ the one Mediator between God and men, and they constitute the Priesthood of all believers. Thus, to quote Bishop Lightfoot, "The Kingdom of Christ . . . has no sacerdotal system."

6. The Conference hopes that the emphasis placed by the Reformers on the paramount importance of the Ministry of the Word may be recovered, and that as one result of the Fourth Centenary Commemoration the Church will discharge more adequately her prophetic function of teaching and expounding the Holy Scriptures. It respectfully invites the Principals of Theological Colleges and Training Schools for the Ministry to instruct ordinands in the practice of Expository Preaching, as well as in the faithful proclamation of the Gospel.

7. The Conference thankfully recalls that the appeal to Holy Scripture by the Reformers led to more spiritual conceptions of the Sacraments, and to the purification of worship, transforming the Mass into a Communion in keeping with its original Institution. The Conference holds that the narrative of the Institution should continue to be the criterion of any Eucharistic development.

8. The Reformation has been the fruitful seed of true liberty in all departments of thought and life. It gave to our country a new spirit which inspired great social and economic changes, affecting alike Community, State and Church. The Conference believes that present conditions in the world demand the application particularly to our commercial and industrial life of the Reformation principle of man's personal responsibility to God.

9. The Reformation also awakened men through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to a new sense of Christian liberty which, in place of subjection to priestly direction calls for self-dedication to the Lord Jesus Christ, and a voluntary exercise of self-discipline with a view to more effective service to God and man.

10. The realisation of the noble heritage which is ours through the Reformation, demands of us a fuller acceptance of the Gospel of Salvation by the free Grace of God through faith which is in Christ Jesus, and a more consistent witness to the Gospel both abroad and at home, in the power of the Holy Spirit.