

Editorial

THE four main articles in this issue, dealing with the subject of Justification by Faith, represent the substance of the papers read at this year's Conference of the Evangelical Fellowship of Theological Literature. In view of the interest and importance which attaches to the subject at the present time, we are particularly glad of the opportunity of reproducing these studies in THE CHURCHMAN. It is much to be desired that Evangelicals on their side should have a clear understanding of what they mean and what they are contending for when they affirm their belief in the doctrine of Justification by Faith; and on the other hand it is equally imperative that Anglo-Catholics should disabuse their minds of those unfortunate misapprehensions concerning this doctrine which perversely and persistently manifest themselves in much of their writings. The present articles will fulfil a useful purpose if they contribute towards both these ends. The writers are: The Rt. Rev. Geoffrey F. Allen, Bishop in Egypt; The Rev. G. W. H. Lampe, Chaplain and Fellow of St. John's College, Oxford; The Rev. T. H. L. Parker, Vicar of Brothertoft, Boston; and The Rev. Douglas Webster, Tutor at the London College of Divinity.

The third of the reports elicited by the Archbishop of Canterbury with reference to the conflict of the so-called Catholic and Protestant traditions has now made its appearance. This is *The Fulness of Christ*¹, produced by a group of Anglican Evangelical scholars, which thus takes its place alongside the two previously published documents entitled *Catholicity* (representing the Anglo-Catholic viewpoint) and *The Catholicity of Protestantism* (expressing the views of the English Free Churches).

The present report sets out primarily to do two things: first, to expound in a clear and accurate manner the distinctive convictions held by Evangelicals in the Church of England; and second, to state the ruling principles upon which the writers believe the 'catholic' and 'protestant' traditions might be brought together in one church. The report is certainly of value for its careful enunciation of Evangelical doctrine, especially with reference to such subjects as grace, justification, assurance, the Bible, authority, and the priesthood of the church; but undoubtedly its chief importance lies in its frank facing of the tensions which exist between 'catholicism' and 'protestantism' within the Church of England and its endeavour to show that both traditions embody insights of essential value which can exist side by side without disloyalty to the gospel.

By way of illustration, the writers consider three sets of complementary truths which are commonly isolated from each other and as a result become unbalanced and distorted. The first set is concerned with justification and soteriology. Here, on the 'protestant' side,

¹ S.P.C.K. 3/6.

is the insistence on justification by faith alone, with its firm denial of any place to merit in the securing of salvation. On the 'catholic' side is the emphasis upon the sacraments of the gospel as means of grace and as "generally necessary to salvation". The second pair of truths is concerned with the Bible and authority. On this matter 'protestantism' accords primacy to Holy Scripture as the ultimate and decisive rule of faith, insisting upon the control of the Church by the gospel and the transcendence of Christ over His Church. 'Catholicism' on the other hand upholds the value of tradition as being the understanding of the gospel already achieved by the Church and the recognition of Christ's immanence in His Church by the Spirit. Thirdly, under the concept of the Church and the means of grace, there is the 'protestant' understanding of the nature of the Church as primarily a personal fellowship of men with God and with each other in Christ—a fellowship which comes into being and grows as men respond in faith to the gospel presented to them in Word and sacraments—and likewise the 'catholic' view of the Church as a visible society, with an outward unity of life and worship and an episcopal ministry based on the principle of historical continuity.

Assuredly such 'unity in tension' would be by no means easy to achieve and would make big demands upon the humility and forbearance of both traditions. Yet the report does well to point out that in the Church of England "there already live together traditions recognisably 'catholic' and recognisably 'protestant', and they do so by accepting a church structure which embodies all the points which we have sketched as necessary for a healthy union of 'catholicism' with 'protestantism'". And the writers record their conviction that it is only through a unity of this kind, which, while unswervingly loyal to the gospel, yet accepts the spiritual challenge of tension within its life, that the 'catholic-protestant' conflict can be resolved and further growth be made into the fulness of truth.