

## FOREWORD

SOME four years ago I invited a group of Anglicans of the “Catholic” school of thought to consider certain questions, as a result of which they produced the report entitled *Catholicity*. I had it in mind at that time to issue a similar invitation to some Anglicans of the Evangelical school of thought and to some leaders of the Free Churches. But for various reasons it was not until later that the two latter groups were invited to start their work. Now from the Free Church side comes this volume and at the same time from Evangelicals of the Church of England a report entitled “The Fullness of Christ”. I am very glad to have elicited these three documents.

The authors of *Catholicity* devoted one section to a careful analysis of Orthodox Protestantism as one of the main streams of the Christian tradition in the West, endeavouring, as they said, “to present a general description of Protestantism such as Protestants themselves may recognize to be truthful and fairminded.” The authors of this volume, while appreciating the sincerity of the endeavour, devote much of their space to showing that in their judgment *Catholicity* does in fact misunderstand in important respects the protestantism of Luther and Calvin and of their spiritual descendants. They argue that there is much more “catholicity” in Protestantism than the authors of *Catholicity* recognize.

The third report, written from within the Church of England as the first was, makes a serious attempt to account for the contrasts of “catholic” and “protestant” theology. It is careful to uphold that the Church of England is in the proper sense Protestant as well as Catholic. To a large extent it is an endorsement of words which occur at the end of *Catholicity* as follows: “Our [Anglican] unity in the past has rested upon the assurance

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that certain things remain constant as part and parcel of the very structure of Anglicanism. Some of these things belong specifically to our Reformation heritage, some of them belong to our Catholic continuity, and it is vital to our unity that both are constant and unalterable". At the same time it seeks to go beyond analysis and to indicate how there may be reconciliation of apparently opposed truths and a fellowship which embraces large varieties of emphasis.

I cannot but think that a careful perusal of these three documents, all so admirable in spirit and in substance, will greatly promote understanding and assist concord. Great themes are discussed in these reports—Soteriology, Scripture, sacraments, ministry, creeds and the nature of authority in the Church. There is not complete agreement upon these great themes: if there were, one could be certain that it would be short lived. No age of the Church, no school of theologians, no single Church, has ever comprehended the "wholeness" of the Christian Faith without any falsity of emphasis or insight. As in the past so in the future, in the whole Church and in its several parts, one age will need to correct another and one truth will rise to preserve another from the corruption of itself. But is there revealed in these three documents such an extent or quality of disagreement as to preclude a steady advance, if not to full reunion (and for myself I do not think the time for that is yet in sight) yet towards a state of full intercommunion, based upon mutual recognition of what *Catholicity* described as "the constancy of one single pattern" in which Scriptures, creeds, sacraments and a ministry acceptable to all have their central and assured place? That is the question which a reading of these three documents leaves most in one's mind; and to it they help to provide the answer.

As we consider advance towards intercommunion, it is well to keep in mind the admirable clause in the agreement

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between the Church of England and the Old Catholic Churches, which says "intercommunion does not require from either Communion the acceptance of all doctrinal opinion, sacramental devotion, or liturgical practice characteristic of the other, but implies that each believes the other to hold the essentials of the Christian Faith". I believe that these words indicate the right line of advance.

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13<sup>th</sup> May, 1950

SAMPLE