# Editorial

THE first three articles in this issue are papers read at the Islington Conference, 1957. Not only will they be particularly welcome to those who were unable to be present, but they deserve publication and preservation. The Islington Conference is of increasing importance in the life of the Church of England, partly because of the care with which the present President ensures representative papers on significant and topical subjects, but also because of the growing influence of evangelicals in the Church.

A matter naturally in the forefront of discussion at Islington was Canon Law, a subject dealt with at length in recent numbers of the CHURCHMAN. The Presidential Address stressed that there can be no question of dropping the Revision at this stage, because of the Royal Assent—though it might be felt that if the Archbishops rightly interpreted the feeling of the Church they could easily arrange to put it on the shelf. The President pointed out that we cannot, however we might wish it, expect an ecclesiastical Utopia in which nothing unevangelical is permitted : " We must recognize that there are other traditions within the Church. . . . We have therefore to defend essential doctrine (and) to contain within careful limits, and in as innocuous form as possible, practices which we cannot approve." Above all, " we should demand that . . . *no* action shall be demanded of *all* clergy which Scripture and conscience and reformed Anglican doctrine forbids ".

Some would feel that this does not go far enough. But we must be realists. The Paper read by Mr. Horsefield, who has contributed to this journal on the subject, laid down a useful " quadrilateral of principles : charity, proportion, accuracy and restraint ". He also kept the matter in a sober perspective by his reminder that these Canon Laws only legislate for a very small corner of the world wide Anglican Communion.

Both Mr. Wood and Mr. Horsefield stressed the need of accurate Information and Liason between clergy and proctors, and Co-ordination of effort to guide the canons into such harmless channels as possible. In this connection it is unfortunate that an evangelical bishop should attack an evangelical society in such violent terms in the national press. There is no " split " among evangelicals ; it would be absurd to pretend it, though there may be disagreement on certain matters. But whether or not we wholly agree with the Bishop of Rochester or the Church Society, we can deplore this washing of dirty linen (with the soap suds flying so vigorously) in front of the nation. It does not forward the Conversion of England.

At a time when the Church is indeed extending her frontiers it will be unfortunate if the energies of evangelicals are deflected from the great causes of Evangelism and Reunion across the world, to a squabble over traffic regulations in our own small corner. " Error," said the President at Islington, " is only driven out when higher truth is perceived, and grasped ". Though we cannot ignore the Canons, that is the main direction for our work and prayer.