

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND & CATHOLIC UNITY

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MY starting point will be some words of Bishop Hensley Henson, written in his Journal during the early stages of the Malines Conversations.

'In the afternoon I read Pusey's Life. His essay at negotiating a union with the Roman Church appears to have run the normal course, and experienced the normal fortune. Eager approaches from the Anglican side; non-committal compliments on the Roman; restiveness and reproaches in both camps; extravagant Anglican expectations, and then sharp disillusionment when the Roman authorities finally speak. I cannot doubt that the present essay will repeat the too familiar-history.'

If we discount a certain bias and exaggeration in the writer's expression of opinion, it can hardly be said that his forecast was not a true one. Bishop Bell's summing up in his account of the Conversations in Archbishop Davidson's Life, though sympathetic and optimistic, does not in essentials differ from Bishop Henson's.

'Of their effect on the Church as a whole', he writes, 'Who can speak? There has been progress in understanding, in charity, in desire. So far as the longed-for *rapprochement* was concerned, the fundamental difficulties remain unsolved. But channels of thought and methods of study have been started, from which perhaps in later days some great gain may result.'

And now, once again, twenty-two years after the publication of the Malines Report, *The Times* correspondence of last November, on 'Catholicism Today', has revealed on both sides of the dividing line a deeply-felt desire for *rapprochement*, and a widespread sense that the way to increasing unity of heart and mind lies in the growth of friendly contacts and in conferences, on the theological level, between representatives of the different parts of divided Christendom.

To sum up the thought of Catholics who share these ideas I cannot do better than repeat the words of Fr Wingfield Digby, S.J. in his contribution to this correspondence.

'The need for such conferences', he writes, 'was never more

urgent. Humanly speaking, they are our only hope of drawing closer together in the hour of our common peril. For even if they achieve nothing else, they will at least enable us to get to know one another in an atmosphere of friendship; to make quite sure that we fully understand, and do not misrepresent, viewpoints differing from our own; and to make the invigorating discovery of how much we actually possess in common. . . . The road to reunion will scarcely be an easy one. We can at least make it less impossibly difficult by believing in the sincerity and sanity of our fellow Christians. Beyond that, God must lead us. And with God all things are possible.'

What will emerge from these desires and aspirations expressed so urgently from many quarters remains to be seen. But I think it very necessary that we should be prepared with clear ideas as to principles and procedure should these desires develop into action, and should authority give its sanction to the demand for such conferences.

I propose therefore to devote this paper to a consideration of some of the reasons which should induce Catholics to take their part in doctrinal conferences between representatives of other allegiances in divided Christendom. I do not believe that failure is inherent in the very nature of such conferences, as Bishop Henson thought it to be and as many Catholics still think it; but it seems to me in discussing this subject that it would be useful also to consider in the light of the comparative failure of Malines what methods and procedure in holding doctrinal conferences would best avoid the mistakes which were made there and so promote their organisation in the future.

In this matter we are not wholly without experience. I myself during the past twelve years, as may be known to some of my readers, have been instrumental in organising such conferences between ourselves and Anglican theologians. Those who have taken part in them on both sides will, I am sure, agree as to their fruitfulness in friendship and understanding.

Upon what principles, then, must a Catholic take his stand if he essays to take part in doctrinal conferences between representatives of other parts of divided Christendom? Bishop Beck in his contribution to *The Times* correspondence ended his letter with a warning that to look for reunion in religion, except on the conditions laid down by Pope Pius XI in the Encyclical *Mortalium*

Animos, is to look for a will-o'-the-wisp. The universal supremacy of jurisdiction over the whole Church granted by our Lord to St Peter and his successors is an integral part of the nature of the Church as it is conceived of by Catholics as a whole—this fact must be kept resolutely in the foreground of consciousness on both sides, and must be accepted and realised by non-Catholics as a pre-requisite of any real understanding.

To speak, as two *Times* correspondents did, of Roman Catholics who are free of the ultramontane temper, even though they are tied to ultramontane doctrines, is to use words which are calculated to obscure the issue; for, whatever their writers meant by them, they imply, to the Catholic reader, that there are many Catholics who are eirenically minded and anxious for contacts and discussion with their separated brethren, and that these as a necessary result of their eirenic attitude, hold to certain doctrines which are *de fide* only with a discomfort and restiveness which imply lukewarm adherence. To be 'tied to' a doctrine of the faith is no way to describe the relation of a wholehearted believer to the things he believes. In fact of course being eirenically-minded in no way implies lukewarmness in holding what is *de fide*; though there are wide differences of temper and emphasis to be found within the Catholic Church, these all rise out of *ex animo* acceptance of what is of faith. Such labels as ultramontane and liberal, whatever meaning they may have had for a past generation, are today wholly misleading descriptions of them.

This insistence on the universal jurisdiction of the Holy See, as an integral constitutive of the nature of the Church as Catholics understand it, is not to deny that there is a wide field for discussion as to the manner in which this jurisdiction can be exercised. In any reunion discussion with the Oriental Churches a careful distinction must be made between the Pope's jurisdiction as Patriarch of the West (not infringing the rights of the other ancient patriarchates) and his higher and less frequently exercised jurisdiction as Supreme Bishop and final court of appeal in matters concerning faith and morals. Again, much of the highly centralised organisation of the Western Church has been due to the compulsion of circumstances and particularly to the crises of the Reformation and the Enlightenment which forced Western and Latin Christendom to place itself in a state of siege so that it might resist external attacks from Protestantism and later from rationalist unbelief.

In the event, in the future, of a widespread return to Catholic belief of Christian organisations now existing apart from Catholic unity the authority of Rome might well be prepared for considerable measures of decentralisation. As Bishop Gore said on his return from Malines, 'the Romans were amazingly concessive where matters of discipline were concerned, but on doctrine adamant.'

What then, it may be asked, is the use of initiating conferences between Catholics and representatives of other parts of divided Christendom when there exists this insuperable barrier to unity: the exclusive claim of Rome? It is THERE; it is insurmountable and no amount of discussion, however amicable, can get rid of it. And this brings us to the foundation principle of all eirenic work between separated Christians. Its basis is the desire to understand; not to understand intellectually merely, but to understand as human beings, bound together, whatever their subsequent differences, by a common allegiance to our Lord, as God made man and by their common experience of the need of redemption and Salvation through him. That is the highest bond that can unite human beings, yet the sense of fellowship which should result from it has been largely lost owing to the animosities and hatreds generated by the schisms of the Reformation and the religious warfare which resulted from them. Today we are slowly regaining it if only because the materialism of the modern world is compelling us to recognise that we are brethren in Jesus Christ and to deplore the separation which hinders its realisation.

The basis of all eirenic approach between separated Christians then must be the desire to understand each others' beliefs and ways of thought; this desire having as its motive a common love of our Lord and a longing for the unity for which he prayed. Thus Catholics must learn to realise the intense loyalty and reverence that very many non-Catholics feel towards the Christian communions in which they have been nurtured and to which they owe allegiance and the strong sense they have that those communions have been blessed by God in their work. They can do this by not dwelling exclusively on the errors for which these Christian bodies are corporately responsible, but by learning to appreciate the great positive contributions that they have made towards building up faith in our Lord and in defence of truth. The work of the great Anglican biblical scholars of the nineteenth

century springs to mind; men such as Bishops Lightfoot and Westcott and my own Cambridge teacher Professor Swete; whose work has been widely used by Catholic scripture scholars, and who not only illuminated the scriptures by their great learning but successfully defended them against the attacks of rationalist criticism. In our own day such men as Sir Edwin Hoskyns and Dean Selwyn have worthily inherited their great tradition.

Catholics too must enter into and understand, though we cannot approve, the toleration of wide differences of belief and the disregard of the binding force of creeds and official formularies which is profoundly shocking to the Catholic mind, but which is characteristic today of nearly all Christian bodies which have sprung from the disruption of the Reformation. This toleration is not wholly due, as we commonly suppose it to be, to indifference to the paramount claims of truth in the interests of expediency, but in part at least to a deeply rooted respect for liberty of conscience. As Catholics, while maintaining the primacy of conscience, we hold that toleration of diversity in fundamental beliefs on the part of any community which claims to preach the gospel of Christ is in the long run destructive of truth and so of human liberty, for it is the truth that makes us free. But this must not excuse us from the effort to enter into the minds of those whose whole ethos and climate of opinion lead them to a different conclusion, nor may we too easily assume that methods of dealing with error so very different from our own are necessarily indicative of insincerity or indifference to truth.

Anglicans and Free Churchmen on the other hand must not, as they so often do, confuse the firm maintenance by Catholics of the truths they hold, and the consequent exclusiveness that that maintenance necessarily involves, with bigotry. Truth of its very nature demands a certain exclusiveness, and the nature of beliefs held as true determines the extent of the exclusiveness; but bigotry is a vice which narrows the claims of charity beyond the demands of truth. The leader-writer who summed up *The Times* correspondence, though obviously not sensitive to all the theological niceties involved, gave a sound general conspectus of the position when he wrote:

'Roman Catholics are not in fact committed, as is widely believed, to the doctrine that all non-Roman Catholics are

damm'd, or to the view that the only channel of divine assistance is the Roman Catholic Church, but they do believe that their Church is the only communion commanded and empowered by God to discharge certain specific sacramental teaching and disciplinary functions on earth. In the light of this conviction they cannot, without betraying their consciences, recognise the validity of the claims of other Churches, even by implication.'

Even in the much canvassed question of praying in common (where if allowed the prayers would necessarily be limited to the Lord's prayer and petitions for light and guidance such as the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*) non-Catholics must realise that Catholic abstention is not necessarily dictated by lofty disdain or hostility or even by the absence of any wish to pray together—though it would be idle to deny that these motives are sometimes unfortunately operative—but much more often by the fear (not wholly unfounded) that after so long a tradition of total abstention, any concession in regard to agreement to pray in common might too easily be construed as an approach to agreement in things where no agreement exists.

It is essential therefore in all eirenic work that each representative should have the right and duty of setting forth the beliefs he holds in their entirety, and that all who are concerned must give those beliefs the most patient and sympathetic attention, never allowing themselves to doubt the good faith of those who hold them, however contrary to the truth they believe them to be and however unwelcome their implications. By such approaches of sympathy and understanding the eirenic mind is gradually formed; the mind which while holding fast to the essential dogmatic truth of one's own tradition yet aims at entering into and understanding the belief and practice of other traditions.

This is to be done primarily by fellowship; by entering into a relation of knowledge and love with those who differ from us. The effect is a first-hand, intimate understanding, born of love, of how others of widely differing background and dogmatic belief think and feel and speak concerning Christ's redeeming work in them and the means by which it touches their lives. And in exchange the Catholic who has this eirenic mind, formed by sympathetic contacts in the things of the spirit with his non-Catholic brethren, finds himself able to speak of Church and Mass and Sacraments and the part they play in the life of grace in language

which is no longer a closed book to them.

Can we hold that non-Catholics who accept many of the doctrines of the Church and yet disbelieve others have true supernatural faith? Theologians commonly teach that denial of any one article of revealed truth involves loss of supernatural faith in the whole of revelation; since denial of a single truth means refusal to acknowledge the divine authority on which all revelation depends. The classical statement of this doctrine is that of St Thomas in the fifth question of the 2^a 2^{ae} of the *Summa* where he puts the question 'Can a person who disbelieves one article of faith still have faith in the others?' It is clear however that St Thomas means by disbelief, in this context, the withdrawal of assent from a revealed truth, by culpably blinding oneself, through obstinacy, to the fact that it is part of God's revelation. This he calls heresy. It is an act of rebellious choice which wholly destroys faith in God's authority in making his revelation. Disbelief which comes from ignorance or misconception of the truth and is neither obstinate nor culpable, St Thomas calls error, and this in no way destroys faith in God's authority in revealing. Theologians subsequent to St Thomas have distinguished wilful and culpable withdrawal of assent from a truth of faith as 'formal heresy' and inculpable error as 'material heresy'. It is perhaps a pity that this distinction was ever made, for it has resulted in the indiscriminate use of the word heretic—a word traditionally loaded with a sinister meaning. It is more in accordance with the spirit of St Thomas to say that non-Catholics are in error in regard to the understanding of certain truths of faith, and since only the perverse will of the heretic and not inculpable error of the understanding can be a bar to it non-Catholics can have true supernatural faith, the motive for it being the authority of God speaking through the scriptures which are his word—the scriptures, that is, interpreted with the aid of an inherited tradition and by the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

We can hardly doubt, for instance, that the doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation as held in Protestant bodies of the Calvinistic tradition have been drawn from the study of Holy Scripture with the extrinsic aid of a tradition which though defective in certain points and attenuated was derived from the Catholic Church as it existed before the major divisions of Christendom. The same may be said of the doctrines of redemption

and grace, of the Church and sacraments, as held by the same Protestant bodies, though here the tradition was corrupted by the positive heresy of the Reformers.

It thus comes about that the devout Protestant studying the scriptures as God's word, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, can accept by supernatural faith a number of truths derived from it towards the formulation of which his tradition has helped him; because on these points it has remained free from error. On other points he is unable, through no fault of his own, to accept the truth contained in Holy Scripture, because the erroneous interpretations with which his tradition is distorted, in regard to these points, are obstacles which obscure the understanding of these truths of faith, and prevent his act of faith from reaching its full extension. It is essential to recognise this in all irenic work. We are not divided from our separated brethren because there is faith on our side and no faith on theirs. What divides us is the error which prevents their faith reaching its full extension.

The same principles hold in regard to those parts of divided Christendom which stand more completely within the Catholic tradition. The Eastern Orthodox Churches, which have retained that tradition almost complete, save for their denial of the supremacy of the Holy See, at the point of development which it had reached at the time of their separation from Catholic unity, and in a lesser degree the Churches of the Anglican Communion, which while retaining the Catholic tradition in a greater degree than any of the other Churches which sprang from the Reformation schisms, are yet influenced at many points, both in official formularies and in common practice by the doctrines of Protestantism. By reason of their separation from Catholic unity, these bodies do not accept the authority of the Catholic Church and in consequence cannot be fully integrated with its living dogmatic tradition.

But though the various sundered elements of divided Christendom, because of their separation from Catholic unity, have no share in the authority given by our Lord to the Catholic Church or in its divinely guaranteed immunity from error in defining and safeguarding the faith, that is not to say that in varying degrees their members as individuals, and even in some sense through the agency of the corporate organisations to which they give their allegiance, do not share in the life of grace which flows out from

head to members in the mystical body of Christ. I do not intend in this paper to attempt to do more than touch on the complex theological problem as to who are members of the visible Church and in what sense those who are separated from her visible unity may still have a share, incompletely no doubt, but none the less really, in her supernatural life.

But I do think that emphasis needs to be laid, if the eirenic spirit is to spread among us, on certain facts which are undoubtedly true, but which in our dealings in matters of religion with our separated brethren are so often allowed to remain dormant and unheeded in our minds. And the first is that they *are* our brethren, not merely in the sense that all men are our brethren because we share a common nature, but in the specifically Christian sense that we share a common faith in Jesus Christ as our divine Redeemer and that in many cases at least they like us have been incorporated into his mystical body by sacramental baptism.

It is often asserted in contradiction of the foregoing statements that the Church of England and the Free Churches are riddled with modernism and that they have largely lost their old-fashioned orthodox belief; that a frequent conception of the divinity of Christ, even amongst their practising members, is a sort of camouflaged adoptionism which on examination proves to be satisfied by the formula 'We all have within us a divine spark, in Christ it was a white-hot fire'. No doubt there is some element of truth in what is put forward in this way as a sweeping generalisation; but it errs in neglecting certain important considerations.

The modernist phase is passing and amongst the younger clergy and ministers especially there is a widespread return to orthodox belief and a revived interest in the study of biblical theology as distinct from biblical criticism.

The *Lex orandi* is the *Lex credendi*; and in public worship prayers and hymns keep alive, even where religious instruction is lacking or inadequate, a deep and evangelical love of our Blessed Lord and an attitude of devout faith and adoration.

Men's hearts and wills are often in advance of their discursive intellect and powers of expression. Many a good Catholic whose heart and will goes out to our Blessed Lord in adoration and love would make a poor show if the concepts of his intellect concerning the nature of God, and their expression in words could be examined. Error, as we have already seen, when it is not obstinate

but only the result of ignorance or misconception, is no bar to the working of the grace of faith and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. These come to the baptised non-Catholic through the mystical body of Christ into which he has been incorporated by his baptism, and of which he is in some sense a member in spite of his adherence in good faith to a religious body which exists in separation from Catholic unity. It may well be that with many non-Catholics whose concepts are unorthodox through ignorance or misconception of the truth, there is nevertheless an urgent reaching out of mind and heart and will to the truth, in which discursive intellect plays only a minor part, and that there is much true faith even where there is defective understanding and expression.

It is often asserted that the baptism of Anglicans and Free Churchmen is frequently invalidly performed—and in the case of certain nonconformist bodies omitted altogether. Again, there is no doubt an element of truth in this assertion. But anyone who has first hand experience of the practice of the Church of England, not merely in Anglo-Catholic circles but among Anglican clergy at large, is well aware that the sacrament of baptism is, with perhaps rare exceptions, reverently and carefully carried out and all the conditions for validity prescribed by the Book of Common Prayer observed. Our own legislation of course forbids conditional re-baptism of those who make their submission to the Holy See if it is certain that the original baptism was validly performed, and it is only the great difficulty of obtaining the necessary witnesses to ensure this certainty that makes the practice of conditional re-baptism on such occasions frequent.

I have spent some considerable time in attempting to set out truths and principles in the light of which it is possible for Catholics to develop an eirenic mind in regard to their separated brethren, and this mind if developed will impel them to seek contacts in conferences and discussions in order, by gaining a deeper understanding of the things that divide us to prepare the way for growth towards unity. But it may well be asked once again what after all is the use of such discussions? We are divided from each other by dogmatic disagreement of the most fundamental kind; these are rocks upon which any hopes of the reunion of Christendom must inevitably be shipwrecked, and no amount of goodwill, friendship and understanding will remove such rocks.

That of course is true—only God's grace and the operation of

the Holy Ghost can create unity of belief. Faith is a gift which God gives; it cannot be generated by human effort. All that human effort can do is to prepare the ground for the seed which God alone can plant and make grow. And it is in thus preparing the ground for God's grace by fostering the growth of friendship and understanding that contacts by conference and discussion can be of the greatest use.

Into such discussions each side will go convinced of the essential truth of their own position, and without thought of compromise or accommodation in the interests of expediency, on matters where what is held to be revealed truth is in question. That must be made clear from the outset, and those of other allegiances with whom we discuss must be prepared to accept and understand what this position involves for us, as we must be prepared to do the same for them. That is the necessary foundation for all fruitful eirenic discussion. It is a hard and costing experience, demanding great charity and patience on both sides and a constant struggle to express what we hold to be true in such a way as to gain understanding from the other side; there must be no controversy of the kind in which, whether consciously or unconsciously, the wish to score a point and win a victory comes to predominate over the patient desire that the truth may emerge.

In this way, by a gradual and costing process many unsuspected agreements will be found and fundamental differences will be marked off with greater clarity and will be seen, often for the first time, in their true setting. To see a part only, divorced from its true setting in the whole, is the most frequent cause of misunderstanding and error.

We have to bear constantly in mind that men's most fundamental beliefs are held not as pure intellectual propositions, but as the beliefs of persons, compact of intellect and will and the whole complexity of emotion, feeling and temperament which goes to make up a human personality. And since persons do not live in isolation but are part of a society and a culture, they live against a background from which are drawn, into their individual personalities the traditions, ideas and manner of approaching truth, the instinctive feelings and prejudices which make up the common ethos of the society and culture in which they live. In consequence even the dogmas of the faith come to us in the clothing, as it were, of a culture. An Oriental Christian differs profoundly in his

approach to eternal truth from the Westerner; and it is a well known missionary problem that the chief obstacle to the acceptance of the truths of the faith by the pagan nations, is not the truths themselves which are timeless and unchanging, but the difficulty of appearing to present them through the medium of an alien culture which obscures rather than commends their truth.

Englishmen are accustomed to the thought that they all share a common culture or way of life—and on the secular plane this is no doubt in many ways true. But their religious culture since the Reformation has been derived from three streams, Catholic, Anglican, Nonconformist that have remained in hostile isolation from each other. These separate streams had their origin in bitter religious strife and persecution, which in process of time served to deepen and render fixed the doctrinal differences that had arisen, and to caricature them. For one of the results of religious warfare, as of any other kind, is to breed war psychology in the contending parties; and war psychology is distorting. One's own side tends to be wholly right and the enemy wholly wrong. In such circumstances the truth, as it really is, is difficult to see. Words and phrases become slogans, loaded with an exaggerated significance which fills the mind with inflammatory images and effectively obstructs impartial judgement and sympathetic understanding. We all recall the propaganda words of two world wars: Hun, Fascist, Red.

In something of the same way the isolated traditions of English religious life, have in the past been arrayed against each other as enemies. Each has its own idioms of thought and consecrated phrases in dealing with the truths of religion. We each talk our own language and that language is not merely imperfectly understood by those who stand in a different tradition, it is the unconscious cause of an instinctive hostility, which is an inheritance of the past acting upon us without our realising it. We Catholics, even though we may know little of them and seldom or never think of them, have the effect upon our tradition of the tragic deaths of Edmund Campion and the English martyrs, so to say, in our very blood, and our non-Catholic fellow countrymen, though these events have long ago been relegated to the history books, are similarly influenced by the Marian burnings and by Guy Fawkes and Titus Oates.

One of the results of war psychology is to place an emphasis

on doctrines which are attacked and this emphasis is disproportionate, not because the doctrine attacked is unimportant, but because the resulting neglect of truths which are complementary to it places it in a wrong perspective. This has happened in the Post Reformation emphasis on the importance of the Papacy which in contemporary controversy bulked so large that its relation to the Church as a whole was neglected and as a result the doctrine *de ecclesia* itself became attenuated and one-sided in current presentation. Evidence of this is to be seen in the revival of consciousness in our own day of that aspect of ecclesiology which sees the Church as the mystical body of Christ, in the liturgical revival which is the expression of it in worship and in the tendency of theology as a whole to return to a more intense and deeper study of its Biblical and Patristic sources.

As Dom Aelred Graham has pointed out in his letter to *The Tablet* of 19th November, 1949, which was a commentary on *The Times* correspondence, there is much work still to be done from the Catholic side. 'Let no one persuade himself', he writes, 'that the Catholic position is clearly understood and that all that remains is for it to be accepted *in toto*. That position, at the theological level, has not even been stated in English in a manner acceptable to scholars.' And in another passage he affirms that 'we deceive ourselves if we imagine that the Churches infallibility, itself demanding no little subtlety of interpretation, leaves no questions to be asked or problems to be solved.'

The *de fide* definitions of the Church are irreversible and to hope that she will ever go back upon what she has declared by divine authority to be a part of the *depositum fidei* is to cry for the moon. But in the clarification of the meaning of these definitions and in working out the due proportions of their inter-relation there is a wide field for discussion and explanation at the theological level. Such discussions as were envisaged by several of *The Times* correspondents, entered upon in a truly eirenic spirit, would, by friendly contact and personal knowledge, clear up many difficulties, throw light on obscure points, dissipate prejudice on both sides, their results would permeate gradually the religious bodies to which the various representatives belonged and would prepare the ground for increasing unity of heart and mind. But they could only prepare the ground—God alone can cause the truth to emerge because unity in faith is his gift. But we may believe that he will

give it in his own time to those who long for it, pray for it and will work for it.

In considering the possibility and usefulness of initiating conferences between representatives of the various bodies in divided Christendom it is natural that we should think first of our Anglican brethren. Twenty-two years ago the Malines conversations came to what seemed to many at the time a premature end. I think it would be useful in view of possible developments to review the mistakes made in what may surely be considered a noble and courageous project the spirit of which may yet profoundly influence future events.

It may well be thought that the first mistake was the decision by Lord Halifax and M. Portal to hold the conversations not in England and with English Catholic representatives but in Belgium. Cardinal Mercier asked Lord Halifax why this was done and was told that the English authorities would not be sympathetic. But to my mind a greater mistake was that the wrong things were discussed and that almost from the beginning the Conversations, though in theory private, were in fact widely and publicly talked about; but since the subject matter of the discussions only leaked out gradually and no doubt with varying degrees of accuracy, the hopes of sympathisers and the fears of opponents tended to be greatly exaggerated.

The first subject of discussion was the practical measures which would have to be taken, and the problems that would have to be solved in bringing about the reunion of the Church of England with the Holy See supposing that complete agreement in doctrinal matters could be reached. Looking back one cannot help feeling extreme surprise at the lack of realism on both sides in adopting this method of procedure. At a later stage when feeling began to run high it was categorically denied that negotiations for reunion between the two Churches were in any way contemplated. But the opponents of the Conversations on the Anglican side (and possibly on the Catholic side too) could hardly be blamed for thinking that the discussion of practical ways and means in the matter of procedure, should reunion become a possibility, was something very like negotiation. In fact of course nothing approaching negotiation was contemplated.

When dogmatic questions came to be discussed at subsequent conversations it was the nature and authority of the Church that

formed the main topic, and in particular the relation of the Papacy to the Episcopate. Again, there was a certain unrealism in this; for all the Anglican representatives (including Bishop Gore and Dr Kidd who came in at a later stage) belonged to a tradition within the Church of England which held episcopacy to be of divine institution and thought of it in sacramental and jurisdictional terms along Catholic lines. It would have been more realistic and more effective had at least two theologians on the Anglican side been present to represent a different tradition whose attitude may be seen in the forthright and perhaps one-sided views of Bishop Hensley Henson.

'What principles shall determine our relations with non-Anglicans?', he wrote, 'Are we to proceed on the principles of Anglicanism as these were understood from Cranmer to Newman, or are we to give formal and final endorsement to the Tractarian repudiation of those principles and acquiesce in an isolation, sterilising and complete, alike from the older episcopal churches which were never reformed and from the new non-episcopal churches which share with ourselves the heritage of the Reformation? It is high time that English Churchmen generally faced and answered this question.'

The fact is that neither Anglicans nor Catholics were ready for discussions on the large scale and at the theological level of those undertaken at Malines—nor are they any more ready today. A wiser procedure would be for small groups of two or three a side to enter upon the enterprise of eirenic discussions locally and at various points. It would have to be clearly understood on both sides that any discussion of schemes for reunion should be ruled out, nor should reunion in any particular form be immediately envisaged. On the Catholic side the permission of the Ordinary of the diocese must be obtained, but there should be no publicity. The work should be one of slow growth, and much prayer; beginning in a small way and spreading not primarily by organisation but by the spontaneous enthusiasm of those who have been fired by the conviction that eirenic work is of the greatest possible moment in the world of today.

The chief means of spreading such a movement would be quiet missionary effort to convince others of what we hold so strongly ourselves, and in this way if God wills it the work will spread.

But it must be inclusive if it is to be fruitful. Perhaps it is right

for Catholics and Anglicans who stand in the Anglo-Catholic tradition to make a beginning; but it must not stop there, it must aim at including Anglicans of all traditions and Free Churchmen and discussion must always start at a deeper theological level than that of the nature and authority of the church. For below that question lies a more profound one: the nature of dogma, and of revelation; the relation of the fact revealed to its formulation of scripture, God's word, to the tradition of the Church which is the body of God's word. The nature of grace which incorporates us into the mystical body of God's Word, the Eternal Son of God.

I dream sometimes of an England where up and down the country there will be groups meeting regularly to discuss not dogmatic questions only, but in spite of the things that divide them, delighting to study the science of prayer as it is known in their respective traditions and the scriptures, God's word, meditation upon which can so greatly enrich the devout mind. Surely in Holy Scripture and the mystical writers there is a unity to be found which even now can transcend our sad divisions and if such things as I have imagined could become a reality the ground would be prepared for the great return of which the Pope spoke so movingly in his Christmas Allocution—a return which must be based, not on human accommodation or compromise, but on a unity in faith and communion which we Catholics believe to be already existing in essentials but which still awaits completion—a completion which can only be accomplished by the power of God's grace.