

The Convocations and South India

*What did the Convocations decide, and how
does their decision affect the Catholicity of
the Church of England?*

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LONDON
A. R. MOWBRAY & Co. LIMITED

THE CONVOCATIONS AND SOUTH INDIA

THE PRESENT SITUATION

THE recent decisions of the Convocations of Canterbury and York about the relations between the Church of England and the Church of South India have provoked a wide variety of reactions among Catholic-minded Anglicans. By some they have been received with relief and joy as a resolute affirmation of the fundamental Catholicity of the Church of England; by others they have been received with dismay and even despair as a virtual abandonment by the Church of England of any claim to Catholicism. If I incline to the former of these positions, it is not with any desire to make the best of a bad job or, on the other hand, in the belief that we can afford to rest on our laurels, but because I believe that a careful consideration of all the facts of the case shows that position to be correct.

It might well seem strange that a comparatively short report and nine briefly worded resolutions should elicit such very different reactions from a number of people holding substantially the same theological outlook. There are, I think, discernible reasons for this. It is notable, in the first place, that those Catholics¹ who were best able to see the resolutions of the Convocations in their actual context—those who were members of the Joint Committee which produced the unanimous Report, and the vast majority of those who were members of the Convocations which accepted it—took what I will call the 'optimistic' view. There has been, however, a very marked tendency

¹ I use this word here and elsewhere in this paper in the colloquial and not the strict theological sense.

on the part of writers in the secular and the Low-Church press to ignore or minimize the very definite restrictions contained in the Resolutions and to assume that we are to all intents and purposes in full communion with the C.S.I. At the other end of the ecclesiastical scale the same interpretation has been seized upon by a small but vocal group who are clearly only too anxious to find pretexts for secession to the Church of Rome. It is therefore not surprising that many priests and laypeople who have not had the time or the facilities to study the matter in detail have been reduced to a state of real perplexity and alarm by what they have taken to be a more or less complete renunciation by the Church of England of any pretensions to the title of Catholic, and have sadly adopted the second or 'pessimistic' view.

The appeal to purely human authority is, as St. Thomas Aquinas remarks, the weakest kind of argument, but it would be surprising nevertheless if persons such as the Bishops of Durham, Exeter, and Malmesbury, Canon E. W. Kemp, the Rev. Michael Bruce, the Rev. Harold Riley, the Rev. L. M. S. du Toit, and the Superior of the Community of the Resurrection, Father Raynes, all of whom were members of the Joint Committee, had allowed themselves to be bamboozled into signing a Report which implicitly repudiated the Catholicity of the Church of England, or even if, as one writer has suggested, the Anglo-Catholics in the Convocations had almost unanimously come to see that their former judgment about the C.S.I. was wrong and had been forced to change their mind. In so far as there has been a change of attitude, it has been due not to any change in the views of Anglo-Catholics but to very considerable changes in the C.S.I. itself, changes which in all probability would not have occurred at all had it not been for the earlier misgivings and protests of Anglo-Catholics. To conclude that the misgivings and protests of Catholics in 1950 were unfounded would be

to adopt the attitude of the highway authority which decided that it had been wrong to erect a danger sign at the top of a precipitous descent, on the ground that no accidents had taken place since it had been put there.

Again, if we accept the 'optimistic' interpretation of the decisions of the Convocations this does not imply that we believe the South-India approach to union to be one that ought to be imitated elsewhere or even to be one that ought to have been adopted in South India. I myself believe that it is a thoroughly undesirable and ambiguous approach, which ought never to have been adopted at all. A method which involves, as a preliminary to future unity, the secession of four dioceses from the Anglican Communion is a method which seeks for unity at the price of schism, and falls under the condemnation which moral theology passes upon those who do evil that good may come. As one of our most distinguished prelates recently remarked, if there were to be a general adoption of reunion schemes which involved as their first step the secession of groups of dioceses from the Anglican Communion there would soon be no Anglican Communion for groups of dioceses to secede from. We are not, however, concerned now with the question whether the C.S.I. ought ever to have come into being, but with what should be our attitude to it now that it exists and has become the sort of thing that it is. With these preliminaries we may proceed to examine the matter on its merits.

TWO DEMANDS IGNORED

Quite the most remarkable feature of the decisions of the Convocations is the way in which both the Report and the Resolutions ignored without discussion two demands which had been vehemently and persistently urged for a period of months and indeed years; namely, the demand that we should recognize the C.S.I. as a fully

constituted branch of the Catholic Church and the demand that we should forthwith enter into full communion with it. This is all the more notable in view of the strong Evangelical representation on the Joint Committee. The publication last year of the volume entitled *The Historic Episcopate* under the editorship of the Principal of Westcott House, with its demand for the establishment of full communion, and the appearance last January on three successive Monday mornings of supporting letters in *The Times*, with impressive lists of signatures of heads of Free-Church theological colleges, secretaries of missionary societies, and university professors respectively, make the serene detachment of the Report of the Joint Committee the more impressive. It is true that the Report says that the future relationship between the Church of England and the C.S.I. 'will be one that will rightly be described as a relationship of fellowship and growing intercommunion, as between living parts of the Church of Christ,' but it is important to recall that part of a body can be alive without being fully healthy or perfectly developed, and that an organism can live in an incomplete or maimed condition. As the present Bishop of Durham wrote seven years ago, with reference to the question whether episcopacy is of the *esse* or only of the *bene esse* of the Church:

A man's eyes and hands and feet are of the *esse* of his body, with functions not normally interchangeable: they are not utility arrangements like his clothes. Yet men have survived and worked without hands, and moved without feet, and (thanks to Braille) read without eyes. But these merciful possibilities do not involve us in doubting that the organs given by the Creator are integral to the body itself in its proper *being* and unity.¹

It is presumably some such view that is responsible for the refusal of the Report to recommend the establishment of full intercommunion, for clearly there could be no obstacle to this if the two Churches were able to recognize each

¹ Michael Ramsey, 'The Evangelicals and the Ministry,' in *Theology*, LI, p. 371 (Oct. 1948). Italics in original.

other as fully constituted branches of the Catholic Church. 'The relationship,' says the Report,

will not yet be that which is the will of our Lord for His Church, for the goal is nothing less than 'full communion,' a complete *communio in sacris*, in which there is no restriction to the participation of the communicants of the one Church in the rites of the other, and no restriction in principle to the interchange of ministries which are everywhere united to the bishop.

It is explicitly recognized that the chief obstacles to the achievement of this happy state are the fact that the organic structure of the C.S.I. is not at present fully constituted from the Catholic point of view—'Full intercommunion will be possible only when the unification of the ministry through episcopal ordination is complete'—and that in fact it is hampered by a contradiction as yet unresolved—'the present irreconcilability of the two principles of a united ministry and of full communion with non-episcopal Churches is a painful reality.' It is thus clear that the Joint Committee approached the problem of our relations with the C.S.I. as the problem of the nature of a body which has some, though not all, of the essentials of a fully-constituted branch of the Catholic Church and which, while it has not yet devised a solution of all its anomalies, has in the first years of its existence shown a steady movement towards the full acquisition of Catholic status. Such a body, the Committee judged, is a living part of the Church of Christ, but with the implication that it is as yet so imperfectly formed as to render our full union with it impossible. Before we go on to consider the decision of the Convocations as to what our precise relation to such a body ought to be, we must stop to examine the question of the validity of the ordinations and consecrations performed by the bishops of C.S.I. since the C.S.I. came into being.

THE VALIDITY OF C.S.I. ORDINATIONS

The suggestion has been made that to accept the validity of the episcopal ordinations in C.S.I. is to repudiate the

so-called 'minority' view of the Lambeth Conference of 1948.¹ It must be noticed, however, that the Lambeth Resolution 54 stated explicitly that 'no member of the Conference desires to condemn outright or to declare invalid the episcopally consecrated and ordained ministry of the Church of South India.' What the 'substantial minority' held was that 'it is not yet possible [*sc.* in 1948] to pass any definite judgement upon the precise status of such bishops, presbyters, and deacons in the Church of Christ or to recommend that they be accepted in the Anglican Communion as bishops, presbyters, or deacons.' In view of the information that is now available as to the form and matter of ordination and of the actual development of the life and functioning of the C.S.I. since the union, the Joint Committee was able to come to the unanimous decision that the episcopally performed ordinations and consecrations within the C.S.I. are undoubtedly valid. In case it might be supposed that the Catholic members of the Joint Committee had allowed themselves to be overruled or carried away by the enthusiasm of their Evangelical colleagues, it may be well to record that, some time before the Joint Committee met, the Theological Committee of the Church Union gave very careful attention to this matter and came unanimously to the same conclusion. As the Joint Committee recognized, 'the acceptance of non-episcopal ministers within the Church of South India undoubtedly raises a difficulty.' But this, it goes on,

can now be seen not to override the undeviating adherence of the Church of South India to episcopal consecration and ordination within itself, or its express purpose of having a unified ministry.

It refers to 'the unsatisfactory character of this anomaly' but adds that

we do not think that its existence affects the grounds for a judgment

¹ 'So-called,' because, as the Bishop of Southern Ohio stated in a letter to *The Living Church*, of Feb. 20, 1949, the 'majority' consisted of 135, and the 'minority' of 94, while between 80 and 85 did not vote.

concerning the valid intention, in its episcopal consecrations and ordinations, of the Church of South India.

'The fact,' it says elsewhere,

that the Church of South India admits persons who have not been episcopally ordained to perform the office of presbyter in the Church confuses, but does not efface, the strong evidence stated above of the intention of the Church of South India to continue the threefold ministry in its historic form, and as it was received through Anglican bishops at the inauguration of the Church of South India.

This judgment seems to me to be undoubtedly correct. The Church of South India may be—and, a Catholic will say, certainly is—mistaken in supposing that a non-episcopally ordained minister can validly administer the sacraments of the Church, and it is precisely on this ground that the Church of England cannot enter into full communion with it, but this error cannot affect the fact, to which both its formularies and its practice bear witness, that when its bishops ordain or consecrate they have the intention of conferring the historic threefold ministry of the Church.

It is not always realized what very slight intention is required, according to the traditional Western view, for the valid performance of a sacrament. The Joint Committee quotes from Dr. John Wordsworth as follows:

The 'Sacrament of Order' requires laying-on of hands, with prayer suitable to the office conferred, and with a general intention of making a man what the Church intends as a Bishop, Priest, or Deacon. We hold that such an Ordination conferred by a Bishop, as sole or chief minister, who has been himself so ordained, even if he is a heretic, is valid and cannot be reiterated without sacrilege.

It rightly remarks that

a stricter requirement than this in the matter of intention would be contrary to the main theological tradition of Western Christendom and might involve difficulty concerning earlier ordinations in history.

(And not, we might add, only the ordinations of Anglicans.)

Those who will be glad of confirmation of this view

from a Roman Catholic authority may like to be reminded of the following well-known passage from Addis and Arnold's *Catholic Dictionary*:

We will give the words of Tournely ('De Sacr.' qu. vi. a. 1): 'Whatever a man's opinion may be about the sacrament, its effect and end, or about the Church itself, whether he rejects all these things or admits them, makes no difference to the substance of the sacrament.' 'He need not intend to produce the effect of the sacrament or to perform the rite of the Church as a sacrament, or to do what the Catholic and Roman Church does; it is enough that he should intend in some general way to do what the Church does, whatever his notion about the Church, the sacrament, its effect and object may be.' Unless the Church held this, she would not, as she certainly does, recognize the validity of many sacraments given by heretics, infidels, and even pagans. . . .

But is it enough for validity if the minister merely perform the external rite in a serious manner, even if internally he withhold his intention—*i.e.* even if from malice or impiety he says to himself, 'I don't mean to act as the minister of the Church, I don't intend to baptize, consecrate, or the like, but merely to deceive the people?' We follow the opinion of those who answer in the affirmative. . . .¹

The minimizing nature of the traditional Western doctrine of intention is sometimes obscured by the fact that Roman Catholic controversialists in England have found themselves in the uncomfortable position of having to defend the condemnation of Anglican orders by Pope Leo XIII and of having to improvise special theories and distinctions in the attempt to maintain the defective intention of Anglican ordinations without at the same time rendering the orders of the Roman Church itself of doubtful authenticity. To illustrate how little in the way of intention the Roman Church requires for a valid sacrament when she is not engaged in controversy with Anglicans, it may be interesting to mention the case of the Methodist baptisms in Central Oceania, for the details of which I am indebted to the kindness of a Roman Catholic scholar. As a result of the conversion to Rome of some natives who had been

¹ s.v. *Sacraments of the Gospel* (15th ed., 1951, p. 717f.).

baptized by Methodist missionaries the following *dubia* were proposed to the Holy Office in 1872:

1. Whether baptism administered by those heretics is doubtful on account of defect of the intention to do what Christ willed, if an express declaration was made by the minister before he baptized that baptism had no effect on the soul?
2. Whether baptism so conferred is doubtful if the aforesaid declaration was not expressly made immediately before the conferring of baptism but had often been asserted by the minister, and the same doctrine was openly preached in that sect?

The replies of the Sacred Congregation were:

1. In the negative, because despite the error about the effects of baptism, the intention of doing what the Church does is not excluded.
2. Provided for in the answer to the first question.¹

In view of such information as this it hardly seems possible to take seriously the assertion, which has appeared in print, that not only are the episcopally performed ordinations in C.S.I. invalid through defect of intention but that also, as a result of the acceptance of their validity by the Convocations, all the future ordinations in the Church of England will be invalid through defect of intention too. I will merely repeat, before passing on, that the judgment of the validity of the C.S.I.'s episcopally performed ordinations rests not upon any desire to make concessions to C.S.I. or to enter into closer relations with it, but is a simple theological conclusion made after investigating all the facts in the light of Catholic principles. Even if we looked upon C.S.I. as a pestilential organization drenched with formal heresy and reeking of formal schism, we should

¹ '1. Utrum baptismus ab illis haereticis administratus sit dubius propter defectum intentionis faciendi quod voluit Christus, si expresse declaratum fuit a ministro antequam baptizet, baptismum nullum habere effectum in animam? 2. Utrum dubius sit baptismus sic collatus si praedicta declaratio non expresse facta fuerit immediate antequam baptismus conferretur, sed illa saepe pronuntiata fuerit a ministro, et illa doctrina aperte praedicetur in illa secta? Ad primum: negative, quia non obstante errore quoad effectus baptismi, non excluditur intentio faciendi quod facit Ecclesia. Ad secundum: provisum in primo.' (*Acta Sanctae Sedis*, XXV, p. 246.)

still have to admit that when a C.S.I. bishop performs an ordination he is making a presbyter or a deacon in the Catholic sense. It is, I think, highly unfortunate that a great deal that has been said by Anglo-Catholics about the validity or invalidity of C.S.I. ordinations seems to have been governed by totally irrelevant considerations about the desirability of entering into closer relations with C.S.I.

IS C.S.I. PART OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

Before leaving this topic it may be well to remark that Catholic theologians of all communions have come in recent years to recognize that the notion of membership of the Church is a very complex notion; not least is this true of theologians of the Roman Catholic Church. It has become evident that it is a gross over-simplification to divide the human race simply into those who are in the Catholic Church and those who are outside it. Both the obstinate fact of invincible ignorance and the existence of bodies which possess some, though not all, of the essentials of full Catholicity force one to realize that the notion of membership of the Church is one that admits of differences of degree. To say this is not of course to adopt the slipshod view that all divisions between Christians are divisions within the Church or the equally slipshod view that, because of the divisions between Christians, we are all equally in schism. It needs to be emphatically asserted that a body which possesses all the essentials of Catholicism, whether it is vigorous or weak, whether it is fervent or corrupt, is a branch of the Holy Catholic Church, and its members are members of the Holy Catholic Church, in the full and unqualified sense. This is the claim which the Church of England, with consciousness of all its imperfections, unhesitatingly makes for itself. This does not, however, mean that bodies which possess only some

of the Catholic essentials have no relation to the Catholic Church at all. In so far as they have those essentials they share in the Church's life; in so far as they are lacking in them their share in the Church's life is impeded and weakened. Understood in this way the Report of the Joint Committee is speaking accurately when it describes our relationship with the C.S.I. as one 'of fellowship and growing intercommunion, as between living parts of the Church of Christ.'¹ And in so far as the C.S.I. is trying to acquire what is lacking to it, it deserves our encouragement and help. (It is, I hope, unnecessary to add that the grace of God is not limited in its operation to the fully constituted branches of the Catholic Church. Many people whose Catholic status is defective, and indeed many people who are not Christians at all, are much more holy than some people whose Catholic status is unquestionable; it is not God Who is bound by His ordinances, but we.) The question of our relation to bodies whose Catholicity is partial or defective is thus a highly complex one, and each case needs to be examined on its merits; it is such an examination that the Joint Committee tried to make in the case of the Church of South India. What, it had to ask itself, is the proper attitude for the Church of England to take to this strangely anomalous body, which possesses some, but not all, of the essentials of Catholicism, which

¹ It may be of interest to compare with the above a sentence in the Report on relations between the Church of England and the Methodists which was also accepted by the Convocations in July 1955. The Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church had issued a document in which it expressed the belief that before any action was taken on the basis of the report *Church Relations in England* 'the Methodist Church would require certain assurances of an authoritative kind from the Church of England,' the first of these assurances being 'that the Church of England acknowledges that our divisions are within the Christian Body which is throughout in a state of schism.' The comment of the Joint Committee of the Convocations in its report was as follows: 'The committee hesitates to use the precise words of this stipulation, because of the theological ambiguities attaching to the word "schism," but would regard all discussions between the Methodist Church and the Church of England as taking place within the Body of Christ.' It is clear from the report as a whole that the use of the phrase 'within the Body of Christ' does not imply the recognition of the Methodist Church as a fully constituted part of the Body.

appears to be moving steadily in the Catholic direction, and which, if we show it friendship and encouragement, may ultimately achieve a fully Catholic character.¹

WHO MAY CELEBRATE AT OUR ALTARS?

Perhaps the most impressive feature of the Report and the Resolutions is their refusal to abandon the traditional Anglican principle that nobody may celebrate the Holy Eucharist at an Anglican altar unless he has been ordained as a bishop or presbyter by a bishop who is in the historic succession. Not even when an Anglican Church is on occasion lent for the celebration of the C.S.I. Liturgy may the celebrant be one who has not received episcopal ordination. This is particularly significant in view of the fact that it has been emphatically urged from the Low-Church side, on the basis of certain instances in the Elizabethan period when Anglican benefices were apparently filled by clerics with non-episcopally conferred Genevan orders, that the existing Anglican practice of insisting upon episcopal ordination is a post-Tractarian novelty which does not represent the authentic Anglican position. It is thus a little

¹ In view of doubts that have been expressed of the credal orthodoxy of the C.S.I., the following note may be useful:

The statement of C.S.I. on the Faith of the Church expresses acceptance of the Apostles' and the Nicene Creed. It is, however, stated in a note that it 'does not intend to demand the assent of individuals to every word and phrase in them or to exclude reasonable liberty of interpretation.' The bearing of this was elucidated in a reply sent to the Archbishop of Canterbury by the Synod of C.S.I. held from Jan. 7 to 11, 1950. In that reply it was stated that the note in question was 'inserted with no intention of departure from the historic faith of the Church. It was inserted with the intention of dealing with the problems of mental reservation and scrupulosity, by making as clear and honest a statement as possible of the fact that the Church must, and will, use a certain pastoral discretion, in the application of written standards of belief to individual candidates for Baptism, Confirmation or Ordination. . . . We are, however, prepared to state categorically, as suggested by the Derby Report, that the liberty of interpretation which we desire to safeguard is not intended to extend to any denial of the substance of the historic faith of the Church.' (Italics mine.) It was no doubt in view of this statement that the Joint Committee of the Convocations of 1950 was able to express itself as 'fully satisfied as to the credal orthodoxy of the Church of South India.' The subsequent development of the C.S.I. shows every sign of bearing out this interpretation of its intention.

surprising to find an influential Evangelical writing in a recent article that,

as far as one can see, the only practical difference between the relations now established and full communion is that a certain number of presbyters of C.S.I., namely those not episcopally ordained, will not be permitted to minister in the Church of England.¹

It will occur to a good many readers that the difference in question is in fact the difference between being in full communion and not, and that this is a very considerable difference indeed. The writer has indeed to add that

there is, however, one further restriction imposed, namely that if episcopally ordained presbyters accept invitations to celebrate in the C. of E. they must refrain from doing so in non-Anglican churches.

But he does less than justice to the Report and the theological intelligence of the Convocations when he tries to sweep this restriction aside with the assertion that

it was, however, made clear in the debate that this restriction is not due to any real or supposed incompleteness in the catholicity of C.S.I., but simply to the continued division between the C. of E. and the Free Churches in this country.

If all that is meant by this is that if all the Churches in England were Anglican there would be no need for an undertaking not to celebrate in non-Anglican churches, this statement is little more than a tautology. And if it is meant to stress the importance of the recovery of the essentials of Catholicism by the English Free Churches, it is obviously to be welcomed. But if it is meant to imply that the Church of England is unreasonable in its present refusal to admit the validity of the ministries of the Free Churches—and the context appears to suggest this—the statement appears to me to be positively misleading. The Report does not say that the necessity for the restriction arises from the unreasonable refusal of the Church of England to recognize non-episcopal ministries but from 'the present irreconcilability of the two principles of a unified ministry and of full communion with non-episcopal

¹ The Rev. C. S. Milford in *The Church of England Newspaper*, July 15, 1955, p. 5.

Churches' in the Church of South India, a situation which the Report more than once describes as an anomaly and of which it remarks upon the 'unsatisfactory character'. It is a poor compliment to the care with which the Joint Committee did its work if it is assumed that the refusal of the Convocations to enter into full communion with C.S.I. rested upon no ground of principles, but was merely a device to throw dust in the eyes of Anglo-Catholics. Nothing could do more than such an assumption to disintegrate the impressive unity which the Report showed, as regards the basic theological issues, or to precipitate a bitter controversy within the Church of England.

Again, it is important to understand the precise bearing of the permission which is given for the loan of Anglican churches on occasion for the celebration of the Liturgy of the C.S.I. by a bishop or an episcopally ordained presbyter of that Church. It is clear that if it was applied unscrupulously this resolution might be made use of in such a way as to by-pass all the restrictions laid down in the other resolutions; that, for example, in a parish church or a cathedral there might be held at regular intervals services of this nature, which would take the place of the normal church service and at which widely publicized and large-scale open communion would be practised. There are indications that in some circles this possibility has been perceived. It therefore needs to be emphasized that in his speech to Convocation the Archbishop of Canterbury made it quite plain that the bishops would not allow the resolution in question to be made use of in this way. It was stressed that such services would have two purposes, to make it possible for a visiting bishop or presbyter of the C.S.I. to celebrate in an Anglican church even if he was not familiar with the Book of Common Prayer, and to give Anglicans an opportunity of witnessing the C.S.I. Liturgy; while communicants who were not Anglicans could not be excluded, such services would not be intended as

demonstrations of intercommunion, but would primarily be domestic occasions within the Church of England.

Three other points in the resolutions need stressing. The first is that, while communicants of C.S.I. who are visiting England may be admitted to communion in our churches, if they become permanent residents here and wish to continue as communicants they must conform to the Church's regular discipline, which, of course, includes the reception of Confirmation. In other words, if any one wishes permanently to act as an Anglican communicant he has got to become an Anglican.

The second point is that if ministers of the C.S.I. wish to enter the ministry of the Church of England they have to do so in the regular way. If they are episcopally ordained they have to receive the normal permission under the Colonial Clergy Act and to conform to the discipline of the Church of England like any other Anglican clergyman; if they are not episcopally ordained they must be ordained by one of the English bishops in the same way as any other candidate for ordination.

The third point is that Anglicans who visit the territory of C.S.I. are allowed to receive Communion within the C.S.I. The word 'within' is significant, for it is made plain that the C.S.I. itself desires to respect the consciences of those who wish to receive Communion only from episcopally ordained ministers, and will not consider Anglicans discourteous who refrain from receiving Communion from those who are not episcopally ordained.

One overwhelming impression stands out when one reads the Report and the Resolutions with care; that is the absolute determination of the Joint Committee and the Convocations to ensure that only those ministers who have received valid episcopal ordination shall be allowed to officiate at our altars. Side by side with this there is the genuine resolve to do everything in our power to enable the Church of South India to remedy the defects that still

remain in it and to become a fully constituted and normally functioning branch of the Catholic Church. In view of this it is monstrous to suggest that the Church of England has abandoned its Catholic character and simply thrown in its lot with Protestantism. Nor is there any ground for assuming that, in order to achieve full communion, the Church of England will have to unite with the Free Churches in England on their own terms. It may be that full communion will not be achieved within any foreseeable time; it may be that, as a result of its experience of episcopacy, the C.S.I. itself will radically change its attitude to the Free Churches. To say 'The Free Churches or the C.S.I. will not change their position, so we must abandon ours in order to unite with them' is as unprincipled as to say 'The Roman Church will not change its position, so we must change ours in order to unite with it.' Both these attitudes manifest a fundamental lack of belief in the Church of England, and both of them indicate a lack of trust in the power of God to bring about changes that are beyond our own power; both of them assume that we can at this moment envisage all the possibilities that lie hidden in the womb of the future.

THE CHURCH'S OPPORTUNITY

I am therefore convinced that, if we take the decisions of the Convocations as what they are, and not as what some persons would like and others fear them to be, they represent a clear vindication of the Catholic character of the Church of England. In saying this, I do not imply any approval of that approach to unity of which the South-India scheme and similar schemes are the concrete expressions. I believe that approach to be in many ways theologically unsound, in particular in the way in which it separates questions of faith from questions of order, as if order itself was not a question of faith. I believe that, in starting with negotiations for the mutual adjustment of churches

as they now are, it fails altogether to penetrate to the real causes of our divisions, which can only be brought to light if we are prepared to probe behind the sixteenth-century crystallizations of doctrine and church organization. That there is something wrong about the movements toward reunion with which the Church of England has got itself involved in the last quarter of a century is fairly clearly shown by the fact that whatever else they have done they have not increased the internal unity of the Church of England. I believe that those who interpret the recent decisions of Convocation as signifying a virtual abandonment of the Catholic character of the Church of England are profoundly misinformed and mistaken. But I also believe that a heavy responsibility lies upon those who have encouraged such an extreme and unbalanced movement of the Church of England towards the Protestant bodies that many intelligent and devoted priests and layfolk have felt themselves to be in a condition of acute anxiety and distress. I am convinced that there is no valid reason for Catholics to secede from the Church of England, but if there should be secessions the blame will not lie entirely with the seceders; it will be shared by those who have placed them in the position in which they have, however mistakenly, felt bound to secede. The plain fact is that our involvement in Protestant reunion schemes has led the Church of England perilously near to the point of disruption, and common prudence, apart from more directly religious considerations, demands that we shall call a halt to this movement while we engage in the urgent task of healing our own inner wounds and divisions. It has sometimes been asserted that we must move in the Protestant direction, since all other avenues are now closed; the lights in the East and even over Rome, which seemed so full of promise in the nineteen-twenties, have now, we are told, faded for ever. I cannot believe that we have any right to adopt this attitude of hopelessness, and there

are, in fact, already signs that roads to Catholic unity which have been long blocked may open up again; the recent initiation, at Lambeth Palace, of talks on the prospect of intercommunion between the Church of England and the Russian Orthodox Church may well turn out to be of the greatest importance in this respect. What is, however, essential is that, without any complacency whatever, the Church of England should recover her confidence in herself, and my gravest complaint against the protagonists of pan-protestantism is that, so far as I can see, they do not really believe in the Church of England. I am sure that, if it has the vision to grasp it, the Anglican Communion has an opportunity such as no other Christian body possesses to-day to rediscover the full understanding of an integral Catholicism. It is neither fettered by the theological rigidity of the Council of Trent, nor is it dominated by the tremendous figures of the Protestant reformers. It is therefore in a peculiarly favourable situation for penetrating behind the barrier of vestigial medievalism which has been so prominent and cramping a feature of post-Reformation Romanism and Protestantism alike. Appealing as it does to Scripture and the Fathers, it is specially fitted to seize the possibilities of a situation in which the most vigorous movements in theology are in the realms of Biblical exegesis and patristic study. This is not the place in which to attempt that task, but it lies ready at our hand. All that I wish to do in concluding this discussion is to emphasize the fact that there is nothing in the recent Resolutions of the Convocations to cause us to lose heart. If we are foolish enough to listen to those who tell us that our cause has been abandoned, we cannot be surprised if others take them at their word. If, on the other hand, we insist—and I believe that this is nothing less than the truth—that the Resolutions are in fact a resolute affirmation of Catholic principles we are in the strongest of positions for maintaining those principles in the future.