

BISHOP GORE AND THE ANGLICAN MODERNISTS

THE Cambridge Conference has created a new crisis in the Church of England. Bishop Gore has publicly complained that a large and important and learned body of men, many of them officials in that Church, hold views which are fundamentally subversive of the whole fabric of Christian belief. To those of the "Catholic party" who ask him what is to be done in this emergency, he confesses he has no short and easy answer to give, but he makes a few suggestions.

These suggestions resolve themselves into a strong argument against defections to the Church of Rome. Dr. Gore declares himself incapable of being a Roman Catholic, on the grounds of his certainty that the Roman Catholic Church requires of its members adherence to propositions which are unauthorized, untrue, and unhistorical.

It is impossible not to feel for Dr. Gore some of that enthusiastic admiration which his hearers testified on the occasion of this declaration. He is consistent, loyal, and sincere. Though his loyalty is to principles which are not ours, and his consistency achieved by a logic from which we dissent, we cannot, and we would not, refuse him the honour due to his intelligence, his integrity, and his unflinching courage.

The principles of our Catholic Faith differ from those of Dr. Gore almost precisely as his differ from those whom he brands as heretical. He accuses Dr. Rashdall of reducing the Divinity of Christ to something less than Deity. We must accuse him of diminishing the Divinity of the Church in much the same way. Dr. Rashdall's conception of Christ is no less different from Dr. Gore's than Dr. Gore's conception of the Catholic Church is different from ours.

He deprecates a Church which in every way maxi-

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mizes authority. He complains of this spirit in the Roman Catholic Church since the counter-reformation, saying that it seems at its worst and completest to reduce the duty of the majority to a mere submissive listening to the voice of authority. This he condemns as a passive attitude far from the temper of religion which would be inculcated by our Lord or St. Paul. He is in favour of a Liberal Catholicism restraining its expression of authority towards the minimum. He would ground belief and support teaching, not on the assertion of authority by the teacher, but on arguments from Scripture, history, reason, everything. His Church may not appeal on the strength of "I have said this"; still less of "I say this"; but rather of "We have proved this true; can't you see that our proof is good?"

That this conception of the Catholic Church is fundamentally different from ours is manifest from the opposition between the practical policy advocated by Dr. Gore and that of which he complains in us. He would not have his Church fulminate her authority even against those who do not accept her arguments. He would not have her condemn heretics because of their unbelief. He minimizes her authority over those she claims, even at times when she might be countering a reformation by rival and spurious authorities. He maximizes Scripture, tradition, philosophy to persuade those whose faith is weak and whose minds are un-tutored in the first principles of belief.

It does not enter into his conception of the Catholic Church that she may be the very Voice of God speaking primarily as God, and subsequently (which subsequence may be before or after in point of time) in human accents of persuasion, plaint, and argument. It is not essential to his conception that the Church, being Divine, should demand, as the first condition of treating with men a sublime faith in the goodness and

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power of God ; so that they will be unsurprised to find Him manifesting Himself in any good and efficacious way, whether as a conspicuously good and effective man, or a conspicuously good and effective institution.

Dr. Gore, in his present state of mind, is indeed incapable of being a Roman Catholic because he disregards two great principles which are essential to any Church that has God behind her and within her : her Divine Magisterium, and her appeal to Faith before all else.

This incapacity is further emphasized by his contention (emphasized two years ago at the Leicester Conference) that the God Who was finally revealed in Christ is no more revealed externally in His Church. He has no place for sacraments efficiently causing grace by the hands of efficient ministers, nor of an external voice correcting our for ever extravagant thought. For him the Church lives and works interiorly by the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit.

If this position is to be supported by logic, as it certainly cannot be by authority, it is not unfair to ask Dr. Gore by what precise miracle the work of the Holy Spirit is done. Does He, for instance, make it impossible for us to err in religious judgments ? Or does He correct our erroneous judgments by a second error into truth ? Or does He simply defraud our con-natural extravagance of its practical conclusions. Even on grounds of authority, reason, and history, are we not bound to admit that this work is done not exclusively within us, but primarily and causatively from without ?

But our difference with Dr. Gore is not really a logical quarrel. It is a question of principle. What is authorized ? What true ? What historical ? No argument can tell us this, but only the Voice of God. And is God's goodness and power so shortened that He can only tell us by Dr. Gore's dubious way of argument—and suffer meanwhile a rival so definitely dogmatical as Rome ?

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