

[COMMUNICATED.]

ORTHODOXY AND HETERODOXY.

Every reader of ecclesiastical history is familiar with the bitter and long drawn out controversies of the dark and middle ages, as they were called; clerical casuists, monks of the several orders, and protesting zealots vied with each other in speculating, formulating, or vindicating theories so thread-like in divergence, and so profound in many cases, that mentality fairly revelled in fine-spun theories and subtle distinctions such as neither affected morality, spiritual life, or the mental grasp of any save the initiated of the schools.

Frantic appeals were made to tradition, to the fathers of the church, and at times to the Scriptures which were later made of "private interpretation," to the making of "confusion more confounded;" it is even possible that had Paul seen the results of his epistles, he would have concluded as he did in regard to meat, which, said he, "if it make my brother to offend, I will eat no more meat while the world stands," so he might have said "if my writing of epistles to the churches has caused my brother to be offended, I will write no more while the world stands," certain it is that tomes of comment, of criticism, of explanation, of deductions and erudition deluged Christendom, filled libraries, evoked mental acumen, created sects and promoted division, beyond the writings of any other man since the days of Father Adam.

Time, strength, ability, money, learning, have each suffered exhaustion, and the full force, intent and meaning of many things of Paulistic origin are as much of an enigma, as dark and mysterious as they were in ages long since gone. Religion has been nearly smothered by an imaginary conclusion, a theology has been created as false and alien to Paul's ideas as possible, and polemical warfare and contradictory exegesis have created more contention and bloodshed than all other controversies combined.

Today there is warfare, but it is dissimilar, it is less heated, less dependent on technicalities or translations, more disposed to ignore abstruse dogma, and probably with exceptions, to be less confident and less assertive than under the old condition; there is a disposition to speak of "essentials and non-essentials," to exercise a certain liberal charity, which, uncertain of individual or sectarian decision, half concludes that some other person or creed may have some truth or be nearer right after all.

There is a growing idea that the religious sentiment in man is a fundamental and irremovable characteristic; that if bedded in the constitution of humanity there must be in the divine economy provision for its proper cultivation and inevitable expansion; ideas are seen to be a gigantic factor for progress, and if, as Henry Ward Beecher said, "It is important that man should believe, it is equally important that he should believe aright;" to correct an unbelieving drift, there has been for many years an earnest inquiry after authority, an official, living commentary on the New Testament Scriptures, so as to determine the transient from the enduring, the intent of the writer, the co-existent conditions, and to eliminate from modern application, thoughts and counsels, patent in their time and age to both writer and reader of those invaluable epistles. Some ideas associated with early Christianity were official, permanent, enduring, eternal; they bore the sign manual of authority, they were verified by signs and wonders, they were efficient, meeting all conditions, all ages, all time: there was no dubiety about these when first promulgated,

there need be none now if the scanty fragments are considered in their true light—a brief, historically dictated research—so plain are these basic principles that "a wayfaring man though a fool need not err therein."

A vast amount of interested speculation; of rivalry in schools, of polemical warfare and contradictory conclusion have arisen because neither side had claimed or invoked that revealing light and spirit which would have been "the end of controversy;" later, personal or organized supremacy dictated on the field of battle the articles of compromise, which were to end discussion and make "the lion lay down beside the lamb."

The assumption of authority was partially silenced by law, confiscation was the rebound from the thunders of the vatican, the dicta of the pope, and the arrogance (so-called) of the mother church; Protestantism in vain assumed to array itself in the meretricious garments of the olden rule, but alas, the very principle of protesting placed the clergy and the laity on the same basis, and "Hear the Church" gradually became belittled and nearly obsolete. Sects multiplied under the abused, unauthorized and disintegrating theory of "private judgment," until hundreds have essayed on specious pretext and unmistakable craze to make for themselves and those similarly affected, a so-called church, one truly "their very own."

The love of notoriety, fame, influence, power, money, has been each in turn the master key in irresponsible hands, fitting into the complicated wards of demand, weakness and ignorance; even good desire, love of right, the hunger of the soul, the innate longing for God and truth, securing full off a willing affiliation, with that moral and financial support which tells its own story, not only of yearning but of gullibility also, and the working of unseen influences, which, seldom acknowledged, are yet real and tangible in all the history of mankind.

It is customary now for this diversity of presumed religious teaching and theory to distinguish between "the orthodox and the heterodox" of the Christian world; these terms have been much abused and often misapplied; churches have denounced their neighbor churches; individual teachers in individual churches have denounced, tried and expelled teacher after teacher for heresy, the court of appeal deciding according to accepted standards, such as confessions and articles of faith, the writings of their founders and from catechisms, rubrics, discipline, etc. These standards are mainly man-made, and have nothing greater than human endorsement; as an illustration, the old Wesleyan organization insists that the ministers alone are orthodox who preach the ideas enshrined in "Wesley's commentaries, and his first five volumes of sermons," and the trust deed of chapels precludes in England preaching different from this, under the penalty of confiscation; new light in science, new light on religion, new light on the Scriptures or truths therein, not already adopted into said standards, are heterodox and in fact debarré.

The Calvinistic church bars itself by the "Institutes of Calvin," the Presbyterian in great part by its catechism and confession of faith, the Episcopal by its thirty-nine articles, including its prayer book and rubrics as "issued by authority;" and every church and conventicle, every sect large or small, erects its standard of truth and doctrine, which, however, none may augment, dispute or repudiate, or doing so they are no more accounted orthodox, but as heterodox, heretics and outside the pale.

From this conclusion there needs no particular appeal, but is it not true that they all claim to be Christians,

followers of Christ, and exponents of Christianity? They think it unjustifiable censure to question their orthodoxy, to comment on their divergence from and infidelity to the "author and finisher" of the Christian system—the Christian faith; they are less concerned about divergence from historic Christianity as found in the records on every pulpit cushion of the land, than on denial of some insignificant article or dogma, or discipline of the Church espoused. If these churches were half as tenacious of their historic Master's teaching, of the institutions He appointed, the order He gave, the spirit He promised, the organization He established, the absolute authority He held, they would no more be like the soldiers at the cross who divided His raiment among them and cast lots for His vesture.

If religious teachers were arraigned for heresy, for rejection of this standard, for disobedience to these requirements, for lack of the spirit of inspiration, for the assumption of authority, for rejection of vital truths, for dispensing at pleasure or by sectarian command with things eternal, there would be such a fluttering and scattering of clerical pretenders as has never been seen since Satan and one third of the hosts of heaven were cast out for their lack of fidelity, and that spirit of rebellion which questioned the wisdom and authority of the Father of all.

It cannot be said that there is an orthodox Christian church in all the land. If scrupulous harmony with the New Testament is to be the standard of comparison. Reformer after reformer has endeavored to approximate to that ideal, that product of authoritative revelation by the Son; but all have signally failed. It was reserved by Divine wisdom and eternal intent, in "the dispensation of the fullness of times" to restore the original, orthodox system by which man can attain to eternal life, and while there is no disposition to impeach the honor, or learning, or devotion of thousands of clergy and laity, there is vastly more reason for saying now as one of the great churches said centuries ago, that men have departed from the truth, the world has become heterodox by "heaping to themselves teachers having itching ears," who have turned the truth into fables, "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." From such the disciples of old were exhorted to "turn away."

OUR CIRAN LETTER

Havana, Cuba, Feb. 19.—Long before this letter can reach Salt Lake City, in the regular way, the cable will have brought you an account of the "official funeral of our boys of the Maine—the most splendid public demonstration which Havana has witnessed in a quarter of a century.

You may imagine the thirty coffins in a row in the grand salon of the captain general's palace, the lines of Spanish soldiers standing silently on guard, the thousands of magnificent floral tributes and the tens of thousands of sad-faced people of all nationalities, many of them in tears, who came to view the black boxes; the 24 hearsees, the hundreds of horses with nodding plumes, the long procession of carriages and pedestrians, and the band playing solemn dirges. Every official of the Spanish government participated—even the bishop, who has taken part in but one previous funeral. Perhaps the most pathetic part of the procession was the 3,000 reconcentrados who brought up the rear. Ragged, hatless, barefooted and dirty, hardly able to walk from sickness and starvation, they followed humbly in the rear.

Knowing that the dead were citizens