

Orthodoxy

Two recent statements on the subject of orthodoxy seem worthy of note. An article in a current journal says that all questions of orthodoxy are out of place in an organism that lives and grows, that orthodoxy means being true to its own past, while the proper attitude is that of being true to its opportunity in the future. Another article, in the London "Times," refers to the way in which the word "orthodox" is used nowadays, with a slightly contemptuous sense, implying an opinion with which we disagree. But, as the writer goes on to remark, "to be orthodox is merely to be right," and the contempt which is shown for orthodoxy really means that "we have grown a little impatient of a certain kind of rightness." No doubt mistakes have often been made in regard to orthodoxy, and it is certainly true that there is a constant danger of insisting upon right opinions and forgetting correct practice. But when everything has been said against orthodoxy, it remains true that a man must have some standard of right and wrong, some criterion by which to test his own life and the lives of others. The one true standard of right thinking and right living is the Word of God, and all genuine orthodoxy, and, if we may use the word, "orthopraxy" (right action), must be guided and guarded by God's revelation. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

"The Tug of the Future"

Under this suggestive title a sermon was preached the other day, referring to the way in which the future affects the present. While the past explains much of our life, the future is also a great power. Not only is there a Fall and a Valley of Humiliation in the years gone by, but "there are sunlit hills, with their beckoning summits, in the days that are to be." We are not only bound to the past by heredity, but we are united to God by faith, and God is the God of to-morrow as well as of yesterday. This thought is one of real helpfulness, as we contemplate the Apostle Paul's remarkable treatment of the future in that great and wonderful chapter, Romans 8. Not only is the past recognized, and all that evil has meant in human life, but the future is brought into view, and sighs will pass into songs, and groans into glorious Hosannas. Such a thought yields inspiration and encouragement for life and service, because it reveals to us the Divine purpose that evil will be ultimately overcome and good will assuredly triumph.

A Parable

Some time ago a telegram from Paris was published in an English paper, saying that a train on a line near the eastern frontier of France had broken down, and the passengers thereupon got out and pushed it to its destination, a distance of nearly five miles. This incident has a spiritual meaning to which we shall do well to take heed. Why is Church work so exhausting and yet so fruitless? Is it not because we make so little of prayer in connection with work? The engine has broken down and the train is at a standstill. Then we try to do the engine's work and move the train by human effort, with the result that our work becomes wearisome and the effects are infinitesimal. And yet the Divine fire has not lost its power, nor Divine grace its influence. As we look forward to another season of Church work, shall we not face this problem of prayer, both individual and corporate? Was there ever a time when there was less prayer, private and public, than there is today? Was there ever a time when the Christian Church has made less spiritual progress? What we need to remember is that God's work must be done in God's way, and this means

the way of prayer, the way of the Holy Spirit. If our Church life is marked by a great influx of intercessory prayer during the next few weeks, spiritual blessing will soon be evident.

Catholic and Roman Catholic

The carelessness in the popular usage of the word Catholic is a thing which grates on the ear of one who rightly appreciates the heritage conveyed in the term. If we profess to believe in the Catholic Church, it were well to attach some meaning, and presumably some value to the term. There are those who say the Creed on Sunday, and on Monday, when they use the word Catholic, mean thereby the Church of Rome. This is making to the latter Church a large surrender, and is to beg several questions of weighty import. All it concerns me now to point out is that the term has a wealth of connotation, larger and profounder far, than some might appreciate. Bishop Brewster in the "Living Church" says:—

"It looks not alone to the past, but also to the future. It means something other than mediævalism or the distinctive characteristic of any particular age. There may be a Catholicity of the twentieth as well as of the tenth or thirteenth century. The term is in genuine accord with the watchwords of this new era. Expressing the social character of Christianity, it is in harmony with the ideals and purposes of a time of social adjustment and reconstruction in the conviction of human solidarity and the brotherhood of men. Genuine Catholicity contains the Christian inspiration and sanction of the democratic and social ideals so persistently hovering above the thought and endeavour of our time."

THE BEST METHOD OF DEALING WITH UNBELIEF

One of the most marked features of the age, one, too, which many shrink from recognizing even to themselves, is the growing spirit of unbelief, or in other words, the increasing tendency to believe nothing except what can be definitely proved, and to regard everything else as optional. This spirit of scepticism confronts us everywhere under the most dangerous aspects, and is spreading with fatal facility. All true Christians view with equal concern this deplorable state of things, but the precise method of meeting and grappling with the evil is a question concerning which a variety of opinions are held. Many persons feel disposed to stand aloof from the whole controversy. As true Churchmen, they say, we have really nothing to do with these miserable aberrancies of modern thought. Heresies and heretical opinions, it is said, have always been and will be to the end of time, but they are only the transitory manifestations or symptoms, so to speak, of our known and recognized enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil, with which latter the Church must exclusively contend. They would advise the Church to continue her ministrations, without noticing the signs of the times, confident that if the truth be set forth, error will soon lose its power and attractiveness. Such a view, which, we think, we have stated fairly, is not, in our opinion, the true view of the case. Our duty is not to shut our eyes, but to prepare ourselves to take our part in the dread controversy which is hourly deepening around us—a controversy as to whether there is in very truth a Father and a God, a Father who so loved us that He gave His only Son for us, or whether there is nothing in this fair world

around us, nothing in the starry heavens above us, but either the ceaseless play of cosmic forces, or the dreaming movements of unconscious intelligence. This is the controversy, and we wish to make a few suggestions as to how we should bear our part in it. In the first place, we should endeavour to feel confident and cheerful ourselves, as we have every reason to do. Every day the most marvellous confirmations of the truth of the Bible are being brought to light. Science, archaeology, the researches of historians are all working for us, not against us. Truth can only lead to truth. Partial discoveries may be misunderstood in their application. Periods of transition are always critical, but if we are true Christians we ought to rest assured that, though the route may seem circuitous, we are in reality nearing a time when the truths of Christianity will be manifested in all their glory, and Christ be everywhere triumphant. And if we have this confidence ourselves, we can surely impart it to those unfortunate persons who would fain believe, but can not. Secondly, whenever we are called upon to meet this class of persons, we should deal with them with sympathy and with a heart-felt yearning for the change and conversion of each doubting heart with which we may happen to be brought in contact. Without that deep feeling in our souls, our arguments will carry but little weight. We should not be satisfied merely with a dialectical victory, but should strive to impregnate the unbeliever with a spark of our own confidence and trustful hope. An overbearing and controversial spirit, by arousing a man's amour propre, only tends to alienate him further. On the other hand, we repeat, our manner ought to be kindly and sympathetic, for to whom, we would ask, may such feelings be more fitly manifested than to those who are alone in the wide world, without a Father and without a God? Lastly, learning and knowledge are quite as much needed as kindness and sympathy, and to that end we would advise the clergy never to suffer themselves to fall behind the laity in reference to the questions of the day. A difficulty to be grappled with successfully must first be felt, and its bearings known. Let our ministers boldly confront the enemy of unbelief, fathom its depths and its shallows, and then will they be enabled successfully to cope with the evil, and by God's grace to lead back the erring wanderers to the fold.

IN QUIETNESS AND CONFIDENCE.

Isa. xxx. 15.

Shadows may deepen o'er life's toilsome road,
Yet God is near,
His hand will help thee bear thy heaviest load,
So do not fear.

Shelter thyself within the outstretched arms
Of His great love.
There, 'mid the fiercest of this world's alarms,
No power can move.

Wait for His guidance, when, at times you stand,
In doubt or fear.
God will direct your way o'er sea and land;
"Be of good cheer."

Work, while the daylight lasts, with all your
might,
Fresh courage take.
He Who alone can arm you for the fight
Will ne'er forsake.

Lie still with patience when the hand of God
Trusts thee with pain.
His mark of confidence, His chastening rod
Are for thy gain.

Speak, with a Christlike tenderness and love,
Some passing word.
Pray, and believe that in the Home above
Thy prayer is heard.

Rest thee beneath that mighty Rock of Strength
Which stands for aye.
Know that earth's weariness and grief at length
Will pass away. T. P.