

**ORTHODOXY AND
HETERODOXY: AS
APPLIED TO QUAKERISM**

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Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy: As Applied to Quakerism by Joseph Parrish

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JOSEPH PARRISH

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AS APPLIED TO

QUAKERISM.

BY A LAY CHURCHMAN.

"WHOSE IS THE LAND?"—2 Sam. iii. 12.

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ORTHODOXY AND HETERODOXY.

THE Society of Friends, in its history, principles and practices, has ever merited public notice; and it has also received a full share of the confidence, and admiration of christian observers. Its present condition is an interesting and instructive one; and it is the design of the writer to present a view of it, which the reader may examine from a novel position. For it is true, that while the quaker controversies of the present generation have been expressive of a revolutionary spirit in their midst, which all must have noticed; but little has been written, or publicly said concerning them, by persons outside of their own community.

But it is due to the cause of Christianity, that their relation to other christian professors should be examined; and that a record of it, however humble, should be made in the annals of our time. It is also due to them, as a large and respectable portion of the family of protestant religionists, that they should have an

opportunity of seeing themselves, as others see them. We invite them, therefore, to an honest perusal of these pages, trusting, that while they may serve to enlighten others, they may also carry home to the Society of Friends some important truths, the remembrance of which, will do no harm. And here, we must ask indulgence for the imperfection of our record. Truth is the object we have in view; but our means of stating it in detail, are imperfect, while our ability to do so, is far below our desire.

Two hundred years ago, there was but one Society of Friends. Since then, there have been several, claiming the same origin, resting on the same authorities, and worshiping in the same manner. In our day, there are at least two, to which particular reference will be made,—the others receiving a passing notice. We scarcely know how to distinguish them, as they each claim one source and adhere to a similar title, while we wish to avoid distinctions, which they themselves reject.

The community are apt to designate the larger part of the quaker family, as Hicksites; and however appropriate this may be considered, we shall not employ it, because they do not acknowledge it; and as we wish them to listen to us without prejudice, we shall not offend them by an unwelcome name. The minority, who also adhere to the name of Friends, are generally known as Orthodox; and as this is not rejected by them, but has been already assumed, it will not, we trust, be received from this humble source, as invidious.

We shall, therefore, consider the Friends, and Orthodox Friends,—their differences, and respective claims to the title and doctrines of their fathers, and their allegiance to acknowledged orthodoxy, or heterodoxy.

What is meant by these terms?

Orthodoxy means soundness of faith; but to define what is sound, or true to believe, there must be a recognized standard, and an admitted interpretation of it; at least so far as necessary doctrine is concerned. The world of Christendom is divided into two great parties, orthodox, and heterodox. Public opinion has drawn the line between them, and each admits it.

Orthodoxically, the Bible is believed in, as a written revelation of the will of God to man, and the things thus revealed, are believed, whether comprehended by human judgment, or not. The doctrines that are taught by this book, and which the christian world have received as sound, are too well known to need repetition here. Suffice it to say, that the Church of England embodies in her creed, the essential elements of orthodox faith; and so do many other churches, which are generally known as evangelical.

Heterodoxy means directly the opposite to orthodoxy. Those church organizations are considered unsound in the faith, who reject the chief doctrines of the so-called evangelical churches. We do not assert that they are so; but that they are ranked as heterodox according to the common definition of the term, in which sense we shall use it. Among these are classed Unitarians, Universalists, &c. This explanation furnishes the christian reader with an understanding of the terms to be employed in this inquiry.

THE ORIGIN OF QUAKERISM.

In the year 1644, there arose from the little parish of Drayton, in Leicestershire, England, the first great master of the sect. He was reared in the midst of the

forms of the mother church; but he saw that her ceremonies failed to satisfy the spiritual hunger of the people, and his desire was for a more substantial, and comforting religion. He determined for himself, to throw aside the wearisome yoke, and seek for another revelation, that should bring the peaceful witness to his own heart, of his acceptance with God. And we find him alone, in the midst of a darkened, and gainsaying people, declaring, "The Lord opened to me, by his invisible power, how that every man was enlightened by the Divine light of Christ. This I saw in the pure openings of the Light, without the help of any man; *neither did I then know where to find it in the Scriptures; though afterwards, searching the Scriptures, I found it.*"—*Journal, vol. i. p. 89.*

He was a simple-minded, earnest, bold man; and these were the very elements of character, that were needed for the emergency of the period we are now considering. It was a time of gross darkness! And having seen the *light* himself, which shined in upon his own soul, independently of any external instrumentality, "he went about" exhorting the people to "mind the light." He had not found it in the rituals and observances of the temple service—it came not to him from without—hence his mission was, to call others to the "light within." It was a wonderful demand to make, in the face of a powerful priesthood, and a church-ridden government. And yet, many followers were won over to the doctrine; so that Fox himself says, in his peculiar style, "The truth sprang up first to us, so as to be a people to the Lord in Leicestershire in 1644."—*Journal, vol. ii. p. 465.*

He did not reject the Bible, but made it secondary to the "Light." He found it in the Scriptures, *after he*

saw it in its "pure openings" upon his mind. His simple creed was, "mind the light;" and this constituted his "heterodoxy." For this, he and his people, suffered persecutions most severe.

What was the true import of this creed?

Fox did not say that the "light" would lead all men to be quakers, or even cause them to forsake their forms; but that it would lead all who were governed by it, away from a *dependence* upon any thing, but itself. This is quakerism;—it is all of it, that is essentially characteristic in *doctrine*. The proclamation of this simple *idea*, and the consistent adherence to it, of the few who gathered about Fox, in, and around his native place, was a new era in christian history, of which the world will do well to take note. It was a *discovery* in religion that simplified the faith of the faithful, and at the same time, thrust a rebuke at the mere traditional ceremonies, which for ages, had beclouded the human intellect. In twelve years from the origin of this sect, there were twenty-five ministers in the field; and in the language of their first apostle, "multitudes were convinced." With such a home-force, they began to labor elsewhere in the kingdom; and sent their missionaries to Wales, and Scotland, to Europe, the isles of the sea, and to the new world in the west.

In 1656 the first quaker emigrants settled in New England; and no sooner did they preach their simple doctrine, than they were imprisoned, and slain for their heresy. It cannot be controverted that many things were done by Fox, which his followers imitated, that were indiscreet, and laid them open to the charge of enthusiasm; but the fervency of a new conversion, and the notoriety of leadership in a novel religious theory,

may account for any impropriety or infirmity of judgment; their heterodoxy however consisted, not in their indiscretion, but in their controversy with established dogmas.

The religion of the day was a formal one. The new sect adopted the simplest of all forms, to wit, silent, meditative worship.

It was fashionable to assemble in costly "steeple-houses," and to perform a ceremonial temple-service; they worshipped in the humblest houses, and under the shade of the forest.

Priests were paid to make sacrifices, and prayers, for the people; but Fox and his adherents, testified against them, and professed to speak only as the "Spirit gave utterance."

The people uncovered the head in church, and before the dignitaries of the earth; but these reformers, worshipped with their hats on, and uncovered not to their fellow-men.

The sacraments of the churches, they refused to accept, claiming to possess the spiritual essence, which these signify. Neither would they observe "days and times," declaring that every day is the Lord's.

These were some of the *peculiarities* of the sect; they claimed to receive them by the illumination of the divine light; taking *that*, and not the Scriptures, for their guide.

Having now planted themselves in different parts of the world, and tested the vitality of their first principles, it becomes us briefly to inquire, what was their bond of union. Denying church authority, each man being his own interpreter of the manifestations of the light within him—how did they come to unite upon a form of church government, that should not conflict with individual con-