

"*The Epistles of Clement to the Corinthians.*" Clement, it is supposed, was the disciple of Peter, and for some time Bishop of Rome. The first is a long and well-written letter. It is evidently the production of a saintly man, and the only blemish in it, as compared with modern writings, is his credulity concerning the fable of the phoenix. We incline to the opinion that too much stress is laid upon this as a blemish. It is likely that this story about the phoenix arising new and fresh out of its ashes every five hundred years was believed in his time, and so he uses it to illustrate the doctrine of the resurrection.

We find nothing in the epistles concerning the distinctive work of the Spirit. His whole gospel seems to be contained in the practice of humility and obedience to law and the bishops.

But this is very significant, and indicates that just as obedience to the Holy Spirit waned, obedience to priest and bishop gradually took its place.

The heart of man craves infallible guidance, and when not led by the infallible Spirit he will impute infallibility to something fallible. The change from the guidance of the Spirit to the guidance of man was doubtless very gradual and almost imperceptible, when viewing the Church as a whole, and it required centuries to make the change apparent and complete.

Our curiosity would be better gratified if we had more of the writings of the first and second centuries handed down to us, for then, doubtless, we could trace with precision this slow but sure substitution. However, the fact that such an able and prominent man as Clement, in his lengthy epistle, emphasizes obedience to the bishops and is silent concerning obedience to the Spirit, indicates this trend in the Church very clearly even in his time, which, roughly speaking, was about the close of the first century.

This seems a very short time, indeed, for such pronounced indications of change, and at first sight would the rather be an argument in the hands of those who will maintain that the doctrine of divine guidance never had right of way in the Christian Church. But those who trace the history of the doc-

trine of Christian perfection since the days of Wesley will not be startled at these indications of rapid departure from apostolic teaching. John Wesley himself, towards the close of his life, noted with alarm the gradual decadence of his favorite doctrine, and again and again raised the note of warning alarm. Fifty years after the death of this great modern apostle, would it have excited remark to see a pastoral address of the Methodist Church of England emphasize obedience to the Scriptures and the Discipline and be silent concerning the doctrine of entire sanctification? And yet any student of ecclesiastical history would be justified in both cases in making such incidents prove that a gradual change had been inaugurated.

The thirteenth gospel, or group of books, is "*The Epistles of Ignatius.*" These are written to various churches, and include one letter to his cotemporary Polycarp. Also in the same group is "*The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians.*"

These writings represent a time towards the middle of the second century. They all have the air of genuineness, and, indeed, can be accepted as such with considerable confidence, when such a scholar as Lightfoot puts his imprimatur on them.

Ignatius is on his way from Antioch to Rome to be thrown to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre. Whilst on this journey he writes these various letters.

They abound in much that is good, and breathe throughout the spirit of the early martyrs; and we have not the slightest desire to lessen their force or depreciate their excellence. However, in pursuing our researches it is of necessity that we be not unduly influenced by the halo which surrounds him as a public martyr, and so be prevented from examining closely his writings, to see what bearing they have on the subject in hand.

Like as with Clement, he emphasizes obedience to the bishops. But he is still more pointed and emphatic in this matter, and gives evidence that the authority of the bishops had been growing apace. Indeed, he does not hesitate to teach that obedience to the bishop is on a par with obedience to God.