

they forsake the quiet and peaceful enjoyments of home for the more exciting pleasures of the dancing-club and the ball-room. There, the rules of etiquette not being so strictly observed as amongst the classes they seek to imitate, liberties are used which tend to destroy that self-respect and modesty which are amongst the fairest ornaments of the female character. These, and other recreations of a kindred kind, steal away the precious hours which might be more advantageously and profitably spent, nurse a craving for unhealthy excitement, and break up the social intercourse of the home circle, thus leading to another pernicious evil—the keeping of late hours. No one can pass along the streets at night without being convinced that in regard to this matter family government must be very lax. At that hour when public houses or hotels vomit forth their noisy and oftentimes insensible companies, we encounter groups of both sexes promenading the streets, or standing at corners and lanes, forgetful that an anxious mother may be sitting at the fireside alone and sad, waiting and weeping for their coming. And when they do return home, in all probability, they tumble into bed, as the beast into his stall, without a thought of God or of their immortal souls. These, and other irregularities of a similar character, show the necessity of early moral training, and of holding with a firm and unflinching hand the reins of family government. A WORKINGMAN.

APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION AND THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS.

BY REV. T. F. FOTHERINGHAM, M.A., ST. JOHN, N. B.

(Concluded.)

They tell us that bishops, presbyters and deacons are essential to every congregation (ad. Trall. 3.) The bishop is not to neglect the widows; he is to assemble the congregation frequently and seek after all by name, not despising male and female slaves (ad Polycarp 4.); the bishop offers up the public prayers in the congregation; the bishop and the presbyters convene the congregation (ad Ephes. 20.), nothing can be done in the Church without the bishop (ad Trall. 2.); without him it is not lawful either to baptize or celebrate the Eucharist, and, wherever he shall appear there, the multitude is to assemble (ad Smyrn. 8). Each bishop then had but one altar and one congregation. What diocesan of the present day could perform all these duties? Yet they are just what thousands of Presbyterian pastor-bishops are performing week by week. They are purely pastoral duties. In all the seven epistles we find not a word about confirmation or ordination, and nothing is affirmed of the bishop that is not perfectly consistent with the strictest equality between him and the presbyters. Indeed the favourite comparison of Ignatius is with the Sanhedrim, the presbyters being the members and the bishop the president, and it is well known that no distinction of rank obtained between the president of the Sanhedrim and its members. Whether, then, the evidence of the Ignatian epistles pertains to the first or the third century, they testify simply to presbyter-bishops.

The writings of the remaining Apostolic Fathers contain nothing pertinent to our subject.

It is impossible to overestimate the value of the evidence here adduced. These were men who heard the truth from the lips of the Apostles, who were living during the organization of the Primitive Churches, who had doubtless received many directions orally which have not been preserved to our time. So far as uninspired testimony is concerned this is of the very highest order, and moreover being unwittingly given when writing on subjects only remotely referring to Church government, indicating what was the condition of things acquiesced in without question, it is difficult to conceive what stronger argument could be framed. It is, moreover, all the evidence of a contemporary character that can be obtained. Not one word remains to us from any writer of the first century, nor is it ever after hinted by any one that such did ever exist, which contradicts the united testimony of Clement, Polycarp and Ignatius. Have we not a right then to claim that, seeking our principles in the Word of God, we find ourselves walking in the "old paths" of the Apostolic Fathers, and the "good way" of the primitive Church?

The chain of Apostolic, or more properly of Episcopal, succession lacks then its first links. It is not enough that the name "bishop" be found. This

title every minister of the Presbyterian Church claims. He only is a bishop in the mediæval and modern sense of the word, the sense contended for by all advocates of the divine right of episcopacy, who possesses the exclusive power of confirmation, ordination and government. The question is really diocesan *versus* parochial episcopacy. Presbyterians do not deny that in the early Church one presbyter presided as *primus inter pares*, "Where many are equal in dignity, one only can occupy the first place" (Cicero, *Pro Murena*), but we deny that he occupied this position as being of a higher order, and executing, *jure divino*, higher functions. Some writers eagerly seize upon almost every sentence in which the word "bishop" occurs, and then exultingly exclaim: "Here is the germ of what we are defending." It matters not to them whether their author defines the functions of the episcopate or not, the name is sufficient, and then they turn to us and solemnly remind us of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. "One would think," said Jamieson, "that, at the beginning, they plead only for as good as nothing; and that the thing they would have is no bigger than the cloud which was like a man's hand; but afterward the whole heaven of the Kirk of God is black with it" (Sum. of Ep. Cont. 186). Only by some such process as this can the unbroken succession of bishops be established. More unstable than a pyramid resting upon its apex, it is a superstructure without a foundation. The language of Macaulay scarcely misrepresents the dubious character of claims resting upon such a shadowy basis. "The arguments against it are infinite, the evidence for it absolutely nothing. It rests not upon one doubtful assertion, but upon fifty, and when these are compounded together, according to Whately's recipe for gauging the force of argument, it defies the power of any calculus invented by man to determine the ratio of improbability. We can imagine the perplexity of a presbyter cast in doubt as to whether or not he has ever had the invaluable 'gift' of apostolical succession conferred upon him. As that gift is neither tangible nor visible, the subject neither of experience nor consciousness; as it cannot be known by any effects produced by it (for that mysterious efficacy which attends the administration of rites at its possessor's hands is, like the gift that qualifies him to administer them, also invisible and intangible) he may imagine, unhappy man, that he has been 'regenerating' infants by baptism, when he has been simply sprinkling them with water. 'What is the matter?' the spectator of his distraction might ask. 'What have you lost?' 'Lost, would be the reply, 'I fear I have lost my apostolic succession, or rather, my misery is that I do not know and cannot tell whether I ever had it to lose.' It is of no use here to suggest the usual questions, 'When did you see it last?' 'When were you last conscious of possessing it?' What a peculiar property is that of which, though so valuable—nay, on which the whole efficacy of the Christian ministry depends—a man has no positive evidence to show whether he ever had it or not; which, if ever conferred, was conferred without his knowledge, and which, if it could be taken away, would still leave him ignorant, not only when, where and how the theft was committed, but whether it had ever been committed or not? The sympathizing friend might probably remind him that, as he was not sure that he had ever had it, so, *perhaps*, he still had it without knowing it. 'Perhaps' he would reply: 'But it is certainly I want.'"

Resting securely upon the Word of Inspiration, we find ourselves in harmony with the consensus of the ancient fathers, the reformers of the sixteenth century and the vast body of evangelical Christians of to-day; we are able to clasp in fraternal embrace all who confess the name of Christ, and in whose Church life the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, manifests His power, by whatever name they may be called, by whatever terms they may designate their Church rulers, and in whatever forms they may offer the sacrifice of broken and contrite hearts. Reaching back through the ages into the misty past, with an historical continuity as unbroken, a Church life as venerable, and a faith as pure as that of our sister of England, we, too, claim the ancient British Church—the Church of St. Columba and St. Patrick, of the Culdees and the Loirlards—as our ancestor; nor do we find the chain of her presbyterate broken till we reach the first twelve sent forth by our Lord Himself.

Glorious Church of our fathers, shall we not love thee, thou mother of saints and heroes? Against thee in thy northern home the kings of the earth set themselves, and their rulers took counsel together; but the angel of the Lord encamped about thee, and delivered thee. Though the fire and the sword have robbed thee of thy children, and the wail of thy exiled sons and daughters has pierced the hearts even of their persecutors, yet thou standest to-day in the van of the Churches of Christ, thine heart tenderer because of thy sorrows, and thy faith purer because of thy conflicts. Yes! we love thee with a love stronger than death; not because thine heart is crowned with hoary locks, and beneath thy furrowed brow flashes a keen yet tender eye; not because thy lips have ever spoken to us, in childhood, youth and old age, words of truth and sweetest love; not because the shadowy hands of dear ones departed in thy faith bind us to thee even as they bind us to heaven itself; but because thou art living now with the life of Christ. Thine is a life which knows no aging, for it comes to thee, not through a channel eighteen hundred years long, but directly from the indwelling Spirit of God, Him who now, as of old, bids thee separate each Paul and Barnabas by holy ordination to the work to which He has called them, and who quickens every bounding pulse of thy life with His vivifying presence. We love Thee because, with a heart large and loving like that of the Master, Thou welcomest as brethren in Christ and honourest as true priests of God, all, who being called of the Holy Spirit, preach His truth and minister in holy things, even though they walk not with thee or scorn thy fraternity. In one word, we love the Church of our fathers, because, with her sister members of the General Alliance, she possesses the apostolic order, the apostolic discipline, the apostolic faith and the apostolic charity.

FORMS OF PRAYER.

OR AN IMPROVED SERVICE FOR THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

MR EDITOR,—In a recent issue a letter appeared, signed "Layman," on the above subject, and containing much for us Presbyterians to ponder over. I was about addressing you on the question when this letter appeared, and as the writer hopes the subject will be further ventilated, I will not withhold my views. No doubt our Presbyterian service has been much improved of late years, yet there is great need for more. Sermons of one hour and over are things of the past. Our communion service of three or four hours was made wearisome, but is now brought within the time of an ordinary Church service. The service of to-day is a decided improvement, and greatly appreciated. The Presbyterian worshipper has no opportunity of taking an active part other than engaging in the service of praise. Why should he not be able to respond and take part in the reading of the Scriptures? why not have forms of prayer suitable to various occasions? How useful this would be at the ordinary prayer meeting, dispensing with the calls upon the brethren. Why should silence reign during the taking up of the ordinary collection, in place of the organist, choir or precentor playing and singing the psalm or hymn that is next to be sung during this uninteresting interval?

Why should we not have a service on Christmas Morning, a day recalling the great event of the birth of our Saviour? Reference is made by "Layman" to the cry "Knox, Knox," when many know not what Knox did. I will add to his remark a portion of a lecture by the Rev. Dr. McGregor, given in St. Giles, Edinburgh, in 1881, bearing on this subject. He said: "Among the historical facts which it is neither to our credit nor our welfare to forget, one is that for the first one hundred years of its existence the Reformed Church had a richer and more varied service than it has had ever since. It had its prayer book, its order for the administration of the sacraments, its service of praise with hymns as well as psalms and appropriate tunes. The loss of all this was due, not to Scottish, but to English influence. As time advances, and taste improves, there is a growing tendency to return to the moderate and enlightened views of Knox and the early reformers. While the privilege of extempore prayer will never be abandoned in Scotland, there are good men in all the Churches, and these the very men who have the