

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

ANOTHER YEAR.

BY M. A. NICHOLL.

Another year has wellnigh passed,
With all its smiles and tears;
Its joys and sorrows that are cast.
In Time's great stream, whose waters vast,
Roll to the ocean of the past
Bearing our hopes and fears,
Where 'neath its waves they mingle fast
With all our vanished years.

Another year! A span of time,
That tells of life work done,
A book, some pages dark with crime,
Some grand, and holy and sublime,
A trumpet, telling every clime
Of battles lost and won,
A knell of woe, a joy bells chime,
Hope dead, and bliss begun!

Another year! In Spring's sweet hours,
What blissful dreams we knew
What hopes that came with opening flowers
What visions nursed in leaf-wreathed bowers,
When fancy lent her magic powers,
To trace, in brilliant hue
Castles of air, and dream-built towers
Too soon to melt from view

Another year! And I can trace
Footprints o'er summer's way,
Where once I met a cherished face,
But now I find a vacant place,
And miss that well-loved form of grace,
Now passed from earth away.
This year the goal of his long race,
The close of his bright day

Autumn is dead, the year is old,
The dull December days are chill,
The northern blast blows keen and cold
O'er bare woods, dreary to behold,
And sobs o'er prairie, glen, and wold;
O'er valley and o'er hill,
And in its moan are requiems old
For true hearts dead and still

So must it be; each passing year
Still bears some joy away.
Some darling treasure held so dear,
In trembling bliss, in hope and fear.
Which we would fancy safe and near
Departs, and seems to say,
"We own no lasting city here—
• Earth's life is but a day!"

But Christmas coming round again
Hath brought his wonted cheer;
And pleasure, in his jovial train,
With rosy mirth, held gleeful reign,
And half-pelled the thoughts of pain
That haunt the dying year,
And many a heart that cup did drain
Of "peace and goodwill here."

Mecymin, N.W.T.

"APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION"

BY REV. ROBERT F. BURNS, D.D., HALIFAX.

The Rev. Dr. Burns gave the first of his course of winter lectures in Fort Massey Church on a recent evening, on Apostolic Succession with an answer to "C's" letter on "Confession and Absolution." The audience was a large one, and the utterances of the speaker were attentively listened to.

During my ministerial life I have declined notifying letters that have not the name of the writer. When your contention is on the public arena with "open face," you are placed at a manifest disadvantage when your opponent skulks into an ambush, or fights behind a mask. It is beneath dignity to notice every anonymous scribble, and, amid the pressure of other duties, a city minister has not the time, even if he had the taste, for bush and guerrilla warfare. But there are exceptions to every rule. The long letter which has appeared simultaneously, during the past week in two of our local journals, over the signature "C," bears such marks of responsibility and respectability as to deserve and demand notice. We like its calm and courteous tone, while differing entirely from its conclusions. We desiderate more of that style of writing on both sides in the present controversy and if we can only avoid that "wraith of man which worketh not the righteousness of God," it will accomplish much good. Why should we not all endeavour to cultivate the charity that "suffereth long and is kind"—that is not "easily provoked, and thinketh no evil," and so earn the character indicated by the illustrious Dr. Chalmers, in a letter upon a cognate theme, to a near and dear relation of my own? "I rest assured that your whole performance is characterized by that spirit of

the Gospel, which, if infused (and why should it not?) into our every difference, would disarm controversy of its sting, and reduce it to a calm and profitable contest of the understanding."

It is noticeable at the outset in the communication of "C," that it leaves the open field of the Word, and plunges into the braky thicket of the fathers. I respectfully decline being drawn into such a wilderness. I infinitely prefer the *Grandfathers* and the *Great Grandfathers*. I entrench myself within the stronghold of the Bible from which dislodgment on this question is impossible. Even the Douay version (A.D. 1609), which "C" must accept, gives me this counsel:—"Should not the people seek of their God, for the living to the dead? To the law rather and to the testimony. And if they speak not according to this Word they shall not have the morning light." (Isaiah viii. 19 20) Better far, according to this, to have the "morning light" of the "true word"—"the light shining in a dark place," than the "gloamin'," or "the dim religious light" of the fathers. Hence, in my discourse of an hour, filling forty-three pages of foolscap, I devoted scarcely two minutes of time and barely half a page of space to the fathers, and for a very plain reason. They, though some of them noble men, are liable to err, and did err, on many points, speaking "the words which man's wisdom teacheth." While the Scripture writers spake "what the Holy Ghost teacheth," spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Unlike the writings of the fathers, even a child can understand these, as the Roman Catholic version of the New Testament (A.D. 1582) says of Timothy (2 Tim. iii. 15, 16): "Because from thy infancy thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which can instruct thee to salvation by the faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture inspired of God," etc. It is singular that, when you pass from this "All Scripture," even to those fathers that bordered on the apostolic age, and were brought up at the feet of the apostles, you at once perceive the difference in spirit and style between the inspired and uninspired. In the writings of the apostolic fathers there is much useful reading. They had the best opportunities of knowing the mind of Christ and the apostles, three of them having been (it is said), pupils of Paul, viz., Barnabas, Clemens Romanus and Hermas, and three of them disciples of John, viz., Ignatius, Polycarp and Papias. Ominously enough, "C" makes not a solitary quotation from one of them. For a manifest reason; they do not favour his view of confession. They are against it. Take Clemens Romanus, for example, whom Irenæus (quoted by "C") puts third from Peter of Rome (Haer. iii. 3, 3) who acted as chief presbyter of the Roman congregation, and whom Jerome (de Vir III) identifies with the "Clement also," mentioned by Paul in Phil. iv. 3. Clement's First Epistle to the Corinthians is pronounced by competent judges one of the most important documents of Christian antiquity extant. It was preserved with singular care in the Alexandrian Manuscript of the New Testament, known as Codex A., and donated in A.D. 1628 to Charles I. by Cyril, Patriarch of Constantinople, and is now deposited in the British Museum. This disciple of Paul says: "Blessed are we, beloved, if we keep the Commandments of God in the harmony of love, that so through love our sins may be forgiven us, for it is written, 'Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not impute to him.' This blessedness cometh upon those who have been chosen by God through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be glory for ever and ever, amen. Let us therefore implore forgiveness for all these transgressions, which through any suggestion of the adversary, we have committed. For it is better that a man should acknowledge his transgressions than that he should harden his heart. The Lord desireth nothing of anyone except that confession be made to Him, for says the elect David: 'I will confess unto the Lord,' and 'Thou forgiveest the iniquity of my sin' quoting two passages of Scripture in proof. Clement, whose writings were, in many places, read for edification at Divine service in the ancient Church, says not a word of any confessing, save unto God, the only Saviour.

Ex uno, discit omnes (from one learn all). How full these apostolic fathers are of Scripture, in the appealing to which, as the sole and supreme standard, the later ones sadly lacked! It is to these last "C" is so partial, and so prolific in quotations. The passages

quoted from Irenæus, Augustine, and partly from Chrysostom, refer to a kind of confessing of which we cordially approve. The more of this public confessing of sin—of the closet confessing to the "Father in secret," and of burdened souls repairing to their pastors for advice and consolation—the better. Much of the confessing referred to by "C" and others in their quotations from the fathers is of this wholesome kind, as different as can be from what is known as auricular confession. What it is otherwise, as in portions of the writings of the others quoted, Origen, Tertullian, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyprian and Basil, we have the germs as we have always said, of that very system which "C" defends. Augustine is with us, of whom one of the greatest of modern English theologians (Mezey) says: "One such writer is himself a whole age, and more than an age of authorship: a complete school, and more than a school of Divinity." What does Augustine say? (b. A.D. 353. d. 430.) He indignantly asks: "What have I to do with men that they should hear my confession, as though they could heal my disease." The paucity of passages in Augustine against confession and kindred dogmas may be explained by the fact noted in the preface to the Venice Edition. "We have taken care that all those things which could affect the minds of the faithful with heretical pravity, or would cause them to deviate from the Catholic Orthodox Faith, be taken away." (*Cyrillus removeri illa omnia quæ fidelium mentes hæretica pravitate possent inficere, aut a Catholica orthodoxa fide deviare.* Passages from Chrysostom (b. 347 d. 407 A.D.) have also been taken out, because bearing against their favourite principles and practices. In the edition of his work printed at Basle, the Inquisitors of the Expurgatory Index have made quite a number of erasures. For example, from his first Homily on John, they have blotted out these words: "The church is not built on the man, but the faith." From his sermon on Pentecost they have deleted: "There is no merit but what is given us by Christ." Many erasures are made from different Fathers. Jehoiakim's pen-knife has been often used in after times, too.

I am fully aware that Chrysostom extols the hierarchy, and that the passage quoted by "C" seems to lean to absolution, but it does not countenance confession as it is now contended for, nor is it inconsistent with language used by him elsewhere, as when he says: "Review and lay open your conscience before God. Show your wounds to the Lord, the best of physicians, and seek medicine from Him. Show to Him who upbraided not, but cures most kindly."

I cannot, therefore, admit the statement of "C." which is in questionable taste: "Dr. Burns was most unfortunate in asserting that St. Augustine and St. John Chrysostom were with him. Surely he never read them." And again, at the beginning of the letter: "It is a matter of surprise, that men laying pretensions to scholarship, should adduce St. Augustine and St. Chrysostom as witnesses against confession. Honesty is one of the first requisites in a teacher; knowledge one of his first equipments." Our position was based upon and buttressed by Scripture. Hence ninety nine out of the hundred parts of our discourse were scriptural, and the remaining fraction, patristic. The Bible is a solid rock. The fathers are shifting sand. We would be like the wise man, "He that heareth these words and doeth them," etc. (Rhemish vers. of Mat. vii. 24.) Why should "C" seek the living among the dead, and not take the advice of his own Bible already quoted: "For the living to the dead. To the law rather and to the testimony."

Considering the many infallible proofs given by me from Joshua, Hezekiah, Ezra, David and Daniel, in the Old Testament, and from Peter, Paul, John, and best of all, from Jesus, in the New Testament, in favour of our Protestant position, which "C" has never touched or come within sight of: not to speak of the unambiguous testimony of the most reliable of those fathers who lived in the very days of the apostles. I may repeat his exultant question: "Candid reader, who has antiquity on his side?"

As so small a portion of "C's" communication is devoted to the Scripture argument, it becomes us attentively to consider the passages that are quoted. The first is St. John, xx. 21, et seq.: "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. When He had said this, He breathed on them and He said to them, receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." This, "C" says, "gave