

seeks, not without success, to enlist the sympathies and co-operation of his people in political Christianity at home, as well as among the heathen in far-off lands. Mr. Macdonnell's health, which gave much anxiety a short time since, is happily restored, and it is hoped long years of Christian usefulness are yet in store for him.

"APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION AND THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS."

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

Holding that questions of Church order occupy a very subordinate position when compared with the great doctrines of the Gospel—believing that the Church is "the pillar and ground of the truth," rather than the embodiment of a systematic polity—Presbyterians are not much accustomed to dwell upon the reasons which have induced them to adopt the principles of Church government which are exemplified in their ecclesiastical system. Consequently many outside our communion, and not a few within our pale, have been led to conclude that the system is one of expediency merely, having no very clear foundation in Scripture or antiquity; or if, through being faithfully instructed in "the whole counsel of God," they have seen clearly that here, as in every other part of her creed and discipline, our beloved mother Church has taken the revealed Word as "a lamp to her feet and a light to her path;" that, in the words of one of her earliest historians, her reformers "took not their pattern from any kirk in the world—no, not frae Geneva itself; but, laying God's word before them made Reformation according thereunto, both in doctrine first, and then in discipline" (Row); yet they have regarded with little interest the arguments based upon the practice of the early Church. They have said, "If we have the Bible on our side we care not for the voice of antiquity where it contradicts the one supreme and infallible Rule. Behind the walls of this fortress, safely bidding defiance to the enemy, we refuse to be drawn out to do battle on the plain. We are building the walls of Zion; we are doing a great work, so that we cannot come down; why should the work cease, whilst we leave it and come down to every (vaunting) opponent who, from what we believe to be a prejudiced study of history and incorrect interpretation of Scripture, concludes that, because we have not a hierarchy, we are no true Church of Christ?" But, acting on this principle, we are in danger of allowing the case to go by default. Through the force of mere assertion, rather than by strength of argument, many seem to have been persuaded that we are silent because we know that history is against us. "You dare not," say they, "take the evidence of the early Church, for you know that it would require you to revise your interpretation of Scripture. The statements of the apostles would convey a very different meaning when read in the light of the apostolic Fathers. The Church history of the New Testament would yield the germs of a very different Church polity when interpreted by its development in the next five centuries." Again and again we are told that there can be no Church where there is no bishop; and the doctrine of the Trinity is scarcely more insisted upon than a trinity of ecclesiastical orders.

While there might be some doubt as to the propriety of occupying the hours of public worship on the Lord's day with a discussion of these questions, for every hour of that day is needed, in this worldly age, for edification and spiritual culture, there can be no impropriety, but rather the reverse, assembled as we are in the capacity of a court of the Church of Christ, on a week day, for the permanence of a solemn ecclesiastical function in which the people have an essential part, in drawing attention to the argument from antiquity as supporting our interpretation of Scripture. To this theme let us address ourselves this evening, and we shall endeavour to show that the corner stone of our Church system—the principle which gives our distinctive title, viz.: that there is but one order in the Christian ministry—that of Presbyter; and that all holding that rank are officially equal, was a principle recognized by the primitive Church, and only lost sight of in the gradual corruptions of succeeding centuries.

That the constitution of the early Church was Presbyterian is clearly inferred from the writings of the Apostolic Fathers.

This is a title applied to those immediate pupils of the apostles whose writings are extant. They fall

into two groups, viz.: the disciples of Paul, Barnabas, Clement of Rome, and Hermas, and the disciples of John, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Papias. Let us briefly examine these.

Clement of Rome (died about A.D. 100) is the reputed author of an epistle from the "Church of God which sojourns at Rome" to "the Church of God which sojourns at Corinth." This epistle contains a fraternal remonstrance with the latter Church in regard to the dissensions that had arisen within it. Had there been a bishop in Rome why does such an official document never mention his name? Had there been a bishop at Corinth why is he never once referred to? On the contrary, it is presbyters who fill the Episcopate (c. 44); it is against presbyters that they have made insurrection (c. 47); it is unto presbyters that they are exhorted to submit themselves (c. 57). How could the brethren at Rome, if under the benign rule of a right reverend father in God, thus write. When wishing to rebuke faction, how could the Church and its prelate be so forgetful as not to point to "the one remedy for the divisions of Christendom"—the apostolic succession of bishops. If prelacy promotes unity, peace, and subordination, then what a pity that it was not tried just here where it was most needed. So far from suggesting such an expedient, the Romans write, "only let the flock of Christ be in peace with the Presbyters who are set over it" (c. 54). One does not wonder that such a candid historian as Milner should acknowledge that "at first indeed, and for some time, Church governors were only of two ranks—Presbyters and Deacons. The Church of Corinth continued long in this state, as far as one may judge from Clement's epistle." (Church History I. 161.)

As Clement is probably the person referred to in Ph. iv. 3, so Polycarp (died about A.D. 167) is in all likelihood the "angel" of the Smyrnan Church, to whom the epistle is addressed in Rev. ii. 8 11. His epistle to the Philippians is extant. It begins "Polycarp and those who with him are presbyters," and is addressed "to the Church of God sojourning at Philippi." In it Polycarp calls himself a presbyter; he addresses his letter to no bishop of Philippi; and never mentions one past, present, or prospective throughout the whole epistle. This is the more remarkable when we find that it consists largely of exhortations to various family and social duties and the practice of the Christian virtues, it alludes at length to the duties of deacons and presbyters, and bids the people be "subject to the presbyters and deacons" (c. 5), but does not in the remotest manner refer to the duties of any higher official or the respect due to him from the people. He mentions the case of a presbyter—Valens—who had been deposed for immorality, but gives no hint that any bishop was concerned in his deposition, or was necessary to his restoration. The Church is counselled to treat him with moderation and kindness. When we compare these facts with the address of the Apostle Paul to the same Church (Ph. i. 1, "bishops and deacons") we have surely as strong evidence as could be obtained that the rulers of the Church at Philippi were presbyter bishops and deacons.

It is of no use to "suppose" that at Philippi and Corinth the bishop "may have been temporarily absent." There is no evidence before us that he ever was in either place, or was ever expected, and the burden of proof surely lies with those who frame theories to escape difficulties. Had these sees been vacant, we cannot understand how, in epistles of such a character, no reference is made to the fact. These are the only two churches regarding which we have authentic contemporary information in the first century. The writings of Polycarp and Clement present us with no trace of episcopacy in them, and no list of their bishops has ever been found, what right have our opponents to conclude that other churches, regarding which we have no contemporary records, were at this time Episcopal?

Regarding the writings of Ignatius (died not later than A.D. 116) there has been much controversy. The most certain fact about them is that they have been expanded by interpolations of a much later date to nearly twice their original length, and several epistles bear the name of this Father which were not written for hundreds of years after his death. Believing these additions to be the work of a forger of the third century, I would be willing to receive them as evidence regarding the Church government of that period; but many of our episcopal controversialists still insist

upon the genuineness of a large portion of them. Let us then concede, for the sake of argument, that the seven epistles mentioned by Eusebius contain the views of Ignatius regarding the Church; and what witness do they bear?

(To be concluded next week.)

ASSEMBLY'S COMMITTEE ON TEMPERANCE.

MR. EDITOR,—I see that the Assembly's Committee on Temperance has just issued their questions. Would it not be well for that Committee to issue their queries much earlier, say, not later than the end of December? The Assembly's Committee on Sabbath schools and on the State of Religion issue their queries by that time. The Synod of Hamilton and London meets on the 9th April. At this late hour it will be impossible for many if not for all of the Presbyteries of this Synod to take any action on the question submitted, or to prepare a report based on the answers of Sessions to such questions for the Synod.

TEMPERANCE.

IN MEMORIAM.

The following is a copy of the minute adopted by the Presbytery of Toronto, on the 6th inst., anent the late Hon John McMurrich:

"It having pleased Almighty God to remove from this world, since the last meeting of Presbytery, the Honourable John McMurrich, for many years a faithful and devoted elder of the Church, the Presbytery desire to place on record their deep sense of the loss sustained in his removal, and their high estimate of his Christian character and moral worth. During the whole of his residence in Toronto, extending over a period of about half a century, Mr. McMurrich was an active member of the Presbyterian Church, ever ready with his time, his influence, and his means to aid in advancing the cause of Christ. In Sabbath school work he was ever deeply interested, and up to almost his latest years was the diligent and devoted superintendent of a Sabbath school in the city, while he was also for many years a faithful officer of the Provincial Sabbath School Association. He did much also to advance Church extension in the city, and to his assistance and influence both the West Church and the East owed a large measure of their success in the earlier years of their organization. As an elder he was faithful and conscientious in attending all the Church courts, and his counsel was always valuable, characterized as it was by sound judgment, Christian moderation, and a sincere regard for the purity and the peace of the Church. It is well known that he took a warm interest in the prosperity and advancement of the missionary and educational schemes of the Church, and when circumstances required, he was always ready and willing to help them by his influence and by his credit. In many directions Mr. McMurrich's influence was felt, and his worth in connection with our Church will be more fully realized now that he is removed.

"The Presbytery mourn the removal of one so faithful and useful; but they mourn not as those who have no hope. His trust was placed on the true and sure foundation. His life, no less than his death, testified to the reality and depth of his religious feelings; and those who mourn his removal can rejoice in the assurance that he has been called to enter into the joy of his Lord.

"The Presbytery desire to sympathize with his bereaved widow and family, and direct that a copy of this minute be sent to them."

REV. R. WALLACE has received for the disabled minister, from Jessie Hamilton, \$1.

THE Corresponding Secretary of Queen's College Missionary Association acknowledges the following contributions in its behalf: Already acknowledged, \$158.82; C. L. Herald, Bracebridge Sabbath school, \$7; J. Somerville, B.A., Arthur congregation, \$54.50; Rev. D. Wishart, of Madoc, \$5; David Forest, Apsley congregation, \$1.50; D. McTavish, M.A., Fort Collins, Col., \$17.05; A. K. McLeod, Consecon and Hillier, \$8.50; T. W. Thom, Kingston, \$5; S. Childerhouse, Cobden and Osceola congregation, \$10; Rev. D. Fraser, of Mount Forest, \$2; R. C. Murray, B.A., Grand Valley, Man., \$40; John Hay, B.A., Merrickville and North Augusta, \$5; Total, \$314.37.