

dom. Two of his servants, however, were tortured, till one of them revealed the place of his concealment. His enemies, fully armed, reached the place of his retreat towards evening, and finding that he could not escape without committing sin, they were overpowered by the will of the Lord be done." After he was arrested, he requested one hour for prayer, and when it was granted, he prayed standing in the presence of his enemies, says the account of his martyrdom,—"so full was he of the grace of God, that he could not cease speaking for two hours, during which time he made earnest supplication for all he had ever known." He was then conveyed into confinement on a prison. He was overpowered by the will of the Tetarch, and his father Nicias, in a chariot; and they, accompanying his extreme old age, took him up into the chariot, and asked him, "What evil it was to say, 'Lord Caesar,'—to sacrifice and not to be saved?" He at first refused to answer, but being pressed, simply replied, "I will not do what you advise me." Upon this they spoke to him sharply, and rudely thrust him out of the chariot, in consequence of which he sprained his ankle. When he came to the amphitheatre he heard a voice from heaven, the age of miracles not having yet closed, saying, "Polycarp, be strong, and act manfully." Upon being brought before the tribunal, the pro-consul said, "Have respect for thy age; swear by the fortune of Caesar; cry, take away the impious!"—an allusion to the fact, that the heathen then called the Christians atheists. Polycarp looked round on the heathen and said, "Take away the impious." The pro-consul then said, "I swear, and I will release thee—blaspheme Christ." "Eighty and six years," said the venerable saint, "have I served, and he hath injured me in nothing; and how can I blaspheme my King who hath saved me?" After much persuasion, the pro-consul threatening him, said, "I have will be strong; I will throw thee to them except thou repent." Polycarp boldly replied, "I have no other answer, but to say, 'I have no better to say, but it is good for me to pass from this world to the next.' Again the pro-consul said, "Since thou despisest the wild beasts I will cast thee into the fire, except thou repent." Polycarp replied, "Thou threatenest fire that burns for an hour, and is afterwards extinguished; for thou art ignorant of that fire of future judgment and eternal punishment, reserved for the wicked. But why do you delay I do whatever you wish." The pro-consul finding that all his efforts were unavailing, sent a herald to proclaim, "Polycarp hath confessed himself to be a Christian." At that hated name, the multitude, both of Jews and Gentiles, unanimously shouted that he should be burned alive. "The business," continues the narrator, "was executed with all possible speed; for the people immediately gathered fuel from the workshops and baths, in which employment the Jews distinguished themselves with their usual malice. As soon as the fire was prepared, Polycarp stripped off his clothes, and undressed in a garble; but when they were about to fasten him to the stake, he said, 'Let me remain as I am, for he who gives me strength to sustain the fire, will enable me also, without your securing me with nails, to remain unburned in the fire;' upon which they bound him, without nailing him; and he, putting his hands behind him, and being bound as a distinguished man selected from the multitude, he said to God his Father, 'O God, Almighty, said, 'O Father of thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained the knowledge of thyself—O God of angels, principalities, and of all creatures, and of all the just who live in thy sight, I bless thee that thou hast counted me worthy of this day, and of this hour, to receive my portion in the number of martyrs, in the cup of Christ, for the resurrection of eternal life, both of body and soul; among whom may I be presented before thee, as a sacrifice well-savoured and acceptable, which thou, the faithful and true God, hast prepared, promised, and fulfilled accordingly. Wherefore, I praise thee for all these things: I bless thee, I glorify thee, by the eternal high priest, Jesus Christ, thy well-beloved Son, through whom, to thee, and the Holy Spirit, be glory, both now and for ever, amen." Some delay having taken place, and the flames not readily consuming his body, an executioner pierced it through with a sword, and put an end to the martyr's sufferings. The pro-consul allowed the bones of Polycarp to be carried away by his friends; though the Jews malignantly said, that the Christians might give up Christ and worship Polycarp. The writers of the letter add, that this was impossible; for Jesus, and Jesus only could be the object of their worship; to him as the Son of God they offered adoration; but the martyrs, as disciples and imitators of the Lord, were merely objects of gratitude and love.

The circular letter of the church of Smyrna thus concludes—"He, Polycarp, was apprehended by Herod, the Italian Pontifex, Statius Intradrus being pro-consul; but Jesus Christ reigning for ever, to whom be glory, honor, majesty—an eternal throne from age to age." How striking an allusion to those very attributes of our Lord, which he once revealed to this very church!—"the first and the last, who was dead and is alive for evermore." When we consider that this writer of the account of Polycarp's martyrdom had been deprived of his best earthly counsellor, teacher, and friend, how natural was the reference which his mind thus made, from things temporal to things eternal—from the beings of a day to him that inhabiteth eternity. He had seen Polycarp, the great and the good, expire in agony under the command of his persecutors. Herod was his enemy—Phileas, the pro-consul, his enemy—the Jews, who were dead, but they were all conquering, transitory beings like himself: a few short years, and their little brief authority would have gone down with him to the grave—a few short years and the throne of the pro-consul would be crumbled into dust. What a relief must it have been to this believer to turn from his enemies to his friend; from Statius Intradrus, the ruler of a day, to Jesus Christ, reigning for ever, on an eternal throne from age to age.

Polycarp wrote a short epistle to the Philippians, which remains to our day, though only partially in the original Greek, in which he chiefly exhorts his converts to avoid heresy and avarice, and to discharge with propriety all the relative duties of Christians. It is interesting to observe he claims inspiration for Paul, he declaims it for himself, for he says, "Neither I, nor any like me, can attain the wisdom of the blessed Paul, who, when he was among you, perfectly and firmly taught the word of truth in the presence of men then living, who also, absent, wrote to you an epistle, into which if you look, ye shall be built up in faith which is worthy unto you, and ye shall also receive the sacred letters;" "for I trust," says he, "you will well exercise yourselves in the small letters, as it is read in three writings, 'Be angry and sin not,' and 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.'" Thus, it is evident that while Polycarp never claimed inspiration, either for his own writings or for those of any individual who had been a companion of the apostles, he affirms that our New Testament is divinely inspired, and that it consequently demands our attentive and prayerful consideration. When we read the writings of the apostolic fathers, and compare them with the epistles of Paul and John, there is not a gradual and almost imperceptible transition between the one and the other; but a sudden retrogression, as if we had instantly passed from an age of gold to one baser than iron. Though in point of time they lived close upon the apostolic age, yet their writings partake of all the weaknesses and imperfections of more remote antiquity; showing that the unaided powers of the human mind required centuries for its development. We never find Paul confounding facts with fictions, as when Clement argues the resurrection of the body from the Phoenix, a bird which never existed; and instead of unjustly exalting his own office, as did Ignatius, he uniformly places the Saviour in the foreground of the picture, and reserves himself for the shade; only claiming to be a herald of the manifold wisdom of God—a herald of the unsearchable riches of Christ.

The only other person who can claim to be an Apostolic father, is an unknown individual who wrote an epistle to Diognetus—an equally unknown person. It was long attributed to Justin Martyr; but the clear, logical, condensed style, proves that it is the production of a much earlier writer. There are also important doctrinal differences between that epistle and the acknowledged writings of Justin Martyr. The former speaks of the heathen Gods, as idols of wood and stone, the latter describes them as demons, dwelling in statues and images, that they might receive the sacrifices of their worshippers. The one represents the heathen before the coming of Christ, as living in a state of profound darkness; the other views the seeds of divine life diffused by Christ, as the Word of God, so as to induce an earnest longing for redemption; and thus, in the words of St. John speaks of Christ, as enlightening every one that cometh into the world. The object of this epistle is to give Diognetus an account of the Christian worship. It consists of twelve chapters, though the last are evidently not genuine, as they sustain doctrines quite opposed to the preceding part of the epistle. As a specimen, we shall extract the passage where he speaks of the soul in the body as viewed as an emblem of the Christian in the world. "What the soul is to the body, that are Christians to the world. 'The soul is dispersed through all the members of the body, and Christians are dispersed through all the states of the world. The soul indeed dwells in the body, but it is not of the body; so also Christians dwell in the world, but they are not of the world. The visible soul is preserved in a visible body; so also are Christians seen living in the world, but their piety is invisible. The flesh hates and fights against the soul, because it hinders its pleasures, though the soul enjoys it in nothing. The soul loves the flesh which hates it, and Christians love those that hate them. The soul is indeed shut up in the body, but it preserves the body; and Christians are indeed kept in the world as a prison, but they preserve the world. The immortal soul dwells in a mortal tabernacle; and Christians, as strangers, dwell with corruptible things, waiting for a heavenly incorruption. The soul when it is purified by the Word of water, becomes better; and Christians, though furnished, daily increase."

In reading the works of the Apostolic fathers, we are forcibly struck with the superiority of their writings, not only to those of inspired men, but also to those of the very wisest age. We have thus evidently a proof for verbal inspiration in harmony with the mental constitution of the apostles; for, not only the doctrine, but the style, is so clearly revealed by the Holy Ghost and the views illustrated as suggested by their minds, that their writings would have been powerless and sometimes trifling. But, not only is the doctrine of the New Testament divine, but the argument is invariably sound and well sustained; the language is select and appropriate. The truth is, that the human mind required time for its development; and, therefore, our present condition is just the result of the combined influences of the past and the present. It is not, therefore, necessary what, in matters of faith, we should follow the opinions of antiquity, since the fathers had to contend with many prejudices from which we are emancipated; and they enjoyed comparatively few opportunities of mental culture. Thus, Lord Bacon well remarks, "We are the true ancients," evidently meaning that we not only live later in the world's history, but that we enjoy the comparative experience of many past generations. The appeal, therefore, in matters of faith and practice, ought to be made to the Father of the Church; but what, said the Scriptures? to the law and the testimony, if they speak not according to this world they have no allusion in them. H.

ERRATUM.—In January No., page 108, lines 4 and 5, for "Thomas," read "Hermas."