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## Poetry.

### The Eternal Goodness.

J. G. WHITTIER.

O friends with whom my feet have trod,  
The quiet aisles of prayer,  
Glad witness to your zeal for God,  
And love of men I bear.

I trace your lines of argument,  
Your logic linked and strong,  
I weigh as one who dreads dissent,  
And fears a doubt as wrong.

But still my human hands are weak,  
To hold your iron creeds;  
Against the words ye bid me speak,  
My heart within me pleads.

Who fathoms the Eternal Thought?  
Who talks of scheme and plan?  
The Lord is God! He needeth not  
The poor device of man.

I walk with bare, hushed feet the ground  
Ye tread with boldness shod;  
I dare not fix with mete and bound  
The love and power of God.

Ye praise the justice; even such  
His pitying love I deem;  
Ye seek a king, I fain would touch  
The robe that hath no seam.

Ye see the curse which overbroods  
A world of pain and loss;  
I hear our Lord's beatitudes  
And prayer upon the cross.

More than your schoolmen teach, within  
Myself, alas, I know,  
Too dark ye cannot paint the sin,  
Too small the merit show.

I bow my forehead in the dust,  
I veil my eyes for shame,  
And urge, in trembling self-distrust,  
A prayer without a claim.

I see the wrong that round me lies,  
I feel the guilt within;  
I hear with groans and travail cries,  
The world confess its sin.

Yet in the mad'ning maze of things,  
And tossed by storm and flood,  
To one fixed-star my spirit clings:  
I know that God is good!

Not mine to look when cherubim  
And seraphs may not see,  
But nothing can be good in him,  
Which evil is in me.

The wrong that pains my soul below  
I dare not throw above;  
I know not of his hate, I know  
His goodness and his love.

I dimly guess from blessings known,  
Of greater out of sight,  
And with the chastened Psalmist own,  
His judgments too are right.

I long for household voices gone  
For vanished smiles I long,  
But God hath led my dear ones on,  
And he can do no wrong.

I know not what the future hath  
Of marvel or surprise,  
Assured alone that life and death,  
His mercy underlies.

And if my heart and flesh are weak,  
To bear an untried pain,  
The bruised reed he will not break  
But strengthen and sustain.

No offering of my own I have,  
Nor works my faith to prove;  
I can but give the gifts he gave,  
And plead his love for love.

And so beside the Silent Sea  
I wait the muffled oar,  
No harm from him can come to me,  
On ocean or on shore.

I know not where his islands lift,  
Their fringed palms in air;  
I only know I cannot drift,  
Beyond his love and care.

O brothers! if my faith is vain,  
If hopes like these betray,  
Pray for me that my feet may gain  
The sure and safer way.

And thou, O God! by whom are seen  
Thy creatures as they be,  
Forgive me if too close I lean  
My human heart on thee.

## Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

### PRIMITIVE EPISCOPACY.

No. II.

By Rev. J. M. CRAMP, D. D.

The advocates of episcopacy generally refer to Clement of Rome as an authority on their side. Clement is an elder of the Church at Rome. It is the fashion now to call him the *bishop* of that Church; and so he was, in the New Testament sense of the word, being one of its elders or bishops. He wrote a letter, in the name of the church, to the church at Corinth, which is still preserved and is a precious relic of antiquity. It is the nearest approach we have, in merely human writings, to the apostolic style. How beautifully simple is the address! "The Church of God, sojourning at Rome, to the Church of God sojourning at Corinth."

The Corinthians were as contentions as in Paul's time, and Clement severely reproves them for it. In the course of his letter there are several allusions to Church officers, on which it has been attempted to build an argument for episcopacy. I never met with an argument on any subject so entirely baseless, as will appear from the following statements:—

1. Clement knew of no officers in the Church but *bishops* and *deacons*. Having observed that the apostles appointed bishops and deacons, from among those who believed, he adds—"Nor was this a new institute, for bishops and deacons were written of many ages before. Thus says the Scripture, 'I will appoint their bishops in righteousness, and their deacons in faith.'" The good father was not very exact in his quotation. He refers to Isa. lx. 17.—"I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness." The Septuagint has "rulers" and "bishops," for "officers" and "exactors." The fathers often quoted according to the sense, or from memory. But that does not affect the point now under consideration. The officers of the Church, according to Clement, are bishops and deacons.

2. The same persons are referred to by him, throughout the letter, by different appellations. The general word "rulers," is employed twice; "elders," several times; bishops as often. The rulers, the elders, the bishops, were precisely the same persons, variously designated.

3. It is clear that there were several elders, or bishops, in the Church at Corinth.—One charge against the Church was, that some of the bishops had been deposed. Clement's language is remarkable. He tells the Corinthians that it was "no small sin" to "cast out of the overseership" those who had discharged their duties "blamelessly and holily";—and then he immediately adds—"Happy are those elders who have already finished their course—they have no fear of being removed." Those elders had participated in the "overseership." They were all "bishops."

4. It is most manifest, then, that in Clement's time there were no bishops, as that word is now used. They were of another sort. No case can be adduced in that age, of a bishop having under him presbyters or elders. The threefold order—bishops, presbyters, and deacons, did not then exist.

There is some difference of opinion as to the time when Clement flourished. Some place him as early as A. D. 66; others, thirty years later. Dean Milman, I observe, gives A. D. 99 as the date of his death;—Gieseler (from Irenæus), A. D. 102; Cave A. D. 100; Mosheim, A. D. 100; Robertson—"towards the end of the century";—Schaff, A. D. 101. The fact is, that the vaunted Apostolic Succession, in which Clement is one of the links, is hopelessly complicated at the very beginning. He who thinks to trace his ecclesiastical pedigree to Peter has undertaken a task which no man living can perform. Even Roman Catholic historians confess that the succession of the early bishops of Rome is plunged in inextricable doubtfulness. The succession in the middle ages is disturbed and interrupted be-

yond hope of restoration. And yet there are English clergymen who boast of their descent from Peter, in a direct line! Poor dreamers!

We have now reached the second century. Symptoms of unholy intermeddling with the laws of Christ soon appear. The beginning was small. Expediency probably suggested the propriety of appointing a chairman at the meetings of the elders. When the fittest man for that office, was found in any place, he would be likely to retain it. All were elders; all were bishops; all were on an equality;—but the chairman would soon come to be regarded as the elder, the bishop, and be spoken of as such. Then, the complimentary title would be assumed as a right, and power and authority would be claimed in consequence. Thus a new order gradually rose up. The bishop became a different man from the presbyters, although during the second century the titles were frequently interchanged and bishops were called elders and elders bishops. But practically the church had slidden into a new form of government. Episcopacy was one of the earliest of the corruptions by which Christianity has been deformed. It was the infusion of a new element of human power. It was "a heavy blow and sore discouragement" to the freedom of christian churches.

Much importance is attached to the sentiments advanced by Ignatius on this subject. He was bishop of Antioch, and was thrown to the wild beasts in the Roman Amphitheatre, A. D. 114. On his way from Antioch to Rome he wrote several letters, which are still extant, or are supposed to be, for the controversy respecting their genuineness is not yet settled. Admitting, however, that the seven which are now generally acknowledged are the actual production of the martyr, we cannot but be struck with the amazing difference between his style and that of the apostolic writings. Thus he writes respecting the officers of the Church in his days:—"Let us be careful not to resist the bishop, in order that we may be subject to God" (*Ad Ephe. Sect. 5*):—"It is proper to regard the bishop as the Lord himself" (*Ibid. Sect. 6*):—"Do nothing without the bishop and the presbyters" (*Ad Magnes. Sect. 7*):—"He who does anything without the bishop, and the presbytery, and the deacons, is not pure in conscience" (*Ad Trall. Sect. 7*):—"As many as belong to God, and Jesus Christ, they are with the bishop" (*Ad Philadelph. Sect. 3*):—"It is not lawful, either to baptize, or keep the love-feast, without the bishop. Whatever he approves is also well pleasing to God" (*Ad Smyrn. Sect. 8*):—"He who honours the bishop is honoured by God; he who does anything separately from the bishop, serves the devil" (*Ibid. Sect. 9*):—"My life for theirs who are subject to the bishop, the presbyters, the deacons" (*Ad Polyc. Sect. 6*).

Many other specimens might be given.—What a change has taken place! Clement tells us of one governmental body, consisting of elders, or bishops, all possessing equal rights and powers, aided, in temporal matters by the deacons. His account corresponds with that of the "bishops and deacons" at Philippi. But Ignatius presents quite a different view of the case. According to him the bishop is a distinct and separate officer, whose presence or authority is necessary to give validity to any ecclesiastical act, and to whom all are to be subject. Admitting, I say again, the genuineness of these letters, and that they are free from interpolation, it must be admitted that the lust of power had taken a great stride, and that the church had already lost a large part of her liberty.

One explanation I know has been suggested, to which due weight should be given. The innovation was recent, and opposition might be expected. Neither the elders nor the people would submit to the change without a struggle. Ignatius was fond of power, and therefore enthusiastic in favour of the new arrangement. He employed his energies in fastening the episcopal yoke on the necks of the brethren, feeling assured that the exhortations of one who was soon to be a martyr would be very respectfully regarded. This may account for his urgent and repeated admonitions.

But Ignatius overshot the mark. We find nothing like his style of writing for many

years afterwards. When Polycarp of Smyrna (he was burned there A. D. 165), wrote a letter to the Church at Philippi, he made no reference to a single bishop, as president of that Church, but exhorted the people to be "subject to the presbyters and the deacons, as to God and Christ." The "presbyters," were the same officers as the "bishops" mentioned by Paul, and thus it is evident that the same government existed at Philippi then as when the apostolic letter was written.

The growth of episcopal power was gradual. It was long before the threefold order was generally diffused. In some places the presbyters held their own; they were all elders; they were all bishops; and they governed jointly. In other places, the busiest, most active man in the body obtained the perpetual chairmanship at an early period, and in time came to be regarded and addressed as "the bishop." By the close of the second century this mode of government extensively prevailed. Yet even the presbyters acted as the bishops' assessors, without whom nothing important was done, and the concurrence of the Church was necessary to acts of discipline. Clement of Rome speaks of "the things commanded by the multitude." Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, in the middle of the third century, affirms in various passages of his Epistles that, offenders were restored, and ordinations celebrated, and other business transacted, in the presence and with the approval of the whole church. The bishops had not yet become despots.

Your readers will see, that though episcopacy was introduced in the second century, it was of a very moderate cast, and extremely different from the episcopacy of these times. The arrangement of the episcopal church of Nova Scotia would nearly resemble those of the second century, if there were a bishop at Halifax; another at Liverpool; another at Yarmouth; another at Bridgetown—and at Amherst—and Pictou—and Truro, and other places; and if, in each town, there were a number of presbyters, to advise and aid the bishop; and if, also, the churches in these towns were regularly convened for purposes of discipline, and for the election of officers, whenever needed. But such a distribution of powers and responsibilities would ill suit the hierarchical pretensions of this age.

I have said that the supposed arrangements in Nova Scotia would "nearly" resemble those of the second century. It would perhaps be more correct to say that they would resemble the *second stage* of episcopal progress. In the first stage, there would be a bishop at Halifax, and another at Dartmouth; for the district or diocese (as it is now called) rarely exceeded the size of a modern English parish. But when the separate power of bishops was consolidated, its extension was eagerly sought, and it was accomplished in this way:—on the occurrence of vacancies in villages and small towns, the people were persuaded to abstain from asking for successors, and to be content with the services of presbyters, who would act under the bishops of the large towns or cities adjacent. Thus dioceses, in the modern sense of the word, were gradually formed. The process of absorption went on in succeeding ages, till at length a bishop's see became coterminous with a province. But it is noticeable that the bishops of Rome contrived to preserve a large number of small dioceses in Italy; so that when Councils were held, the Pope could command a majority. This was notorious at the Council of Trent. Even now, the whole number of Roman Catholic bishops in Europe being about six hundred, one-third of them are found in Italy.

It has been objected, that if episcopacy is acknowledged to have existed in the second century, the presumption is that it was instituted by the apostles. Hence it is sometimes alleged, that towards the close of the apostolic age the mode of government was changed by the apostles themselves from congregational to episcopal.

I reply, 1. That there is no record of any such change. It cannot be proved.

2. That the government of the church by elders, or bishops, as already described, continued to prevail in the second century, after all the Apostles had died. Polycarp's letter may be adduced in evidence.

3. That while the choice of a presiding el-