

NOVEMBER XXIII.

ST. CLEMENT, POPE, M.

See Tillemont, t. 2. p. 162. Cœllier, Wake, Pagi, ad an. 100. n. 2.

A. D. 100.

ST. CLEMENT, the son of Faustinus, a Roman by birth, was of Jewish extraction; for he tells us himself, that he was of the race of Jacob.¹ He was converted to the faith by St. Peter or St. Paul, and was so constant in his attendance on these apostles and so active in assisting them in their ministry, that St. Jerom and other fathers call him an apostolic man; St. Clement of Alexandria² styles him an apostle: and Rufinus,³ almost an apostle. Some authors attribute his conversion to St. Peter, whom he met at Cæsarea with St. Barnabas: but he attended St. Paul at Philippi in 62, and shared in his sufferings there. We are assured by St. Chrysostom,⁴ that he was a companion of this latter, with SS. Luke and Timothy, in many of his apostolic journeys, labours, and dangers. St. Paul (Phil. iv. 3.) calls him his fellow-labourer, and ranks him among those whose names are written in the book of life; a privilege and matter of joy far beyond the power of commanding devils. (Luke x. 17.) St. Clement followed St. Paul to Rome, where he also heard St. Peter preach, and was instructed in his school, as St. Irenæus⁵ and pope Zozimus

¹ Ep. 1. ad Cor.

² Strom. l. 4.

³ De Adulter. lib. Orig.

⁴ S. Chrys. Prol. in 1 Tim. et Hom. 13. in Phil.

⁵ L. 3. c. 3.

testify. Tertullian tells us,¹ that St. Peter ordained him bishop, by which some understand that he made him a bishop of nations, to preach the gospel in many countries; others, with Epiphanius,² that he made him his vicar at Rome, with an episcopal character to govern that Church during his absence in his frequent missions. Others suppose he might at first be made bishop of the Jewish Church in that city. After the martyrdom of SS. Peter and Paul, St. Linus was appointed bishop of Rome, and after eleven years succeeded by St. Cletus. Upon his demise, in 89, or rather in 91, St. Clement was placed in the apostolic chair. According to the Liberian Calendar he sat nine years, eleven months, and twenty days.

At Corinth, an impious and detestable division, as our saint called it, happened amongst the faithful, like that which St. Paul had appeased in the same church; and a party rebelled against holy and irreproachable priests, and presumed to depose them. It seems to have been soon after the death of Domitian, in 96,³ that saint Clement, in the name of the Church of Rome, wrote to them his excellent epistle, a piece highly extolled and esteemed in the primitive Church as an admirable work, as Eusebius calls it.⁴ It was placed in

¹ Prescr. c. 32.

² Hær. 27. c. 6.

³ See Patr. Junius, or Young, Annot. in ep. Clem. Cotellier, p. 82. Ceillier, &c. Yet Dodwell, Appen. ad c. 6. Diss. ad Pearson, p. 219, Cave, Hist. Lit. p. 28. t. 1. Archbp. Wake, p. 12, 13, &c. Grabe in Spicilegio, t. 10. p. 245, &c. think this epistle was wrote by St. Clement, whilst the see of Rome was vacant, after the martyrdom of SS. Peter and Paul; on which account they say he writes in the name of the Roman Church. For in the beginning he speaks of troubles, (c. 1.) which seem to represent Nero's persecution; he speaks (c. 5.) of the martyrdom of SS. Peter and Paul as recent; he mentions the services of the Jewish temple as subsisting, (c. 41.) which were abolished in the year 70, and Fortunatus who came from Corinth to Rome with information of this schism, (c. 59.) was an old disciple in St. Paul's time

¹ Cor. xv. 16,

⁴ Eus. Hist. l. 3. c. 16. See S. Iræn. ap. Eus. l. 5, c. 6, S. Jerom. in Catal. c. 15, Photius, Cod. 126.

rank next to the canonical books of the holy scriptures, and with them read in the churches. Whence it was found in the very ancient Alexandrian manuscript copy of the Bible, which Cyril Lucaris sent to our king James I. from which Patrick Young, the learned keeper of that king's library, published it at Oxford in 1623. St. Clement begins his letter by conciliating the benevolence of those who were at variance, tenderly putting them in mind, how edifying their behaviour was when they were all humble-minded, not boasting of any thing, desiring rather to be subject than to govern, to give than to receive, content with the portion God had dispensed to them, listening diligently to his word, having an insatiable desire of doing good, and a plentiful effusion of the Holy Ghost upon all of them. At that time they were sincere, without offence, not mindful of injuries, and all sedition and schism was an abomination to them. The saint laments that they had then forsaken the fear of the Lord, and were fallen into pride, envy, strife, and sedition, and pathetically exhorts them to lay aside all pride and anger, for Christ is theirs who are humble, and not theirs who exalt themselves. The sceptre of the majesty of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, came not in the show of pride, though he could have done so; but with humility. He bids them look up to the Creator of the world, and think how gentle and patient he is toward his whole creation: also with what peace it all obeys his will, and the heavens, earth, impassable ocean, and worlds beyond it,¹ are governed by the commands of this great master. Considering how near God is to us, and that none of our thoughts are hid from him, how ought we never to do any thing con-

¹ The British Isles, and other places separated from the continent of the ancients by vast distances and a wide ocean, are called by them *new worlds*.

trary to his will, and honour them who are set over us; showing with a sincere affection of meekness, and manifesting the government of our tongues by a love of silence. "Let your children," says the saint, "be bred up in the instruction of the Lord, and learn how great a power humility has with God, how much a pure and holy charity avails with him, and how excellent and great his fear is."

It appears by what follows, that some at Corinth boggled at the belief of a resurrection of the flesh, which the saint beautifully shows to be easy to the almighty power, and illustrates by the vine which sheds its leaves, then buds, spreads its leaves, flowers, and afterward produces first sour grapes, then ripe fruit; by the morning rising from night, and corn brought forth from seed. The resurrection of the fabulous Phoenix in Arabia, which he adds, was at that time very strongly affirmed and believed by judicious Roman critics,¹ and might be made use of for illustration; and whether the author of this epistle believed it or no, is a point of small importance, whatever some may have said upon that subject.² The saint adds a strong exhortation to shake off all sluggishness and laziness, for it is only the good workman who receives the bread of his labour. "We must hasten," says he, "with all earnestness and readiness of mind, to, perfect every good work, labouring with cheerfulness: for even the Creator and Lord of all things rejoices in his own works." The latter part of this epistle is a pathetic recommendation of humility, peace, and charity. "Let every one," says the saint, "be subject to another, according to the order in which he is placed by the gift of God. Let not the strong man neglect the care of the weak; let the weak see that he rever-

¹ Tacitus, *Annal.* l. 6. n. 23, &c.

² See Tentzelius, *Dissert. Select. de Phœnic.* p. 33. et n. 16. p. 45.

once the strong. Let the rich man distribute to the necessity of the poor, and let the poor bless God who giveth him one to supply his want. Let the wise man show forth his wisdom, not in words, but in goods works. Let him that is humble, never speak of himself, or make show of his actions.—Let him that is pure in the flesh, not grow proud of it, knowing that it was another who gave him the gift of continence.¹ They who are great cannot yet subsist without those that are little: nor the little without the great.—In our body, the head without the feet is nothing: neither the feet without the head. And the smallest members of our body are yet both necessary and useful to the whole.”² Thus the saint teaches that the lowest in the Church may be the greatest before God, if they are most faithful in the discharge of their respective duties; which maxim Epictetus, the heathen philosopher, illustrates by a simile taken from a play, in which we inquire not so much who acts the part of the king, and who that of the beggar, as who acts best the character which he sustains, and to him we give our applause. St. Clement puts pastors and superiors in mind, that, with trembling and humility, they should have nothing but the fear of God in view, and take no pleasure in their own power and authority. “Let us,” says he, “pray for all such as fall into any trouble or distress; that being endued with humility and moderation, they may submit, not to us but to the will of God.”³ Fortunatus, who is mentioned by St. Paul,⁴ was come from the Church of Corinth to Rome, to inform that holy see of their unhappy schism. St. Clement says, he had dispatched four messengers to Corinth with him,

¹ S. Clem. ep. 1. ad Cor. n. 38.

² N. 37.

⁴ 1 Cor. xvi. 17.

³ N. 56.

and adds: "Send them back to us again with all speed in peace and joy, that they may the sooner acquaint us with your peace and concord, so much prayed for and desired by us; that we may rejoice in your good order."

We have a large fragment of a second epistle of St. Clement to the Corinthians, found in the same Alexandrian manuscript of the bible; from which circumstance it appears to have been also read like the former in many churches which St. Dionysius of Corinth expressly testifies of that Church,¹ though it was not so celebrated among the ancients, as the other. In it our saint exhorts the faithful to despise this world and its false enjoyments, and to have those which are promised us always before our eyes: to pursue virtue with all our strength, and its peace will follow us with the inexpressible delights of the promise of what is to come. The necessity of perfectly subduing both the irascible and concupiscible passions of our soul, he lays down as the foundation of a Christian life, in words which St. Clement of Alexandria enforces and illustrates. Besides these letters of St. Clement to the Corinthians, two others have been lately discovered, which are addressed to spiritual eunuchs, or virgins. Of these St. Jerom speaks, when he says of certain epistles of St. Clement:² "In the epistles which Clement, the successor of the apostle Peter, wrote to them, that is, to such eunuchs, almost his whole discourse turns upon the excellence of virginity." Doctor Cave,³ having in his eye the letters of this saint to the Corinthians, is angry with St. Jerom for these words, and accuses him of calling a period or two in this saint's first epistle to the Corinthians, in which virginity is commended, the whole epistle.

¹ Ap Eus. l. 4. c. 23.

² L. l. adv. Jovinian. c. 7. p. 327.

³ Hist, Liter, t. l. p. 29. ed. Noviss.

But this learned writer and his friend Dr. Grabe,¹ founded this false charge upon a gross mistake, being strangers to these two letters, which were found in a manuscript copy of a Syriac New Testament, by John James Westein, in 1752, and printed by him with a Latin translation at Amsterdam, in 1752, and again in 1757.² A French translation of them has been published with short critical notes. These letters are not unworthy this great disciple of St. Peter; and in them the counsels of St. Paul concerning celibacy and virginity are explained, that state is pathetically recommended, without prejudice to the honour due to the holy state of marriage; and the necessity of shunning all familiarity with persons of a different sex, and the like occasions of incontinence is set in a true light³.

St. Clement with patience and prudence got through the persecution of Domitian. Neva's

¹ Spicil. Patrum, Sæc. I. p. 262.

² Mr. Westein answers the objections made by Henry Venema, a German Lutheran, to the authenticity of these two letters, on which see the acts of Leipsic, for January, 1756. Mr. Westein acknowledges that St. Clement differed much in his opinion of celibacy from Martin Luther; "but it has not been proved," says this Protestant author, "that his opinion was wrong." For, "if any one denies himself what it is allowed him to enjoy, that he may better and more freely apply himself to the care of the Church, why ought he not to hope to receive a great recompense in the life to come."

³ Several forged works have appeared under the name of St. Clement. First, the Recognitions of St. Clement came abroad in the middle of the second century, and are mentioned by Origen. In them are contained a pretended itinerary with disputations of St. Peter. The Ebionites inserted their errors in this work: also in the nineteen Clementine sermons, &c. published by Cotelier, under the title of Pseudo-Clementina. The impostor was a man of learning and eloquence. Some have attributed to St. Clement the apostolic canons, which were collected in the third century from various preceding councils: some from those of the Re-baptizers in Africa. See Beveridge in Canon. eccl. t. I. Grabe in Spicileg. t. I. p. 290. Nourry, in Agpar. t. I. Cotelier, Patres Apostol. and principally Fontanini, Hist. Litter. Aquil. I. 5. c. 10. p. 234. The apostolic constitutions are almost as old as the collection of the canons aforesaid. They are quoted by St. Epiphanius, (hær. 45. 85.) but have been altered since that time. They are a compilation of the regulations of many ancient pastors, in some of which the author personates the apostles. The liturgy is one of the most ancient extant. See Ceillier, t. 13. p. 643. The dream of Whiston in ranking these counterfeit writings among the canonical scriptures, deserves no notice.

peaceable reign being very short, the tempest increased under Trajan, who even from the beginning of his reign never allowed the Christian assemblies. It was in the year 100, that the third general persecution was raised by him, which was the more afflicting, as this reign was in other respects generally famed for justice and moderation. Rufin,¹ pope Zosimus,² and the council of Bazas in 452,³ expressly style St. Clement a martyr. In the ancient canon of the Roman mass, he is ranked among the martyrs. There stood in Rome, in the eighth century, a famous church of St. Clement, in which the cause of Celestius the Pelagian was discussed. This was one of the titles, or parishes of the city; for Renatus, legate from St. Leo to the false council of Ephesus, was priest of the title of St. Clement's. At that time only martyrs gave titles to churches.⁴ Eusebius tells us, that St. Clement departed this life in the third year of Trajan, of Christ 100. From this expression some will have it that he died a natural death. But St. Clement says of St. Paul, who certainly died a martyr, that "he departed out the world."⁵ It is also objected, that St. Irenæus gives the title of martyr only to St. Telesphorus among the popes before St. Eleutherius.⁶ But it is certain that some others were martyrs, whatever was the cause of his omission. St. Irenæus mentions the epistle of St. Clement, yet omits those of St. Ignatius, though in some places he quotes him. Shall we hence argue, that St. Ignatius wrote none? When the emperor Lewis Debonnair

1 De adulterat. Lib. Orig.

2 Ep. 2. (an. 417.) p. 945. ed. Coutant.

3 Conc. Vasens. can. 6. t. 1. Conc. ad Hardwin. p. 1783.

4 The Greek acts of the martyrdom of St. Clement in Taurica Chersonesus, though as old as St. Gregory of Tours, are justly exploded by Tillemont, Orsi, &c.

5 Ep. ad Cor. c. 5.

6 L. 3. c. 8.

founded the great abbey of Cava in Abruzzo, four miles from Salerno, in 872, he enriched it with the relics of St. Clement, pope and martyr, which pope Adrian sent him, as is related at length in the chronicle of that abbey, with a history of many miracles. These relics remain there to this day.¹ The ancient church of St. Clement in Rome, in which St. Gregory the Great preached several of his homilies, still retains part of his relics. It was repaired by Clement XI. but still shows entire the whole structure of Christian churches, divided into three parts, the narthex, the ambo, and the sanctuary.²

St. Clement inculcates,³ that the spirit of Christianity is a spirit of perfect disengagement from the things of this world. "We must," says he, "look upon all the things of this world, as none of ours, and not desire them. This world and that to come are two enemies.) We cannot therefore be friends to both; but we must resolve which we would forsake, and which we would enjoy. And we think, that it is better to hate the present things, as little, short-lived, and corruptible; and to love those which are to come, which are truly good and incorruptible.—Let us contend with all earnestness, knowing that we are now called to the combat.—Let us run in the strait road, the race that is incorruptible.—This is what Christ saith: keep your bodies pure, and your souls without spot, that ye may receive eternal life."

¹ Chron. Casauriense ap. Muratori inter Ital. Rer. Scriptor. t. 2, part. 2. p. 776.

² See Ficoroni *Vestigia di Roma Antica*, (an. 1744,) c. 14. 25.

³ Ep. 2. ad Cor. n. 5, 6.