

Clement was appointed by St. Peter to be his successor; but either he declined that dignity till St. Linus and St. Cletus had preceded him in it, or he was at first only vicar of St. Peter, to govern under him the Gentile converts, whilst that apostle presided over the whole church, yet so as to be chiefly taken up in instructing the Jewish converts, and in preaching abroad.(1) St. Linus, succeeding St. Peter after his martyrdom, sat twelve years,(2) and is named among the martyrs in the canon of the Roman mass, which is certainly older in this part than the sacramentary of Gelasius, and of the greatest authority in this point. It is not indeed impossible that he might be called a martyr on account of his sufferings for the faith, without dying by the sword. St. Linus was buried on the Vatican hill, near the tomb of St. Peter.

This saint distinguished himself among the illustrious disciples of the apostles, who were formed upon their model to perfect virtue, and filled with the holy spirit of the gospel. How little are we acquainted with this spirit of fervour, charity, meekness, patience, and sincere humility; without which it is in vain that we bear the honourable name of Christians, and are a reproach and scandal to so sacred a profession!

ST. THECLA, V. M.

See Tillemont, t. 2, p. 60, who has gleaned the following circumstances of the life of this glorious saint from the writings of many primitive fathers, no genuine acts of this holy virgin being extant. Tertullian and St. Jerom inform us, that St. John deposed a priest at Ephesus for having forged false acts of SS. Paul and Thecla, and a book under that title was condemned by Pope Gelasius. The life of St. Thecla, published by Basil of Seleucia in the fifth age, is compiled from these false acts; consequently of no authority. See Stilling the Bollandist, t. 6. Sept. p. 546. Her Greek acts published at Antwerp in 1608, are mentioned by Lambecius at Vienna. Catal. Bibl. Vindeb. t. 8, p. 243, others more ancient are given us by Grabe Spicil. Patr. t. 1, p. 95.— See Fabricius Bibl. Græc. t. 9, p. 146.

THE FIRST AGE.

ST. THECLA, whose name has always been most famous in the church, and who is styled by St. Isidore of Pelusium and all

(1) See Hammond, Pearson, Cave, &c.

(2) See Berti, Chron. t. 2, and Chronologia primorum Pontificum ex picturis veteribus in basilicâ S. Pauli, sedente S. Leone vel Symmacho, inter Opr. Anastasii Biblioth. per utrumque Banchinum edita, Romæ. 1717.

the Greeks the protomartyr of her sex, was one of the brightest ornaments of the apostolic age. She was a native of Isauria or Lycaonia. St. Methodius, in his *Banquet of Virgins*, assures us that she was well versed in profane philosophy, and in the various branches of polite literature, and he exceedingly commends her eloquence, and the ease, strength, sweetness, and modesty of her discourse. He says that she received her instructions in divine and evangelical knowledge from St. Paul, and was eminent for her skill in sacred science. The same father extols the vehemence of her love for Christ, which she exerted on many great occasions, especially in the conflicts which she sustained with the zeal and courage of a martyr, and with the strength of body equal to the vigour of her mind. St. Austin, St. Epiphanius, St. Ambrose, and other fathers mention, that St. Paul by his preaching converted her to the faith at Iconium, probably about the year 45, and that his discourses kindled in her breast a vehement love of holy virginity, which state she eagerly embraced, in an age which seemed very tender for so great a resolution. Upon this holy change she broke off a treaty of marriage, which had been set on foot by her parents, with a rich, comely, and amiable young nobleman, of one of the best families in the country.

St. Gregory of Nyssa says, (1) that this blessed virgin undertook the sacrifice of herself, by giving death to the flesh, practising on it great austerities, extinguishing in herself all earthly affections, and subduing her passions by a life dead to the senses, so that nothing seemed to remain living in her but reason and spirit: the whole world seemed dead to her as she was to the world. St. Chrysostom, or an author of the same age, whose homily is attributed to that father, lets us know that her parents perceiving an alteration in her conduct, without being acquainted with the motive upon which she acted, plied her with the strongest arguments, mixed with commands, threats, reprimands, and tender persuasives, to engage her to finish the affair of her marriage to their satisfaction. The young gentleman, her suitor, pressed her with the most endearing flatteries and caresses, her servants entreated her with tears her friends and neighbours exhorted and conjured her, and the

(1) *Hom.* 14, in *Cant*

authority and threats of the civil magistrate were employed to bring her to the desired compliance. Thecla, strengthened by the arm of the Almighty, was proof against all manner of assaults; and regarding these worldly pagan friends as her most dangerous enemies, when she saw herself something more at liberty from the fury of their persecution, she took the first favourable opportunity of escaping out of their hands, and fled to St. Paul to receive from him comfort and advice. She forsook father and mother, and a house abounding in gold and riches where she lived in state and plenty: she left her companions, friends, and country, desiring to possess only the treasure of the love and grace of God, and to find Jesus Christ, who was all things to her.

The young nobleman to whom she was engaged, still felt his heart warm with his passion for the saint, and, instead of overcoming it, thought of nothing but how to gratify it, or to be revenged of her, from whom he pretended he had received a grievous affront. In these dispositions he closely pursued, and at length overtook her, and, as she still refused to marry him, he delivered her into the hands of the magistrates, and urged such articles against her, that she was condemned to be torn in pieces by wild beasts. Nevertheless her resolution was invincible. She was exposed naked in the amphitheatre, but clothed with her innocence; and this ignominy enhanced her glory and her crown. Her heart was undaunted, her holy soul exulted and triumphed with joy in the midst of lions, pards, and tigers: and she waited with a holy impatience the onset of those furious beasts, whose roarings filled even the spectators with terror. But the lions on a sudden forgetting their natural ferocity, and the rage of their hunger, walked gently up to the holy virgin, and laying themselves down at her feet, licked them as if it had been respectfully to kiss them: and, at length, notwithstanding all the keepers could do to excite and provoke them, they meekly retired like lambs, without hurting the servant of Christ. This wonderful circumstance is related and set off with the genuine beauties of unaffected eloquence, by SS. Ambrose, (1) Chrysostom, Methodius, Gregory Nazianzen, and other fathers.

(1) L. 2, de Virg. p. 469, in Ps. civ. et ep. 25.

She was at another time, by the divine interposition, delivered from the power of fire, and preserved without hurt in the midst of the flames, as St. Gregory Nazianzen, (1) St. Methodius, and others testify: who add that she was rescued from many other dangers, to which the rage of persecutors exposed her. A very ancient Martyrology which bears the name of St. Jerom, published by Florentinius, mentions that Rome was the place where God extinguished the flames to preserve the life of this holy virgin. She attended St. Paul in several of his apostolical journeys, studying to form her own life upon that excellent model of Christian perfection. She is styled by SS. Gregory Nazianzen, Chrysostom, Austin, and others, a virgin and martyr. Her sufferings justly purchased her this latter title, though Bede in his Martyrology, tells us, that she died in peace; which is proved also from other authorities by Papebroke (2) and Tillemont. (3) The latter part of her life she spent in devout retirement in Isauria, where she died, and was buried at Seleucia, the metropolis of that country. Over her tomb in that city a sumptuous church was built under the first Christian emperors, which bore her name, was visited by SS. Marana and Cyra, two female anchorets mentioned by Theodoret, and crowds of pilgrims, and rendered famous by many miracles, as we learn both from Theodoret, St. Gregory of Nazianzen, Basil of Seleucia and others. The great cathedral at Milan is dedicated to God in honour of St. Thecla, and has been long possessed of part of her precious remains.

If we desire to please Christ, we must imitate the saints in their love of purity, and in strict chastity according to the circumstances of our state. To obtain this great virtue, we must earnestly beg it of God, praying him to inspire us with his holy fear, to create in us an abhorrence of all sin and dangerous occasions, to cleanse our affections, and to teach us to set the strictest guard upon all our senses, especially upon our eyes, ears, and tongue. Secondly, we must study sincere humility of heart, and live in an entire distrust of ourselves, and fear of dangers. To forget our weakness, or to presume upon our own resolution or strength is equally foolish, fatal, and criminal.

(1) Carm 4, et Or. 18.

(2) Maij, t. 1, p. 42.

(3) T. 2, n. 4, p. 489.

Thirdly, We must shun all occasions which may incite and fire our passions, especially all fond friendships or intimacies between young persons. Even such as are begun in the spirit, without the utmost precautions, will degenerate into a carnal affection. Fourthly, We must be always employed, always eager in some serious exercises which must never leave us one moment idle. Devotions and labour or business must be alternately called in, so that the devil may always find our mind taken up. Fifthly, We must live in the habitual practice of frequently denying our inclinations, and mortifying the senses. If we give our appetites full liberty in things that are not forbidden, they will quickly master us, and crave gratifications that are unlawful, with too great violence to be restrained by us. We shall not lose courage at the name of penance and mortification, as many are apt to do, if we look up at our eternal reward, and if we have before our eyes the austerities which the most tender virgins joyfully embraced for the sake of virtue. The habit of self-denial once acquired will raise us above our senses, render us masters of ourselves, make the remaining part of our life easy, and restore us in some measure to the happy state which our first parents enjoyed before their sin. We shall be so much the more perfectly conformed to the image of the Son of God, the more the old man is crucified, and the body of sin is destroyed in us.

ST. ADAMNAN, ABBOT.

HE was the eighth in descent from the great Nial, king of Ireland, and from Conal the Great, ancestor of St. Columbkille. His parents were eminent for their rank and virtue. He was born in the year 626, at Rathboth,* now called Raphoe, in the county of Donegal, and embraced a monastic life with great humility and fervour, in the monastery which had been founded there by his kinsman St. Columb. Afterwards following the steps of his holy kinsman, he left Ireland, and retired to the celebrated monastery of Hij, of which he became fifth abbot. In 701 he was employed by Longsech, king of Ireland, on an embassy to Alfred, king of the Northern Saxons, to demand of

* *Rath*, in old Irish, signifies a town or military inclosure, and *Both*, a booth, or cottage: so that Rathboth is a town made up of cottages.