

A PURITAN AND A BROAD CHURCHMAN IN  
THE SECOND CENTURY.

I PROCEED now to give a brief survey of Clement's extant writings, and will thus illustrate those points which bear on my subject, concluding with testimonies to the value of his work both from Romanist and Protestant sources.

Like Justin Martyr, and like Augustine, Clement passed through philosophy to the Gospel. Augustine tells us (*Conf.* iii. 4) that it was the *Hortensius* of Cicero which first changed his thoughts, and turned his affections to God. Clement generalizes this experience. "It was his favourite idea," says Neander (ii. 273), "that the Divine plan for the education of mankind constituted a great whole, the end of which was Christianity." Within this plan were included God's dealings not merely with the Jews, but also with the heathen. Thus we read (*Str.* i. c. 4): "The fact that all science and art and skilful inventions come from God is evident from what we are told of Bezaleel in Exodus xxxi., where it is said that God filled him with wisdom to devise and execute in all manner of work. With reason, therefore, has the Apostle called the wisdom of God manifold, seeing that it has manifested itself in many departments and in many modes for our benefit." (*Str.* i. c. 9, p. 342, quoted with approval by Cardinal Wiseman.) Some persons, having a high opinion of their own good dispositions, will not apply themselves to philosophy or dialectics, nor even to natural philosophy, but wish to possess faith by itself alone; as reasonably might they expect to gather grapes from a vine which they have left uncultivated. On the contrary, we know that we must prune and dig and bind, and do all necessary labour, if the vine is to be fruitful. So is it with religious progress. Every movement to that which is good comes from God, who employs as His organs

those who are best fitted to instruct mankind. Such were the better sort of Greek philosophers. The philosophy which forms men to virtue cannot be a work of evil originated by Satan, as some think; no, it is the gift of that Providence which bestows on each what it is fitting that he should receive (*Str.* vi. 822). Philosophy was to the Greeks what the Law was to Jews, the schoolmaster to prepare them for Christ; and it is still useful in the service of piety as a help to set forth the evidence of the faith (*Str.* i. 331 foll.). We cannot now rely on the miraculous help of the Holy Spirit like the prophets of old. If we would bring out the meaning of Scripture, and understand and explain the articles of our faith, and guard against erroneous teaching, it is necessary that we should have passed through a training in philosophy (*Str.* i. 342). There is a remarkable passage in *Str.* vi. § 45, where the preaching in Hades is said to have extended, "not only to those who perished in the flood, but to those among the Gentile philosophers, who had fallen short of perfection and had afterwards repented in another place (*κἀν ἐν ἄλλῳ τόπῳ τύχῳσι*); seeing that it was befitting the Divine economy that those who were confessedly *ἐν τοῖς τοῦ θεοῦ* should be saved, each one according to his individual knowledge."

It was natural that such thoughts should suggest themselves to Clement, as a lecturer in the Alexandrian school, for Alexandria was at that time the centre of philosophical and theological speculation. It was there that Philo had promulgated his epoch-making system of Hellenistic Judaism. It was there that the leading Gnostics—Basilides, Valentinus, and others had lived and taught. It was there that Paganism was preparing to put forth its last effort to rival Christianity in the neo-Platonism of Plotinus, himself, according to some, a fellow pupil of Origen. Clement's own ideas, as to what was required from a teacher in a school which was attended not only by Christians thirsting

for a scientific exposition of the faith, but also by educated Pagans, who were still hesitating as to whether they should join the Church, are expressed in the following words (*Str.* vi. 784): "He who would gather from every quarter what would be for the profit of the catechumens, must not shrink from deep and wide study; for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. All culture is profitable; above all, the study of Holy Scripture, to enable us to prove what we teach, especially when our hearers come to us from the discipline of the Greeks."

The extant works of Clement (beyond one sermon and a few fragments) form a single series containing three parts, which we may call the Preacher, the Tutor, and the Miscellanies, intended to exhibit the three steps of initiation into the wisdom of the perfect Christian. The first is addressed to pagans, the second to catechumens, the third is intended to stir up the baptized members of the Church to aim at growth in grace and fuller knowledge of God. They exhibit an extraordinary acquaintance with Greek poetry and philosophy, and also with the Scriptures. Of non-Christian authors perhaps Philo is the one by whom Clement is most influenced. The use of the term *Λόγος* to express the Divinity, working in the world of nature and of man, pervades the writings of Clement as of Philo, but its meaning is supplemented and intensified by St. John's conception of the "Word made flesh." It is the Word who invites the heathen in the Preacher, who trains the catechumens in the Tutor, who instructs the Gnostic, i.e. the enlightened Christian in higher truth in the Miscellanies.

The first treatise resembles other apologies in pointing out the follies and the immoralities of the Greek religion; but what I think is peculiar to it is the warmth of affection, the earnest enthusiasm with which he presses his hearers to become followers of Christ. It begins with a comparison, with which we are familiar from the paintings in the cata-

combs, of our Lord drawing all men to Himself, as Orpheus attracted the wild animals by the sound of his lyre. "The Word by whom all things were made, who in the beginning gave us life as our Maker, now appears as our Teacher. *He is made man that we may learn from Him how man may become God.*"

I add, in a simplified and shortened form, a few extracts from Kaye's epitome of this treatise. "God speaks to us, not as a master to his servants, but as a father to his children." "The Word is a common light, shining on all. Let us hasten to the Regeneration which unites all in one." "Man is born to hold intercourse with God. As we apply animals to the uses for which they were naturally designed, so we invite man, who was made for the contemplation of heaven, who is indeed a heavenly plant, to the knowledge of God." "All things have become light, never again to set. For the Sun of Righteousness comes alike to all mankind, imitating the Father, who causes His sun to rise, and the dew of truth to fall upon all men. He has changed the setting to the rising, and, crucifying death, has raised up life, transplanting corruption into incorruption, and converting earth into heaven." "He, the eternal Jesus, the one great High Priest, prays for men and exhorts men. Harken, He says, all ye who are endowed with reason. I call the whole human race, whose Creator I am by the will of the Father; I freely give you the Word, the knowledge of God, I freely give you my whole Self; I will anoint you with the ointment of faith, through which you cast off corruption. I will show you the naked form of righteousness, through which you ascend to God. Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. This is the counsel of the Word, not to hesitate whether it is better to be sane or insane, but laying fast hold on the truth, to follow God with all our might. If friends have all things in common, and man is the friend of God (and he *is*

the friend through the mediation of the Word), all things belong to man, because all things belong to God; and all things are common to both the friends—God and man.”<sup>1</sup>

The relation between the first and the second treatise is given in the following passage: “When the Heavenly Guide, the Word, calls men to salvation, the name of Preacher is that which peculiarly belongs to him; when He acts the part of physician and trainer, we speak of Him as the Tutor, His object being then practical, to point the way to soberness of living, and hold up examples of conduct.” He addresses his hearers as having been released from the chains of their old sins in baptism, through faith on the part of man, and grace on the part of God.<sup>2</sup> They have learnt the truth of Christ’s word, “He who heareth My words, and believeth in Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and has passed from death into life?” He goes on to say that Christ revealed Himself as Tutor to Israel in the old dispensation. It was He who appeared to Abraham, who wrestled with Jacob, who led His people through the wilderness by the hand of Moses. The Tutor adopts at different times different measures for the benefit of his children. He admonishes, He reproveth, He rebukes, He convinces, He threatens, He heals, He promises, He freely gives. They who are sick need a Saviour, they who have wandered, a guide, they who are blind, one to give them light, they who thirst, the Living Fountain, of which he who drinks shall thirst no more. The dead need life, the sheep a shepherd; all mankind need Jesus. If He addresses them through their fears, it is not because He is not good as well as just, but because goodness by itself is often despised. There are two kinds of fear—one accompanied by reverence, such as children feel towards their parents; the other by hatred, such as slaves feel towards

<sup>1</sup> Kaye’s *Clement*, pp. 12, 15, 18, 20 (in *Ancient and Modern Library*).

<sup>2</sup> *Paed.* p. 116.

harsh masters. There is no incompatibility between justice and goodness. The physician who tells his patient that he has a fever has no ill will to him, nor has God, when He convinces man of sin. God of Himself is good, but He is just for our sakes, and just because good.<sup>1</sup>

The bulk of the book is taken up with minute regulations (many of them borrowed from the Stoic Musonius) as to the way in which a Christian should behave both at home and abroad. There are few remains of antiquity from which we learn so much as to the every-day life of the Greeks. Sometimes we are astonished that Christians could need the warnings that are given; sometimes we are amused at what seems trivial, but on the whole it is characterized by good sense and good taste, and gives a beautiful picture of Christian modesty and simplicity. It concludes with a hymn to the Saviour, one of the earliest specimens, but not, I think, a very successful one, of Christian psalmody. I will quote from the prayer which immediately precedes it. "Grant that we all, living in Thy peace, translated into Thy city, safely traversing the waves of sin, may be peacefully borne along with the Holy Spirit, the ineffable wisdom; and day and night, until the perfect day, may give thanks with praise to the only Father and Son, the Tutor and the Teacher, together with the Holy Spirit, in Whom are all things, through Whom all things are one, through Whom is eternity, Whose members we all are, Whose is the glory, the ages. To the All-good, All-fair, All-wise, All-just, be glory now and for ever. Amen."<sup>2</sup>

The third and much the longest division of Clement's great work is the Miscellanies. In reading this we have to bear in mind a distinction, on which much stress was laid among Jews and Greek philosophers, and even in the New Testament, between what may be called the higher and the lower virtuousness, between the Jew who knows the law

<sup>1</sup> Kaye, pp. 36, 37.

<sup>2</sup> Kaye, p. 63.

and the Jew who has to receive it from others, between the political virtues, based on good training, of the auxiliaries in Plato's ideal State and the virtue of the guardians which was founded on principle and insight, between the Stoic sage who is complete in every excellence and the fools who make up the rest of humanity, between the babes in Christ who must still be fed with milk and the full grown men who have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil.

This distinction had been exaggerated by the Gnostic schools, who divided men into three classes—earthly, psychical, and spiritual, the difference between these classes being considered to rest on an original difference of nature, by which they were predestined for different conditions hereafter, leaving little room for the exercise of free will. Salvation is impossible for the earthly; it is made possible for the psychical by means of faith and good works; it is certain for the spiritual by means of knowledge, which enables them to dispense with subordinate means. Clement strongly opposed this introduction of the caste-system into Christianity. All are alike saved by faith and by the God-given power of free choice, working through the ability which Divine grace supplies. But knowledge (*γνώσις*) is essential to the full perfection of the Christian man, and it is the object of Clement in his *Miscellanies* to instruct men in this true *γνώσις*, in opposition to the false *γνώσις* of the pseudo-Gnostics.

This third treatise has a curious title. We should have expected it to be called *Διδάσκαλος*, "the teacher," for teaching of the Christian mysteries, the explanation of doctrine and of the meaning of Scripture, is what Clement frequently refers to as the final stage of his initiation.<sup>1</sup> It seems

<sup>1</sup> See De Faye, *Clement d'Alexandre, Etude sur les rapports du Christianisme et de la Philosophie Grecque au Deuxième Siècle*, p. 47 foll. and the quotations there given.

however that he found it expedient to interpose a preparatory work,<sup>1</sup> which he calls *Στρωματεῖς*, or more fully *τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἀληθῆ φιλοσοφίαν γνωστικῶν ὑπομνημάτων στρωματεῖς*, i.e. literally "bags of striped canvas in which bedclothes were kept rolled up." The phrase was used figuratively of a collection of loose remarks, with no very definite end or order. One might compare such books as Coleridge's *Friend or Aids to Confession*. It is possible that Clement may have been conscious that he was wanting in the architectonic faculty needed for a logical exhibition of Christian doctrine. It is possible on the other hand that he doubted the patience of his readers, and certainly it was an age in which *Miscellanies* (such as those of A. Gellius and Athenaeus) were very popular. There are however two other reasons which appear to have influenced him: one, that in it he proposed to store up his recollections of the teaching of the instructors from whom he had himself learnt most, especially Pantaenus; the other that he wished rather to suggest than to enforce views, which he thought might be misunderstood by the narrower school of Churchmen, *Orthodoxastae* as he called them, who rejected the aids of human learning, and said that faith was sufficient, and that philosophy came from Satan. Clement puts forward his own view that it came from God, and was partly borrowed from the Old Testament, which was far more ancient than the philosophy of Greece. Still faith is not only the first movement to salvation, leading on to love and knowledge, but remains a necessity of life to the Gnostic,

<sup>1</sup> This view, that the *Miscellanies* is not the proper conclusion to Clement's course of Christian initiation, but was intended to prepare the way for its true conclusion, *The Teacher*, is maintained with much force by De Faye in his work on Clement, published in 1898. He collects and examines all the allusions to forthcoming works which are scattered through the *Miscellanies*, and shows that they would fit in very well into a whole, corresponding to Origen's *Principia*. It is possible that the plan was never fully carried out, that Clement either did not live to complete it, or found it more convenient to bring it out piecemeal under different names. See De Faye, p. 109 foll.



as necessary as the air he breathes is to this lower life. Thus the true Gnostic stands firmly fixed in faith, while the false Gnostic, who is puffed up with the idea of his own wisdom, is carried away by random impulse.

A favourite topic with Clement, when arguing against the Gnostic dualism, which opposed the just God of the Old Testament to the good God of the New, is that God's justice is only a form of His love, and that His punishments are remedial not vindictive. For this compare *Str.* i. 369: "It is the nature of God to be always doing good, as it is of fire to warm and of light to illumine"; *Str.* v. 733: "There was no beginning of the goodness of God and there will be no end of it, for God can never cease being what He is"; *Str.* vi. 813: "God being good, if He should cease to do good, He must cease to be"; *Str.* vi. 764: "Since the Lord is the Power of God, He is always able to save both here and elsewhere. For His effective power reaches not this world only, but all other worlds throughout all time"; *Str.* vii. 895: "As children are chastened by their fathers, so are we by God, who does not take vengeance (for vengeance, *τιμωρία*, is retaliation of evil) but chastises for the good of those who are chastised, collectively and individually"; *Str.* vi. c. 14: "The greatest punishment which can be inflicted on the Christian is shame for his past sins. For God's justice is good and His goodness is just. And though the punishments cease in the course of the completion of the expiation (*ἐκτίσεως*) and purification of each, yet to have missed the highest of the heavenly folds is a source of permanent sorrow"; *Str.* vii. c. 2: "Those who are more hardened are constrained to repent by chastisements, inflicted either through the agency of angels, or through various preliminary judgements, or through the great and final judgement, by the goodness of the great Judge, whose eye is ever upon us."

Not to dwell further on this point, I will insert here the

substance of some selected passages which will illustrate the freshness and vigour of Clement's way of thinking; and I will then close with some appreciations from subsequent writers.

P. 834 foll. : In the Divine economy no part of the universe is uncared for, but all are piloted in safety according to the Father's will, ranks below ranks being drawn upwards, like iron rings by the magnet, all saving and being saved through the initiation and action of One . . . That which is lovely has power to draw to the contemplation of itself whoever has devoted himself to contemplation. . . . These Gnostic souls being translated to another sphere, keep on always moving to higher and yet higher regions, until they no longer greet the divine vision by means of mirrors from afar; but with loving hearts feast for ever on the uncloying, never-ending sight, which is the apprehensive vision of the pure in heart.

P. 849 foll. : Our sacrifice is prayer, our incense the songs of praise ascending from many tongues and voices, our altar the righteous soul, our temple the congregation of those who are devoted to prayer. P. 877 : To the Gnostic the Wednesday and the Friday fasts signify the mortifying of the love of money and of pleasure. He holds that to be a Lord's Day on which he puts away an evil thought, and assumes one fitted for a Gnostic, doing honour to the Lord's resurrection in himself. When he gets sight of some scientific principle (*ἐπιστημονικῶν θεωρημάτων*) he thinks he sees the Lord Himself. P. 851 : If the presence of some good man always moulds for the better one who converses with him, owing to the respect and reverence which he inspires, how much more must he who is always in the uninterrupted presence of God be raised above himself on every occasion, both in regard to his actions and his words and his temper ! Such is he who believes that God is everywhere present and does not suppose Him to be shut up in this or that

place, so as to be tempted to sin by the imagination, forsooth, that he could ever be apart from God whether by day or night. P. 853: Where there is an unworthy conception of God it is impossible that there should be any true devotion. Prayer is converse with God, who never ceases to listen to the inward converse of the heart. There are some who assign fixed hours to prayer, but the Gnostic prays all his life through. P. 860: Thus his life is a holy festival. He prays in every place, whether he is walking, or in company, or at rest, or reading, or engaged in good works; and though it be only a thought in the secret chamber of his heart, yet the Father is nigh at hand, even before he has done speaking.

P. 871: Those that endure trial from love of glory, or from fear of some severer punishment, or with a view to any joys or pleasures after death, such are mere children in faith, blessed indeed, but not yet having attained to manhood in their love to God—for the Church too has its prizes both for men and for boys as the gymnasium has—but love is to be chosen for its own sake, and not from any meaner motive. Love by her anointing and training makes her own champion fearless and full of trust in the Lord. The same too may be said of temperance. For a man is not made really temperate through ambition, as the athlete for the sake of crowns and glory; nor again through covetousness, as some feign, pursuing a good end by means of a fatal passion; no, nor yet through the desire of bodily health, nor from boorish insensibility, enabling him to abstain from pleasures for which he has no taste.

The chivalrous enthusiastic character of Clement comes out strongly in the two next quotations:

P. 875: The Gnostic would rather pray and fail than succeed without prayer; *Str.* iv. 626: If any one were to offer to the Gnostic the choice between two things (which are really inseparably connected)—the knowledge of God or

eternal salvation—he would without hesitation choose the knowledge of God.

Clement's idea of punishment being opposed to the *prima facie* view of certain passages of Scripture, though it is the only idea which is consistent with the central truths of Christianity, was no doubt derived by him from Plato, to whom he continually refers as an authority, even ascribing to him something of prophetic inspiration (*οἶον θεοφορούμενος*, *Str.* i. 42). We may trace Plato's influence in his statement of other doctrines, such as that sin is due to the abuse of man's free will (*αἰτία ἐλομένου, θεὸς ἀναίτιος*, *Str.* v. 731); that man is capable of becoming a partaker of the Divine Nature (*Str.* vi. 634, vii. 830); that Christian belief has its beginning in wonder (*Str.* vii. 867); that the combination of reason and enthusiasm are essential to true virtue (*Str.* vii. 870). So again Stoic influence is apparent in his distinction between the things that are, and are not in our power (*Str.* vii. 868); in his acceptance of the famous paradoxes that the wise man (the true Christian) is rich and noble and beautiful, the true king among men (*Protr.* 92); that the virtues all hang together (*Str.* ii. 470); that the Christian is *αὐτάρκης* (*Str.* vii. 857). At times his dependence on Greek philosophy has led him into unguarded statements, as in reference to the doctrine of Reserve, the medicinal falsehood of Plato (*Str.* vii. 863); and the *ἀπάθεια*, the passionless state, which the Stoics regarded as a mark of perfection (*Str.* vii. 836). There is a touch of the self-assertion of the Stoic sage in *Str.* vii. 860, where Clement quotes with approval the story of the athlete who prayed for victory in the Olympic games in the words, "If I, O Zeus, have now done all that was fitting on my part in preparation for the contest, do thou make haste to bestow the victory I deserve." This makes it all the more surprising that Clement should have fiercely attacked the Stoics for upholding the doctrine, which lies at the root of the Incarnation, of the identity of virtue in man and in God.

## ESTIMATES OF CLEMENT.

The piety and learning of Clement, his power as a teacher and philosopher, are spoken of in the highest terms by succeeding Fathers.

The 4th December was known in the middle ages as St. Clement's Day. In the sixteenth century Pope Clement VIII. omitted his name from the martyrology at the instance of Baronius, and his judgment was confirmed by Boniface XIV. in 1748, when the matter was again brought before him by the admirers of the Alexandrian doctor; the grounds of the decision being the uncertainty as to the details of his life, the absence of proof as to his cultus, and the doubts raised as to his orthodoxy, though on this last point the Pope refused to pronounce. The original author of the doubts as to Clement's orthodoxy is Photius, a learned writer of the ninth century, who said that his treatise entitled *Hypotyposes* contained Gnostic errors, whether belonging to Clement himself or interpolated by heretics. We have fragments of this book, which certainly are opposed to orthodox doctrine, and also to what is said elsewhere by Clement himself; and there is every reason to believe that they are merely quotations from Gnostic writers with a view to commenting upon them. However, it must be allowed that he is sometimes incautious in his expressions. In one passage of the *Miscellanies* he seems to hold a kind of docetic view of the Person of our Lord, implying that His humanity was apparent only, e.g. that food was not really needed by Him; but this is not supported by anything else in his writings.

In the discussion between Fénelon and Bossuet on the disinterested love of God, Clement is quoted by both sides as an authority. In our own day his teaching and his method are being recalled by eminent French Catholics, as giving an example of what is needed in order to meet the

difficulties of a period of transition. The Abbé Cognat (1859) quotes with approval the words of Bossuet that in Clement's works we have "une parfaite apologie de la religion chrétienne," and contrasts his methods with those of the traditionalists, who deny the rights of reason, and declare an internecine strife between science and theology. Monsigneur Freppel, in his lectures delivered in 1865, says that Clement's boldness and largeness of view are enough of themselves to give him a high position in the history of theology. No defender of the faith ever studied so deeply the relations between science and faith, between the natural and the supernatural order. He has given a sketch of Christian science extending from the philosophy of history to the heights of mystical theology, which in its main lines is of permanent value. Eugène de Faye in his book, published in 1898, on the *Relation of Christianity to Greek Philosophy*, compares our age with that of Clement as a period of transition, in which the germs of the future are fermenting. We cannot be indifferent to him and his work. He is the true creator of ecclesiastical theology. In him the rational and mystical elements are equally mixed. He has a beautiful trust and a noble serenity which mark the depth of his Christianity. He feels himself possessed of a divine virtue which ensures to him the victory. He fears no one. He dares to measure himself against the philosophy and the spirit of his age, because he feels himself able to dominate them, i.e. to appropriate all that they offer of good. He feels in himself that the Truth has made him free. He is at once the firmest of believers and the most inquisitive and independent spirit that has perhaps ever appeared in the Church. Unhappily the legalistic spirit of Tertullian and Cyprian prevailed over the free spirit of Clement and of Origen. It remains for Christians of to-day to revert to the wider theology.

Of English writers who have held Clement in esteem, I

have already mentioned Cardinal Wiseman. Maurice (in his *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 233) says: "Clement's writings, though they are often censured as being learned and philosophical and mystical, were, I am convinced, written with a more distinctly practical purpose, and produced a more practical effect, than any which we have received from this or from almost any century"; (p. 239): "I do not know where we shall look for a purer or a truer man than this Clement of Alexandria. I should like to be able to tell you more of his countenance and manner, as well as to give more particulars of his history. . . . But we must be content to make his acquaintance through the words which he has spoken. Judging from these he seems to me *that* one of the old Fathers, whom we should all have revered most as a teacher and loved most as a friend."

I will conclude with a quotation from Hört's *Antenicene Fathers* (p. 93): "In Clement, Christian Theology in some important respects reaches its highest point. With all his manifest defects there was no one whose vision of what the faith of Jesus Christ was intended to do for mankind was so full or so true"; (p. 90): "What he humbly and bravely attempted under great disadvantages . . . will have to be attempted afresh, with the added experience of more than seventeen centuries, if the Christian faith is still to hold its ground among men; and when the attempt is made, not a few of his thoughts and words will probably shine out with new force, full of light for dealing with new problems."

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