

ST. HIPPOLYTUS AND HIS AGE.

Who is St. Hippolytus? when and where did he live? are questions which the title of this article may very well provoke. In reply we say that although his name is found in the Roman Calendar he is yet a Saint, and one too of the Presbyterian Order. He was an illustrious man, and held a high place in the work and government of the church in his day. His name and memorial were for many ages well nigh lost from history. He wrote books of no mean order, as we shall see, and he had once a name among the mighty; for centuries, however, little more than his saintly name were known, and his works were lost among the accumulated rubbish of monkish literature. By a curious chain of providences the lost writings have been recovered, and considerable light has by them been thrown upon the history of their author and his times.

It appears that in the year 1851, the Oxford University issued from its press a Greek book with the title "The Philosophoumena of Origen, or a refutation of all the Heresies." This book it further appears had been found at Mount Athos in Greece a place celebrated for its curious and ancient Monasteries. The manuscript dates from the fourteenth century, and professes to have been transcribed from an older copy by a monk named Michael. At its first discovery it did not attract much notice; nor was it considered of any value until Mr. Millar, a learned Frenchman, discovered, on looking over its contents, several unknown fragments of the Greek poets of great literary value. This led to a more minute examination of the document, the result of which was, that, from the fact that the name of Origen was found on the margin, it was supposed to be part of a lost treatise by this distinguished writer. This Origen lived at the beginning of the third century, and taught rhetoric, philosophy and theology at Alexandria. He wrote also several books on religious subjects of a highly allegorical and fanciful cast, which for many generations exercised a most baneful influence on the doctrine and general teaching of the Christian Church.

It turns out, however, that the treatise on "All the Heresies" was not written by Origen at all, but from evident remarks, and reliable testimonies was found to be a long lost and little known writing of a certain Hippolytus, who describes himself as "Bishop of Portus Romanus and member of the governing Presbytery of Rome."

This Hippolytus was, as appears from extant histories, an illustrious man in his own day, a celebrated controversial writer and preacher, and a Martyr for the cause of Christ. He lived about the year 220 A.D., during the troubled reigns of the Emperors, Commodus and Alexander Severus. He contended zealously against the corruption which at this early time was threatening both the doctrine and the polity of the Church. And although he did not succeed in his zealous endeavours to arrest the evil tide, his labours have yet not been in vain, he being dead yet speaketh, and this treatise now discovered witnesses a good confession for the truth of God, to the Church of our own day.

Chevalier Bunsen, late Prussian Ambassador at the Court of England, has been the chief agent in bringing this work into public notice. It was he who on examination of its contents found that there was no evidence whatever to justify its ascription to the learned Origen, but on the contrary that it contained many things that could not have been written by Origen at all. The work, for example, attests that it was written by a Bishop, which Origen never was, and by one who resided near Rome and was familiar with all its private affairs, which Origen who resided at Alexandria in Egypt could not have been. Besides it appears that this same treatise is ascribed to St. Hippolytus by Christian writers and historians of the fourth century.

To render this conclusion still more conclusive it appears that there is at