

The Church Guardian

—: EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR:—

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CALENDAR FOR MARCH.

MAR. 3—1st Sunday in Lent.
 “ 6—
 “ 8— } Ember Days.
 “ 9— }
 “ 10— 2nd Sunday in Lent.
 “ 17— 3rd Sunday in Lent.
 “ 24— 4th Sunday in Lent. [Notice of An-
 nunciation.
 “ 25— The Annunciation of the Blessed Vir-
 gin Mary.
 “ 3 —5th Sunday in Lent.

THE BISHOP OF MANCHESTER ON THE CLAIMS OF ROME.

(From the *Scottish Guardian*.)

(CONTINUED.)

If the chronological difficulty was urged that St. Peter could not consecrate a Bishop after his own death they had the answer of Platina that St. Peter “had, as it were, by will bequeathed the right of succession (to St. Clement). Yet his modesty was so great that he compelled Linus and Cletus to take upon them the Pontifical dignity before him” (*Lives of the Popes*, vol. i.; Linus). The idea of one Bishop ordaining another by will was certainly startling and unprecedented. A far more possible explanation was that of the *Liber Pontificalis*, that Linus and Cletus were appointed by St. Peter during his lifetime to act as his suffragans. This explanation was current nearly 300 years before, and was repeated by Rufinus, who said: “Linus and Cletus were no doubt Bishops in the city of Rome before Clement, but this was in St. Peter’s lifetime; that was, they took charge of the episcopal work, while he discharged the duties of the Apostolate” (Preface to “Clement’s Recognition”). This, however, was no explanation, for the authentic lists of the Roman episcopate made them diocesan and not suffragans, assigning to them their own special periods of office as Bishops of Rome. Epiphanius imagined that both St. Peter and St. Paul were Bishops of Rome, and that it was a common practice in the Church to support two Bishops in one city where there were communities of Jews and Gentiles. These two latter explanations had been combined by modern Roman apologists, who, however, could imagine for a moment that St. Paul would take part in an arrangement which by separating Jews and Gentiles, would favour what to him was the heresy of heresies, that in Christ there was any distinction between them? Obviously all these so-called explanations were mere evasions to get rid of a difficulty which obstinately refused to disappear.

When a historical critic found himself confronted by such difficulties and such evasions he knew that he was in the neighbourhood of mistakes and fictions, and he looked carefully round for their origin. In this case he would not have to look far for he soon found that at the very time when Clement began first to be called St. Peter’s successor that romance was published which was known as the “Clementine

Homilies and Recognitions.” The writer of the preface made Clement give an account of his ordination, and here for the first time they had mention made of St. Peter as sole Bishop of Rome, and of the chair of that bishopric as St. Peter’s chair. St. Paul’s name was excluded as a founder because the author of the romance was an Ebionite, who hated St. Paul and all his works; but those who wished to make the Church there “the mother and mistress of all Churches” were not likely to inquire too closely into the origin of this proceeding. They found what they wanted—the assertion that St. Peter was Bishop of Rome, and, whatever chronological difficulties might be created by the statement that St. Peter ordained Clement, they eagerly accepted what they found.

There were several things, however, contained in the Clementines respecting which Roman apologists were silent. First, they never quoted the first paragraph of that epistle which made St. James, and not St. Peter, Bishop of Bishops. They never, again, referred to those passages of the same work where St. James was made to require from St. Peter an annual report of all his discourses and acts, or where St. Peter was made to say, while we abode at Jericho. . . . James, the Bishop, son for me, and sent me here to Caesarea.” Again, while the Clementine assertion that the see of Rome was “St. Peter’s own chair” was constantly repeated by subsequent writers, a significant silence was preserved as to another Clementine report. They were told that when St. Peter left the Church of Caesarea, to which St. James had sent him, “he laid his hands upon Zaccheus, who had stood by and forced him to sit down, in his own chair” (Homilies, iii. 63). If, then, the expression “his own chair” proved St. Peter to have been Bishop, he was Bishop of Caesarea. And, again, if setting a man “in his own chair” gave a Bishop all the prerogatives of St. Peter, then assuredly all the prerogatives of St. Peter, belonged to the Bishop of Caesarea. If it were urged that the Clementine homilies were simply a romance without historical foundation, he answered that it was historically certain that this romance was the very foundation of the Petrine claims of Rome. Before their publication they heard nothing of St. Peter’s sole episcopate, and nothing of Rome as being his see. St. Peter was a founder of the Church of Rome along with St. Paul, but never sole Bishop.

How this Clementine fiction came to be first received as serious history we could not tell; it was probably rather from ignorance than from a desire to deceive. Certain it was that we found traces of its influence in many quarters from the early years of the third century. Rufinus, who in the first eight years of the fifth century translated the Clementines, referred to those works without a suspicion of their apocryphal character. In the year 1479 Bartholomew Platina, superintendent of the Vatican Library, published at the request of Pope Sixtus IV. his *Lives of the Popes*, and in his life of St. Peter it was easy to recognise in those words a free paraphrase of the preface to the Clementines, and that Platina accepted this preface as genuine history was evident from his life of St. Clement, Platina quoted the words of the Clementine preface freely, as did the *Liber Pontificalis*. This made it probable that he quoted or paraphrased from this latter work—a conclusion to which we should also be led by his frequent appeals to the authority of Pope Damasus. For there appeared as a preface to the *Liber Pontificalis* two forged letters, from Damasus to Jerome and from Jerome to Damasus, to which Platina referred as genuine in his life of this Pope.

And now who could doubt that the whole confusion of the Roman lists and the whole early persuasion of St. Peter’s Roman episcopate were due to the acceptance of the third and following centuries of the Clementine fiction as

genuine history? So that if they had to conclude, as he believed every honest historical critic must conclude, that the Roman episcopate of St. Peter was nothing better than a fable based upon a fiction, then what became of the claim of the Bishop of Rome that he inherited from St. Peter the right to be the supreme ruler and infallible teacher of all Christian Churches? How could he inherit, as Bishop of Rome, from one who never was Bishop of Rome? The Liberian catalogue was a mistake, the Clementine preface was a fiction, there was only one true tradition—that of Irenæus. And if St. Peter were not Bishop of Rome then the foundation-stone of the vast structure of Roman supremacy was knocked away and the whole building must crumble into ruins. Again, if the Clementine fiction were received as history, of what value or authority could the assertion of St. Peter’s Roman episcopacy be by the authors of later date? They did but repeat a mistaken tradition, and had no more authority than the fiction upon which that tradition was based. Not that on that account he expected to see those assertions abandoned by Roman apologists. They would be repeated in the future he knew, with an audacity in no wise diminished by the discovery of their apocryphal foundation.

FASTING AS A HEALTH FACTOR.

[By H. T. WHITFORD, in the “Church Eclectic.”]

[Continued.]

That fasting to the spiritually-minded should logically lead up to Holy Communion may readily be admitted as being a spiritual motive for the practice which is the most helpful to the fully initiated into the mysteries of the spiritual world. The vital importance of the command ‘take eat’ and the relationship which it bears to the previous command ‘thou shalt not eat’ were recognized by General Gordon by placing the texts in juxtaposition, thus: ‘There was a command not to eat, which led to separation from God—death. There is a command to eat, which leads to eternal life and union with Him. . . . With respect to the outcoming of such act, by disobedience of the first command, sin, in its essence and root, entered the body; by obedience to the second command, we may by analogy suppose it is driven out. In the first case disobedience brought about an immense, though finite misery; in the second case, obedience would bring infinite happiness.’^a

Professor Drummond recognizes the same principle, or at least infers it, by placing starvation and nourishment together; understanding, of course, one is natural and the other spiritual. He observes: ‘Man has his own part to play. Let him choose Life; let him daily nourish his soul; let him forever starve the old life; let him abide continuously as the living branch in the Vine, and the True Vine-Life will flow into his soul. . . . I am only as I am sustained, I continue only as I receive. . . . If vitality is to be prolonged for any length of time, and is to be accompanied with growth and the expenditure of energy, there must be a constant supply of food.’^b Here the two acts are placed in conjunction—the spiritual feast and the natural fast. The importance of the relationship which the fast bears to the feast cannot be examined here. The union of the two ideas can merely be suggested as being a possible consequence and corollary.

That the Church has always regarded fasting as a practice of primary importance requires

^a ‘Observations on the Holy Communion,’ by General Gordon, pp. 10, 16.

^b ‘Natural Law in the Spiritual World,’ by Professor Drummond, pp. 312, 261, 262.