

A NEW CYPRIANIC FRAGMENT.

By M. BÉVENOT, S.J.,

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY, HEYTHROP COLLEGE, CHIPPING NORTON, OXON.

THE existence of the letter which is here published for the first time was first reported by H. Schenkl in his *Bibliotheca Patrum Latinorum Britannica*, VII (Sitzb. Ak. Wiss. Wien, vol. 133, 1895, p. 71). There, in his list of MSS. in the library of the Earl of Leicester at Holkham Hall, Norfolk, he gives the contents of a fifteenth-century MS. of St. Cyprian's works, which he numbers 3407. Ten treatises come first, then follow the letters, the second of which is the subject of these pages. Apparently nothing more has ever been published about it, and no one save the late Abbot Ramsay, whose preliminary work on a projected new edition of Cyprian is preserved at Downside Abbey, has investigated the matter further. The Abbot's notes have formed the starting-point of the present research.

A. The Manuscript : Holkham 121.

In *A Handlist of the MSS. in the Library of the Earl of Leicester at Holkham Hall*, annotated by Seymour de Ricci (*Bibliographical Society*, 1932), the entry is as follows :

121 S. Cyprianus Epistolae. Vel. and pap. (XVth c.) Bernardino Trevisani coll. cf. H. Schenkl, p. 71.

It was apparently acquired by Thomas Coke, Lord Lovell, Viscount Coke of Holkham and first Earl of Leicester, when as a young man he travelled on the Continent with his tutor, Dr. Thomas Hobart, and between the years 1715 and 1718 collected some seven hundred volumes which he added to the existing library at Holkham Hall. In 1717 he acquired some valuable books from the collection of Bernardino Trevisani in Venice, and among them, apparently, this codex of St. Cyprian's works. Since that date it has remained in the same library.¹

¹ Lord Leicester kindly allowed the MS. to be sent to the Bodleian, Oxford, for the present writer's convenience (1937). To him, to the authorities there, and to Mr. C. W. James, the librarian at Holkham, the most sincere thanks are due.

It is a large quarto of no great thickness, made up of gatherings of six double leaves, the outer and the inner ones of each gathering being of parchment, the four inner ones of paper. Only the parchment folios are numbered throughout, the intervening paper folios bearing no number (except those up to 17, in a later hand). There are 128 folios of text, *i.e.* eleven gatherings, of which the last has had three folios removed from it, and what is now its last folio is blank.

The writing shows an Italian hand at work, but the codex was never finished off, for though the *Incipits* and *Explicits* are all there in red, the spaces left for illuminated initials have never been filled in.

The following is the list of its contents, numbered according to the Vienna Corpus (Hartel) :

I	IV	VI	V	VII	VIII	XI	X	XII	XIII
58	<i>Silv</i>	10	63	6	55	28	37	11	38
39	60	76	73	71	70	XIV	74	69	67
64	2	13	<i>dln</i>	43	65	52	1	56	3
47	45	48	44	61	46	57	59	40	4
72	51	54	32	12	30	II	66	<i>cena</i>	IX

Though *Silv*¹ is found only in this fifteenth-century MS., there is a clear trace of it in N (Monte Cassino 204) of the eleventh century, and a comparison of these MSS. with those related to them suggests a still greater antiquity.² These pages, however, are solely concerned with the text itself, and with the question whether it could have come from Cyprian's pen.

B. The Text.

fol. 53v.]

Cipriani Silvano Regino et Donatiano incipit.

Ciprianus dominis meis fratribus (sanctissimis) atque dilectissimis incomparabili caritate et mutua dilectione connexis, Silvano Regino Donatiano in domino salutem.

5 Inter maximam leticiam votorum meorum de vestris incomlunitatibus perceptam : ut de inconcussa fidei vestrae virtute quam habetis in Christo Jesu, per quam sentio etiam

¹ The new letter, *ad Silvanum*, etc.

² A study of the relations between these MSS. is in preparation.

- mihi delictis multis obnoxio in tam multum prodesse
 sanctis atque immaculatis vestris precibus, pro me ad deum
 10 emissis, veniam delictorum mihi a domino esse tributam.
 In tanta igitur exultatione qua de vobis gloriior; quod
 dignum memoriae orationum vestrarum habere dignemini,
 in una tantummodo parte contristor: quod litteris vestris
 15 aspernimini pusilitatem meam resalutare [fol. 54] de quibus
 spero semper fomenta spiritualia recipere, quotiens dignum
 judicaveritis scripto vestro plenam mihi repraesentare
 affectionem. Ego enim non praetermittam ullam occasionem
 scribendi vobis, quominus assiduitate ipsa commoneam vos
 ad scribendum, unde et utilitatis et salutis perfruar emolu-
 20 mentum. Salutate sanctissimas sorores nostras (benedictas)
 Metucosam et Valeriam, quas vobiscum in cursu et stadio
 sanctitatis deus custodiat: et ad effectum laudis gloriae
 perducatur, ut vestris precibus possimus condonari, cum
 coeperit in vobis virginitas honorari.
 25 Opto vos bene valere et mei meminisse. Valete.

CIPRIANI SILVANO REGINO ET DONATIANO Explicit.

Notes:

2 sanctissimis: in margin.

6 ut: perhaps *et*.

7 per quam: one word—*perquam*?

8 tam multum: ? No subject to prodesse. (*tumultum*?)

12 dignum < me > memoriae.

14 aspernimini: no doubt *aspernamini*.

20 benedictas: in margin.

21 Metucosam: any connection with Ep. 21, 3 *Etecusam*
 (ettecusam; et recusam MSS.)?

C. Comments.

1. The general impression is that of a short note of greetings and of congratulations, together with a request for a reply, already long overdue. The three men addressed seemed to have been submitted to torture for their faith, but have escaped death without any weakening on their part. The writer is filled with a holy affection for them, as also for the two ladies who, in their

pursuit of sanctity, have dedicated themselves to a life of virginity. One cannot entirely exclude the possibility that we have here only the beginning and the end of a longer letter, especially as the latter part of the first sentence is certainly corrupt, and may be the result of a lacuna of indeterminable length. The general tone of the letter, however, justifies one in neglecting this as a mere possibility and no more: everything points to its private, personal character, where no long development need be expected.

2. The two marginal additions, in a different hand (l. 2 *sanctissimas*; l. 20 *benedictas*) suggest that the MS. being copied was difficult to read and that they were made by the diorthotes. They are not sheer inventions.

3. Lines 6-8 present a corrupt text. One or two suggestions are made in the Notes, but it is impossible to restore the original construction.

4. In line 12, the loss of *me* before *memoriae* is a very satisfying suggestion which is due to Fr. J. Crehan, S.J. (His are likewise the emendations *et* (l. 6) and *perquam* (l. 7).

5. *Pusilitas mea* (l. 14) is interesting, as it is of rare occurrence among such regular formality titles as *mea mediocritas*, *reverentia vestra*, etc. Du Cange quotes an example from Bede, and the only earlier instances of its use, which the present writer has traced, occur (i) in a letter of Pope AGATHO (A.D. 680) (cf. Mansi, XI 242C; Migne, P.L. 87, 1169D), in a passage which was later borrowed by the Pseudo-Isidore, and fathered by him on three different early Popes (cf. Migne, P.L. 130: 174, 198, 614)¹; and (ii) in a letter of LUCIANUS, a priest of Caphargamala, near Jerusalem, written in or shortly after 415, and translated from the Greek, at the time, by Avitus of Braga (Migne, P.L. 41, 807): "[Visio] quae apparuit *meae pusillitati* a Deo ter, de revelatione reliquiarum," etc.

Hence the "title" which occurs in *Silv* can be paralleled at least from the beginning of the fifth century.²

¹ Hinschius: *Decretales Pseudo-Isidorianae*, pp. cxxvii, 179-180, 205-6, 454. That part of the passage which contains *pusillitas mea* was also placed by him on the lips of Pope Symmachus († 514) speaking at one of his Roman synods, *id.* p. 683.

² These references have been traced with the help of *Titles of Address in Christian Latin Epistolography to 543 A.D.* (Catholic University of America,

6. Lines 20-24. Apart from the inscription of the letter, this sentence is the only part of the letter which provides a possible link with the Cypriatic correspondence as we know it. In the two letters that passed between Celerinus (in Rome) and Lucianus (in Africa) there is question of two ladies named Numeria and Candida. One of them is said by Celerinus (*ep.* 21, 3 ; 531, 17) to have always been called by him *Etecusa* (this is Hartel's reading ; his critical apparatus reads : " *ettecusam Tϕ ; et recusam w*).¹ This name has a certain likeness to the strange *Metucosa* of our letter, and may be due to a copyist's error, e.g. " *hanc ipsā Metecusam* " having become " *hanc ipsam Etecusam* ."

The situation then in *Ep.* 21 would be this. Candida was generally believed to have offered sacrifice. But Celerinus maintains that she never did. She only went half-way up the Capitol and there bribed an official to give her a certificate of sacrifice, and returned without having publicly denied her Christianity. For this reason, Celerinus has always regarded her as still sharing (*μετέχουσα* ?) in the Christian communion. We can suppose the name to have stuck, and that Cyprian used it in *Silv*, though in the course of centuries of transcription it became *Metucosa* in the Holkham MS. On this supposition, *Silv* must have been written later than *Ep.* 21 and 22.

One is at the same time tempted to identify *Valeria* with *Numeria*, especially as we know that an alias might be based on the original name, the same scansion and ending being retained (*cf.* Catullus's *Lesbia* to represent *Clodia*).

7. Line 25. Professor Souter, whose generous help has been invaluable in compiling these notes, has summed up his view of *Patristic Studies*, vol. xxi) by Sister Mary Bridget O'Brien, M.A. (Washington, D.C., 1930). Another example there given from Ruricius, Bishop of Limoges († 507) (*Mon. Germ. Hist., Auct. Ant.* 8 : 299, 22 ; Migne, P.L. 58, 69), cannot be admitted, because it is plainly no such "title" as is here under consideration, but from the context is meant to be taken literally. Otherwise, we must see "titles," too, in the expressions *meae infirmitatis, aegritudini meae* and *languori meo* (!) which occur in the same letter.

¹ Benson (pp. 74-75) is inclined to read *Tecusam*, and takes this to be her real name. He considers *Numeria* to be a sobriquet given her by Celerinus because, as he writes of her, " *pro se dona numeravit ne sacrificaret* ." But the person referred to seems definitely to be Candida, and the incident was so recent that the nickname could not have been used earlier in the letter, without comment, and only explained later.

the text of the letter, in a private communication, thus: "I have read the letter with some care and find nothing inconsistent with Cyprian except that he always says '*nostrī meminisse*' never '*mei meminisse*'." This is indeed true of all the cases where the closing formula of his letters has been preserved. But, after all, the letters which have survived are all of an official character, and the majority were deliberately published by Cyprian himself. He uses the 'majestic' *we* liberally in them all. But we have no example of the short personal notes that he must have written in abundance to his friends, which were not meant for the general public and with which this one might be compared. One is permitted, therefore, to conjecture that where he dropped the use of the 'majestic' or 'episcopal' *we* in the text of his letters, he concluded them in the same familiar way with "Opto vos bene valere et *mei meminisse*". This phrasing is in keeping with the general tone already referred to, and both phrasing and tone with the fact that the letter never reached, or did not retain its place in, any of the surviving collections of letters save this one.

8. Lines 23-24. The closing lines of the letter itself are a clear echo of the end of Cyprian's *De Habitu Virginum* 24 (Hartel, 205, 4): "Tantum mementote tunc nostri, cum incipiet in vobis virginitas honorari". Quite apart from the similarity of the wording, the essential thought is the same: the writer begs that when those he is addressing are enjoying (in heaven) the glory that will crown their lives of chastity, they may not forget him in their prayers.

In a passage of the *De Laude Martyrii* 30 (Hartel, 51, 12), the same thought finds similar expression, but martyrdom now replaces virginity: "Tamen erit hoc benivolentiae vestrae, erit caritatis et amoris, si volueritis nostri memores esse cum in vobis Dominus martirium coeperit honorare". (A discussion of the authorship of this treatise would be out of place here.)

9. Lastly, a small point which obviously calls for attention is whether our letter observes the rules of the *clausulae* in the way that Cyprian's work generally does. Anyone with a sense of metrico-rhythmical prose will at once feel that the writer was fully conscious of the existence of such rules. *Dilectione connexis—habere dignemini—parte contristor—virginitas honorari* are all in

the best style and *repraesentare affectionem* might perhaps be added to them. On the other hand, there are three hexameter endings : *esse tributam* ;—*emolumentum* (though even Cicero uses *single* words, in this way, as also pairs of words beginning with a monosyllable) ; and *mei meminisse* (which, however, occurs in a stereotyped formula, and should not enter into consideration here). There remain some five other phrase-endings which do not seem to conform to any rule.

It is to be remembered that in Cyprian's works there are many non-metrical or non-rhythmical endings (quite apart from Scripture quotations). Perhaps at that time no such need was felt to adhere rigidly to the rules as was felt later, for instance, by St. Leo and others ; indeed, it may be that an occasional break in the rhythmic flow was considered a good thing, in order to avoid a lulling monotony.

In any case, the nature of the clause-endings in our letter—a minority clearly stamped, the majority haphazard—provides no grounds for denying its authorship to Cyprian. It was written by a man who had a feel for the rhythmic-ending, one to whom the necessary phrasing would tend to come naturally ; but in a simple note like this, written to friends without any idea of publication he would not go out of his way to look for the well-formed phrase, but would put down his thoughts as they came. That "correct" *clausulae* appear in a notable proportion—especially at the beginning and at the end of the letter—would go to show that he had it in him to do much better, had he tried. But there was no reason why he should.

D. Conclusion.

Our study takes us little further than to enable us to say that this letter, in part corrupt, is preserved in a good collection of Cyprianic letters without anything to suggest its having been intruded there ; that it can certainly be traced beyond the eleventh century, and probably much further back ; and that nothing in it positively excludes it from being the work of Cyprian himself. If we add to this the fact that its intrinsic insignificance excludes all probability of its having been concocted and ascribed to Cyprian with some ulterior motive, we have reasonable grounds for holding that we here have a new fragment which deserves to be included among the genuine works of St. Cyprian.