

XXIII. At this time that very disciple whom Jesus loved, John, at once Apostle and Evangelist, still remained alive in Asia and administered the churches there, for after the death of Domitian, he had returned from his banishment on the island. And that he remained alive until this time may fully be confirmed by two witnesses, and these ought to be trustworthy for they represent the orthodoxy of the

¹ Sept. 18, A.D. 96.

² Jan. 27, A.D. 98.

church, no less persons than Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria. The former of these writes in one place in the second of his books *Against the Heresies*, as follows: "And all the presbyters who had been associated in Asia with John, the disciple of the Lord, bear witness to his tradition, for he remained with them until the times of Trajan." And in the third book of the same work he makes the same statement as follows: "Now the church at Ephesus was founded by Paul, but John stayed there until the times of Trajan, and it is a true witness of the tradition of the Apostles."

Clement indicates the same time, and in the treatise to which he gave the title *Who is the rich man that is saved*, adds a narrative most acceptable to those who enjoy hearing what is fine and edifying. Take and read here what he wrote. "Listen to a story which is not a story but a true tradition of John the Apostle preserved in memory. For after the death of the tyrant he passed from the island of Patmos to Ephesus, and used also to go, when he was asked, to the neighbouring districts of the heathen,¹ in some places to appoint bishops, in others to reconcile whole churches, and in others to ordain some one of those pointed out by the Spirit. He came to one of the cities which were near by (and some tell even its name),² and gave rest in general to the brethren; then, while looking before them all at the bishop who had been appointed, he saw a young man of strong body, beautiful appearance, and warm heart. 'I commend this man,' he said,

¹ 'ἔθνωσιν possibly means "country-people" as opposed to "town-folk."

² According to the *Chronicon Paschale* it was Smyrna.

'to you with all diligence in the face of the church, and with Christ as my witness.' The bishop received him, and promised everything, and the same conversations and protestations were used. John then returned to Ephesus and the presbyter¹ took to his house the young man entrusted to him, brought him up, looked after him, and finally baptized him. After this he relaxed his great care and watchfulness, because he had set upon him the seal of the Lord as the perfect safeguard. But some idle and dissolute youths, familiar with evil, corrupted him in his premature freedom. First they led him on by expensive feasts, then they started out at night for robbery and took him with them, then they urged him to greater crimes. He gradually became accustomed to this, and like an unbroken and powerful horse starting from the straight way and tearing at the bit, rushed all the more to the precipice because of his natural vigour. Finally he renounced salvation from God; and now he planned nothing small, but, having perpetrated some great crime, since he was ruined once for all, accepted the same lot as the others. He collected them and formed a band of brigands and was himself a born chief, excelling in violence, in murder, and in cruelty. Time went on and some necessity arose to summon John. When he had arranged the rest of his mission John said, 'Come now, bishop, pay me back the deposit which Christ and I left with you, with the church, over which you preside, as witness.' The bishop was at first amazed, thinking that he was being blackmailed for money which he had not received. He could neither show his faithfulness in

¹ Immediately above he is called a bishop.

what he had never had, nor could he fail John. But when John said, 'I ask back the young man and the soul of the brother,' the old man groaned deeply and shedding tears, said, 'He has died.' 'How and with what death?' 'He has died to God,' he said, 'for he turned out wicked and abandoned and finally a brigand, and now instead of the church he has taken to the mountains with an armed band of men like himself.' Then the apostle rent his garments and beat his head with great lamentation. 'Well,' he said, 'it was a fine guardian whom I left for the soul of our brother. But let me have a horse and some one to show me the way.' So he rode, just as he was, straight from the church. When he came to the place he was seized by the sentinel of the brigands and neither fled nor made excuses, but called out, 'This is why I am come; take me to your leader.' The leader waited for him, armed as he was, but when he recognized John on his approach, he turned and fled in shame. But John pursued with all his might, forgetting his age and calling out, 'Why do you run away from me, child, your own father, unarmed and old? Pity me, child, do not fear me! You have still hope of life. I will account to Christ for you. If it must be, I will willingly suffer your death, as the Lord suffered for us; for your life, I will give my own. Stay, believe; Christ sent me.' When he heard this he first stood looking down, then he tore off his weapons, then he began to tremble and to weep bitterly. He embraced the old man when he came up, pleading for himself with lamentations as best he could, baptized a second time in his tears, but his right

hand he kept back. But John assured him by pledges and protestations that he had found forgiveness for him with the Saviour, led him back, prayed and kneeled and kissed that right hand as though cleansed by his repentance. He brought him to the church, he prayed with many supplications, he joined with him in the struggle of continuous fasting, he worked on his mind by varied addresses and did not leave him, so they say, until he had restored him to the church, and thus gave a great example of true repentance and a great testimony of regeneration, the trophy of a visible resurrection." These remarks of Clement may be quoted both for the sake of the narrative and the edification of those who shall read them.