

IRENÆUS ON THE APOSTOLICAL PREACHING.

WE have now before us the text of the newly-found treatise of Irenæus *On the Apostolical Preaching*, which forms the first part of the thirty-first volume of Harnack's *Texte und Untersuchungen*. More exactly we should have put, instead of Harnack, the joint names of Harnack and Schmidt, and that collocation would have at once reminded us that another of the great patristic lights has gone out, and that the long-continued co-operation of von Gebhardt and Harnack has been ended in the way in which the best-established of partnerships must be broken up at the last. The record of von Gebhardt's literary work remains, and it will not be easy, even for a well-trained and capable scholar, to succeed him.

But here is Irenæus, fresh from the press, and full of interest and surprises. To begin with, a discovery of second-century literature can never be anything but interesting, in view of the fact that it was in this century that the organization and doctrine of the Church were really established, and the interest is unusual in the case of a writer like Irenæus, who claims to be in touch with the Apostolical tradition through Papias and Polycarp and the elders who had known the Apostle John. As is well known, we have the already extant works of Irenæus only through translation or by quotation; his great work, the five books against Heresies, is only known from the Latin translation, with the supplement of a few Greek, Syriac, and Armenian quotations; the original Greek is supposed by Zahn to have been extant in the sixteenth century; and, although doubt has been cast on his argument, we are not without hope that a complete copy of the original Greek may yet be lurking somewhere. But beside the five books against

Heresies, there are traces of a number of other writings which have either wholly, or in great part, perished. Fragments are extant of certain letters to Florinus, in which he warns him against the erroneous nature of the beliefs which he was embracing, and holds Polycarp up to him *in terrorem*. He wrote also certain other tracts relating to controversial matters of the time, such as the date of the Easter festival ; and we learn from Eusebius that he dedicated a treatise to one Marcianus *On the Apostolical Preaching*, and it is this treatise which has suddenly come to light from an unexpected quarter as could have been conceived, the library of the Armenian Church at Erivan, in Russian Armenia, where it was unearthed in 1904 by one of the most able of the younger Armenian ecclesiastics, Karabet ter-Mekertschian. He has now edited the text in collaboration with his friend, ter-Minassiantz, accompanied by a German translation of such fidelity and excellence that it needed very little emendation at the hand of Harnack and his editorial office. I was in Erivan in 1903, and had the pleasure of visiting these learned Armenians at the great convent of Etschmiadzin ; little suspecting, as we examined the treasures of their great library, that a patristic document of the first magnitude was lying only a few miles away and waiting to be discovered. We may at least take heart in two directions : first, in the belief that it is still reasonable to expect the recovery of the lost documents of the early Church ; and second, that the Armenian people have given us one more proof that they are not the dying race which they are, in many quarters, assumed to be ; but that in the region of religion, as well as in that of science, they are, as I have often maintained publicly, the brain of Asia.

The first reading of the new book will, I think, cause something of a sense of disappointment ; it appears to be wanting in originality. This is partly due to the fact that

it is a catechetical treatise, following the conventional lines of the teaching of the Church of the second century, and using the same arguments and proof-texts as are found elsewhere in that period and the time immediately subsequent. The Gospels are *not* the foundation of the argument, the whole weight of which is thrown upon the Old Testament, that is to say, upon the prophecies, together with the allegorical and mystical explanation of the histories. At first sight this is both surprising and disappointing, for Irenaeus is instructing his friend Marcianus in the very foundations of the Faith, and he hardly uses the Gospel at all; everything is prophecy and gnosis, just as it is with Justin Martyr; and the Gospels, which Irenaeus speaks of elsewhere, in a well-known passage, as comparable to the four pillars of the world and the four winds of heaven, take relatively less place than they do in Justin Martyr. The fault is in the method of teaching, which Irenaeus has clearly inherited. His real gospel is the Book of Testimonies, concerning which we wrote something in this magazine last November. We will return to this point presently. But the fault, as it seems to us, is the more patent when we remember that the book before us is probably one of the last things that Irenaeus ever wrote. He refers to his great work on Heresies, which can hardly have been completed much before 190 A.D., so that the new tract must belong to the last decade of the second century. One would have supposed that, by this date, the Gospels would have taken their right place in the education of a catechumen, and that the person of Christ would have been presented historically, and not by the method of obscure and often impossible reflections from the Prophets or the Psalms.

So far is Irenaeus from using the historical foundations of Christianity, that he does not even know how old Christ

was when He died, nor what emperor He died under. There is a well-known passage in the *Adv. Haereses*, ii. 22, which has caused grave searchings of heart, because it implied a belief (based, perhaps, in the first instance, on a misunderstood passage of St. John's Gospel) that our Lord must have been nearly fifty years of age, in opposition to the common belief that He was little more than thirty years when He finished His public ministry. And here, in the Apostolical Preaching, we are quietly informed that He suffered under Pontius Pilate (so far we are following the Apostolical Symbol), but that Pontius Pilate was the procurator *under the emperor Claudius*. It will be very difficult, in view of the known procuratorship of Pontius Pilate under Tiberius, and his subsequent recall, to trust Irenæus in any matter that requires the exercise of the historical sense; for if chronology is one of the eyes of history, he has deliberately put that eye out. We must not look to the new tract (nor to the old author) for historical details. Its value, and his, lie in another direction.

The argument of the book is as follows. One attains truth through purity of soul and body: through right thinking and right acting, through right belief and right love. Right belief consists in knowing the things that really are (*τὰ ὄντα*): it is a doctrine of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost brings us to the knowledge of the Son, the Son to the knowledge of the Father. The world was created by the Word of God, and was made for a habitation of men, to whom is given lordship over the angels. Irenæus then proceeds to summarize the whole of the history of the world, from the Creation, Fall, Flood, Call of Abraham, and so on, down to the building of the Temple and the rise of the Prophets. (In writing the history of the flood, he borrows freely from the Book of Enoch.) The Prophets declare the Incarnation of Christ and

the redemption of men. The Virgin Birth is proved by the prophecies and by an Old-Testament gnosis which makes Mary the second Eve. A few lines are given to the preaching of John the Baptist and to the works and sufferings of Christ recorded in the Gospels. After which the writer returns to the Old Testament and the theology supposed to be latent in it, with regard to the Deity and Pre-existence of Christ. A casual reference is made to John the disciple of the Lord and the opening sentence of his Gospel. The order and method of the Book of Testimonies are closely followed, and after establishing all the main points of the Gospel account from the Old Testament, he concludes that "*these testimonies* show his Davidic descent, according to the flesh, and His birth in the city of David"; we are not to look for His birth among the heathen *or anywhere else but in Bethlehem*. His works and sufferings were also foretold. It is surprising that the teaching of Christ is almost entirely absent; His sayings are not quoted, and, more disappointing still, there are no apocryphal sayings or new words of Jesus. The writer concludes with a little warning against the heresies of the time, which are classified as heresies concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We must not divide the Father from the Creator, we must not depreciate or deny the Incarnation, and we must not undervalue the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the prophetic gift, for it is through these gifts that life becomes fruitful.

Such being the structure of the book, we repeat that the first reading is somewhat disappointing, even when we agree with Harnack that there are directions in which it makes a great impression upon us: as, for example, in the complete absence of hierarchical and ceremonial elements, and in the relatively small position given to the Sacraments. Church authority and tradition are not appealed to; they

are latent, but not directly affirmed. The sum of the doctrine of Irenæus is that a life of faith in God is a life of love to man. We wish he had divided his subject a little more evenly, and given more place to the human relations of the Christian man. In this respect he does not come near to the ethical elevation of Aristides, for example. But now, having done with preliminary disappointments, let us turn to the text and see what light we can throw on some of the passages.

In the first place, we have the important evidence of a quotation from Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians. Up to the present we had no early quotation from Polycarp, and the external evidence for his Epistle was limited (as far as the first two centuries after its composition are concerned) to a statement of Irenæus (*Haer.* iii. 3, 4), in which he declares that—

“There is a very adequate letter of Polycarp written to the Philippians, from which those who desire it, and who care for their own salvation, can learn both the character of his faith and the message of the truth.”

Now let us turn to the *Apostolical Preaching*, c. 95 :—

“Through faith in the Son of God, we learn to love God with all our heart and our neighbour as ourselves. But *love to God is far from all sins*, and love to the neighbour causes no evil to the neighbour.”

Compare with this the following from Polycarp, *ad Phil.* 3 :—

“Faith is the mother of us all, followed by hope, in front of whom goes love to God and to Christ and to the neighbour. For if one be within these, he has fulfilled the law of righteousness ; *for he that hath love is far from all sin.*”

The coincidence in words is reinforced by the coincidence of the whole argument, and there cannot be any doubt

that Irenaeus is using Polycarp, with whose writings he shows himself in another passage to be acquainted. It is curious that Harnack does not seem to have noticed the quotation, any more than the Armenian editors; but it is of some importance critically.

Another interesting case of an unidentified quotation will be found in c. 77. Here we are told, amongst the prophecies of the Passion, to reckon the following:—

“It is said in the book of the Twelve Prophets: they chained him and brought him there to the king as a present. For Pontius Pilate was the procurator of Judaea, and was at that time at enmity with Herod, the king of the Jews. But after, when Christ was brought to him in chains, Pilate sent Him to Herod, leaving him to examine Him, in order to know exactly what he would do with Him, using Christ as an excuse for reconciliation with the king.”

Here the editors are at fault, and Harnack adds that to the best of his knowledge there is no such passage in the Minor Prophets, and that it is significant that Irenaeus, in this instance, does not give the name of the prophet whom he is quoting.

The passage is Hosea x. 6, which the LXX present in the following form:—

καὶ αὐτὸν εἰς Ἀσσυρίους δῆσαντες, ἀπήνεγκαν ξένια τῷ βασιλεῖ Ἰαρείμ.

It is not easy to see how this Greek was made out of the Hebrew, as we know it; and it is well known that the passages relating to King Jarib are to this day a *cruz interpretum*. But that the passage was taken as a prophetic testimony to Christ and His trial, is certain. Suppose we turn to Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, c. 103; here we find as follows:—

Ἡρώδου δὲ, τὸν Ἀρχέλαον διαδεξαμένου, λαβόντος τὴν ἐξουσίαν τὴν ἀπονεμηθείσαν αὐτῷ, ᾧ καὶ Πιλάτος χαριζόμενος δεδεμένον τὸν Ἰησοῦν

ἔπεμψε, καὶ τοῦτο γενησόμενον προειδὼς ὁ θεὸς εἰρήκει οὕτως· καί γε αὐτὸν εἰς Ἀσσυρίους ἀπήνεγκαν ξένια τῷ βασιλεῖ.

Here Justin makes the same connexion as Irenæus between the passage in Hosea and the account of what passed between Pilate and Herod.

The same connexion is made in Tertullian against Marcion (iv. 42):—

“Nam et Herodi velut munus a Pilato missus, Osee vocibus fidem reddidit: de Christo enim prophetaverat: et vinctum eum ducent xeniam regi.”

Tertullian, as is well known, used the prophetic testimonies in slaying Marcion; and I think it is quite likely that both he and Justin are using a formal collection of such testimonies; for the connexion between Hosea and the Gospel is by no means obvious, even to a person whose mind was set on finding Christ in the Old Testament. In any case, there can be no doubt where Irenæus' quotation comes from. We shall find the same connexion made in Cyril of Jerusalem (*Cat.* xiii. 14) as follows: *δεθεῖς ἦλθεν ἀπὸ τοῦ Καϊάφα πρὸς Πιλάτον ἄρα καὶ τοῦτο γέγραπται· καὶ δῆσαντες αὐτὸν ἀπήνεγκαν ξένια τῷ βασιλεῖ Ἰαρείμ.* And also in Ruffinus on the Symbol.

And this brings us to the interesting question of the relation of the composition, and of the catechetical teaching which underlies it, to the collection of prophetic passages which I have shown to be current in the early Church, whose original title seems to have been *Testimonies against the Jews*. Does the new treatise involve Irenæus in the use of that early book in the way that I have suggested in the too brief article which I wrote on the subject in the *EXPOSITOR* for last November? For example, we are to ask whether it quotes the same proof-texts as the Book of Testimonies, whether it quotes them with similar sequences, with the same misunderstandings, like combinations, similar

displacements of the names of authors quoted, and so on.

Perhaps it will be sufficient if I present a few striking cases of coincidence in the matter quoted from the Old Testament and in the manner in which it is quoted.

It will be remembered that I drew attention to the way in which Bar Şalibi, in his *Testimonies against the Jews*, quotes as follows :—

“David said : Before the day-star I begat thee. And before the sun is his name and before the moon. Now explain to us, when was Israel born before the day-star, etc.”

The combination of passages from the 110th Psalm and the 71st Psalm was noted, and it was shown that the same two passages were combined in Justin, *Dialogue*, 76, and in the collection of prophetic extracts ascribed to Gregory of Nyssa.

Now turn to the new treatise, c. 43, and you will find Irenaeus establishing the pre-existence of Christ from the first verse of the book of Genesis, after which he goes on :—

“And Jeremiah the prophet also testifies this as follows : Before the morning-star have I begotten thee, and before the sun is his name.”

Here the very same sequence occurs, in exact agreement with Bar Şalibi ; and we have, over and above that coincidence, an error of ascription such as frequently occurs in these collections, by which Jeremiah is made responsible for the Psalms ! Probably, though I have not been able to verify this, a proof-text from Jeremiah lay adjacent. A similar case exists in our Gospel of Matthew with reference to the potter's field, and the parallel is particularly interesting because Irenaeus quotes it in the newly-found treatise, and evidently *not* from the Gospel. His language is as follows :—

c. 81, "And again Jeremiah the prophet said: 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one that was sold, whom they of the children of Israel had bought, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me.' For Judas, who was of Christ's disciples," etc.

A comparison of the other passages which are similarly treated will show that Irenæus means to quote the prophet, and does not mean to quote the Gospel. From which again we infer that the famous reading stood in a book of Testimonies.

Another famous passage to which I referred was the prophecy of Jacob concerning Judah ("the sceptre shall not fail from Judah," etc), which I showed to have been current in the book of Testimonies as a prophecy of Moses (see *Iren., adv. Haer.* iv. 10, and Justin, 1 *Ap.* 32). In c. 57 of the new treatise we get the same matter brought forward, with the preface, "And Moses says in Genesis," the change in the manner of introducing the passage being made so as to avoid the error of the ascription of the prophecy to Moses. Then, after explaining the meaning of the blessing of Judah, and how he washes his garments in wine, which is a symbol of eternal joy, he goes on, "And on this account he is also the hope of the heathen, *who hope in him.*" This addition becomes clearer if we assume that somewhere in the neighbourhood of the words he was quoting (*αὐτὸς προσδοκία ἐθνῶν*) there stood the words :

καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν βραχίονα αὐτοῦ ἔθνη ἐλπιούσιν·

for when we refer to the parallel section in Justin Martyr (1 *Ap.* 32) we find as follows :—

καὶ Ἡσαΐας δὲ, ἄλλος προφήτης, τὰ αὐτὰ δι' ἄλλων ῥήσεων προφητεύων, οὕτως εἶπεν, Ἄνατελεῖ ἄστρον ἐξ Ἰακώβ καὶ ἄνθος ἀναβήσεται ἀπὸ τῆς ῥίζης Ἰεσσαί· καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν βραχίονα αὐτοῦ ἔθνη ἐλπιούσιν

(Num. xxiv. 17; Isa. xi. 1; xi. 10),

where the sequence of thought is again preserved for us which occurs in the argument in Irenaeus. And if we read on in Irenaeus, we shall find the words actually extant which he has proleptically treated at the end of c. 57. The order of the passages in the original book can be clearly made out. And the same thing can be shown elsewhere in the new treatise, but for brevity I forbear further reference to this matter.

Here is one other curious and interesting passage in which the treatment of prophecies by Irenaeus is closely parallel to that which we find in Justin, but apparently without any direct dependence of the former upon the latter.

In c. 70, in dealing with Christ's sufferings, Irenaeus quotes from Isaiah liii. 8 ("Who shall declare His generation?"). He then goes on (c. 71) to quote Lamentations iv. 20 under the name of Jeremiah; and then (c. 72) to point out from the same prophet (it should have been Isaiah) "how the righteous perish and no man layeth it to heart; and pious men are taken away" (Isa. lvii. 1); and proceeds to prove from it (i.) the death of Christ, (ii.) the sufferings of those who are His followers; and neither of these points would have been made by a rational exegete; and he concludes thus: "'Who,' says the prophet, 'is perfectly righteous except the Son of God, who leads on those who believe in him to perfect righteousness, *who are persecuted and killed like himself?*'"

Here the parallel in Justin Martyr, 1 *Ap.* 48, is very striking: "And as to the way he pointed out in advance by the prophetic spirit, that he should be done to death *along with those who hope in him*, listen to the things that were spoken by Isaiah," etc.¹

I do not think that the coincidence, which we here observe

¹ Πῶς τε προμεμήνυται ὑπὸ τοῦ προφητικοῦ πνεύματος ἀναιρεθησόμενος ἅμα τοῖς ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἐλπίζουσιν, ἀκούσατε τῶν λεχθέντων διὰ Ἡσαίου,

in the treatment of the passage in Isaiah at the hands of Irenæus and Justin, is due to the fact that Irenæus has been reading Justin; it is more natural to suppose that the treatment of the passage is conventional and is invited by a headline in the Testimony book. But enough has probably been said on this point. The inference which we draw is something more than our previous conclusions: we not only confirm our argument as to the existence of written collections of prophecies used for controversial purposes against the Jews, but since the treatise we have before us is almost the equivalent of a Church Catechism, we see that the Book of Testimonies became a regular book of Church teaching, and that it passed out of controversial use with Jews into doctrinal use for the instruction of Greeks, and that, being so used, it is, as we have said above, the equivalent of a Gospel for the instruction of the catechumens; a little later and it will be displaced by the Gospels themselves, and will rapidly disappear.

Now, in conclusion, we may point out that the anti-Judaic character of the early Apostolical Preaching which Irenæus is commending to Marcianus is reflected in the ethics of the book, which, although meagre in quantity, are lofty in tone and anti-Judaic in temper. The writer has no further use for the Mosaic Law! Why should we tell a man not to kill, who does not even hate? or not to covet his neighbour's goods when he loves his neighbour as himself? or why tell him to keep an idle day of rest every week, when he keeps every day a Sabbath rest in himself? Is not the true temple the human body, where God is constantly served in righteousness? As for sacrifices, read what Isaiah says about the sacrifice of an ox being the equivalent of the offering of a dog.

Could anything be more characteristically anti-Judaic, or more definitely Christian? And this is the teaching which

professes to present the Apostolical tradition ; it has none of the natural machinery of religion, and very little supernatural machinery ; the terrors of the world to come are as little in evidence as the offerings of bulls and goats. The proportion of the doctrines presented is certainly significant. We should have expected more in this direction and less in that, more in the direction of ritual and less in the direction of ethics unqualified by eschatology. But it would clearly be going too far to assume an argument from silence, and say that Irenaeus had no ritual conceptions, and taught [no eschatology. For we have the five books against Heresies to reckon with, as well as a number of preserved fragments from lost books.¹

It seems clear, however, that the tradition which he presents made much of the interior change and of the spiritual enlightenment. And it is in reference to this spiritual vision and experience that we come nearest to the actual teaching of the New Testament. In c. 93 Irenaeus quotes the famous passage from Hosea (ii. 25), where the Not-Beloved becomes Beloved, and the not-people the children of the living God. For, says he, this is what John the Baptist meant when he said, "God can raise up children to Abraham from the stones." *For after our hearts have been torn away from their stony service and made free, then we behold God by faith and become the children of Abraham, those, namely, who are justified by faith.*

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¹ It should be noticed that the parallels between the *adv. Haer.* and the *Apostolic Preaching* are constant and often very illuminating. For instance, in c. 14 Irenaeus explains the innocence of Adam and Eve in the garden by the fact that they were created as boy and girl: and, as Harnack notes, this was already implied in *adv. Haer.* iii. 22. 3 (*Erant enim utrique nudi in Paradiso et non confundebantur, quoniam paulo ante facti, non intellectum habebant filiorum generationis: oportebat enim illos primos adolescere, dehinc sic multiplicari*). See also the curious argument for the Virgin-Birth in c. 36, based on the promise to David, "Of the fruit of thy body, etc.," and the same argument in *adv. Haer.* iii. 21. 5.