



DEMONSTRATION OF THE APOSTOLIC
PREACHING



IRENÆUS OF LYONS

DEMONSTRATION OF
THE APOSTOLIC
PREACHING

*Translated from the Armenian by J. Armitage Robinson
From the S.P.C.K. edition, London, 1920.*

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The text of *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* is translated by J. Armitage Robinson, from the edition published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, and The Macmillan Co., New York (1920).

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ABOUT THIS SERIES

The *Holy Nativity Patristic Library* presents the foundational texts of the early Christian Fathers in carefully typeset pocket editions. The Library is drawn from the public-domain English translations of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* and the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* — the thirty-eight-volume collection edited by Philip Schaff and his collaborators between 1886 and 1900, which remains the most comprehensive English-language gathering of the patristic writings ever assembled.

The present volume is the one work in the Library that Schaff's collection could not contain. It survives only in an Armenian translation, and the manuscript came to light in December 1904, after the last of those volumes had been published. Its

text is J. Armitage Robinson's translation of 1920, with his introduction and notes.

We have undertaken to issue these works one at a time, as portable single-author editions, so that they may travel where the original folio volumes cannot — in a coat pocket, on a long flight, beside a hospital bed. Each volume preserves its translation and the translator's introduction. The footnote apparatus is retained where it serves the text; we have set aside those notes that pertain only to the nineteenth-century volume context, and any commentary at variance with the Orthodox confession of the Fathers themselves. We add a scripture index for the text in hand.

The texts are typeset in IM Fell English, a face cut by John Fell in seventeenth-century Oxford and freely available again through the work of Igino Marini. The Greek is set in Philokalia, designed for the Athonite tradition.

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**DEMONSTRATION OF THE
APOSTOLIC PREACHING**

PREFACE

Eusebius in his Ecclesiastical History tells us that in addition to his great work *Against Heresies* St Irenæus wrote *A Discourse in Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*. This work was entirely lost sight of: no one seems ever to have quoted a word of it. But it has quite recently reappeared in an Armenian manuscript together with Books IV and V of the greater work. The Armenian translation proves to be a fairly close rendering of the original Greek.

What Irenæus meant by the Apostolic Preaching can be seen from his larger work. Although the exact expression does not seem to occur there, we have its equivalent, "the Preaching of the Apostles" (III, iii. 2), and also the parallel phrases, "the Tradition of the Apostles" (III, iii. 4) and "the Preaching of the Truth" (I, iii. 1; III, iii. 4). Moreover, in I,

i. 20 we read that "he who holds the canon (or rule) of the truth without deviation, which he received through his baptism," will be able to escape all the snares of heresy: and in the *Demonstration* (c. 3.) we have closely parallel words which also refer to the baptismal faith. Although it was not until much later that the baptismal confession came to be called the Apostles' Creed, it was already regarded as a summary of the essential elements of the Apostolic message. Its form varied in some details in different Churches, but its structure was everywhere the same, for it had grown up on the basis of the baptismal formula.

What Irenæus undertakes in the present work is to set out the main points of this Apostolic message, which, as he has explained in his greater work (III, iii. 1 ff.), has been handed down in the Church by the successions of the bishops and is the same in substance in all parts of the world, and to demonstrate its truth more especially from the sacred scriptures of the Old Testament. This argument from prophecy was the earliest form of Christian evidence; and though it does not appeal to us with equal force to-day, and we find it hard to be patient with

some of the proofs which seemed to be convincing in the earliest times, we must yet recognize that it was a true instinct which claimed the Jewish scriptures as the heritage of the Christian Church, and surmounted by means of allegorical interpretations those serious difficulties which led many Christians to wish to cast them aside altogether.

The words of Bishop Westcott in reference to the methods of the schoolmen of the Middle Ages, are applicable also to these earlier teachers: "Many of the arguments which they use appear to us frivolous and pointless. It requires a serious effort to enter into them with a sympathetic intelligence. But the effort is worth making. Conclusions which rest upon arbitrary assumptions as to the symmetries of things witness in an imperfect fashion to a deep sense of a divine order in creation; and we do injustice to those who draw them if we allow even the greatest errors of expression and form to blind us to the nobility of the conception which they embody most inadequately" (*Epp. of St John*, "The Gospel of Creation," pp. 276 f.).

The wonder of Irenæus is the largeness of his outlook. No theologian had arisen since St Paul and

St John who had grasped so much of the purpose of God for His world. "The Making of Man," to borrow Tennyson's great phrase, is his constant theme. Even though he was forced to be controversial, he was never merely negative; and the last of his books *Against Heresies* ends on the keynote of the whole—that man shall at length be made "after the image and likeness of God." This is to him the meaning of all history; and for that reason the centre point of history is the Incarnation. So Christ came "to link up the end with the beginning," or in St Paul's words, which Irenæus never tires of repeating, "to gather up into one all things" in Himself.

I have retained the chapter divisions of the first editors and translators of the Armenian text. The references to the work *Against Heresies* are to Harvey's edition (Cambridge, 1857). Though I have not everywhere reproduced the double renderings which are so frequent in the Armenian, I have made the translation sufficiently literal to serve the general needs of the patristic student, even at the cost of some clumsiness of expression. In the Introduction and Notes I have been at some pains to bring out the indebtedness of Irenæus to Justin Martyr;

and in pursuance of the same end I have devoted a section of the Introduction to the teaching of both these writers in regard to the Holy Spirit.

J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON.

The Deanery,
Wells, Somerset, Oct. 1919.

