

The Church Guardian

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ments See page 15.

CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY.

FEB. 4—Quinquagesima. (*Notice of Ash Wednesday*).

" 7—ASH WEDNESDAY. (Pr. Pss. M. 6, 32, 38. L. 102, 130, 143. Communion service).

[The forty days in Lent are to be observed as Days of Fasting or abstinence. Ash Wednesday Coll. to be used daily.]

" 11—1st SUNDAY IN LENT. (*Notice of Ember Days. Ember Coll. Daily.*

" 14 — }
" 16 — } EMBER DAYS.
" 17 — }

" 18—2nd Sunday in Lent. (*Notice of St. Matthias*).

" 24—ST. MATTHIAS. Ap. & M. (*Athanasian Creed*).

" 25—3rd SUNDAY IN LENT.

THE MESSAGE OF THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS TO OUR OWN AGE—IX.

16. *The Christian Character.*

St. Clement draws the following beautiful picture of a Christian community before jealousy and envy made them a shame and disgrace: "Ye were all lowly in mind and free from arrogance, yielding rather than claiming submission, more glad to give than to receive, and content with the provisions which God supplieth. And, giving heed unto His words, ye laid them up diligently in your hearts and His sufferings were before your eyes. Thus a profound and rich peace was given to all, and an insatiable desire of doing good. An abundant outpouring also of the Holy Spirit fell upon all; and, being full of holy counsel, in excellent zeal and with a pious confidence, ye stretched out your hands to Almighty God, supplicating Him to be propitious, if unwittingly ye had committed any sin. Ye had conflict day and night for all the brotherhood, that the number of His elect might be saved with fearfulness and intentness of mind. Ye were sincere and simple and free from malice one towards another. Every sedition and every schism was abominable to you. Ye mourned over the transgressions of your neighbors: ye judged their short-comings to be your own" (2).

The following exhortation also presents a beautiful ideal of social and domestic virtue: "Let us fear the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was given for us. Let us reverence our rulers; let us honour our elders; let us instruct our young men in the lesson of the fear of God. Let us guide our women toward that which is good: let them show forth their lovely disposition of purity; let them prove their sincere affection of gentleness. . . . Let our children be partakers of the instruction which is in Christ; let them learn how lowliness of mind prevaileth with God, what power chaste love hath with God, how the fear of Him in good and great saveth all them that walk therein in a pure mind with holiness" (21).

Again, the following passage presents a beautiful picture of brotherly love and humility: "Let not the strong neglect the weak; and let

the weak respect the strong. Let the rich minister aid to the poor; and let the poor give thanks to God, because He hath given him one through whom his wants may be supplied. . . . He that is pure in the flesh, let him be so, and not boast, knowing that it is Another who bestoweth His continence upon him" (38).

St. Polycarp also says: "Our widows must be sober-minded as touching the faith of the Lord, making intercession without ceasing for all men, abstaining from all calumny, evil-speaking, false witness, love of money, and every evil thing, knowing that they are God's altar, and that all sacrifices are carefully inspected. . . . In like manner also the younger men must be blameless in all things, caring for purity before everything and curbing themselves from every evil" (5).

But the unknown Homilist draws another and a sad picture. It is of the effect of inconsistency between profession and practice. "The Lord saith, Every way My name is blasphemed among all the Gentiles; and again, Woe unto him by reason of whom My Name is blasphemed. Wherein it is blasphemed? In that you do not the things which I desire. For the Gentiles, when they hear from our mouths the oracles of God, marvel at them for their beauty and greatness; then when they discover that our works are not worthy of the words which we speak, forthwith they betake themselves to blasphemy, saying that it is an idle story and a delusion. For when they hear from us that God saith, It is no thank unto you, if ye love them that love you, but this is thank unto you, if ye love your enemies and them that hate you; when they hear these things, I say, they marvel at their exceeding goodness; but when they see that we not only do not love them that hate us, but not even them that love us, they laugh us to scorn, and the Name is blasphemed" (13).

These are some of the lessons to be learned from the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. But we may also learn much from

17. *Their omissions.*

We may notice the complete absence of many errors and abuses which afterwards spotted the white robe of the Church. Thus, there is nothing to support the arrogant pretensions of the Bishops of Rome. It is true that the Church of Rome is greeted by St. Ignatius as she "that hath the presidency in the country of the region of the Romans, being worthy of God, worthy of honour, worthy of felicitation, worthy of praise, worthy of success, worthy in purity, and having the presidency of love." In those words he accords to her the *presidency* among sister-churches, not the *supremacy* over them. Such presidency we may be willing to accord again, if she become once more "worthy in purity and having the presidency of love." Again, although the Lord Jesus is called "Son of Mary," there is not the slightest trace of any homage to her. The same remark is true of everything else which was discarded by the Church of England, when she returned to primitive doctrine and practice.

The testimony of the Apostolic Fathers is in no way discredited by their admitted blemishes. Such as their belief in the current fables about the phoenix and Lot's wife, texts falsely quoted, or fancifully interpreted. These are but marks showing the hand of the human workman, as distinguished from the machine. The important fact is that their testimony is unmistakable and unanimous to what was believed and practiced in the primitive Church. It is inconceivable that any of those who differ from us could honestly study these writings without admitting that the Church of the Prayer Book is in the fullest sense *Apostolic* in government, doctrine, and practice.

There is a widespread misapprehension as to the use and value of the early Fathers. Many think that historic Churchmen appeal to them under the delusion that their private opinions

should carry weight, and that their statements of doctrine are authoritative. But we quote the Fathers for the same reason that our Prayer Book and Articles quote them; namely, to prove that our views on certain essential or important questions are not *novel* (and therefore *false*), or to prove that our doctrine or practice is *Primitive* or even *Apostolic*. The Apostolic Fathers were men of no learning, of no originality, and of no critical judgment. It would be strange if it were otherwise, when "not many wise men, not many mighty, not many noble were called." But these deficiencies render their testimony the more valuable. We care little for their opinions as such; we thank God for the unspeakable gift of their united, straightforward testimony. In these days when advanced critics tear the New Testament into shreds, when sectarians tell us that we have no Scriptural standing ground, and when men of all parties confidently appeal to the Bible to establish the most contradictory views, it is *something* to know on the unimpeachable testimony of men who had been with the Apostles, that the Apostles "were fully assured through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ," and on account thereof "despised death, nay, they were found superior to death;" that the following language was used of Holy Baptism as early as the middle of the second half of the first century: "We go down into the water laden with sins and filth, and rise up from it bearing fruit in the heart, resting our fear and hope on Jesus in the spirit;" that at the close of the first century the Holy Eucharist was said to be "that sacrifice spoken of by the Lord, in every place and at every time offer Me a pure sacrifice;" and that at the beginning of the second century "apart from deacons, presbyters and the bishop, there" was "not even the name of a Church." So far as we know or can conjecture, the witness of St. Clement comes from Rome, or Barnabas from Alexandria, of the Didache from some obscure corner of Palestine, of St. Ignatius from Antioch, of St. Polycarp from Smyrna, and of the Unknown Homilist from no one knows where; and yet all with one heart and voice, as far as they can testify at all, bear witness to the truths which are now unjustly impugned as Romish. Although the enemy very early sowed tares it cannot be that the whole Church, so far as it is known to us, erred from the truth during the lifetime of the companions of the Apostles. Even the Jews who entered Canaan "served the Lord all the days of the elders that out-lived Joshua." If the views of the ministry and sacraments stated above could be disproved from the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, should not we hear much of the value of their testimony? As a matter of fact, learned Dissenters are never tired of quoting the isolated opinions of one or two of the Fathers against Episcopacy, although their novel speculations were formed *several centuries later*.—*Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette*.

THE "COMFORTABLE" SEASON OF LENT.

We like that good old word in its old English sense as applied to the season of Lent.

Lent is *most* comfortable to one who rightly observes and uses it.

Let us make it so to ourselves.

To make Lent comfortable see to it that it is not a sham. Let it cost you something.

Let it cost you all you can give in time and service and money.

It is your opportunity to find out the truth about yourself—to find out what place you have given your hope of Eternal Life in the list of things valuable to you.

If our Blessed Lord needed a Lent to prepare Himself for His great work, do not you need it every year to help you to go rightly about your work?—*Selected*.