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SATURDAY, NOV. 21, 1903.

Calendar for Next Week.

NOVEMBER.

- 22—Twenty-fifth and last Sunday after Pentecost. Octave of the dedication of all the churches of the Diocese.
23—Monday—St. Clement, Pope, Martyr.
24—Tuesday—St. John of the Cross Confessor.
25—Wednesday—St. Catharine, Virgin, Martyr.
26—Thursday—St. Leonard of Porto Maurizio, Confessor.
27—Friday—The Feast of the Miraculous Medal of the Blessed Virgin.
28—Saturday—St. Sylvester, Abbot (transferred from the 26th inst). Vigil of St. Andrew.

VALUE OF TRADITION.

That the Apostle's Creed was never, during three centuries committed to writing in its complete form, and that it was preserved intact by being committed to memory, and repeated regularly by all Christians: these are the two startling propositions which the Rev. Dr. Alexander McDonald, Vicar General of the Diocese of Antigonish, proves in his learned work, "The Symbol of the Apostles—a vindication of the Apostolic authorship of the Creed on the lines of Catholic tradition." The nucleus of this great work was a series of articles in the American Ecclesiastical Review from January to July of this year. They form the first six chapters of the book, which contains seven more chapters and a splendid introduction on the discipline of Secrecy, by the Author, to which is added a final chapter by another writer on the name "Catholic."

The entire tone and style of the work inspires great confidence in the learning and discernment of the author. He is evidently extremely modern in form. Nothing in the way of real scholarship is unknown to him, and his mind is stored with that treasury of collateral information which enables a scholar to throw light on many a subject that needs illustration. But all the while he holds to the value of oral tradition when the subject thereof is a matter of supreme moment, which must be kept secret from those outside the Church. This Discipline of Secrecy with regard to the body of Christian doctrine is the point on which the learned author insists all through his book. Here is a passage that gives an excellent idea of his manner.

"There has been produced evidence enough and to spare that the Creed of the early Church was hedged about and jealously guarded by the Discipline of the Secret, and that the early Christian writers religiously refrained from reproducing it in their works, and even from putting it at all in writing. But consider how fraught with significance is this, and how effectually it serves to discredit the method of historical criticism so-called, as applied to the question of the authorship of the Creed. Your ingenious critic, with his vast apparatus of learning, with industry and patience in research beyond all praise and worthy of all

emulation, ransacks the writings of sub-apostolic and early times, for the Symbol, and declares he cannot find it. No marvel that he cannot find it: he seeks the living among the dead. The Creed is in the heart and on the lips of the Church of the living God; he is looking for some fossil remains of a casket that might be thought to have enclosed it, but did not: for, to cite once more the words of St. Jerome: "The Symbol of our faith and hope, handed down to us from the Apostles, is not written with ink on paper, but graved on the fleshly tablets of the heart." To the weary and sore perplexed critic peering into ancient tombs, groping in the twilight of those early times, seeking in vain the source whence came the Symbol, the words of Augustine and Jerome and Rufinus, of Basil and Cyril and Clement, should have been as the legend on the sign-post to give timely warning of No thoroughfare. But he heeded not the warning, he had no eyes for it; he would plod his way, groping ever, till at length he has latched up in a blind alley. For this is just where its failure to find other than an anonymous author for the great Creed of Christendom has left historical criticism—in a cul-de-sac."

Elsewhere Dr. McDonald explains his meaning in greater detail. "The historical critic," he writes, "searches for the Symbol or traces of the Symbol, among the remains of early Christian literature, after much the same manner as the biologist seeks for a species, or traces of a species among the fossil remains of early geological epochs. This is all well enough. But in the eagerness of his search he overlooks a point of capital importance. Between literary remains and the fossil remains of plant or animal there is a radical distinction. The latter are mute and voiceless; the former, being the product of the living mind have a tongue and can deliver their message to those who find them. Now here is where the method of historical criticism is at fault. It takes the Symbol by dint of piecing together the scattered elements of it, from the writings of Cyril and Rufinus and Augustine, and pays not the slightest heed to the warning which these same writings deliver at the same time. The very same writers"—and this is the strongest general argument in Dr. McDonald's book, the great point which he makes so clearly—"who are the first to describe and expound the Symbol, and in the very act of describing it, tell us, in the most distinct way, and with patient iteration, that they did not themselves get the Symbol from written records, but from the lips of the living Church. What sort of criticism is it that is willing to trust these writers when they tell us what the articles of the Symbol were in their day, and in what order they were arranged, but will not trust them when they tell us how the Symbol was transmitted to them by their forefathers in the lancy that he can run with the hare and hunt with the hounds after this fashion, 'I will accept nothing,' he declares, 'but what I can find documentary evidence for.' All very well. But let the whole evidence be taken. It will not do to take this because it fits in with a preconceived theory, and reject that because it does not. The method that picks and chooses in this way, is neither critical nor historical."

In order that our readers, who have not the book before them, may better understand what follows in this long quotation, we hark back to a previous chapter in which the Author gives this passage from St. Basil: "Of the dogmas and teachings preserved in the Church, we have some from the doctrine committed to writing, and some we have received, transmitted to us in a secret manner, from the tradition of the Apostles; both of these have the same force in forming religion; and no one will gainsay either of these, no one, that is, who has the least experience of the laws of the Church. . . . Dogma is one thing, and preaching another; for the former is guarded in silence, while preachings are openly proclaimed." That he means by 'dogma' especially the Symbol ap-

pears from the words, he uses a little further on: "The very Confession of Faith in Father, Son and Holy Ghost," he asks, "from what written records have we it?"

Dr. McDonald continues, (p. 80). "The critic may, if he likes, put this statement of St. Basil's to the test, and proceed to ransack written records for the Confession of Faith. He has a perfect right to do this. But he has no warrant, and no shadow of warrant, on failing to find it, as he was foredoomed to fail, to say that the Symbol did not then exist at all. This is an assumption so arbitrary that it is difficult to speak of it with composure. His assumed first principle will not let the critic see that he has been looking in the wrong place for the Symbol."

"In our quest for the origin of the Creed then, we shall set out, not with an assumed first principle but with a fact proved by documents, and proved up to the hilt, namely, that the Creed was not transmitted in writing to the Christians of the fourth or fifth centuries, but handed on by word of mouth, and 'graved on the fleshly tablets of the heart.' The knowledge of this fact will be as a lamp to our feet. In the light of it we shall not look for the Symbol itself in the writings of the earlier time, assured before hand that it is not to be found there. We shall look only for traces of it, tokens of its existence in the minds and hearts of believers, in the mouths and on the lips of the neophyte and the martyr, and these we shall find in plenty."

"Of course no comprehensive or minute search into original sources can be made here, nor shall it be attempted, nor is it, indeed, needed. We shall pick up in passing, one or two allusions to the Symbol from third century writings, and proceed straightway to the second century, which is today the battleground of the rival theories as to its origin."

Dr. McDonald analyzes most thoroughly the crucial passages of the second century witnesses. Occasionally his treatment of the subject is as breezy as it is effective. Referring to Prof. McGiffert's theory ancient the origin of the Symbol, he writes "the theory that the Symbol was framed to head off the heresy of Marcion, however much labor and skill may be employed in setting it up, is but a house of cards, which a very slight puff of wind would blow down. A gust or two from North Africa will sweep it clean into the Adriatic." And then he adduces the testimony of Tertullian asserting that the Roman Church got her Symbol from the Apostles Peter and Paul, and afterwards gave it to proconsular Africa.

Had we more space, we should examine more fully Dr. McDonald's convincing evidence. But, under the circumstances, we can only endorse his main contention thus expressed at page 283:

The key to the whole situation is furnished by the Discipline of the Secret. Both Irenaeus and Tertullian are kept back from giving us the Creed in the very phrase by the prohibition against putting it in writing, and the obligation of secrecy in regard to it. Neither of them tells the reader so in terms, but this only serves to hit more effectually the words and structure of their Symbol. On any other hypothesis, the reticence of these writers and the studied care with which they vary the unvarying rule of the Faith is an insoluble conundrum to be everlastingly given up.

These words contain the essence of Dr. McDonald's splendid defence of tradition. They show how lamentably handicapped are all non-Catholic searchers in the field of early Christian history. Not belonging to the family, they do not know its secrets, its spirit, its 'ethos,' and so they grope with Sisyphean labor, in the dark. As this work is sure to make its way among the learned defenders of Christianity, we venture to suggest some necessary improvements. The index should be more complete; every quotation should be referred therein to the pages, not the sections, of the book. The pages should also be marked in the contents. We have also noted several errata, such as p. 39, l. 6, where a



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