

NOTE

THE "CREEDS" OF ST. VICTORINUS AND ST. PATRICK

As a key-note or motto for his famous *Confessio*, St Patrick inserts near the beginning of that work a long creed-like passage in which he formally professes his belief in the Trinitarian God.¹ It has long been noticed that part of this "creed" corresponds almost word for word to a passage in the commentary on the Apocalypse by Victorinus of Pettau,² but the nature of this relation is still disputed. J. Haussleiter,³ and more recently, J. E. L. Oulton⁴ maintained that Patrick quoted from Victorinus. F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock, who originally suggested that Patrick was dependent on St. Irenaeus, later modified his thesis at least so far as to assume that the creed of Irenaeus, which he had laboured to reconstruct from several passages in the *Elenchos*, was reproduced independently by both Victorinus and Patrick.⁵ Recent studies on the text of Patrick's *Confessio* demand a review of the problem.

Hitchcock's theory that Patrick borrowed from Irenaeus is not very plausible. Most of the parallels which Hitchcock quotes are far too vague to prove anything. For the same reason it is unlikely that the almost identical phrases of Victorinus and Patrick should be derived independently from Irenaeus; besides, the Latin version of Irenaeus was probably not yet in existence during the lifetime of Victorinus, and if the Bishop of Petavio knew Greek, the apostle of the Irish did not. We may therefore restrict our efforts to a comparison of Victorinus and Patrick.

The commentary on the Apocalypse by Victorinus, a writer of the late third and early fourth century,⁶ was, after an interval of a hundred

¹ *Confessio*, 4, according to the chapter division by Dr. Newport J. D. White, *Libri S. Patricii* (Dublin, 1905 [Proc. Royal Irish Academy, XXV, C]; London, 1918 [S.P.C.K. Texts for Students, No. 4]).

² *In Apoc.*, XI, 1. The relation was first discovered by F. Kattenbusch, *Das apostolische Symbol I* (1894), pp. 188, 212 f., 395.

³ *Der Aufbau der altchristlichen Literatur* (1898), p. 36 f.; cf. *Göttinger Gelehrte Anzeigen* (1898), pp. 369-71.

⁴ *The Credal Statements of St. Patrick* (Dublin, 1940).

⁵ "The Creeds of SS. Irenaeus and Patrick" *Hermathena*, XIV (1907) 168-82; *Irenaeus of Lugdunum* (1914), 340 ff.; *Hermathena*, XLVII (1932), 232-37.

⁶ He suffered martyrdom during the persecution of Diocletian.

years, revised by St. Jerome. We are fortunate enough to possess both the original text and Jerome's revision. In the present passage the two redactions differ with regard to an essential detail: Victorinus speaks only of the Father and the Son, whereas Jerome, introducing the Holy Ghost, makes this rudimentary creed Trinitarian. We must compare the text of the *Confessio* with both versions.⁷

Victorinus, <i>in Apoc.</i> xi. 1 (Hausssl., p. 96, 4-9):	Patricius, <i>Conf.</i> , 4 (White p. 236, 8-15, 19-20):	Victorinus-Jerome, <i>in Apoc.</i> xi. 1 (Hausssl., p. 97, 4-9):
mensura autem fidei est mandatum Domini nostri, Patrem confiteri omnipotentem, ut didicimus, et huius Filium Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum	quia non est alius Deus praeter . . . Deum Patrem . . . omnia tenentem, ut <di> dicimus, et huius (eius D) Filium Iesum Christum, quem . . . testamur	mensura autem filii Dei mandatum Domini nostri, Patrem confiteri omnipotentem; dicimus et huius Filium Christum
ante originem saeculi spiritaliter (-alem a) apud Patrem genitum,	ante originem saeculi spiritaliter apud Patrem et inenarrabiliter genitum. . . ,	ante originem saeculi spiritalem (-ualem CBHIK) apud Patrem genitum
factum hominem et morte deuicta in caelis cum corpore a Patre receptum,	hominem factum, morte deuicta in caelis ad Patrem receptum . . .	hominem factum et morte deuicta in caelis (-os e g) cum corpore a Patre (ad -em FM) receptum, effudisse
sanctum Dominum et pignus immortalitatis.	et effudit in nobis habunde Spiritum Sanctum, donum et pignus immortalitatis.	Spiritus Sanctum donum et pignus immortalitatis.

In the opinion of Haussleiter and Oulton, Patrick quotes from the text as revised by Jerome. There are indeed several points of agreement: *dicimus* (*didicimus* Vict.), *hominem factum* (*factum hominem* Vict.), *ad Patrem* (so Patrick and Vict.-Jerome codd. FM: *a Patre* Vict.), and above all *donum et pignus immortalitatis* (referring to the Holy Ghost) against *sanctum Dominum et pignus immortalitatis* (re-

⁷ Victorinus will be quoted from the edition by J. Haussleiter (*CSEL*, XLIX, Vienna 1916); Patrick after the script of my own, as yet unpublished, edition.

ferring to the Son) in the original version of Victorinus. Yet there are also coincidences between Patrick and the original Victorinus: *spiritualiter* (*spiritalem, spiritualem* Vict.-Jerome),⁸ and the *ut* before *dicimus*, which, together with the identity of structure as against Jerome, seems to testify to an original *didicimus* in Patrick's text as in that of Victorinus.⁹

Could Patrick have had a knowledge of both recensions? In a learned discussion,¹⁰ Dr. Oulton has given good reasons for assigning to the revision of St. Jerome a date *ca.* 406 A. D., which would almost exactly coincide with the most probable date for Patrick's arrival on the continent after his escape from Irish captivity.¹¹ It is quite possible that both versions of Victorinus' commentary were circulating in Gaul during the first third of the fifth century. Quoting from memory, Patrick might then conceivably have mixed up the two versions, both of which he had known during his years of study.

It is doubtful, however, whether Patrick really quotes from Victorinus. Between the words *genitum* and *hominem factum*, which follow immediately one upon the other in both versions of Victorinus, Patrick inserts a passage which corresponds almost literally to the Creed of Auxentius (Hilarius, *Contra Auxentium*, 14):

Patrick:

ante omne principium et per ipsum
facta sunt uisibilia et inuisibilia

Auxentius:

ante omne principium natum ex Patre
... per ipsum (i.e. Christum) enim
omnia facta sunt, uisibilia et inuisibilia

According to Oulton,¹² the combination of the two clauses *ante omne principium* and *per ipsum facta sunt*, etc. is found in no Western creed

⁸ Dr. Oulton is inclined to belittle this coincidence, cf. p. 17, note 68: "The apparatus criticus . . . gives variants here both in Victorinus and Jerome; and in our ignorance of the exact text that lay before Patrick, no arguments of a solid character can be based on a detail of this kind." However, the variant in St. Jerome's revision is merely one of spelling, whereas the variant in the original commentary is a substitution of Jerome's reading for that of Victorinus. Thus Victorinus wrote *spiritualiter*; Jerome, *spiritalem*, and Patrick agrees with the former.

⁹ Nothing follows from *mensura fidei* in both Victorinus (XI, 1; *filius Dei*, Jerome) and Patrick (*Conf.*, 14); both authors borrow independently from Rom. 12:3.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 33 f.

¹¹ Cf. E. MacNeill, *St. Patrick, Apostle of Ireland* (London 1934), p. 26.

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

besides these two. Has Patrick, then, contaminated his "mixed" quotation of Victorinus with another Gallican creed—the creed of a heretic? Further, in the clause referring to the Third Person, the words *in nobis habunde* (Tit. 3:6) are not found in either recension of Victorinus; are they another addition, this time from Patrick's biblical text? It is difficult to find a motive for their insertion. Besides, the structure of the phrase in Victorinus-Jerome is different from Patrick's. It would rather appear that Jerome slightly abridged a text which is quoted more fully in the *Confessio*.

Dr. Oulton is therefore hardly right in his assertion "that the general plan of this credal passage is . . . shaped by the passage in Victorinus-Jerome."¹³ It would be safer to assume that *Confessio*, 4, is based on a formal creed of Eastern character, more or less related to Gallican symbols still known,¹⁴ and that it was this creed which Patrick had learnt when studying in Gaul. The parallel in Victorinus is certainly most striking, but it remains doubtful whether Patrick derived these statements directly from that author. The parallelism might be explained also on the assumption that the creed which Patrick was taught in Gaul had been partly based on the original text of Victorinus. The Trinitarian character of the passages in Patrick and Victorinus-Jerome would then be a mere coincidence.¹⁵ One might even consider the possibility that Jerome made use of this Gallican creed for the purpose of his revision, and merely left out certain accretions which in his opinion were not essential.

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¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 10, note 50.

¹⁴ See the illuminating parallels in Oulton's monograph.

¹⁵ We have seen that Patrick's text agrees in important details with the original against Jerome's revision; occasional agreement with the latter might testify to ancient variants in the tradition of Victorinus' text.