

## ST. IRENAEUS ON THE ATONEMENT

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IN the middle of the second century the Church faced one of the gravest crises in her history. From her earliest days, of course, she had struggled for survival against external foes—against physical force in the hands of her persecutors. But with the rise of Gnosticism she met an intellectual rival. The battle became one of ideas, against domestic enemies who strove to overthrow the foundations of Christian belief.

The decisive importance of the role played by St. Irenaeus in this battle is well known. In contrast with certain unnamed predecessors, whom he gently criticizes (at the same time that, with characteristic modesty, he calls them “multo nobis meliores”<sup>1</sup>), he made a most thorough study of all the Gnostic systems and fully grasped the import of the errors they contained. He knew the writings of the Gnostics, and he completed his knowledge of their teachings by personal contact with the heretics themselves;<sup>2</sup> it was perhaps his zeal in this matter that led Tertullian to refer to him as “omnium doctrinarum curiosissimus explorator.”<sup>3</sup> And the fruits of his researches appear in the greatest of his works, whose title indicates its purpose; it is to be a “refutation and overthrowing of knowledge falsely so called.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Adversus haereses*, IV, *praef.*, 2. Unless otherwise stated, all references to St. Irenaeus are to the *Adversus haereses*. The text of this work which we have followed is that of W. W. Harvey; the divisions, however, are those of Massuet in *PG*, VII. While Harvey does not follow Massuet's divisions, he does list them in the margin of his own edition.

<sup>2</sup> I, *praef.*, 2. Cf. A. Ehrhard (*Urkirche und Frühkatholizismus* [Verlag der Buchgemeinde! Bonn, 1935], p. 171), who mentions an interesting confirmation of the fidelity of St. Irenaeus in reproducing the teaching of the Gnostics. It has been shown that the source of the twenty-ninth chapter of the first book of the *Adversus haereses* is one of the very few original Gnostic fragments that have survived, the *Apocryphum Joannis*. A comparison of the passage in St. Irenaeus with the original makes it clear “dass Irenäus sich die grösste Mühe gab, den Inhalt möglichst im Anschluss an den Wortlaut seiner Vorlage zu reproduzieren. . . .”

<sup>3</sup> *Contra Valent.*, 5. Cf. “*Selecta Veterum Testimonia de Irenaeo ejusque Scriptis*,” *PG*, VII, 421.

<sup>4</sup> II, *praef.*, 2: “. . . quapropter quod sit detectio et eversio sententiae ipsorum, operis hujus conscriptionem ita titulavimus.” IV, *praef.*, 1: “Hunc quartum librum, dilectissime, transmittens tibi operis quod est de detectione et eversione falsae cognitionis. . . .” V, *praef.*: “. . . in hoc libro quinto operis universi, qui est de traductione et eversione falso cognominatae agnitionis. . . .”

The major Gnostic tenets are sufficiently familiar to all; as a preface to a study of St. Irenaeus' doctrine on the atonement, certain fundamental positions, common to the various, otherwise differing, Gnostic sects may be here briefly set down. In consequence of an oriental exaggeration of Platonism, the Gnostics regarded matter as intrinsically evil; most of their doctrines proceed as logical conclusions from this principle. It accounts, for instance, for the elaborate systems of aeons which they constructed. These emanations from what they termed the primary God were felt as necessary to explain the existence of the visible, material creation, since the thought of the primary God coming into direct contact with matter was repugnant to them. Moreover, most of the Christological errors put forward by the Gnostics can be explained in the light of the same principle. The idea that God, or at least a human being in whom there was something divine, should possess a real, material, human body was regarded as intolerable. To avoid the difficulty, some separated the aeon, Christ, from the man, Jesus. Others, as Marcion and his followers, proposed a more radical solution, asserting that Christ was a completely celestial being, a revelation of the good God of the New Testament, who appeared suddenly on this earth in the reign of Tiberius, without the antecedent indignity of human birth; he appeared, indeed, in the form of a man, but His body was a mere illusion.<sup>5</sup> Again, in conformity with their contempt of matter, the Gnostics maintained that man's body, being a material substance, was incapable of salvation.

In the light of these fundamental Gnostic positions we may, therefore, readily understand the importance which St. Irenaeus attaches to the demonstration of the true humanity of the Saviour and the unity of His person. We may likewise understand the reason for his strong vindication of the participation of the flesh in the fruits of the redemption.

As the background of St. Irenaeus' doctrine on the atonement, we propose to consider, first, his teaching on man's original condition in Paradise, man's fall from that state, and its effects on the rest of mankind, and, secondly, his notions on the preparation for the redemption. The study of his doctrine on the atonement proper will be concluded by a brief exposition of the fruits of the atonement.

<sup>5</sup> I, 27, 2: "Jesum . . . in hominis forma manifestatum. . ."

## MAN'S ORIGINAL CONDITION

In his account of the creation of man, St. Irenaeus adheres closely to the opening chapters of Genesis. Man is a composite creature consisting of body and soul.<sup>6</sup> St. Irenaeus was far from assenting to the heretics in their contempt for the body of man. Far from being something base and contemptible, it is the result of a divine "skill."<sup>7</sup> He uses expressions in this regard which justify our belief that he would have subscribed wholeheartedly to the bard's exclamation, "What a piece of work is man!" God took slime from the earth, and with an artistry truly divine fashioned it into a fitting receptacle for the breath of life. As opposed to the material nature of the body, the soul is incorporeal.<sup>8</sup> We use the qualifying phrase, "as opposed to the material nature of the body," advisedly, since St. Irenaeus held for a relative, not an absolute incorporeity of the soul. More than once, it is true, he refers to the soul as immortal,<sup>9</sup> but he does not assign the same reason as for the immortality of the spirit. "But this," he says, referring to death, "befalls neither the soul; for it is the breath of life: nor the spirit, for a spirit is uncompounded and simple, such as cannot be dissolved and is itself the life of those who receive it."<sup>10</sup> Nowhere does he clearly state the corporeity of the soul, but some of his remarks appear to lead necessarily to this conclusion. For example, he says that the soul has the form (*figuram*) of the body and is fitted to it as water to a vessel.<sup>11</sup> In a later passage he says that, in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, our Lord taught clearly that souls continue in existence without passing from body to body, and that they retain the same bodily form in which they were moulded,<sup>12</sup> so that they are able to recognize one another in the next world. He demonstrates this

<sup>6</sup> II, 33, 5: 'Αλλ' ὡς εἰς ἕκαστος ἡμῶν ἴδιον σῶμα . . . λαμβάνει, οὕτως καὶ ἴδιαν ἔχει ψυχὴν' IV, *praef.*, 4: "Homo est autem temperatio animae et carnis. . . ." V, 1, 3: "... non contemplantes [Ebionitae], quoniam quemadmodum ab initio plasmationis nostrae in Adam ea quae fuit a Deo adspiratio vitae unita plasmati animavit hominem, et animal rationabile ostendit." V, 20, 1: "... exspectantibus . . . salutem totius hominis, id est animae et corporis. . . ." *Demonstratio apostolicae praedicationis* (ed. S. Weber; Freiburg: Herder, 1917), 2: "Et quia compositum animal est homo ex anima et corpore, per duo haec existere ei congruit et convenit."

<sup>7</sup> V, 3, 2: εἰ γὰρ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀπεδέξατο [ἡ σάρξ] τὴν τέχνην τοῦ Θεοῦ.

<sup>8</sup> V, 7, 1.

<sup>9</sup> V, 4, 1; V, 13, 3.

<sup>10</sup> V, 7, 1.

<sup>11</sup> II, 19, 6.

<sup>12</sup> II, 34, 1.

from various points in the gospel narrative and concludes that "hereby it was clearly declared, first that souls continue, next that they pass not from one body to another; also that they have the figure of a man (*hominis figuram*), so as both to be known and to remember the things which are here."<sup>13</sup>

Man was created in the state of original justice. From the first moment of his existence he possessed sanctifying grace. If these exact words are wanting in the works of St. Irenaeus, the idea is certainly there. Adam, we are told, was created to the image and likeness of God. This is an important point in the soteriological teaching of St. Irenaeus, since the whole purpose of the Incarnation is summed up by saying that Christ came to restore what we had lost in Adam, "id est secundum imaginem et similitudinem esse Dei."<sup>14</sup> The two concepts, "image" and "likeness," are clearly distinguished. "If on the other hand," St. Irenaeus says, "the spirit is wanting to the soul, such a one is truly an animal man, and as being carnal, will be imperfect; having indeed the image in his form, but not assuming the likeness by the spirit."<sup>15</sup> Man, therefore, in his natural constitution, that is to say, as a rational animal, is the image of God; the likeness of God is received separately through participation in the spirit. Such is the Saint's constant teaching, and discrepancies in this connection are only apparent, not real.<sup>16</sup>

From the description we are given of the "spirit" through which man is made to the likeness of God, we are forced to conclude to its identity with sanctifying grace. In one passage,<sup>17</sup> "spirit," "likeness," and "perfection" are all regarded as correlative concepts. Lack of

<sup>13</sup> *Loc. cit.* Notwithstanding his doctrine on the relatively corporeal nature of the soul, St. Irenaeus still appears to imply its spirituality. While strongly vindicating the body's participation in supernatural gifts, he asserts that this is possible only because the soul acts as an intermediary, for it is the soul alone that can directly receive the Spirit and His gifts (V, 6, 1; V, 9, 1). Similarly, St. Irenaeus observes that the soul is immortal by nature, whereas the body, after its dissolution, will receive immortality as an extrinsic and gratuitous gift.

<sup>14</sup> III, 18, 1.

<sup>15</sup> V, 6, 1.

<sup>16</sup> On this point, compare the charges of inconsistency levelled at St. Irenaeus by F. R. Tennant (*The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin* [Cambridge, 1903], p. 285). An analysis and careful examination of the texts alleged by Tennant, disclose nothing more than a certain looseness of expression on the part of Irenaeus. The charge of inconsistency can be disproved without great difficulty.

<sup>17</sup> V, 6, 1.

“spirit” is equivalent to absence of “likeness,” and therefore the man who does not possess the likeness of God is imperfect. The truth of Adam’s elevation to a supernatural state and his fall from that state is a capital one in the doctrine of St. Irenaeus. He develops this point, above all, indirectly when he treats of the atoning work of Christ, who restored to humanity what it had lost in Adam.

Together with the strictly supernatural gift of sanctifying grace, Adam also received certain preternatural gifts. St. Irenaeus furnishes some interesting information on this doctrine, which was more fully developed later. He does not ascribe perfect knowledge to Adam, as do modern theologians, for, he says, Adam was created a child.<sup>18</sup> By this, St. Irenaeus understands especially a spiritual childhood or immaturity, in the sense that at the beginning Adam had not attained the full degree of perfection of which he was capable.<sup>19</sup> Adam’s natural felicity appears clearly implied in the description we are given of the garden: “It excelled in climate, beauty, light, food, plants, fruits, waters, and all other things necessary for life, and its name was Paradise. And so beautiful and good was Paradise.”<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, pain and sickness were absent, for St. Irenaeus plainly states that these are the result of the sin of disobedience.<sup>21</sup> The original integrity of our first parents is also maintained.<sup>22</sup> In the *Adversus haereses*, the

<sup>18</sup> III, 22, 3; IV, 38, 1; *Dem.*, 12.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. IV, 38, 1-4, where St. Irenaeus expounds his doctrine that perfection must be the result of continual progress and growth. The epithets *parvulus* and *puer* as applied to Adam appear to imply also a certain physical and intellectual immaturity. Thus, in the *Demonstratio apostolicae praedicationis*, 12, St. Irenaeus writes that while the various animals were formed in their full force and vigour, man, their master, was as yet a child: “parvulus erat, quia puer erat et eum necessario decebat accrescere et ita ad statum perfectionis [per]venire.” At the conclusion of the same chapter we read: “Sed homo parvulus erat, adhuc etiam non habens consilium.” *Consilium* is rendered as “perfect understanding” in the English translation of the *Demonstratio* by S. G. Wilson in *Patrologia Orientalis*, XII, 668, and as “le parfait usage de ses facultés” by J. Barthoulot, S.J. in his French translation in *Recherches de science religieuse*, VI (1916), 377. Père Barthoulot’s translation of the Armenian text together with Tixeront’s introduction is also to be found in *Patrologia Orientalis*, XII, 749-802. Another pertinent text is III, 22, 2: “. . . paulo ante facti [Adam et Eva], non intellectum habebant filiorum generationis, oportebat enim illos primo adolescere, dehinc sic multiplicari.”

<sup>20</sup> *Dem.*, 12.

<sup>21</sup> V, 15, 2: “. . . propter inobedientiae peccatum subsequuti sunt languores hominibus.” Cf. III, 23, 3; *Dem.*, 17.

<sup>22</sup> *Dem.*, 14.

onslaught of concupiscence coincides with the loss of the "puerilem sensum" which occurred after Adam's transgression.<sup>23</sup> Finally, although mortal by nature,<sup>24</sup> man was in the beginning endowed with immortality. While St. Irenaeus, like St. Paul, recurs constantly to the theme that death is the result of sin, he also states explicitly the immortality of our first parents: "And He [God] put certain limits to him [Adam]. If he should keep the commandments of God, he should remain always as he was, that is, immortal. But if he should not keep them, he should become mortal and would be resolved to earth from which his structure had been taken up."<sup>25</sup>

#### THE FALL

St. Irenaeus is an ardent champion of man's liberty, an endowment which implies the power of self-determination and free choice. Man was made free in the beginning and he has always remained free. Freedom was bestowed that he might act upon God's decree voluntarily and not by any divine compulsion, "for in God there is no violence."<sup>26</sup> In fact, free obedience is the only motive assigned for the bestowal of freedom: "And therefore . . . He hath set in man the power of choice . . . so that on the one side they who have been obedient, may deservedly keep the good thing which they have, God's gift, but preserved by themselves: but those who have not obeyed . . . will receive condign punishment."<sup>27</sup>

It was with good reason, therefore, that God subjected Adam to a test. A command was issued that man might know he had a Master, the Lord of all, and that he might merit his reward by a free act of obedience.<sup>28</sup> Adam failed the test and sinned. God did not will man's transgression or the evils that ensued, yet He foresaw and permitted them, because evil can become the source of blessings for man-

<sup>23</sup> III, 23, 5.

<sup>24</sup> V, 3, 1: ". . . quoniam ipse quidem infirmus et natura mortalis. . ."

<sup>25</sup> *Dem.*, 15.

<sup>26</sup> IV, 37, 1.

<sup>27</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> *Dem.*, 15: "Sed ne permagna cogitaret homo neve exaltatus gloriaretur, velut ac si non haberet dominum, [neve] propter datam sibi potestatem et libertatem adversus creatorem suum Deum peccaret, transgrediens suum modum, et sibi placentes sententias arrogantiae tueretur adversarius Dei, datae sunt ei leges a Deo, ut cognosceret, quod dominum habet cunctorum Dominum." IV, 37, 7: ". . .uti et bonitas ostendatur, et justitia perficiatur . . . et tandem aliquando maturus fiat homo, in tantis maturescens ad videndum et capiendum Deum."

kind. As a sick person, by the experience of disease and its sufferings, learns to esteem the benefit of good health, so man learns to appreciate the joy and value of communion with God by the experience of its opposite.<sup>29</sup> God allowed Jonas to be swallowed by the whale, not that he might wholly perish, but that he might become even more submissive to God, the author of his un hoped for deliverance. So, too, with sin; God permitted it, not that man might perish, but that he might conceive a wholesome distrust of himself and a knowledge of his own weakness and be eternally grateful for his deliverance beyond hope by the saving work of Christ.<sup>30</sup>

In his description of man's fall, St. Irenaeus adheres closely to the traditional account of Genesis. "Man did not keep this commandment but became disobedient to God, being deceived by the angel who by reason of the many gifts of God which He had given to man, was jealous of him and evil-eyed; so he destroyed himself and made man a sinner, persuading man not to keep the commands of God."<sup>31</sup> However, St. Irenaeus would not have us judge Adam too severely, for "man was a child without perfect understanding, and for that reason he was easily deceived by the deceiver."<sup>32</sup> That is why the curse of God was directed not against man but against the serpent and "the angel that was concealed in it."<sup>33</sup> Adam was deceived by a love of immortality and a desire to be like God. His only fault lay in the inordinateness of this love and desire. Still, despite all the mitigating circumstances mentioned, St. Irenaeus does not minimize Adam's guilt.<sup>34</sup> Zealous defender that he was of human freedom and subsequent responsibility, he saw no exception in the case of Adam. Nor did he regard as unjust the punishments of God, "justissimus retri-

<sup>29</sup> *Adv. haer.*, loc. cit.

<sup>30</sup> III, 20, 1.

<sup>31</sup> *Dem.*, 16.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 16; III, 23, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Johannes Werner (*Der Paulinismus des Irenaeus* [Texte und Untersuchungen, VI; Leipzig, 1889] p. 132), holds the opposite view. According to this author, St. Irenaeus exculpates Adam completely and holds his sin to be not a personal, free act but simply a tragic piece of bad luck: "Auf listige Weise ist Adam verführt worden: hingegen davon, dass er mit Absicht, mit Bewusstsein seiner Verantwortlichkeit das Gebot Gottes übertreten habe, ist nicht die Rede: demnach kann die Sünde aber nicht eigentlich als freie Tat des Menschen gelten. Nicht durch einen bösen Willen, sondern durch ein tragisches Missgeschick ist der Mensch gefallen. Die Schuld, die auf ihm lastet, ist also nicht eigentlich eine solche, für die er die sittliche Verantwortlichkeit trägt, sondern die ihn als ein widriges Schicksal betroffen hat."

butor,"<sup>35</sup> that followed Adam's transgression. That the Saint did not consider Adam's action as blameless can also be deduced from his controversy with Tatian on the salvation of the first man. If he believed that Adam was free from guilt, he would certainly have said so and closed the discussion. But his whole line of argumentation for the salvation of Adam presupposes that Adam was guilty. Finally, although he says that Adam disobeyed through carelessness, his act was nonetheless wicked.<sup>36</sup>

Death followed as a result of man's disobedience. The term "death" has a double signification in St. Irenaeus. In the first place, by this term he understands physical death<sup>37</sup> and all its implications of disease, suffering, etc.<sup>38</sup> But the word is also taken in a figurative and spiritual sense as denoting a voluntary separation from God. Just as communion with God is described as life and light, so separation from Him is termed darkness and death.<sup>39</sup> This separation entails the loss of all divine blessings,<sup>40</sup> and since the good things of God are "endless and eternal, the privation of them is, of course, likewise eternal and endless."<sup>41</sup> The principle and source of all divine gifts is the "spirit," the foundation of divine likeness in man and of his supernatural perfection, by whose loss man becomes estranged from God.

The significant thing about Adam's sin of disobedience is that it affected not only himself but the whole of mankind. Authors are divided in their opinions on the doctrine of St. Irenaeus on original sin. Duncker<sup>42</sup> sees in the *Adversus haereses* almost the full development of the later teaching of St. Augustine,<sup>43</sup> while Ziegler finds no trace of

<sup>35</sup> IV, 36, 6.

<sup>36</sup> IV, 40, 3: . . . τὸν δὲ ἀμελῶς μὲν, ἀλλὰ κακῶς παραδεξάμενον τὴν παρακοήν ἄνθρωπον. . .

<sup>37</sup> *Dem.*, 15.

<sup>38</sup> III, 23, 3; V, 15, 2; *Dem.*, 17.

<sup>39</sup> V, 27, 2: κοινωνία δε Θεοῦ, ζωὴ καὶ φῶς . . . χωρισμὸς δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ θάνατος καὶ χωρισμὸς φωτὸς σκότος. . . .

<sup>40</sup> *Loc. cit.*: . . . καὶ χωρισμὸς θεοῦ ἀποβολὴ πάντων τῶν παρ' αὐτοῦ ἀγαθῶν.

<sup>41</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>42</sup> L. Duncker, *Des hl. Irenäus Christologie im Zusammenhang mit dessen anthropologischen Grundlehren* (Göttingen, 1843), p. 141.

<sup>43</sup> He claims that St. Irenaeus had "die Grundzüge der eigentümlichen Lehre, die durch Augustin am konsequentesten und strengsten systematisch ausgebildet worden ist, bereits vollständig entwickelt" (quoted by G. N. Bonwetsch, *Die Theologie des Irenäus* [Gütersloh, 1925], p. 81, note 4).



any such thing.<sup>44</sup> The truth is to be found somewhere between these two extremes. St. Irenaeus gives us a broad view of his teaching on this point when he says: "Nos autem omnes ex ipso [Adam]: et quoniam sumus ex ipso, propterea quoque ipsius haereditavimus appellatorem."<sup>45</sup> There are texts where he says that in Adam we all sinned,<sup>46</sup> that Satan made us his captives in Adam.<sup>47</sup> The reference of death back to Adam's disobedience is a common one: "And because in the first created Adam we were all chained and bound to death by his disobedience, it was necessary and fitting that by the obedience of the one who became man for us, death should be abolished."<sup>48</sup> From its first father the human race inherited not only the natural death of the body but also the supernatural death of the soul, the loss of divine life: "For we were in the bonds of sin and were born by means of sinfulness and of those who lived with death."<sup>49</sup> The Son of God became man in order that "as by the former generation we inherited death, so by this generation we might inherit life."<sup>50</sup> It seems clear from this text that the death in question, as being opposed to the life brought by Christ, is to be understood in a spiritual sense. The doctrine of original sin is presupposed in a text which is a valuable testimony regarding the baptism of infants in the early Church. Christ, says St. Irenaeus, came to save all men, "all, I mean, who through Him are newborn into God: infants, and little ones, and boys, and youths, and older men."<sup>51</sup> In the case of infants, obviously, there can be no question of any personal, actual transgression. Their need of "regeneration to God" is tantamount to saying that their souls are defiled by original sin at birth.

With the loss of the spirit, the principle of all supernatural growth

<sup>44</sup> H. Ziegler, *Irenäus, Bischof von Lyon* (Berlin, 1871); cf. F. Stoll, "Die Lehre des hl. Irenäus von der Erlösung und Heiligung," *Der Katholik*, XXI (1905), 58.

<sup>45</sup> III, 23, 2.

<sup>46</sup> V, 16, 3: 'Εν μὲν γὰρ τῷ πρώτῳ Ἀδάμ προσεκόλαμεν. . . .

<sup>47</sup> V, 21, 1: ". . . et elidens [Christus] eum [inimicum nostrum], qui, in initio in Adam captivos duxerat nos. . . ."

<sup>48</sup> *Dem.*, 31.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>50</sup> V, 1, 3.

<sup>51</sup> II, 22, 4: "Omnes enim venit per semetipsum salvare: omnes inquam, qui per eum renascuntur in Deum, infantes, et parvulos, et pueros, et juvenes, et seniores." That the reference is clearly to baptism is evident from another passage where the Saint says: ". . . potestatem regenerationis in Deum demandans discipulis, dicebat eis, Euntes docete omnes gentes baptizantes eos. . . ." (III, 17, 1).

and perfection, man became more and more unrestrained, held his very kindred in enmity, and passed his time "without fear in all restlessness, and in murder, and in covetousness."<sup>52</sup> Although man was born in sin, to suffer and die, and subject to concupiscence, he was still free. His freedom was not impaired by the fall. While St. Irenaeus vindicates man's free will in the strongest possible terms, he also expresses himself in no uncertain language on man's incapacity to work out his own salvation.<sup>53</sup> In his insistence on man's freedom, St. Irenaeus started a line of thought that would be taken up and developed by the Greek Fathers after him. The reason for his emphasis on this point is, we think, fairly obvious; in no other way could he hope to counteract the fatalistic determinism of the Gnostics.

St. Irenaeus is careful to point out that man, despite his sinful condition, had always remained an object of God's tender solicitude, "for," he says, "He is the most gracious and merciful Lord and the lover of mankind."<sup>54</sup> The history of the human race is the story of God's goodness and love for His creature, for His *plasma*. The promise of redemption was given to Adam immediately after the fall, and the object of that redemption was to be the whole human race, born as it was in sin and wedded to death. Mankind was the lost sheep that was sought out by the Good Shepherd. "The Lord came again to seek the lost sheep and the lost sheep was man."<sup>55</sup>

#### THE PREPARATION FOR THE REDEMPTION

St. Irenaeus has several references to the essential imperfection of man, an imperfection which arises from the very fact of his creaturehood. It was, indeed, in God's power to bestow perfection on man in the beginning but man was incapable of grasping or retaining it from the first; the case resembles that of a mother, who can, no doubt, give strong food to her child at the very beginning, but the child cannot endure it.<sup>56</sup> The first man, notwithstanding his supernatural and preternatural endowments, was imperfect. True perfection, which, accord-

<sup>52</sup> V, 24, 2.

<sup>53</sup> III, 18, 2: "... impossibile erat ut salutem perciperet. . . ." III, 20, 3: "Dominus salvabat eos, quia per semetipsos non habebant salvari . . . non a nobis, sed a Deo est bonum salutis nostrae. . . Hoc, quoniam non a nobis, sed a Dei adjumento habuimus salvari."

<sup>54</sup> III, 18, 6.

<sup>55</sup> *Dem.*, 33.

<sup>56</sup> IV, 38, 1.

ing to Irenaeus consists in the contemplation of God, must be the *destination* of man and must come as the crowning of a spiritual growth: God formed man "in augmentum et incrementum, quemadmodum et Scriptura ait: Crescite et multiplicamini."<sup>57</sup> Man's ultimate destiny, the flowering of this "augmentum et incrementum" was to be realized through the guidance of God and the free decision of man, working out a life of obedience and love through the spirit that was in him. Goodness which is not the result of free choice is valueless.<sup>58</sup>

Such, then, was the original plan for mankind in the divine economy. By the entrance of sin into the world, this divine plan was disrupted, to a certain extent frustrated, but not completely destroyed. Through the loss of fellowship with God brought about by Adam's disobedience, man was wholly incapable of striving towards his destination.<sup>59</sup> The operative principle of this striving was the divine *πνεῦμα*, the loss of which rendered all man's efforts fruitless. If man was to be saved, this divine principle, this "likeness of God" had of necessity to be restored. Even in God's original plan it was necessary that man be brought into being, "and being made should grow, and having grown should come to manhood, and after manhood should be multiplied, and being multiplied should grow in strength, and after such growth should be glorified, and being glorified should see his own Lord."<sup>60</sup> If, therefore, even in the state of innocence and original justice, man's perfection was to be the result of a spiritual progress and growth, it is not surprising, granted the fact of the redemption, to find St. Irenaeus even more insistent on the necessity of a period of preparation before the destiny of man could be achieved in his fallen condition. Indeed, mankind had to undergo various stages of training even before the Incarnation, that is to say, even before it recovered the participation in the divine Spirit on which communion with God and all perfection rests.

From the moment of the fall, God had plans for man's salvation to be wrought by the Incarnate Word. Throughout the pre-Christian era, man was to be led on by progressive stages to true knowledge and life.

<sup>57</sup> IV, 11, 1.

<sup>58</sup> IV, 37, 6: "Quae autem gloria his qui non studuerunt illud? Quae autem corona his qui non eam, ut victores in certamine, consecuti sunt?"

<sup>59</sup> III, 18, 2.

<sup>60</sup> IV, 38, 3.

There is, says St. Irenaeus, one God and one salvation, but there are many precepts which form man, and many steps which bring him to God.<sup>61</sup> Man's progress and the various periods of training through which he passed, were conditioned by his nature and destination, and were dependent on the ever clearer revelation of God by His Son, culminating in the Incarnation of the latter and the subsequent bestowal of the Spirit on the human race. The first stage, following immediately on the fall, comprised what St. Irenaeus calls the *naturalia legis*.<sup>62</sup> Adam and his immediate descendants could still know God and order the conduct of their lives according to this knowledge. The norm for moral action was the natural law written in the heart of man. During this time, to please God, man had only to observe the precepts of the natural law; no more was required of him.<sup>63</sup>

However, it is not exact to say, as Harnack does,<sup>64</sup> that justification followed on the observance of these precepts. Nor is it true, as some have maintained,<sup>65</sup> that the judgment, whereby St. Irenaeus considers the patriarchs just, militates against his teaching on original sin and the necessity of redemption. It cannot be denied that St. Irenaeus does speak of the "*naturalia legis, per quae homo justificatur.*"<sup>66</sup> Nonetheless, the context seems clearly to indicate that the verb *justificare* is here used in a rather loose sense, referring to what Tertullian calls "*naturalis legis justitia,*"<sup>67</sup> since in the phrase that immediately follows, justification is ascribed to "*faith.*"<sup>68</sup> Speaking of the justification of Abraham, St. Irenaeus, following St. Paul, declares that "*credidit Deo, et deputatum est ei ad justitiam.*"<sup>69</sup> That the righteousness of Abraham is not independent of the redemption by Christ, is abundantly clear from another passage. In prophetic vision Abraham foresaw the day of the Lord's coming and the ordering of His passion and rejoiced exceedingly, for he knew that it would be through Christ that the salvation of all believers would one day be accomplished.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>61</sup> IV, 9, 3.

<sup>62</sup> IV, 13, 1.

<sup>63</sup> IV, 15, 1: "Nam Deus primo quidem per naturalia praecepta, quae ab initio infixae dedit hominibus, admonens eos, id est per Decalogum, (quae si quis non fecerit, non habet salutem) nihil plus ab eis exquisivit."

<sup>64</sup> A. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. from 3d German ed. by Neil Buchanan (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1889), II, 306.

<sup>65</sup> J. Werner, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-36; Harnack, *loc. cit.*

<sup>66</sup> IV 13, 1.

<sup>67</sup> *Adversus Judaeos*, 2 (PL, II, 638).

<sup>68</sup> IV, 13, 1.

<sup>69</sup> IV, 8, 1.

<sup>70</sup> IV, 5, 5.

It is evident, says St. Irenaeus, that those who, like Abraham, believed, were freed from their bonds by the Lord and received life from Him.<sup>71</sup> Christ, we are told, came to save not only those who believed in Him at the time of Tiberius Caesar, but all men who from the beginning feared and loved God, who lived in peace and justice with their neighbours, and who desired to see Christ and hear His voice.<sup>72</sup>

Apart from their relation to original sin, it is difficult to see what sense the above passages could have. The texts speak of people who, like Abraham, had faith, loved and feared God, lived in peace with their neighbours; so there can be no question of actual sin. What need, therefore, could there be of "justification," of "loosing of bonds," of "giving life," if it was not the inherited sin of Adam that St. Irenaeus had in mind? The above statements are intelligible only in the light of St. Paul's teaching in the Epistle to the Romans. We might indicate a further confirmation of the fact that the righteousness of the just of the Old Testament cannot be understood in an absolute sense and independently of that imparted by Christ. Although St. Irenaeus ascribes divine sonship and immortality to the just of the ancient dispensation,<sup>73</sup> these gifts were fully bestowed only when Christ descended into hell after His death.<sup>74</sup>

During the first period of preparation for the coming of Christ, just men who, like the patriarchs, loved God and refrained from injustice towards their neighbours, had no need to be exhorted with the strict letter of the law; the law of righteousness was written in their hearts.<sup>75</sup> But the vast majority of men, wandering far from God, fell into the sorriest condition. When righteousness and love of God fell

<sup>71</sup> IV, 8, 2.

<sup>72</sup> IV, 22, 2.

<sup>73</sup> IV, 41, 3: "Cum enim converterentur et poenitentiam agerent et quiescerent a malitia, filii poterant esse Dei, et haereditatem consequi incorruptelae quae ab eo praestatur."

<sup>74</sup> IV, 27, 2: "Et propter hoc Dominum in ea quae sunt sub terra descendisse, evangelizantem et illis adventum suum, remissione peccatorum existente his qui credunt in eum. Crediderunt autem in eum . . . justi et prophetae et patriarchae: quibus similiter ut nobis remisit peccata. . . . Omnes enim homines egent gloria Dei, justificantur autem non a semetipsis, sed a Domini adventu, qui intendunt lumen ejus."

<sup>75</sup> IV, 16, 3: "Quare igitur patribus non disposuit Dominus testamentum? Quia lex non est posita justis; justis autem patres virtutem decalogi conscriptam habentes in cordibus et animabus suis, diligentes scilicet Deum qui fecit eos, et abstinentes erga proximum ab injustitiae: propter quod non fuit necesse admoneri eos correctoriis literis, quia habebant in semetipsis justitiam Legis."

into oblivion among the chosen people in Egypt, God led them forth that they might once again become His followers and disciples.<sup>76</sup> To accomplish this, He gave them a written law, the decalogue, which contained nothing else than the moral law of nature which had fallen into desuetude. But when they made to themselves a golden calf and turned their minds back to Egypt, the land of exile and slavery, God gave them the ceremonial law, as being a form of training most suited to their present condition. This ceremonial law, a "yoke of slavery," as St. Irenaeus terms it,<sup>77</sup> which comprised numberless external precepts, was designed as a pedagogic means of preserving the Jews from idolatry.<sup>78</sup> When God commanded His people to construct the tabernacle, to build the temple, to choose levites, to offer sacrifices, to observe various ceremonial precepts, it was not because He stood in need of any such things. He was schooling them to persevere and serve Him, leading them on by the typical to the true, by the temporal to the eternal, by the carnal to the spiritual, by the earthly to the heavenly.<sup>79</sup> Thus, concludes St. Irenaeus, by types they learned to fear God and to continue in obedience to Him.

The New Testament, originating with the Incarnation of the Son, differs from the Old as the law of freedom differs from the law of bondage. With the advent of Christ, men received the "testamentum libertatis" and divine adoption.<sup>80</sup> The moral law of Moses, the decalogue, which had been disfigured and blunted by what St. Irenaeus calls the

<sup>76</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>77</sup> IV, 15, 1.

<sup>78</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>79</sup> IV, 14, 3: "Sic autem et populo tabernaculi factionem, et aedificationem templi, et Levitarum electionem, sacrificia quoque et oblationes, et monitiones, et reliquam omnem legis statuebat deservitionem. Ipse quidem nullius horum est indigens . . . facilem autem ad idola reverti populum erudiebat, per multas vocationem praestruens eos perseverare, et servire Deo, per ea quae erant secunda, ad prima vocans; hoc est, per typica, ad vera; et per temporalia, ad aeterna; et per carnalia, ad spiritalia; et per terrena, ad coelestia. . ."

<sup>80</sup> We might ask ourselves whether in the view of St. Irenaeus, the just of the Old Testament had only the infused created gifts but not the substantial indwelling of the Holy Spirit or, consequently, the divine adoption in the strict sense of the word. It should be noted at the outset that St. Irenaeus does ascribe divine adoption to the just of the ancient dispensation, for he says that those who did penance and desisted from evil "could be the sons of God" (cf. note 73 *supra*). It would seem that this adoption is to be understood strictly of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, since St. Irenaeus continues with the observation that the just of the Old Testament could also attain to the inheritance of immortality (*loc. cit.*), and elsewhere he speaks of the Holy Spirit as the "arrha incorruptelae" (III, 24, 1). However, the important thing to remember is that, in the teaching of St. Irenaeus, sonship in the Old Testament is not independent of that brought by Christ.

“watered-down tradition of the elders,”<sup>81</sup> was restored to its purity and given a fuller clarification.<sup>82</sup> The “*particularia legis*,” that is, the precepts of the law of bondage, were abolished. But Christ Himself and His apostles avoided every infraction of the ceremonial law, in order to show that it, too, had a divine origin. Since it was figurative and typical, its purpose was fulfilled with the coming of Him whom it foreshadowed.<sup>83</sup>

As the New Testament is vastly superior to the Old, since the means of grace and salvation are more abundant, so a far higher degree of perfection is demanded of those under the new dispensation.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, their infidelity will be punished with greater severity.<sup>85</sup> And truly, the covenant under which we live is indeed new: “*Quid igitur novi Dominus attulit veniens? cognoscite quoniam omnem novitatem attulit semetipsum afferens.*”<sup>86</sup>

#### THE REDEMPTION

As is well known, such development as the dogma of the redemption underwent during the patristic age was along two main lines, depending on the phase of salvation stressed. Following the lead of St. Paul, the Latins and particularly St. Augustine, insisted on the medicinal character of divine grace, and, as a consequence, emphasized the atoning value and efficacy of Christ’s death, by which grace was restored. This is what later theologians were to label the realist or moral theory of redemption. The Greek Fathers, on the contrary, consistently with their conception of grace as an elevation to a superior life, as a deification, used similar expressions in their teaching on the

<sup>81</sup> IV, 12, 1.

<sup>82</sup> IV, 13, 1.

<sup>83</sup> This whole question of the decalogue and the ceremonial law of bondage in relation to the New Testament is summed up as follows: “. . . decalogi quidem verba ipse per semetipsum omnibus similiter Dominus locutus est: et ideo similiter permanent apud nos, extensionem et augmentum, sed non dissolutionem accipientia per carnalem ejus adventum. Servitutis autem praecepta separatim per Moysem praecepit populo, apta illorum eruditioni, sive castigationi. . . . Haec ergo quae in servitum, et in signum data sunt illis, circumscrispsit novo libertatis testamento. Quae autem naturalia, et liberalia, et communia omnium, auxit et dilatavit, sine invidia largiter donans hominibus per adoptionem, Patrem scire Deum, et diligere eum ex toto corde, et sine adversatione sequi ejus Verbum, non tantum abstinentes a malis operationibus, sed etiam a concupiscentiis earum. Auxit autem etiam timorem: filios enim plus timere oportet quam servos, et majorem dilectionem habere in Patrem.”

<sup>84</sup> IV, 11, 4.

<sup>85</sup> IV, 28, 1-2.

<sup>86</sup> IV, 34, 1.

atonement. The death of the Saviour, although not losing its significance entirely, is relegated to a secondary place. In this scheme, it is the Incarnation which is all important. Human nature, by its contact with the divinity in the person of the Logos, was deified. A similar elevation and deification would be wrought in those individuals who became united to Christ by faith in Him and adherence to His teaching. On this foundation, a theory of the atonement was elaborated which has come to be known as physical or mystical. While this doctrine was held by none of the Greek Fathers in its rigid and absolute form, it constituted the general framework in which the speculations of many of them were carried on.

Where, we might ask ourselves, does St. Irenaeus stand with respect to these two theories? A careful reading of the *Adversus haereses* and the *Demonstratio apostolicae praedicationis* makes it evident that both trends are present. It seems to us, however, that an undue stress has been laid on the Saint's mystical theory of the atonement. The other side of his teaching has, for the most part, been passed over in silence. Thus Johannes Werner asserts that St. Irenaeus, contrary to the teaching of St. Paul, maintains that the Incarnation of the Word, not Christ's offering on the cross, is the cause of the redemption.<sup>87</sup> Christ redeemed man, not by the offering of His body and blood, but by the very fact that He possessed them.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, Ritschl has maintained that St. Irenaeus, in full agreement with his predecessors, sees in Christ only the role of teacher and exemplar.<sup>89</sup> Ritschl is followed by Beuzart.<sup>90</sup> A recent work by Dr. Theophil Tschipke, O. P., asserts that St. Irenaeus taught a "mystico-physical theory of redemption and grace."<sup>91</sup> The trouble with a statement like that is,

<sup>87</sup> J. Werner, *op. cit.*, p. 177: "Der eigentliche Grund der Heilsteilnahme des Fleisches ist nicht die *Aufopferung*, sondern die *Fleischwerdung* Christi" (italics mine).

<sup>88</sup> *Loc. cit.* Werner quotes St. Irenaeus to this effect: "... quoniam per carnem domini nostri et sanguinem ejus nos salvati sumus," and adds the explanatory remark: "d.h. nicht dadurch, dass er sie für uns *dahingab*, sondern weil er sie *besass* . . ." (italics mine).

<sup>89</sup> A. Ritschl, *Die Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung* (3rd ed., Bonn, 1889), I, 7, cited by F. Vernet, "Irénee, saint," *DTC*, VII, 2470.

<sup>90</sup> P. Beuzart, *Essai sur la théologie d'Irénee*, (Paris, 1908), pp. 93, 102, 104, 148, cited by Vernet, *loc. cit.*

<sup>91</sup> Theophil Tschipke, O.P., *Die Menschheit Christi als Heilsorgan der Gottheit* (Freiburger Theologische Studien, LII-IV; Freiburg i. Br., 1940), p. 25. It is only just to point out that Dr. Tschipke's statement is somewhat modified in the two following sentences:



not that it is untrue—Irenaeus did indeed teach such a theory—but that it is misleading. One is led to conclude that this is the only theory to be found in Irenaeus, and this conclusion is false. We hope to show presently that the realist theory of the atonement is not only not absent from the works of Irenaeus, but is very much in evidence.

In the teaching of St. Irenaeus on the redemption two points are very pronounced. They are (1) the solidarity of the human race with its head, Adam, and its resultant fall, and (2) the solidarity of that same human race with its new head, Christ, and its subsequent restoration. St. Irenaeus develops the parallelism between Adam and Christ in considerable detail. It was necessary that Christ, in His role of Redeemer, be not only a man, but a man possessing the same flesh as those who perished in Adam and whom He came to save.<sup>92</sup> The salvation of men in Christ is the exact counterpart of their fall in Adam; Adam's disobedience is offset by Christ's obedience.<sup>93</sup> Just as the body of Adam was drawn from virgin soil, so Christ owes His human origin to a virgin.<sup>94</sup> Those Gnostics who claim that St. Joseph was the father of Jesus in the ordinary meaning of that word, might have reason on their side if they could point to a human father of Adam.<sup>95</sup> As Adam was tempted by Satan in the garden and was overcome, so Christ was tempted in the desert and vanquished His assailant.<sup>96</sup> It was on the sixth day of creation that Adam disobeyed and died a spiritual death; it was on the sixth day of the week that Christ consummated His obedience by His physical death on Calvary.<sup>97</sup> A similar parallelism is drawn between Eve and the Blessed Virgin: "Maria virgo obediens invenitur . . . Eva vero inobediens: non obaudivit enim, adhuc cum esset virgo."<sup>98</sup> "[Eva] inobediens facta, et sibi et universo generi

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"Unsere Fehler und unsere Schuld sind im Erlöser grundsätzlich *bereits* durch die Tatsache seiner gottmenschlichen Existenz ausgetilgt. Die ganze Menschheit erfährt ihre Vergöttlichung grundlegend *bereits* durch die Menschwerdung des Logos" (*loc. cit.*; italics mine).

<sup>92</sup> III, 21, 10; cf. V, 14, 2.

<sup>93</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>94</sup> *Loc. cit.*: "Et quemadmodum protoplastus ille Adam de rudi terra, et de adhuc virgine . . . plasmatus est manu Dei . . . ita . . . Verbum . . . ex Maria quae adhuc erat Virgo, recte accipiebat generationem Adae recapitulationis." Drawing his inspiration from this text, Hugo Koch has written a most venomous little book against the perpetual virginity of our Lady (*Virgo Eva—Virgo Maria* [Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte, XXV], Berlin u. Leipzig, 1937). This book is a sequel to an earlier work of the same author: *Adhuc Virgo* (Beiträge zur historische Theologie, fasc. 2, Tübingen, 1929).

<sup>95</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>96</sup> V, 21, 2.

<sup>97</sup> V, 23, 2.

<sup>98</sup> III, 22, 4.

humano causa facta est mortis: sic et Maria . . . obediens, et sibi et universo generi humano causa facta est salutis."<sup>99</sup> "Sic autem et Evae inobedientiae nodus solutionem accepit per obedientiam Mariae. Quod enim alligavit virgo Eva per incredulitatem, hoc virgo Maria solvit per fidem."<sup>100</sup>

Intimately connected with the teaching of St. Irenaeus on the Saviour as the new Adam, is his doctrine of "recapitulation." The word is employed in different contexts and takes on various meanings, but as applied to Christ in His role of Redeemer, the fundamental notion is that our Lord, as the second Adam, sums up the whole of humanity in Himself as a closed unit. In virtue of this union and solidarity, Christ, by the Spirit which had been lost and which He possessed in its fulness, permeated and sanctified the entire human race, by His life vivified it, and by His obedience "annulled the old disobedience."<sup>101</sup> All this was possible only because Christ became an organic part of that unity which is the human race; this is the reason why St. Irenaeus is so vigorous in his denunciation of the Docetae and so insistent on the true humanity of the Saviour. The Incarnation posited the indispensable foundation for the reconciliation of humanity to God, in that a new head of the human race with a human nature similar to that of Adam, once again possessed the Spirit. Stoll makes the important observation—and we feel that he is justified—that, for Irenaeus, the important thing about Christ in His redemptive role is, not that He was God, but that He was a man who possessed the Spirit.<sup>102</sup> However, since this condition could be verified only in the hypothesis of the Incarnation, the divinity of Christ is also of the utmost importance.<sup>103</sup>

From what has been said thus far, we might be tempted to conclude that, for St. Irenaeus, the atonement was effected by the very fact of the Incarnation; but this is not so. It is true that the Incarnation has redemptive implications in the divine plan, but the work of salvation is not completed in the Incarnation; it is merely made possible. The

<sup>99</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>100</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>101</sup> *Dem.*, 37.

<sup>102</sup> F. Stoll, "Die Lehre des hl. Irenäus von der Erlösung und Heiligung," *Der Katholik*, XXXI (1905), 195.

<sup>103</sup> In this connection, we might mention the text where St. Irenaeus says that God could have taken dust and created a new man and imparted the Spirit to him, but then it would not be *our* flesh that would be saved. Cf. III, 21, 10.

full realization of the atonement takes place through the whole life of Christ. Relevant passages in St. Irenaeus to demonstrate this point are those in which the Saint says that, in order to bestow divine adoption on us, our Lord had to pass through all stages of human experience.

Thus, it became the Mediator between God and man, by His relationship to both, to bring both to friendship and concord, and present man to God while He revealed God to man. For in what way could we be partakers of the adoption of sons, unless we had received from Him through the Son that fellowship which refers to Himself, unless His Word, having been made flesh, had entered into communion with us? Wherefore also He passed through every stage of life, restoring to all communion with God.<sup>104</sup>

Elsewhere the same principle is given fuller expression,<sup>105</sup> and leads St. Irenaeus to the remarkable conclusion that our Lord had reached the age of fifty years in order that He might sanctify old age.<sup>106</sup>

When St. Irenaeus considers the life of Christ in general, it is summed up in the word "obedience." "For as by one man's disobedience sin entered and death prevailed through sin; so also by the obedience of one man should righteousness be brought in, and bear the fruit of life to those who in times past were dead."<sup>107</sup> The soteriological import of Christ's obedience rests on the fact that through it righteousness was again introduced into the world. This righteousness in man, which is imparted through the Spirit, is the sum total of Christ's redemptive work. All the expressions that St. Irenaeus uses in connection with the motives of the advent of Christ—expressions like "ut et homo fieret particeps Dei,"<sup>108</sup> "ut et homo fieret filius Dei,"<sup>109</sup> "ut quod perdidimus in Adam . . . hoc in Christo reciperemus,"<sup>110</sup> "ut finem conjungeret principio, id est, hominem Deo,"<sup>111</sup> "ut pretiosus homo fiat Patri,"<sup>112</sup> "ut in vitam veniant Dei,"<sup>113</sup> and others—are all

<sup>104</sup> III, 18, 7.

<sup>105</sup> II, 22, 4: "Ideo per omnem venit aetatem, et infantibus infans factus, sanctificans infantes: in parvulis parvulus, sanctificans hanc ipsam habentes aetatem, simul et exemplum illis pietatis effectus, et justitiae, et subjectionis: in juvenibus juvenis, exemplum juvenibus fiens, et sanctificans Domino. Sic et senior in senioribus, ut sit perfectus magister in omnibus, non solum secundum expositionem veritatis, sed et secundum aetatem, sanctificans simul et seniores, exemplum ipsis quoque fiens. . ."

<sup>106</sup> II, 22, 5-6.

<sup>107</sup> III, 21, 10; cf. also III, 18, 6.

<sup>108</sup> IV, 28, 2.

<sup>109</sup> III, 10, 2.

<sup>110</sup> III, 18, 1.

<sup>111</sup> IV, 20, 4.

<sup>112</sup> V, 16, 2.

<sup>113</sup> IV, 22, 1.

reducible to the restoration of the Spirit to mankind. For it is through the Spirit that "man becomes a partaker of God," that he "becomes the son of God," that he receives "what he had lost in Adam," etc.

While every act of Christ in His role of Recapitulator has a salutary effect on mankind, St. Irenaeus mentions two acts as being particularly significant in this respect; they are the temptation of Christ and His death. The temptation of Christ in the desert is the exact counterpart of the first temptation in the garden.<sup>114</sup> The detailed antithesis of even the most insignificant incidents in the two accounts, is highly characteristic of St. Irenaeus' treatment of the recapitulation theory. To sum up in Himself and to recapitulate "that ancient and primary enmity against the serpent,"<sup>115</sup> our Lord fasted forty days to give His opponent an opportunity of attacking Him; for, as it was by means of food that Satan won his first victory, so by the same means he would go down to defeat. When Christ repulsed the first attack of His adversary, then it was that "the corruption of man which occurred in Paradise was done away with."<sup>116</sup> Nothing daunted, Satan made a second attempt "concealing falsehood under the guise of Scripture as is done by all the heretics."<sup>117</sup> When Christ refused to yield to the sin of presumption, He again confuted His adversary, and "therefore the pride of reason which was in the serpent, was put to nought by the humility which was in the Man."<sup>118</sup> Finally, when Satan was repulsed the third time and utterly vanquished, "that infringement of God's commandment which had occurred in Adam was done away with by means of the precept of the law which the Son of man observed, not transgressing the commandment of God."<sup>119</sup> By virtue of his initial victory in the garden, Satan bound man with the bonds of sin and slavery and held him captive. But by His triumph in the desert,

<sup>114</sup> This question is treated in V, 21, 2-3.      <sup>115</sup> V, 21, 2.

<sup>116</sup> *Loc. cit.* The Latin of this passage is not too clear. "Quae ergo fuit in Paradiso repletio hominis per duplicem gustationem, dissoluta est per eam, quae fuit in hoc mundo, indigentiam." In rendering the phrase "Quae ergo fuit in Paradiso repletio hominis" by "the corruption which occurred in Paradise," we are following the suggestion of Harvey who thinks there can be "no doubt but that the translator read ἀναπλήρωσις for ἀναπήρωσις, vitiatio. Ita vocat excessum in edendo is Grabe's forced solution. Δέλνται suits the one, but not so well the other term; and indigentiam in the sequel is not the correlative term to repletio, but to duplicem gustationem." Harvey, *op. cit.*, II, 382, note 4.

<sup>117</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>118</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>119</sup> *Loc. cit.*

Christ bound the tempter with his own chains and man was set free.<sup>120</sup> St. Irenaeus concludes his treatment of this point as follows: "And justly indeed is he led captive, who had led men unjustly into bondage; while man, who had been led captive in times past, was rescued from the grasp of his possessor, according to the tender mercy of God. . . ."<sup>121</sup>

The apparently exaggerated utterances that St. Irenaeus uses in his exposition of this episode in our Lord's life, are understandable only when put into the framework of the entire Irenaean system. The salvation of mankind was to be imparted through the communication of the Spirit which Christ acquired by the obedience of His whole life and death. But insofar as the temptation in Paradise was the cause of the loss of the Spirit for Adam and his posterity, the "re-capitulative" significance of the temptation of the Saviour could only be presented as St. Irenaeus does, in fact, present it. That this does not detract from the paramount atoning value of Christ's death, we shall now proceed to show.

Harnack is quite right in his observation that "as regards the history of Jesus, he [Irenaeus] has been taught by Paul not to stop at the Incarnation, but to view the work of salvation as only completed by the sufferings and death of Christ. . . ."<sup>122</sup> While the atoning value of Christ's passion and death is mentioned many times and in different contexts, St. Irenaeus does not work out a strict theory of his own on this point. Perhaps the reason for this is that the fact of the crucifixion and death was generally admitted by the Gnostics. What they denied was the reference of the Gospel narratives to "one Christ." That God should suffer, they considered impious and a contradiction; they distinguished, therefore, in the person of Christ, between Jesus, a man capable of suffering, and a divine aeon. Hence in his discussions with them, Irenaeus could, and for the most part did, confine himself to the vindication of the unity of the Saviour, because from this the reality of the suffering and death of Christ in the scriptural sense would naturally follow. For Irenaeus the significance of the passion and death of our Lord for the redemption of mankind was an incontestable tenet of Catholic belief. This is shown by the fact that on more than one occasion fundamental dogmas, which the Gnostics denied,

<sup>120</sup> V, 21, 3.

<sup>121</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>122</sup> Harnack, *op. cit.*, II, 242, note.

are referred to this point. For example, to disprove the Marcionite contention of a twofold God of the Old and New Testaments, St. Irenaeus has recourse to the passion and death of our Lord, where the unity of God is made manifest. Christ, he says, "rectifying that disobedience which had occurred by reason of a tree, through that obedience which was [wrought out] upon a tree," showed that one and the same Father was concerned in the estrangement and the reconciliation.<sup>123</sup> Because here and in similar passages a subsidiary function of the passion and death is stressed, we are not justified in calling in question their primary purpose in the theology of St. Irenaeus. As a matter of fact, before he could, in a strange context, compare the manner of Christ's death with that of Adam's fall, the soteriological implication of that death had to be acknowledged. Parallels of this kind are a natural consequence of the recapitulation theory, and the fact that they are adduced as proofs seems to indicate a certain conviction on this point.

Nowhere is the dependence of St. Irenaeus on St. Paul more manifest than in his treatment of the passion and death of Christ. The climax of Christ's redemptive work is expressed in language that is genuinely Pauline: "... the mighty Word and very man, redeeming us by His own blood, in a manner consonant with reason, gave Himself as a ransom for those who had been led into captivity."<sup>124</sup> The sufferings of the passion are not something merely adventitious to the Incarnation, but form an essential part of the whole redemptive plan. St. Irenaeus points out the dependence of the Incarnation on the passion when he observes that, in the preaching of the Apostles, "the Son of God came to endure suffering."<sup>125</sup> There are passages in the *Adversus haereses* where the expressions "incarnatus est" and "passus est" are practically synonymous.<sup>126</sup> In explaining the motives of the Saviour's suffering and death, St. Irenaeus has recourse to the same formulae he had used in expounding the reasons for the Incarnation. Just as he had said that the Word became incarnate for us, so he teaches that it was for our sakes that Christ suffered,<sup>127</sup> for us that He shed His blood,<sup>128</sup> for us that He died.<sup>129</sup> Christ underwent the passion to bring

<sup>123</sup> V, 16, 3.<sup>124</sup> V, 1, 1.<sup>125</sup> *Dem.*, 86.<sup>126</sup> Cf. I, 9, 3; III, 18, 3.<sup>127</sup> I, 9, 3.<sup>128</sup> III, 16, 9.<sup>129</sup> *Loc. cit.*; cf. III, 20, 4.

us to the knowledge of the Father,<sup>130</sup> to unite us to God,<sup>131</sup> to reconcile us to God,<sup>132</sup> to ransom us by His blood,<sup>133</sup> to end our exile and restore us to our inheritance.<sup>134</sup> The destruction of death and the bestowal of immortality—capital points in the Irenaeus system—are referred to the passion. “And the Lord indeed,” he says, “by His passion destroyed death, and dispersed error, and put an end to corruption, and destroyed ignorance, while He manifested life and revealed truth, and bestowed the gift of incorruption.”<sup>135</sup>

The shedding of the blood of Christ is regarded as “recapitulationem effusionis sanguinis ab initio omnium justorum et prophetarum.”<sup>136</sup> The salvific implication of this shedding of blood is maintained in the same context when St. Irenaeus speaks of Christ as “salvans in semetipso in fine quod perierat in principio in Adam.”<sup>137</sup>

Dominating the whole exposition of the Saviour’s passion and death is the cross. The cross is the sign of the kingdom of Christ,<sup>138</sup> it is the ladder joining earth to heaven.<sup>139</sup> Christ took the handwriting that recorded our debt to God and “fastened it to the cross, so that as by means of a tree we were made debtors to God, so also by means of a tree we may obtain the remission of our debt.”<sup>140</sup> The cross of Christ is death and damnation to those who nailed Him to it, but to those who believe in Him it is salvation and life.<sup>141</sup>

The sacrificial character of the death of Christ is not only taught by implication, but explicitly stated. St. Irenaeus speaks of Abraham as being ready to offer his only and beloved son as a sacrifice to God “in order that God also might be pleased to offer up for all his seed His own beloved and only-begotten Son, as a sacrifice for our redemption.”<sup>142</sup> That the offering on Calvary is a true sacrifice is clearly implied in those texts in which the priesthood of Christ is vindicated. The vision described by St. John in the first chapter of the Apocalypse (1:12–17) is referred to “the priestly and glorious advent of the Lord’s kingdom.”<sup>143</sup> Elsewhere it is pointed out that our Lord came, not to destroy, but to fulfill the law “by performing the office of the high priest, propitiating God for men . . . and Himself suffering death, that

<sup>130</sup> II, 20, 3.<sup>133</sup> *Loc. cit.*<sup>136</sup> V, 14, 1.<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.<sup>142</sup> IV, 5, 4.<sup>131</sup> *Loc. cit.*<sup>134</sup> IV, 8, 2.<sup>137</sup> *Loc. cit.*<sup>140</sup> V, 17, 3.<sup>143</sup> IV, 20, 11.<sup>132</sup> III, 16, 9.<sup>135</sup> II, 20, 3.<sup>138</sup> *Dem.*, 56.<sup>141</sup> IV, 28, 3.

exiled man might go forth from condemnation, and might return without fear to his own inheritance."<sup>144</sup> A Syriac fragment refers to Christ as "in sacerdotibus princeps sacerdotum."<sup>145</sup>

We have pointed out above the attitude of Werner and others in their interpretation of the Irenaeian teaching on the atonement. We are now in a position to judge that interpretation at its true worth. While we have not by any means adduced all the passages in which Irenaeus discusses the soteriological import of the passion and death of Christ, we feel that we have given a sufficient exposition of his doctrine on this point to show that the contentions of Werner and the others we have mentioned are without foundation. Far from losing sight of the significance of Christ's death, St. Irenaeus appears to place it on the same level as the Incarnation. It is precisely here that the difficulty lies, because it is practically impossible to determine to which of the two the atonement is ultimately ascribed. While St. Irenaeus holds strongly to both these ideas, he did not succeed in fitting the two together. If his doctrine on this point is somewhat lacking in perspective, and if his ideas in this regard are not clearly ordered and rigidly systematized, one thing at least is certain. According to him, the atonement meant the repairing of the havoc wrought in our nature by sin; it meant the reconciliation and union of man with God by the communication of the Spirit, and for this the Incarnation, life, passion, and death of the Saviour were necessary.

#### THE FRUITS OF THE REDEMPTION

The dualism of the Gnostics influenced the speculations of these heretics in their treatment of all the fundamental dogmas of Christianity. This is abundantly clear in their teachings on God and on Christ; it is equally evident in their ideas on the redemption. According to them the redemption may, in summary fashion, be put down as the liberation and separation of the spiritual element in man from the material. In this view, salvation is above all a division, a rending asunder. St. Irenaeus maintains a position which is directly opposed to this; for him the redemption is essentially an at-one-ment. Here the master idea is unity, a thought, which, according to St. Irenaeus, is uppermost in the redemptive work of Christ and the results it achieved.

<sup>144</sup> IV, 8, 2.

<sup>145</sup> Fragment XXX in Harvey, *op. cit.*, II, 461.



The immutability of God, His transcendence and absolute self-sufficiency are points which we find frequently stressed in the *Adversus haereses*. God is ever one and the same; He has no need of our service, of our sacrifices.<sup>146</sup> In all these things God profits nothing; rather it is we who are the beneficiaries. This idea is well phrased in a remarkably fine passage:

Nor did He stand in need of our service when He ordered us to follow Him; but He thus bestowed salvation upon us. For to follow the Savior is to be partaker of salvation, and to follow light is to receive light. But those who are in light do not themselves illumine the light, but are illumined and revealed by it: they do certainly contribute nothing to it, but, receiving the benefit, they are illumined by the light. Thus, also, service rendered to God does indeed profit God nothing, nor has God need of human obedience; but He grants to those who follow and serve Him, life and incorruption and eternal glory, bestowing benefit upon those who serve Him, because they do serve Him, and on His followers because they do follow Him; but he does not receive any benefit from them: for He is rich, perfect, and in need of nothing. But for this reason does God demand service from men, in order that, since He is good and merciful, He may benefit those who continue in his service. For, as much as God is in want of nothing, so much does man stand in need of fellowship with God. For this is the glory of man, to continue and remain permanently in God's service. Wherefore also did the Lord say to His disciples, "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you"; indicating that they did not glorify Him; but that, in following the Son of God, they were glorified by Him.<sup>147</sup>

There is one phrase in the above citation to which we should like to draw particular attention: "In quantum enim Deus nullius indiget, in tantum homo indiget Dei communione." A proportion is here expressed between God's absolute self-sufficiency and man's absolute need of union with Him. The reason for this need is variously stated. Placed outside the reach of God's benefits which accrue from union with Him, man has not the power to procure for himself the means of salvation.<sup>148</sup> Nor can man, unless he be united to God, ever become a sharer in incorruption and immortality.<sup>149</sup>

Now, union with God is precisely one of the main results of the redemption. It is stated as one of the motives of the Incarnation, for the Word was made man "ut finem conjungeret principio, id est, hominem Deo."<sup>150</sup> When the Son of God destroyed the power of sin

<sup>146</sup> IV, 38, 1; cr. IV, 14, 1; 17, 5.

<sup>147</sup> IV, 14, 1.

<sup>148</sup> IV, 13, 3.

<sup>149</sup> III, 18, 7.

<sup>150</sup> IV, 20, 4.

and bestowed salvation on His creature, He "caused man to cling to, and to become one with, God."<sup>151</sup> While the precise nature of this union is somewhat obscure, it would not be too difficult to show that St. Irenaeus regards it as objective and interior. There is evidently no question of a personal union *καθ' ὑπόστασιν*; it is not a substantial unity, and therefore St. Irenaeus is far from endorsing any pantheistic views.<sup>152</sup> Yet, from the various expressions which he uses in describing this union, it is evident that his words cannot be adequately interpreted in terms of a moral union, or a merely external "bei Gott sein."<sup>153</sup>

Christ, according to St. Irenaeus, "leads man into fellowship [*communione*] and union [*unitatem*] with God."<sup>154</sup> This "communio Dei" signifies any dynamic relation in virtue of which man participates in the excellence of God, His life, His glory, and especially His immortality.<sup>155</sup> While union with God in this world is not final—it can be lost through sin—it is life and light and the source of man's highest perfection.<sup>156</sup> St. Irenaeus postpones the full possession of salvation to a future life, yet even now, the man who is united to God, possesses the essential constituent of salvation, for communion with God will one day find its complete fruition in the eternal beatitude of the beatific vision: "Vita autem hominis visio Dei."<sup>157</sup>

Thus far there has been question only of the union of the faithful with God the Father. In the passages we have considered, when Irenaeus speaks of God, he understands God the Father, whom, like St. Paul, he calls simply *Θεός*, even when the Son and the Holy Spirit are mentioned in the same context. If man's greatest good is to be united to God, the first step toward that union is to be made like the Son, "qui propter suam dilectionem factus est quod sumus nos, uti nos perficeret quod et ipse."<sup>158</sup> The only way to the Father is through the

<sup>151</sup> III, 18, 7.

<sup>152</sup> F. Stoll (*op. cit.*, p. 351) has this to say with regard to the charge of pantheism in Irenaeus: "Seine Lehre ist pantheistisch, soweit jede vernünftige Theologie den Zusammenhang zwischen Gott und Mensch wahren muss, will sie sich nicht in vage und religiös unfruchtbare Spekulationen verlieren."

<sup>153</sup> P. Gächter, S.J., "Unsere Einheit mit Christus nach dem hl. Irenäus," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, LVIII (1934), 506.

<sup>154</sup> IV, 13, 1.

<sup>155</sup> V, 1, 1.

<sup>156</sup> V, 27, 2.

<sup>157</sup> IV, 20, 7.

<sup>158</sup> V, *praef.*

Son, for it is only by means of the visible Word that man can enter into communion with the invisible Father.<sup>159</sup> By becoming like the Son through union with Him, man, by that very fact, becomes similar to the Father; he becomes "pretiosus Patri."<sup>160</sup> If, therefore, we are to reach our final destiny, we must of necessity be united to Christ. This is the reason why St. Irenaeus is so insistent on our need of union with our Lord: "Nos autem indigemus ejus quae est ad eum communionis. Et propterea benigne effudit semetipsum ut nos colligeret in sinum Patris."<sup>161</sup> As the Father revealed His Son to man, so the Son leads man back to the Father.<sup>162</sup> To be united to Christ is to be one with life; for Christ is the "vivificans Verbum,"<sup>163</sup> and the "Verbum incorruptionis";<sup>164</sup> He is the "antidotum vitae,"<sup>165</sup> and the "princeps vitae Dei."<sup>166</sup> Therefore, even as the Father, the Son too grants eternal life to men.<sup>167</sup> To participate in the glorious resurrection on the last day, union with Christ is essential; for "resurrectio . . . ipse Dominus noster est, quemadmodum ipse ait: Ego sum resurrectio et vita."<sup>168</sup>

If the way to the Father is through Christ, union with Christ is effected by the operation of the Holy Spirit, who, once again, dwells in man as a result of the atonement. In His human nature, Christ possessed the fulness of the Spirit, and in this way, says St. Irenaeus, the Spirit "became accustomed" to take up His abode in mankind and to dwell once again in God's creatures, "voluntatem Patris operans in ipsis, et renovans eos a vetustate in novitatem Christi."<sup>169</sup>

The work of the redemption, in the teaching of St. Irenaeus, was not complete until the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost: "Wherefore the Lord promised to send the Comforter, who should join us to God."<sup>170</sup> He then goes on to point out that just as a mass of dough or a loaf of bread cannot be formed into a unity from dry wheat without water, so neither can we "being many, be made one in Christ Jesus without the water from heaven."<sup>171</sup> Not only is the Holy Spirit the source of our unity with each other and with Christ, but He is also the interior principle from which flows the meritorious efficacy of our

<sup>159</sup> V, 16, 2.<sup>162</sup> III, 13, 2.<sup>165</sup> *Loc. cit.*<sup>168</sup> IV, 5, 2<sup>171</sup> *Loc. cit.*<sup>160</sup> V, 16, 1.<sup>163</sup> V, 8, 3.<sup>166</sup> IV, 24, 1.<sup>169</sup> III, 17, 1.<sup>161</sup> V, 2, 1.<sup>164</sup> III, 19, 1.<sup>167</sup> IV, 23, 2.<sup>170</sup> III, 17, 2.

good works. Similarly, the faithful who, before the advent of the Spirit, were a dry tree, could never have brought forth living fruit without the heavenly water from above.<sup>172</sup>

The need that man has of the Spirit emerges very clearly in a passage where St. Irenaeus, with his characteristic love of simile, explains the union of man with the Spirit of God in terms of a wild olive branch that is grafted on to a fruit-bearing olive tree.<sup>173</sup> If the wild olive branch takes kindly to the graft, it brings forth fruit and is transformed into a good olive tree, "planted, as it were, in the garden of a king."<sup>174</sup> In a similar manner, men who have received the Spirit of God, bring forth spiritual fruit and are "planted in the paradise of God."<sup>175</sup> If, on the contrary, the wild olive branch retains its former condition and does not bear fruit, it is cut off and cast into the fire. In the same way, those who cast out the Spirit and follow the things of the flesh, shall never inherit the kingdom of God. Finally, although by his union with the Spirit, man possesses within himself a principle of supernatural activity, his own nature is not thereby changed:

But as the engrafted wild olive does not certainly lose the substance of its wood, but changes the quality of its fruit, and receives another name, being now not a wild olive, but a fruit-bearing olive, and is called so; so also, when man is grafted in by faith and receives the Spirit of God, he certainly does not lose the substance of flesh, but changes the quality of the fruit of his works, and receives another name, showing that he has become changed for the better, being not now [mere] flesh and blood, but a spiritual man, and is called such.<sup>176</sup>

The Holy Spirit, who is the proper "communicatio Christi," the pledge of immortality, and the means of our ascent to God, is communicated through the Church.<sup>177</sup> For, says St. Irenaeus, quoting the words of St. Paul (I Cor. 12:28), in the Church God has placed apostles, prophets, and teachers and other instruments through which the Spirit operates. All those, therefore, who through their perverse opinions and infamous behavior are not members of Christ's Church have no share in the Spirit and consequently deprive themselves of supernatural life:<sup>178</sup>

For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and every kind of grace; but the Spirit is truth. Those,

<sup>172</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>175</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>178</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>173</sup> V, 10 *in toto.*

<sup>176</sup> V, 10, 2.

<sup>174</sup> V, 10, 1.

<sup>177</sup> III, 24, 1.

therefore, who do not partake of Him, are neither nourished into life from the mother's breasts, nor do they enjoy that most limpid fountain which issues from the body of Christ; but they dig for themselves broken cisterns out of earthly trenches, and drink putrid water out of the mire. . . .<sup>179</sup>

Another important result of the redemption, according to St. Irenaeus, is the salvation, not only of man's soul but also of his body. He was compelled to emphasize this point because of a well-known Gnostic error. The heretics, consistently with their contempt for matter and by a perverse interpretation of the Pauline text, "quia caro et sanguis regnum Dei possidere non possunt" (I Cor. 15:50), maintained that the material element in man could not be saved. The opinion of St. Irenaeus in this matter is grounded, as he expressly states, in the traditional teaching of the Church.<sup>180</sup> If flesh is not capable of salvation, man is not redeemed, because flesh is an essential constituent of his nature: "Homo est autem temperatio animae et carnis. . . ." <sup>181</sup>

In the mind of St. Irenaeus, an honor which is fleeting and transitory is no honor at all. An ephemeral glory, be it prolonged throughout a lifetime, is no real benefit; to be such, it must be everlasting.<sup>182</sup> This principle is later applied to the healing narratives of the Gospel:

For what was His object in healing [different] portions of the flesh, and restoring them to their original condition, if those parts were not in a position to obtain salvation? For if it was a temporary benefit He conferred, He granted nothing of importance to those who were the objects of His healing. Or how can they maintain that the flesh is incapable of receiving the life which flows from Him, when it received healing from Him? For life is brought about through healing, and incorruption through life. He, therefore, who confers healing, the same does also confer life; and He who gives life, also surrounds His own handiwork with incorruption.<sup>183</sup>

In his teaching on the salvation of the flesh and the resurrection of the body, St. Irenaeus depends directly on St. Paul, but he has recourse to scriptural arguments drawn from other sacred books as well. The

<sup>179</sup> *Loc. cit.*<sup>180</sup> V, 20, 1.<sup>181</sup> IV, *praef.*, 4.

<sup>182</sup> II, 7, 1-2: "Quandoquidem et apud homines qui sunt temporales, nulla gratia est ejus honoris, qui celeriter praeterit, sed ejus qui plurimum quantum potest perseverat. Quae autem statim ut facta sunt exterminantur, in contumeliam magis eorum qui putantur honorari facta esse juste dicuntur. . . . O vanae gloriae honor, qui statim praeterit, et jam non apparet!"

<sup>183</sup> V, 12, 6.

possibility of the resurrection presents no difficulty whatever to St. Irenaeus. The trouble with the Gnostics, according to him, was that they were so preoccupied with the weakness of the flesh, that they lost sight completely of the power of God. To be sure, the body is weak;<sup>184</sup> but it is precisely in weakness and infirmity that the power of God is made manifest:

But that He is powerful in all these respects, we ought to perceive from our origin, inasmuch as God, taking dust from the earth, formed man. And surely it is much more difficult and incredible, from non-existent bones, and nerves, and veins, and the rest of man's organization, to bring it about that all this should be, and to make man an animated and rational creature, than to reintegrate again that which had been created and then afterwards decomposed into earth. . . . For He who in the beginning caused him to have being who as yet was not, just when He pleased, shall much more reinstate again those who had a former existence, when it is His will that they should inherit the life granted by Him.<sup>185</sup>

The salvation and resurrection of the flesh is put into close relation with the Eucharist. The notion that our bodies, which have been nourished by the body and blood of Christ, should be excluded from life and destined to everlasting corruption, St. Irenaeus regards as preposterous.<sup>186</sup> Just as a grain of wheat which is deposited in the earth and becomes decomposed grows and increases and through the wisdom of God serves as food for man, and "having received the Word of God, becomes the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ," so also "our bodies being nourished by it, and deposited in the earth, and suffering decomposition there, shall rise at their appointed time, the Word of God granting them resurrection to the glory of God, even the Father, who freely gives to this mortal immortality, and to this corruptible incorruption, because the strength of God is made perfect in weakness."<sup>187</sup>

Further proofs of the salvation and resurrection of the flesh are drawn from the fact that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit and members of Christ. Recalling the Apostle's words to the Corinthians, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (I Cor. 3:16), St. Irenaeus points out that the expression "temple of God" has reference to the body. In support

<sup>184</sup> II, 33, 4; II, 28, 4.

<sup>186</sup> V, 3, 2.

<sup>186</sup> IV, 18, 5.

<sup>187</sup> V, 2, 3.

of this he appeals to the words of our Lord Himself, who expressly calls His body a temple (John 2:19-22). Furthermore, our bodies are the members of Christ. In direct, vigorous language St. Irenaeus leaves no doubt as to the meaning of St. Paul on this point:

'Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot?' (I Cor. 6:15). He speaks these things, not in reference to some other spiritual man; for a being of such a nature could have nothing to do with a harlot: but he declares 'our body,' that is, the flesh, which continues in sanctity and purity, to be 'the members of Christ'; but that when it becomes one with a harlot, it becomes the members of a harlot. And for this reason he said, 'If anyone defile the temple of God, him will God destroy' (*ibid.*, 3:17). How then is it not the utmost blasphemy to allege that the temple of God, in which the Spirit of the Father dwells, and the members of Christ, do not partake of salvation, but are reduced to perdition?<sup>188</sup>

All those who are members of the body of Christ, will naturally share in the fortunes of Christ. Thus, the sufferings and persecutions which began in Abel, which were foretold by the prophets and accomplished in Christ, are continued in us, "consequente corpore suum caput."<sup>189</sup> But herein lies the guarantee of our resurrection, because "... ut quemadmodum caput resurrexit a mortuis, sic et reliquum corpus ... resurgat. . . . Multae enim mansiones apud Patrem, quoniam et multa membra in corpore."<sup>190</sup>

So conscious was St. Irenaeus of the union of Christ and the faithful and so insistent on the consequent similarity of the lot of the Head and the members, that, on one occasion at least, he was led into a rather serious blunder through over-emphasis of this point. The error we refer to is the postponement of the enjoyment of the beatific vision until after the resurrection,<sup>191</sup> an opinion which emerged intermittently during the first twelve centuries and was finally condemned by Pope Benedict XII.<sup>192</sup>

The few novel and singular opinions proposed by St. Irenaeus can be readily condoned,<sup>193</sup> for they detract very little from his work as a whole. The Church alone is infallible and she has yet to canonize

<sup>188</sup> V, 6, 2.<sup>189</sup> IV, 34, 4.<sup>190</sup> III, 19, 3.<sup>191</sup> V, 31, 2.<sup>192</sup> *Const., Benedictus Deus (DB, 530)*.<sup>193</sup> Compare the opinion just mentioned of the postponement of beatitude until after the resurrection; his teaching on the age of Christ and the duration of His public life, on the spirituality of the soul and on the millenium.

every single affirmation of even her greatest doctors. That a few errors should have found their way into a work of the proportions of the *Adversus haereses* is understandable. When we recall that it was written at the dawn of Catholic theology and that its author was a pioneer in the field, the wonder is that errors are so infrequent. Speaking of the writings of St. Irenaeus, Hitchcock, with characteristic English understatement, observes that "when we have separated the transitory from the abiding, the dross from the pure ore, the gains are not small."<sup>194</sup> Indeed, they are not small; they are large enough to have confounded the enemies of the Church, to have inspired Christians with a love of their faith and a loyalty to its teaching, to have acquired for their author the admiration and respect of succeeding ages,<sup>195</sup> and to have won for him the title of "Father of Catholic Theology."

#### CONCLUSION

While it is true to say that reading the *Adversus haereses* is very much like exploring a vast tract of virgin forest,<sup>196</sup> it is also true that treasures, rich and varied, are to be had there for the seeking. We have seen the Saint describe the first man issuing from the hand of God, created in the divine image and likeness and destined to supernatural glory. In the treatment of the havoc wrought by the sin of Adam and the promise of a Redeemer, we found the doctrine of original sin clearly contained. This point of doctrine is all the more remarkable when we consider a few of the rather serious difficulties arising from the teaching of some of the later Greek Fathers on this question. Perfection in man, we saw, was to be the result of a continuous progress and growth. We noted the progressive, pedagogic stages through which man was led under the Old Testament in preparation for the coming of the Redeemer. The redemption, we saw, was effected by the whole life and death of Christ. We indicated the importance of the latter in Christ's redeeming work and showed, as a consequence, that the realist

<sup>194</sup> F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock, *Irenaeus of Lugdunum: A Study of his Teaching* (Cambridge, 1914) p. 346.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. *Selecta veterum testimonia de Irenaeo ejusque scriptis*, PG, VII, 419-430; F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock, "Irenaeus of Lugdunum," *The Expository Times*, XLIV (1932-33), 170.

<sup>196</sup> A. d'Alès, S.J., "La doctrine de la récapitulation en saint Irénée," *Rech. de sc. relig.*, XVI (1916), 185.



theory of the redemption is not, as has been maintained by Werner and others, absent from the teaching of St. Irenaeus on the atonement. The principal result of Christ's redeeming work was, we saw, the reunion of God and His creature. Through the restoration of the Spirit, man could once again achieve his final end, the vision of God, for, says St. Irenaeus, they who are saved "ascend through the Spirit to the Son, and through the Son to the Father."<sup>197</sup> Even in this present life, by reason of 'the Spirit that Christ poured out upon us and Who dwells within us, we have the pledge of eternal life: "If therefore at the present time, having the earnest, we cry, 'Abba, Father,' what shall it be when, on rising again, we behold Him face to face; and when all the members shall burst out in a continuous hymn of triumph, glorifying Him Who raised them from the dead, and gave the gift of eternal life?"<sup>198</sup>

<sup>197</sup> V, 36, 2.

<sup>198</sup> V, 8, 1.