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Knowledge Falsely So-Called: Irenaeus' Approach to the Confrontation between Orthodoxy & Heresy

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1980

KNOWLEDGE FALSELY SO-CALLED:
IRENÆUS' APPROACH TO THE CONFRONTATION
BETWEEN ORTHODOXY AND HERESY

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of Philosophy
and Religion

Western Kentucky University

Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

David L. Rogers

July 1980

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BETWEEN ORTHODOXY AND HERESY

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David L. Rogers

Soli Deo Gloria,
July, 1980

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BETWEEN ORTHODOXY AND HERESY

David L. Rogers

July 1980

78 pages

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A study of the methodology utilized in Irenaeus' Against Heresies is undertaken as a moment in the orthodoxy-heresy controversy. By examining the heresiological method of one author in some detail, his insights into the controversy may be gained. The problem of heresy and heretics is treated by examining the origins and nature of heresy according to Irenaeus from paganism, demonology and psychology, and Simon Magus. Heretics proper have their own problems with unity and diversity, and they are identified by their teaching and moral character. The study of their victims shows that they are discernible both within the Church and among the general public. Refutation is classified broadly in relation to the manner in which it is pursued and the instruments of Scripture and reason. Three criteria of refutation are regarded as providing an overview of Irenaeus' method. These are the irreducibility of the Rule of Faith, the inconsistency of heretical exegesis of Scripture, and the insufficiency of their systems with focus on the doctrine of creation. Irenaeus based his refutation on ecclesiastical criteria of unity and universality, apostolic succession, and an empirical conception of truth. Certain ambiguities regarding second century Church life are recognized and allowed to stand, although prominent themes relating to these areas are not entirely obscured as a result of this recognition.

INTRODUCTION

The second century of the Christian era might be best characterized as a time of growth accompanied by confusion. The post-apostolic age saw many developments, of which the most important was perhaps the development of canonical and auxiliary bodies of literature. The work of Irenaeus is representative of one of several types of auxiliary literature which might be classified broadly as heresiologies, apologies, and the New Testament apocrypha, among others. There was also during this period a development of schools for the instruction of converts, the most famous of which was the one located at Alexandria. Alterations also occurred in ecclesiastical polity as the office of bishop steadily increased in power. Changes in the various forms of ministry occurred, beginning with the demise of the apostles and manifested in the critical examination of the office of prophet. Other developments proceeded from the increasing contact of Christianity with Graeco-Roman culture and the severing of the relationship with its Jewish matrix. The Church began to display both Eastern and Western characteristics in its thought and practice, reflecting the mystical, speculative mindset of the Eastern world and the more practical attitude of the Westerner. This fact relates to what was perhaps the most perplexing phenomenon of the period, namely, the confrontation between orthodoxy and heresy. Yet perplexing as it may have been, it was a distinguishing characteristic of this exciting era in the history of the

Church, an era in which stability and identity were sought in relation to an environment that was basically hostile.

This and similar eras representing crisis points in the history of the Church possess manifold possibilities for fruitful study of the problems associated with Christian identity and pluralism. It was this realization along with the proximity of the Church of the second century to the apostolic community that originally prompted this study. The use of the second century as a specimen for the study of the problem of pluralism in Church life allowed for sufficient interaction between Church and society for the former to have achieved some degree of maturity. At the same time, the second century was still so closely related to the apostolic age as to retain some of the freshness and spontaneity of the original communities before the rise of more stringent theological definition and ecclesiastical order. Thus, the second century appears to occupy a unique position when compared with other crisis periods in the history of the Church, insofar as the study of pluralism is concerned.

Yet there are many ways in which a study of this type might be pursued. It would be possible to study the Church as a whole by selecting those attitudes toward heresy that existed across the entire empire. Or it is possible to study the Church of a particular region or city in order to discern how heresy was dealt with in one locale. Or one author can be selected from among others who wrote on the subject. The purpose of such a selection is to give a close examination to the methods used by that one author. Each of these approaches has its advantages and limitations, but the latter has been chosen here as

that course of study which will yield the views of one of the most eminent bishops and heresiologists of the period in question.

In choosing to focus the following study on Irenaeus, though, there is no intention of presenting a comprehensive theology of this one author. Rather, it is the purpose of this study to examine the methods used by Irenaeus in his major extant work, Against Heresies,¹ in approaching the problem of heresy. It is hoped that such an investigation might reveal something of Irenaeus' view of the heretics and, hence, of the orthodox Church. To this end, the selection of passages from Against Heresies is restricted to those passages where Irenaeus expressly makes a statement regarding either the heretics or the Church and its people in relation to them.

This study falls logically into three main chapters. The first chapter deals with heresy as to its origins and nature, and heretics as to the characteristics of their teaching and their relationship to the Church. The second chapter treats the results of heretical activity in a discussion of the victims thereof. The third chapter concerns the reaction of the Church and the instruments that were utilized in the confrontation. The overall purpose of this arrangement of the content is to let the voice of one man from the second century speak on a subject that was of prime importance to him and of relevance to the modern age.

¹Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," trans. Alexander Roberts and W. H. Rambaut, in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., The Ante-Nicene Fathers, 10 vols., American reprint of the Edinburgh ed., revised by A. Cleveland Coxe (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., n.d.), vol. I: The Apostolic Fathers--Justin Martyr--Irenaeus, pp. 309-567. This is the only text that will be used. References to it will appear at the end of the pertinent citation and enclosed in parentheses, giving the appropriate book, chapter, and paragraph (e.g. 3. 15. 2).

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM: HERESY AND HERETICS

There are several preliminary considerations which must be briefly taken into account. The first of these regards the bifurcation suggested in the chapter title above. Irenaeus sometimes treats heresy in generic terms, but to say that he treats it as an abstracted entity would be extreme. He is not a speculator, being far too practical in approach and purpose. On the other hand, he treats heretics individually, frequently naming them and giving personal characteristics. But a problem with regarding heresy as strictly generic and heretics as strictly individual arises when, on the one hand, Irenaeus refers to an individual person as the origin of heresy, and on the other hand, he refers to the heretics personally as "they," or as a group. Whether or not the bifurcation will prove to be instructive as to whether one consideration or the other serves as a point of origin or culpability for the situation remains to be seen. But the reader should be aware that the bifurcation is essential but not always precisely clear.

Secondly, when reading Irenaeus, who wrote around 180-190 A.D., one must keep in mind that some of the founders of the heretical sects had long since passed. It could be that the teachings of those who followed them at some chronological distance may not have accurately

represented the teaching of the founder.² This difficulty is easily seen to be due to the lack of extant writings from the heresiarchs themselves, and consequently one must exercise due caution in moving too easily from disciple to master.

The third and last of the preliminary considerations for this chapter deals with the reasons that prompted Irenaeus to write this work. These reasons are set forth most clearly in the preface to Book 1. In this preface, Irenaeus explains that certain men have influenced the members of his flock by means of false teaching in various forms. He is constrained to "expose and counteract their machinations."³ There is no hint in this preface, or for that matter in the entire work, of a personal affront felt by Irenaeus. Rather, the affrontery has been given to the things of God characterized by revelation, oracles, and to the person of God himself. As God is seen in his role of Creator, he is personally blasphemed and insulted by the notion of a Demiurge. Irenaeus' duty as a shepherd of the flock is to protect them from "wolves." It is furthermore incumbent upon him to instruct other capable men who can assist him in the refutation of these errors. He has made himself familiar with the teaching of the heretics by first-hand investigation through two means, by reading

² Jules Lebreton and Jacques Zeiller, A History of the Early Church, Collier Catholic Readers Series, trans. Ernest C. Messenger, Book III: Heresy and Orthodoxy (New York: Macmillan Co., 1947; reprint ed., Collier Books, 1962), p. 26.

³ This statement is part of a longer sentence that is enclosed within brackets in the text. The editors of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, however, give the reader no reason for this enclosure. But whether or not this signifies a textual problem or a phrase supplied for clarity, the text is cited here as an expression of the overall content of Irenaeus' remarks concerning his purpose in writing.

their works and by personal encounters with them. He desires to establish their opinions "with brevity and clearness," and to "furnish the means of overthrowing them." He hopes to accomplish this by establishing the absurdity and inconsistency of their statements. The former term presupposes either a body of beliefs held by the Church or what is open to the perception of anyone, such as empirical surroundings, in view of which their beliefs would seem absurd. The latter term may relate either to logical considerations or, more likely, the teachings of the heretics when compared with the teachings of other heretics or teachings in general.

Just as the statements of the heretics require refutation, so also does their character require discernment. Irenaeus expresses fear that the more inexperienced among his flock might not even be able to discern heretical teachers at the level of conduct. He obviously feels greatly responsible for the "simple ones." His warmth expressed towards his correspondent in 1. pref. 2 shows the reader a pastoral quality that extends itself quite naturally to all under his charge. In no case is it to be thought that Irenaeus regards himself as superior to even the "simple ones," though. Confirming this is his repeated modesty regarding his task in proportion to his abilities. He characterizes his own writing as "simple" and "homely." But even so, someone must look after the spiritual well-being of the simple ones, for they are not able to discern the heretics (1. pref. 1-2). What they cannot do for themselves, Irenaeus is constrained by pastoral responsibility to do for them:

Irenaeus was not a speculative theologian who undertook to give to posterity an account and refutation of Gnosticism, but a

bishop who had around him some souls disturbed by a pernicious propaganda which he set out to denounce and counteract.⁴

It is this pastoral aspect that must be kept in mind as one reads this work. For what Irenaeus wrote, he did not write for himself, but for others whose spiritual well-being depended upon his labors.

Heresy

The various points of origin to which Irenaeus attributes heresy can be gathered into three classes: paganism and philosophy, an individual, Simon Magus, and demonology and psychology. Of the first class, Irenaeus says that the heretics issue forth from diverse regions and promulgate different opinions, but they unite in their aim of "derogating from the salvation of man." (4. pref. 4). Irenaeus regards man as being made of soul and flesh, and to destroy the doctrine concerning either is to destroy man's salvation. So the heretics can "render men disbelievers in their own salvation," or they can "blaspheme the Creator, and disallow the salvation of God's workmanship, which the flesh truly is." (4. pref. 4).

At one point, Irenaeus describes a method utilized by the Valentinians which exhibits a heterogenous origin. First of all, a hodgepodge teaching is gathered together, and then support is gleaned from the Scriptures by whatever hermeneutical procedure is required:

In like manner do these persons patch together old wives' fables, and then endeavor, by violently drawing away from their proper connection, words, expressions, and parables whenever found, to adapt the oracles of God to their baseless fictions. (1. 8. 1).

He does not explain exactly what is meant by an "old wives' fable," but it is surely a pagan precept of some sort. But what is of impor-

⁴Lebreton and Zeiller, p. 75.

tance here is that "old wives' fables" were not truths from Scripture, for it was necessary to borrow from Scripture to support them. Moreover, the "original" teaching that required support was itself a composite.

Again with particular reference to the Valentinians, Irenaeus attributes their origin at one point to a pagan poet, Antiphanes (2. 14. 1). The pattern is similar, but more complex: the Valentinians adopt the teaching of Antiphanes on the theogony, range their own opinions around it, and change the names of its referents. In 2. 14. 2, he cites further the borrowings of the Valentinians from Thales, Homer, Anaximander, and Anaxagoras, saying that although the borrowed ideas appear new, they come from those ignorant of God, who propounded dogmas "redolent of ignorance and irreligion." Throughout this chapter, ancient philosophers are brought forward, and a comparison of their doctrines with the teachings of the Valentinians is made. Most interesting is the comment on method with reference to Aristotle: Irenaeus accuses the heretics of transferring to the treatment of the matters of faith "that hairsplitting and subtle mode of handling questions" taken from the Philosopher (2. 14. 5).

But all of the points of origin that Irenaeus cites are not necessarily other eclectic systems. Simon Magus figures prominently as an individual whom Irenaeus regards as the patriarch of all heresies.⁵ He identifies this Simon with the Simon in Acts 8, and then he gives additional information concerning Simon's activities during

⁵Cf. Phillip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, 5th ed., vol. II: Ante-Nicene Christianity A.D. 100-325 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., n.d.), p. 458.

the reign of Claudius. "He, then, not putting faith in God a whit the more," contended against the apostles, continued in the magic arts, received honors from Caesar, and represented himself as each of the three persons of the Trinity in various nations (1. 23. 1). He had originated his own sect by means of the slave woman, Helena, whom he had come to redeem from her successive incarnations (1. 23. 2). People are saved by the grace of Simon, and not by their own works. He was not a mere man, nor was he the one who suffered in Jerusalem. The angel-creators hold people in bondage, but he will free them when he dissolves the world (1. 23. 3). His priests are paid to be profligates who worship Simon and Helena as Jupiter and Minerva by means of images. Their name (Simonians) derives from him; "and from them 'knowledge falsely so called' received its beginning, as one may learn even from their own assertions" (1. 23. 4). Again, on Simon Magus, Irenaeus concludes a discussion on Marcion by saying, "At present, however, I have simply been led to mention him, that thou mightest know that all those who in any way corrupt the truth, and injuriously affect the preaching of the Church, are the disciples and successors of Simon Magus of Samaria" (1. 27. 4). These claims will be assessed at the appropriate point.

There are also, according to Irenaeus, demonological and psychological origins to which heresy can be attributed. Carpocrates is given in 1. 25 after Menander, Saturnius, and Basilides as a further example of the descent of heretics from Simon. Irenaeus speaks of these teachers as having traded upon, if not having copied directly, the teachings of Simon. But he describes them thus:

These men, even as the Gentiles, have been sent forth by Satan to bring dishonour upon the Church, so that, in one way or another, men hearing the things which they speak, and imagining

that we all are such as they, may turn away their ears from the preaching of the truth; or again, seeing the things they practise, may speak evil of us all, who have in fact no fellowship with them, either in doctrine or morals, or in our daily conduct. (1. 25. 3).

The heretics have been sent forth by Satan (not Simon) intentionally to do damage to the Church. But the heretics in this passage are not the primary causes of the damage done. They do indeed spread false teaching and indulge in immoral practices, but the damage to the Church as seen in this passage is not immediately connected to the Church. Rather, the damage is done through conceptions formed in the minds of neutral observers as a result of heretical activity. Similarities in terminology (1. 25. 2) allow for a surface identification to be made between the heretics and the Church. But the dishonor wrought by Satan upon the Church through the actions of the heretics is effected in this case in the general public. For the general public views neither the Church nor the heretics at a level that would show the distinction between them. Thus, the teachings and immoralities of the heretics are automatically attributed to the Church.

It is perhaps the origins attributable to demonic inspiration that have the greater number of facets. The most complete passage is probably 2. 31. 3. In 2. 31. 2, Irenaeus implies in response to the magical claims of Simon and Carpocrates, that they could not even cast out the demons that they sent into others. But here, he launches into fierce invective, saying that they are "altogether full of deceit... apostate inspiration, demoniacal working, and the phantasms of idolatry..." He regards them as the predecessors of the dragon of Rev. 12, and believers are instructed to flee from them as they would the drag-

on. The greater the degree of apparent wonders performed by them, the greater the degree of demonic influence that may be assumed.

In another example, heretics who promulgate the teachings of Simon are spreading the "poison of the serpent, the great author of apostasy." (1. 27. 4). The Marcosians are spoken of as being instigated by Satan to a denial of "that baptism, which is regeneration to God" (1. 21. 1). In 1. 13. 3, Marcus himself is mentioned as possessing a demon as his familiar spirit, by means of which he is enabled to utter prophecies, and by which he enables others to do the same. Similarly, in 1. 15. 6, a poem attributed to Pothinus, Irenaeus' predecessor, calls Satan Marcus' true father and notes his agency in aiding Marcus in performing wonders. The poem then curiously adds, "Thus making thee the precursor of his own impious actions." In 5. 26. 2, two types of heretics are named as agents of Satan. Marcion is one who openly blasphemes God, and Valentinus is a more subtle sort who perverts the sense of Scripture. Satan uses the operations of each to conceal his own mission. Irenaeus attributes the origin of the extreme plurality and contrariety of the heretical teachings to demonic agency in 1. 9. 5. The fathers of fables differ among themselves "as if they were inspired by different spirits of error." The "as if" should not be taken to imply that they were not really so inspired; the "as if" relates to "different" and to Irenaeus is quite likely. Whether it is one spirit or many he does not know for certain, but given the origin and negative quality that he emphasizes, it is easy to see how he might account for the plurality of heretical teachings in this manner.

Closely related to demonic agency relative to the origins of heresy is the psychological aspect of demonic influence. In 1. 16. 3, Irenaeus attributes the evil influence that acts upon the Marcosians to the "wicked spirits of the Ogdoad." But elsewhere, he repeatedly regards the Ogdoad as a mere contrivance (cf. 1. 16. 1), which leads to the belief that Irenaeus speaks of an evil influence proceeding forth from their own minds. In the remainder of 1. 16. 3, he likens them to people overtaken by frenzy, yet think that they are well due to outwardly pleasant behavior such as laughter. Also, the demonic influence on Marcus in 1. 13. 3 has already been noted (p. 11). But in this same section, Irenaeus says of his victims that they are "heated by an empty spirit," which then causes them to prophesy. He then says parenthetically, "Referring to this, one superior to me has observed, that the soul is both audacious and impudent when heated with empty air." Thus the origin of the victim's reaction is seen to be at least partly internal and of a psychological character.

Turning to the nature of heresy, we find that Irenaeus has summarized it in the preface to Book 1 where he states his purpose for writing. The two basic characteristics seem to be that heresy is a perversion of revelation and a pretension to superior wisdom above that available to the common man:

These men falsify the oracles of God, and prove themselves evil interpreters of the good word of revelation. They also overthrow the faith of many, by drawing them away, under a pretence of...knowledge, from Him who founded and adorned the universe; as if...they had something more excellent and sublime to reveal, than the God who created the heaven and the earth, and all things that are therein. (1. pref. 1).

It should also be noted that intent is implied with respect to each, but Irenaeus does not say that if intent is absent then such characteristics

do not constitute heresy. Irenaeus does, however, point out that the systems of the heretics are cloaked so as to hide their true nature. Such teachings are presented to the simple in an attractive dress in order to make the teachings seem superior, "more true than the truth itself." Part of the outward appearance is a similarity in language, but that is where any similarity ends. The heretics' systems are spoken of as being "plausible," and this is what makes them so truly dangerous to the uninstructed.

In 1. 8. 1, we find these characteristics expanded in a particular reference to the system of the Valentinians concerning the specific issue of their use of Scripture. This system was not announced by the prophets, taught by the Lord, or delivered by the apostles. Yet the Valentinians boast of a superior knowledge above all other people that they alone have received. They gather their basic views from sources other than Scripture, "reading from things unwritten." Irenaeus calls their efforts a striving to weave "ropes of sand." This signifies not only the preposterous nature and uselessness of the task, but also that the result will serve to support nothing. Then he cites their handling of Scripture. The Valentinians adapt with an air of probability the sayings of the prophets, the parables of the Lord, and the words of the apostles for the support of an existing system. That is, Scripture has nothing to do with the basic system, but only the legitimation thereof.

It is in connection with this latter point that Irenaeus places himself in a bit of difficulty. The problem is with an analogy that he uses to exemplify the manner in which the Valentinians disregard the order and connection of the Scriptures, and thus destroy the truth

by "transferring," "dressing up," and "confusing" various texts. The analogy has to do with an original and glorious image of a king. After the meddling of the heretics, the image bears more of a likeness to a dog than to the king. But to the heretic, the revised image is a better likeness of the king than before (1. 8. 1). But the analogy fails to function as Irenaeus desires, because it does not show the reader how the mind of the heretic viewed the image in the first place, except to suggest that it could be improved. Thus, it leaves open the question of the heretic's sincerity. This undercuts Irenaeus' notion of intent to deceive (pp. 12-13), despite his assertions to the contrary. Yet analogies customarily have such difficulties, and Irenaeus is not refuting them at this point. He is merely being descriptive, and that from an orthodox point of view.

In summary, Irenaeus shows that heresy originates from paganism and philosophy under various names and from diverse locations. The usual method is to construct a system from a hodgepodge of principles and to legitimize that system with adaptations from the Scriptures. Heresy also originates from Simon Magus, who founded his own cult in opposition to the apostles and gave impetus to the heretical opponents that followed him. Satan is also a primary factor in the origin of heresy, whether through direct demonic agency or through perpetuating the heretical enterprise from Simon onward. Closely related to demonic influence is the psychological aspect of the origin of heresy. The essential nature of heresy combines the notions of a perversion of revelation and a pretension to superior wisdom.

Heretics

Having investigated Irenaeus' understanding of "heresy," it is now necessary to examine how he views the heretics themselves and their relation to the Church. The preface to Book 1 has already been cited with respect to Irenaeus' reasons for writing and for his understanding of the nature of heresy. Only a few additional points need to be noted here. Irenaeus' overall attitude is one of opposition to the heretic proper before it is one of opposition to heresy in the abstract. He does not deal with heretics in a "God loves the heretic but hates the heresy" manner of speaking. The heretic himself bears first order responsibility for what he teaches. In addition, he notes that some heretics are offshoots from others, notably Ptolemaeus from Valentinus.

The heretics hold a number of theological tenets in common, although some are nothing more than negations of Church teaching. They all confess one Jesus Christ with their tongue, but they are "thinking one thing and saying another" (3. 16. 6). The content of their confession is clearly amiss, as all of them subdivide Christ and make many of him (3. 17. 4). Among the heretics, one finds many shades of adoptionism: "But according to the opinion of no one of the heretics was the Word of God made flesh." (3. 11. 3). And with reference to their practical theology, Irenaeus says, "For men of this stamp do indeed say that they believe in the Father and the Son..."; but they do not meditate on their beliefs, and their lives are immoral (5. 8. 4).

But in spite of what they may agree on, the heretics' inconsistency predominates. In 1. 21. 1, the difficulty that Irenaeus has in

describing their views on redemption is that each of them "hands it down just as their own inclination prompts." There are seemingly as many schemes as there are teachers. And in 1. 21. 5, definition is difficult because, among the heretics, novelty is the indicator of ability: "...those of them who are recognized as being most modern make it their effort daily to invent some new opinion, and to bring out what no one ever before thought of." This aspect seems to indicate a competitiveness among them for the sake of status. In 1. 22. 1, Irenaeus' purpose is to show that, in spite of their bewildering diversity, the heretics admit to henotheism, belief in one God without denying the possibility of others. But then they go beyond this belief to pervert it by their pernicious doctrines. The reason for their striving among themselves is "to make good their own opinions" (2. 13. 10). Irenaeus brings forward their own inconsistency in the event that anyone should require a final argument against them (1. 9. 5). They hold different notions not only to different things but also interpret Scripture differently (4. 35. 4). When confronted with their contradictions, Irenaeus humorously describes them as beginning to "purse up their eyebrows, and to shake their heads," saying that only the truly wise can understand (4. 35. 4). This shows that while, for Irenaeus, Scripture may have more than one sense, it may not have contradictory meanings.

In 5. 20. 2, reasons are given as to the causes of their diversity. It is first of all characterized as a desertion of the preaching of the Church and a calling of the presbyters into question by exhibiting disrespect. Their contradictory notions hinge on their belief that they have "hit upon something more beyond the truth"

(5. 20. 2). They profess to have the knowledge of good and evil, which Irenaeus then likens to that which was forbidden to Adam and Eve in paradise (Gen. 2:17). And the heretics set their minds above God in the same manner: "They therefore form opinions on what is beyond the limits of understanding" (5. 20. 2). That their pursuit is likened to the Fall here is obvious by the penalty cited for heeding their teachings. Those who do will be cast forth from the "garden" that God has created in the form of the Church; one might label this notion the "ecclesiology" of the recapitulation theory.⁶ As Adam sinned, so have the heretics; both desired to know too much.

In turning to examine the characteristics of their teaching, it is immediately seen that their use of Scripture plays a central role. It is a contributory role, to be sure, since, as has already been noted, Irenaeus holds that Scripture is not foundational to the heretics' construction of systems but rather serves as a justifier thereof. The key word describing this use of Scripture seems to be "adaptation." In 1. 3. 6, the fact that the heretics "adapt" the Scriptures is juxtaposed with a description of the Valentinian Pleroma as an "invention." This juxtaposition shows that the Valentinians' doctrine proper is not to be thought of as a perversion of the Scriptures. Adap-

⁶On the recapitulation theory of Irenaeus, cf. Jean Daniélou, A History of Early Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea, trans. John Austin Baker, vol. 2: Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), pp. 166-183. "Recapitulation is thus presented as a restoration of the position which obtained at the origin of mankind." (p. 179). Irenaeus makes comparisons between Adam and Christ, Eve and Mary, etc. in order to show that all things have been summed up and renewed in Christ, including the consequences of the Fall (e.g. 3. 23. 1, 5. 19. 1).

tation is the act of relating the Scriptures to their doctrines in such a way as to provide support for them. Irenaeus characterizes their efforts to perform this as "striving," seemingly noting the labor required of a heretic to accomplish this in view of the magnitude of the task. In other words, for Irenaeus, the Scriptures as the ground of Christian teaching are of such clarity that striving indeed is required of anyone who wishes to make its principles and stated facts fit such grotesque systems. Furthermore, this adaptation is performed "with great craftiness," not only implying intent to deceive and to lead away the simple, but also implying that these men are not to be taken lightly, as their abilities in opposing the faith are considerable. In modern times, members of traditional Christian communions have been somewhat prone to view the progenitors of a cultic movement as standard, if not a little foolish. Irenaeus takes such progenitors quite seriously; this is shown by the size and detail of his work and his comprehension of the consequences of letting them have free course among the simple.

In this same section (1. 3. 6), Irenaeus says that these proofs are drawn not only from the evangelists and apostles but also from the law and the prophets, or the Old Testament. He regards the Old Testament as a fertile field offering much material for corrupted exegesis due to its abundance of allegories and parables, but he cites no particular examples in this context. The end of such exegesis is "perverse interpretations and deceitful expositions" which the heretics use to support their systems. The nature of an interpretation varied according to the type of exegesis to which it was subjected,

and the heretical exegesis was not Christian because it disregarded entirely the literal meaning of Scripture.⁷

But another passage relating to the heretics' use of Scripture is somewhat perplexing. In 2. 13. 3, Irenaeus is attempting to show their ignorance of God in attributing to him things pertaining to men, namely "human affections and passions." He identifies their ignorance as follows:

But if they had known the Scriptures, and had been taught by the truth, they would have known, beyond doubt, that God is not as men are; and that His thoughts are not like the thoughts of men.

Before 2. 13, Irenaeus' work has presented the heretics as intentionally perverting the Scriptures in order to substantiate their own systems and to undercut the teaching of the Church. But now he claims that they have neither known the Scriptures nor been taught them, and as a consequence they have nothing by which to correct their errors. He could be referring to proper content rather than to the extent of the biblical corpus, but the notions which Irenaeus brings forward against the heretics in what follows are themselves theological conceptions which are more derived from Scripture than expressed therein. Thus, Irenaeus appears to be somewhat inconsistent as to whether the heretics know the Scriptures.

Closely related to the heretics' view of Scripture is their view of tradition. In 3. 2. 1-2, Irenaeus presents a twofold evasion by

⁷Cf. James McCue, "Orthodoxy and Heresy: Walter Bauer and the Valentinians," *Vigiliae Christianae* 33 (No. 2 1979): 122-123. He cites Irenaeus' passages on Valentinian usage of the New Testament as evidence that they represent a spin-off from orthodoxy. The dispute then is not over a common body of revelatory material but over proper interpretation, which for the Valentinians is done at both the psychic and pneumatic levels.

the heretics of the implications of tradition. He begins with the position that the heretics have been refuted from the Scriptures, intending to show their next step. The heretics evade the Scriptures⁸ by asserting that the "truth was not delivered by written documents" (3. 2. 1). On the contrary, truth resides in each heretic as he speaks. The heretics not only regard the Scriptures as incorrect, non-authoritative, and ambiguous, but they also assail the Scriptures because people who are ignorant of tradition cannot glean truth from these writings. Secondly, when the tradition associated with the apostolic succession is brought against them, the heretics evade this aspect of tradition in two ways. The first is seen in that the heretics claim to be wiser than the presbyters who are in the succession and to be possessors of a knowledge that is much more immediate. The second is seen in the claim of the heretics that the apostles perverted the teachings of the Lord with additions from the law. Thus, the attitude of the heretics toward tradition is that it is to be evaded when used against them. This is to be done by attacking either the basis of truth in Scripture or the transmission of truth via apostolic succession.

The superior attitude of the heretics is noted in 1. 11. 3-4, where Irenaeus is demonstrating their inconsistencies. A certain "renowned teacher" prides himself as having originated his own system because he gave it an original terminology. Irenaeus says that when he names those things which existed before all other things and which surpass all thought,

⁸A discussion of the Scriptures as tradition appears in Chapter III. It is anticipated here in order to facilitate the present discussion of the twofold rejection of tradition on the part of the heretics.

...it is most manifest that he confesses the things which have been said to be his own invention, and that he himself has given names to his scheme of things, which have never been previously suggested by any other...so that, unless he had appeared in the world, the truth would still have been destitute of a name. (1. 11. 4).

The alleged possession of superior wisdom is also implicit in the heretics' teaching that the angels and Demiurge are ignorant of the supreme God (2. 6. 3). That the heretics claim to know the God above the Demiurge who created them shows at once that the heretics exalt their knowledge above the Demiurge. In the same way, the heretics claim to possess this knowledge by virtue of a particle of the Pleroma which was deposited in their souls and in the Demiurge by the Mother (2. 19. 3). But this implantation was effectual to pneumatic knowledge only in themselves, as the Demiurge was yet animal. Again, the heretics place their wisdom above that of the creator, even while recognizing the common source for both.

The heretics are also identified by the practice of accommodating their teaching to the "prepossessions" of their hearers. In 3. 5. 1-2, Irenaeus places this practice in sharp contradistinction to that of the Lord and the apostles, concerning whom it is simply inconceivable to Irenaeus that they could have accommodated their teachings, given their concern for the truth and their manner of teaching without hypocrisy or respect of persons in any regard. He likens the apostles to those who have medicine for an illness and who will not dilute it lest the disease be left unhealed. The heretics, on the other hand, only bring another disease in the form of perverted medicine. But in 3. 12. 6, Irenaeus shows that the heretics accused the apostles of an inability to present any teaching to the Jews other than the one that they al-

ready knew. That is, they did not have another god to proclaim than the one in whom the Jews already believed. The heretics apparently had observed the preaching of the apostles to the Jews in the Scriptures and had assumed from this that the Jewish God was indeed the one being preached, and also that the apostles were unable to declare another to replace him. After all, it probably made little sense to the heretics to bother preaching to another group unless one had something better to offer. Irenaeus' reply to this assertion is of a yes-and-no nature. He claims that the apostles did not speak to the Jews in terms of their old opinions, and that if they had, no one could have learned of the truth from them, nor from the Lord's preaching for that matter. But although it was not in accordance with their old belief, it was nonetheless Christ as the Son of God, King of the Jews, who was preached. The heretics, in failing to grasp the continuity between the old and new covenants, place their abilities above the apostles again. But in doing so, they show that such accommodation of teaching was normative among them, and the number of gods must necessarily multiply according to the number of differing prepossessions held.

Another element in the heretics' teaching is a utilization of human feelings to describe God, things to which people can easily relate (2. 14. 8). The heretics utilize a similar language to that of the ignorant to make them feel at ease with the new teaching at first. The result of this established familiarity is the drawing away of many people, and Irenaeus attacks it severely. He uses the analogy of those who place the customary food before an animal in order to entice it away, until the time for capture is proper. Then they bring forward the heretical equivalent of "strong meat" in all of its inconsisten-

cies. The usual food used to entice them is not the body of Christian doctrine, but the familiarity of the terminology used with gentle persuasion, the human element again, to smooth over the seams in their doctrines. For Irenaeus, the truth is the truth, and one does not alter it in order to make more converts. If some must be labelled "simple" and learn from others, then so be it. Thus the heretics retain enough of scriptural terminology to make overtures to the more susceptible and unlearned members of the Church.

Irenaeus has much to say on the subject of the morals of the heretics. In 1. 6. 3, he gives a general description of their vices. They were in the habit of defiling the women whom they had taught; this was confirmed by those who managed to return to the Church. They became attached to some of these women and went so far as to entice them from their husbands to become their own wives. Some of them use a "brother-sister" ploy, living with the female converts in a modest fashion at first, and leading up to sexual activity only later. In 1. 6. 4, those who are in the world love a woman to gain possession of her through the Gnostic mystery of conjunction, but those who are of the world and love a woman have not attained to truth because their motive was merely concupiscence. A particular example of this sexual immorality is Marcus (1. 13. 3). Those whom he alone counts worthy to partake of the Charis communion do so. A womanizer, he goes to great lengths to captivate the most elegant and wealthy ones by flattery and by deceiving them into thinking themselves to be prophetesses. He thus plays upon the vanity and pride of these women, eliciting from them both financial reward and sexual favors. Irenaeus brings out other instances

of immorality on the part of the heretics, particularly concerning their attacks upon the Church; but this aspect will be considered below.

The destiny of heretics is a theme that also receives not a little treatment from Irenaeus. One might expect that the final end of false teachers would be spoken of in terms of fire and brimstone, or invective followed by Anathemas. But the actual case is quite the contrary, as Irenaeus not only holds out the prospect of salvation for them but also encourages his hearers to seek it actively. The possibility of salvation which is held out to the Valentinians in 1. 31. 3 demonstrates that heresy is not a final or unforgiveable sin (cf. 3. 14. 4). Their doctrines are to be despised, and their persons are to be pitied. Their return, however, is not spoken of as a return to the Church, but as a return to God the Creator. In other words, they obtain salvation, rather than regain it. But in 2. 11. 2, they may "return to the truth" in humility, propitiating God for those things uttered against Him, and thus obtain salvation. And in 3. 2. 3, Irenaeus says explicitly that for those who deny the twin criteria of Scripture and tradition as held by the Church, repentance is possible but not at all likely. The key is to bring the truth alongside of error so that error may be seen for what it is.

In assessing this likelihood, Irenaeus distinguishes two types of responses. "The more moderate and reasonable among them thou wilt convert and convince...but the fierce, and terrible, and irrational... thou wilt drive far from thee, that you may no longer have to endure

their idle loquaciousness." (2. 31. 1).⁹ There are some who will respond to the presentation of the truth, and there are some who never will. Each group seems to be distinguished according to traits of personality affecting their response. But regardless of the heretic's potential response, Irenaeus maintains that the protection of the Church was of greater importance than the possible salvation of an obstinate heretic in exhorting his hearers to drive them away. Again, in 4. 41. 4, it is necessary that Irenaeus confute them by proofs if they are ever to be saved.

According to 1. 22. 1, heretics also will rise from the dead in the flesh. In this act, they, too, will confess to the power of God, "...but they shall not be numbered among the righteous on account of their unbelief." And later on, Irenaeus cites Mt. 12:36 against them, saying, "For all teachers of a like character to these, who fill men's ears with idle talk, shall, when they stand at the throne of judgment, render an account for those things which they have vainly imagined and falsely uttered against the Lord..." (2. 19. 2). Another example is found in 4. 11. 4, where Irenaeus speaks of those who follow God unto liberty which has been fully revealed in Christ. Then, of "scoffers, and to those not subject to God" who follow outward legal observances, "and to those who pretend that they do themselves observe more than what has been prescribed," he says that they have been assigned everlasting perdition by being cut off from life. These people are not

⁹The latter clause appears from the context to be construed as a purpose clause, or "so that you may no longer have to endure." But it is also possible to read it as a result clause, or "with the result that you may no longer have to endure."

identified specifically as heretics, but as hypocrites, covetous, etc. But the passage seems to refer to Ebionism in rejecting the followers of outward purifications and excessive zeal for the law, and the fate of such as are explicitly mentioned would certainly imply that the heretics would fare no better.

Of course, the above discussion of heretics in themselves has many facets, each of which one may find under one or more individual heretics in Against Heresies. But it will serve the overall purpose of this writing to bring forward two examples of heretics in order to show how these facets come together in the case studies of Irenaeus. First of all, it should be noted that 1. 23 and the following chapters contain studies of individual heretics as the successors of Simon Magus, but it is not necessary to treat this entire list at present. Marcus the Magician is discussed before this in 1. 13. 1. He boasts of having improved upon his master, and he is very adept at his magical impostures. He draws away many men and not a few women to join him. He claims the greatest of knowledge and perfection, having received the highest powers from above. Irenaeus refers to him as being similar to the precursor of Antichrist. Marcus joins the buffooneries of Anaxilaus to the craftiness of the magi. And he is regarded as a miracle worker by his followers.

Marcion receives heavy treatment from Irenaeus throughout. In 1. 27. 3, the origin of his heresy is attributed to Satan, as Marcion is "truly speaking as with the mouth of the devil, and saying all things in opposition to the truth." One may read the irony in "truly speaking...in opposition to the truth" as an indication of Marcion's earnestness in doing so. The uniqueness of Marcion is that he was the

"only one who has dared openly to mutilate the Scriptures" (1. 27. 4), his inveighing against God being more than a matter of degree. But Irenaeus nonetheless notes that Marcion may be refuted on the grounds of what few books he does hold to be authoritative. It is evident that Irenaeus would not underestimate Marcion for any reason, for Marcion's audacity and views on authority combine to make him a special danger to the Church.

The heretics have been described individually; now they must be seen in relation to the Church. The key questions that should be kept in mind in this discussion are how the heretics relate to the institutions of the Church, and whether or not and under what conditions they may be identified with it. In 3. 4. 2-3, Irenaeus speaks of "these teachers, among whom neither Church nor doctrine has ever been established." He then gives the reason for this as the heretics being later than their founders, and their founders being later than the apostles and unable to demonstrate that the teaching of either their founders or themselves is linked to the apostolic tradition. So here the heretics are altogether unrelated to the Church, not only by statement, but also by the fact that if they were a part of the Church then the Church would have served as the necessary prior point of origin. Also in 3. 24. 1, the heretics are spoken of as "fleeing from the faith of the Church, lest they be convicted; and rejecting the Spirit, that they may not be instructed." Their antipathy to the Church expressed in this passage certainly excludes them from it in Irenaeus' eyes.

Irenaeus has only a little to say about the sacraments as a factor in the relationship between heretics and the Church. But his

statements in 4. 18. 4 are sufficient. The sacrifice of the Church is pure, for it offers the "first-fruits of His creation." The Church has also received the "Word, through whom it is offered to God." The Church offers with giving of thanks for the things from His creation. But the conventicles of the heretics do not do so, because they cannot. For if the Father in the heretical systems is different from the Creator, then it would be absurd to give thanks to the Father for what he had not created. Irenaeus rather facetiously says that the heretics accuse their Father for coveting what is another's. And those who hold that the material order came from "apostasy, ignorance, and passion" offer the first-fruits of these to the Father. The heretics apparently observe a similar rite, but they do not call the Lord the Son of the Creator. Also, given the view of Christ's body that those with Docetic tendencies hold, Irenaeus' doctrine of the real presence of Christ¹⁰ in the Eucharist becomes nonsensical (cf. 5. 2. 1-3).

In addition to the lack of agreement in teaching, the heretics openly attack the Church. The Valentinians place the Church in a lower position than themselves by identifying the orthodox with their "animal" men who must do good works along with having a "mere faith" (1. 6. 2). They attack the Church as being ignorant and contemptible, and the grace received by the Church differs from that received by the Valentinians in that theirs is irrevocable (1. 6. 4). Being merely animal, the Church cannot enter into the Pleroma, but the righteous

¹⁰Cf. J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 198. Citing 4. 17. 5, 4. 18. 4, and 5. 2. 3, he says, "So Irenaeus teaches that the bread and wine are really the Lord's body and blood. His witness is indeed all the more impressive because he produces it quite incidentally while refuting the Gnostic and Docetic rejection of the Lord's real humanity."

may enter an intermediate state (1. 7. 1). Thus the heretics would not appear to be so hostile to the Church in the opinion of a neutral observer. In 2. 16. 4, the Valentinians accuse the Church of insufficient understanding, but Irenaeus cites the heretical inconsistencies by noting that the Basilideans accuse the Valentinians of the same. Irenaeus regards their opposition to the Church to be as intentional as it is malicious and dishonest (2. 11. 2). They "delight" in such attacks, assailing the Church with irrelevant or falsely attributed points.

On the subject of separatism, Irenaeus identifies the Montanists as sharing a particular tendency with the Encratites, who, because of the presence of hypocrites in the Church, "hold themselves aloof from the communion of the brethren." (3. 11. 9). This passage clearly speaks of a voluntary separatism. But there is at least one example of an excommunication of a heretic, that of Cerdon who was the predecessor of Marcion in Rome:

Coming frequently into the Church, and making public confession, he thus remained, one time teaching in secret, and then again making public confession; but at last, having been denounced for corrupt teaching, he was excommunicated from the assembly of the brethren. (3. 3. 3).

The meaning of this passage is unclear until several subordinate points are determined. First, what is meant by "coming frequently into the Church?" It sounds as if Cerdon were not a regular communicant to begin with. He also made "public confession" more than once. If the Rule were a baptismal creed as is supposed,¹¹ it would not have been repeated; therefore a baptismal creed is a doubtful prospect. But pub-

¹¹Cf. Kelly, p. 39, and Lebreton and Zeiller, pp. 111-113.

lic confession is understood as a visible expression of remorse and repentance for backsliding which is performed upon restoration to the Church in 1. 13. 5 and 7. So, we might read that "he thus remained" in a hypocritical but undetected stance, teaching heresy "in secret" while making public confession.¹² He was at length discovered. It seems plain, then, that the Church did not know of his activities at first, and when it became aware, he either left under pressure or was forcibly evicted. Yet the problem remains that Church membership during this period is such a blurred concept that those functions which are connected to it are also blurred. This is about the most that can be said here.

The heretics differ from the Church in their attitude toward martyrdom, according to Irenaeus in 4. 33. 9. The Church sends forth martyrs with regularity, perhaps a reference to the Gallic persecutions still fresh in his mind. But others not only abstain, but they also claim that this sort of "witness-bearing" is unnecessary because of their true doctrine.¹³ Irenaeus then makes some concessions, allowing for one or two martyrs from among the heretics from the time of Christ down to his own.¹⁴ But then he removes even the significance of

¹²According to Schaff, p. 189, it should be remembered that this point in time is yet very early in the development of a penitential system. He says that second century discipline was locally administered.

¹³Cf. H. E. W. Turner, The Pattern of Christian Truth: A Study in the Relations between Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Early Church, The Bampton Lectures, 1954 (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1954; reprint ed., New York: AMS Press, 1978), pp. 159-160. He notes the heretics' aversion to martyrdom, citing the reason for this: "It might appear to pander too much to the flesh."

¹⁴Compare Eusebius Ecclesiastical History 5. 16. 20-22, who cites Apollinaris of Hierapolis against the Montanists and Cataphrygians. He says that even if they do have great numbers of martyrs, they do not

this allowance when he implies that those few who accompanied the martyrs of the Church were at best of the status of fellow travelers. It is a mere physical accompaniment as the Church sustains the reproach of only those who suffer for righteousness' sake. In other words, heretics who suffered martyrdom had no reward.

So far, the relationship between the heretics and the Church has been less than clear as the available information in Irenaeus has left the reader in considerable doubt concerning exactly what that relationship was. What follows is similar information, some of which has been referred to already but which was held until this point because of its relevance here. In 5. 31. 1, Irenaeus speaks of "some who are reckoned among the orthodox" who go beyond the teaching on the resurrection and accept heretical opinions. He then goes on to cite what the heretics teach. This seems to indicate that not the heretics but those who heard them are reckoned among the orthodox. Perhaps Irenaeus is in doubt himself as to their status, for he has elsewhere said that even one who adheres to their teachings loses his part in the kingdom (2. 8. 3, 2. 18. 7, 5. 20. 2). But the interpretation here offered gains support in the next chapter (5. 32. 1) as "the opinions of certain...are derived from heretical discourses,..." They are deemed ignorant and in need of instruction, but they are not labelled as heretics themselves.

Tatian provides an example of one who was at one time somehow closely associated with the Church through his extant writings. In

regard them as orthodox nor agree with them just because some were martyred.

1. 28. 1, Irenaeus accuses Tatian of asserting that Adam was lost to salvation. He calls this a recent opinion that was invented among them, the antecedents being some other heretics. Tatian was with Justin, whom he did not oppose, nor is his status as orthodox exactly affirmed or denied here. He separated from the Church and then became puffed up and assumed the usual superior wisdom, composing his own doctrine. It is explicit that Tatian composed his own system and that "his denial of Adam's salvation was an opinion due entirely to himself." It is true that systems were not built from Scripture, but they were built prior to adaptation from it. Moreover, Irenaeus says that the opinion on Adam's salvation was invented among them, not among us. Also, Tatian composed his doctrine after he left the Church. One surmises that Irenaeus is being less than fair to Tatian, as he omits to assert Tatian's orthodoxy while with Justin and he does not mention his works. It seems fairly clear that Tatian developed as a heretic after he departed from the Church, and the actual reasons for that departure are still unknown.¹⁵

Irenaeus makes some additional comments on Marcion's heresy. In 3. 12. 12, those who deny the Mosaic legislation as contrary to the gospel have been deserted by the eternal love, have been puffed up by Satan, have been brought over to the doctrine of Simon Magus, and have apostatized in their opinions from God. The attribution of this heresy to Marcion compares favorably with 1. 27 in that, in both

¹⁵ Lebreton and Zeiller, pp. 24-25, apparently sense the confusion, for they label Tatian a dangerous disciple who adopted Church teaching to disfigure it, and in the next sentence state the interpretation that has been offered above.

places, the heresy is attributed to Satan and also to Simon Magus. Polycarp also called Marcion "the first-born of Satan" (3. 3. 4). And Marcion is not spoken of as having been in the Church. What apostasy means here depends on what is meant by the "paternal love" (3. 12. 12). It could refer to salvation or to providence. But at any rate, it is unlikely that Marcion could be worthy of such labels and still be considered as being within the Church.

The notion of heresy as originating from Satan has already been presented above. It was seen that with regard to the neutral observer, both heretics and orthodox might be grouped together as one in the mind of the outsider, and that the immoralities of the heretics might be attributed to the Church. But Irenaeus says in this same passage (1. 25. 3) that the Church has no fellowship with such people as the heretics. It is obvious that they were not in the Church, or Irenaeus would have made much of that fact. It is obvious that one group does not claim separation from another group if the two are allegedly indistinguishable, for if this were true, there would be no motive.

The notion of accommodation--that is, that the heretics tailored their teachings to what their hearers already held as basic--has also been presented above. At that point, it was also seen that the apostles and the Lord would have none of this bending of the truth, for whatever reason. But given this situation, we are again confronted with the question of why heretics should be regarded as related to the Church in the common fashion, whatever that was. For the prepossessions of those within the Church would surely be different than the prepossessions held by those outside the Church solely by virtue of the

content of the Rule by which profession was made at baptism and subsequent instruction was measured. This being the case, for the heretical systems to bear any resemblance to the speculative systems which Irenaeus describes in his first two books while the heretics were able to accommodate such systems to hearers in the Church is unlikely. These systems do not bear sufficient likeness to the simplicity of the Rule¹⁶ so as to allow for a correspondence between the two that would deceive anyone but the simplest, and then only with an optimum display of character on the part of the Gnostics. Those who were led astray by accommodation were probably among those outside the Church and perhaps the Church's most recent converts who had not yet cultivated faculties of discernment. This passage (3. 5. 1-2) dealing with accommodation of teaching specifies neither group. Rather, it indicates the nature of the teaching in general as one of disparity between the heretic and the Church.

In our discussion of heretics, we have seen that Irenaeus has much to say about their relationship to the Church. But this chapter began by discussing heresy in the abstract, and no such relationship was noted. What this suggests, if it is relevant at all to Irenaeus' mind, is that while the heretic may have been under some conditions in some form of relationship to the Church, heresy as an abstract had

¹⁶The Rule of Faith is a term used for the forerunner of the present day "Apostles' Creed." As expressed by Irenaeus in 1. 10. 1, it has three main points summarizing the person and work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. For a full discussion of the stages in the development of the Rule and the significance of its divisions, cf. C. A. Briggs, Theological Symbolics (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1914), pp. 40-82. The Rule will be treated in greater detail in Chapter III.

no such relationship. This seems tautologous, but only if such a distinction is less than functional. For this distinction could signify a principle of exclusion whereby the heretic, who may well have existed in such a blurred relationship as we have described, was eventually identified with something about which there was never any doubt, heresy in the abstract, the body of teachings at variance with the Rule and the apostolic succession. It is this matter of identity that relates people to organizations, and those who would so identify must embody that organization's teachings which have been approved. This matches up with what has been said regarding the person as the primary bearer of responsibility for what he believed and taught (p. 15). Thus, we conclude that the heretic was identified with the Church in a relationship which cannot be defined either because of insufficient data or because the relationship was never clearly defined in Irenaeus' time. And if the latter is preferable, then the heretic was excluded as he defined that relationship in terms of a body of beliefs which the Church could never have held. So the heretic was not excluded or did not exclude himself solely because of a differing set of beliefs, but because of his use of beliefs that were inconceivable to the Church in order to clarify his identity with it.

To summarize, heretics have some teachings in common, yet the predominant characteristic of the relationship between the individual heretics is inconsistency. The teaching of the heretics is further characterized by the manner in which they use the Scriptures. The heretics adapt the Scriptures to preformed systems after corrupt exegetical principles have been used. The heretics evade tradition and its implications by attacking its basis in Scripture and its transmission by

means of apostolic succession. The heretics exhibit other characteristics in their teaching such as claiming superior wisdom, accommodation of the teaching to the prepossessions of the hearers, and attribution of human passions to God. Immorality is evident in the treatment of female converts to the heretical teachings. On the subject of the destiny of the heretics, repentance is possible but not likely. In their relationship to the Church, the information as Irenaeus presents it is ambiguous to the modern reader. This is in some measure due to a more general lack of information on just what the relationship of the individual was to the Church. What is clear, however, is that the orthodox and heretics related to the Church in quite different ways.

CHAPTER II

THE RESULT - VICTIMS OF THE HERETICS

As stated in Chapter I, Irenaeus is not composing a work to serve as a refutation of heresy in the abstract which has little practical impact. He is first and foremost a bishop, a shepherd of the flock of God, who possesses pastoral qualities and realizes his responsibilities to that flock when it is endangered. The purpose of this brief chapter is to delineate the results of heresy among the sheep as Irenaeus reports them and further to show the general attitude of believers toward the heretics. It is possible that some passages on the latter point have a broader reference that includes the neutral observer and his reaction to the heretic. It is desirable to avoid reiterating what has already been treated under Irenaeus' view in Chapter I of this thesis. But even by confining the discussion to groups and individuals which he mentions, this will not be easy to avoid as the same Irenaeus gives both primary and secondary opinions under his own hand.

The first category of victims with whom Irenaeus deals is that of the "simple ones" of the Church. In the preface to Book 1, they are also referred to as the "inexperienced" and the simple-minded. Irenaeus uses these terms to show that the simple ones are yet unable to discern between truth and falsehood; it is implied that the obli-

gations of the Church toward the simple ones are to bring them to a point of maturity in the faith and to keep watch over their spiritual and physical well-being until they are able to do so for themselves. The heretics desire to take the simple ones captive and "overthrow the faith of many." The heretical instruments used in the conquest of the simple ones are "blasphemous and impious opinions." Irenaeus runs directly counter to any notion that proper doctrine is irrelevant to one's salvation. For him the salvation of even the simple ones depends upon a proper comprehension of divine things, the basic tenets of which must become their possession. So just as the teacher of doctrines bears a first order, personal responsibility for what he teaches, the hearer bears a similar responsibility for what he hears.

As the heretics construct their systems by composition of previous ideas and then attempt legitimation by using the Scriptures, the inexperienced cannot detect either the mixture on the surface or the cloaked essence beneath. Nor can the inexperienced detect the true character of these men, which implies that if they were able to do so, then they would also receive enlightenment as to the true nature of the heretical doctrines.

Irenaeus recognizes that this is the case with the simple ones, but he does not place the less well intellectually endowed and the new convert in a position of inferiors. They are not occupants of a position which might be attributed to the unlettered. On the contrary, Irenaeus actually says in 2. 26. 1 that to be among the simple is "better and more profitable." This is because of the problem that the wise have with humility. He cites Paul's text from I Cor. 8:1, "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth," to show that the simple lack nothing

if they continue in God's love "which is the life of man." It is best to search out the knowledge of "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for us." Implicit here again is the obligation which Irenaeus must have felt in his calling as overseer of the flock. This extends to the other readers of this document as they also are obliged to protect the simple in their simplicity. So it is in reality the wise of the Church who exercise a secondary role if either side must do so, and whatever authoritarian concepts exist in Irenaeus' work are directed toward the preservation of the simple and are permeated with a benevolent, pastoral love. The main drawback of the simple is that their level of comprehension which aids them in relating to the Father as a child of God also leaves them open for the attack of "wolves" who desire to ravage the flock. Thus the calling of the heresiologist is not at all for his own benefit, as he has little need of his own services. His labors go for the benefit of those who require them, and this is perhaps the source of his own humility.

In 1. 3. 6, it is the intent of the heretics to lead astray "those who do not retain a steadfast faith in one God, the Father Almighty, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The means of doing so in this particular case is by perverting Scripture. There emerges here a double responsibility similar to what has already been seen, with an added element for the responsibility of the simple. The heretic, as before, bears the burden of responsibility for the promulgation of false teaching and for leading the simple astray. The simple are obliged to retain a steadfast faith in God and Christ. Before, we saw that the simple one must take heed to what he hears, an external reference to the teaching of another. But now the internal

counterpart of their responsibility is seen in the form of what we might call "heart work" (cf. Pr. 4:23) of a sort. The believer bears the responsibility to maintain consciously those tenets of the faith which are taught by the Church. The passage implies that this, too, will require effort. In 1. 13. 4, the weak spirits commanded by Marcus are sent forth by Satan "for the seduction and perdition of those who do not hold fast that well-compacted faith which they received at first through the Church." Again, there is first order, personal responsibility, not in this case to reject external heresy, but to retain what the Church has already implanted within the believers.

Yet the victims are not all members of the Church. In 1. 4. 3, Irenaeus describes the "lovers of falsehood" who pay great sums to hear nonsense. But both teacher and pupil regard these teachings as "profound mysteries."¹⁷ The results of the heretical doctrines are described as a "tragedy" of conflicts, and Irenaeus says of the heretics that this is good reason why they should not teach freely to all in public, but only to those people who can afford them. This identifies the lovers of falsehood as a segment of the general public, and as a segment having nothing better to do with their wealth than to subsidize the heretics and their teaching. That Irenaeus is not speak-

¹⁷ Compare Aristophanes Clouds 140-145 especially. It would prove to be an interesting study of Irenaeus just to gather the possible allusions to classical literature. This is not the only time that it occurs, as we shall see. But whether or not Irenaeus indeed was possessor of such a background, the similarities between his sarcastic humor directed toward the Gnostic teacher-pupil relationship in 1. 4. 3 and Aristophanes' merciless satire of the philosophers are too great to ignore.

ing of members of the Church is plain for another reason, for during these times of persecution, it is doubtful that many wealthy people attached themselves to the Church. In addition, they probably would have lost their wealth had they done so. According to 3. 15. 2, when a heretical teacher gains followers, their vanity swells to grand proportions, a fact which leads Irenaeus to give another amusing description of them:

But if any one do yield himself up to them like a little sheep, and follows out their practice, and their "redemption," such an one is puffed up to such an extent, that he thinks he is neither in heaven nor on earth, but that he has passed within the Pleroma; and having already embraced his angel, he walks with a strutting gait and a supercilious countenance, possessing all the pompous air of a cock. (3. 15. 2).

The resulting morality of the victims differs according to whether they attach themselves to a teacher of lofty concepts or to an antinomian. But overall, Irenaeus' attitude is not at all that which he expresses towards the flock of God, as he regards the lovers of falsehood to be more foolish than unlearned.

There are examples in Against Heresies of victims having been restored to the Church. In 1. 6. 3, women who had been defiled by their Valentinian teachers acknowledged their act along with the "rest of their errors." An error could be moral as well as doctrinal. Repentance was required and return was possible. But the context of this paragraph indicates that neither was likely. And in 1. 13. 5 and 7, the women who had been defiled by Marcus and his followers had to make public confession upon return to the Church. But again, they were in his grasp to such an extent that it was an extremely difficult task to convert them. Some do indeed confess and are restored, but some go to

the other extreme due to shame and despair. Then there are some who are in between, unable to do either.

The fate of the victims is consistent with what has already been seen of their responsibility. Those who follow the teaching of Tatian also render themselves "heretics and apostate from the truth" (3. 23. 8). The Church is planted as a garden, from which those who heed the heretics will be cast forth (5. 20. 2). In 2. 18. 7, Irenaeus says that "Those, too, who listen to these teachers, truly blind themselves, while they possess blind guides, justly...fall along with them into the gulf of ignorance which lies below them." It is in the act of listening to heretical teaching that the victims blind themselves and lose their part in the kingdom. Similarly, in 2. 8. 3, we read, "Empty, too are those who listen to them, and are verily descending into the abyss of perdition." The reference to their being "empty" is a play on words relating to the "vacuum" of the Gnostics which their Bythus is impotent to fill.

Turning to the attitudes expressed toward heretics by believers, one should note first of all the attitude expressed in 1. 16. 3. Referring to his correspondent, Irenaeus says that at first glance, the folly of the heretics may prompt the reader to a hearty laughter. Yet the heretics should be regarded with sorrow, not only because of their destiny, but also because of their inability to deal properly with the things of God. The implication is that had they done so, then they themselves might have recognized the truth.

Nevertheless, such passages as 3. 16. 8 show that heretics are clearly "outside of the...dispensation" because they reject the teach-

ing of the Church, substituting a divided Christ for the real one. Irenaeus describes the heretics further according to the analogy of wolves in sheep's clothing.

To particularize, in 3. 3. 4, Irenaeus cites the story of John the Apostle fleeing from the bathhouse in Ephesus upon learning of the presence of Cerinthus. In the same passage, he also records the exchange between Polycarp and Marcion wherein Marcion asked him, "Dost thou know me?" And Polycarp replied, "I do know thee, the first-born of Satan."¹⁸ Irenaeus cites these two examples to display the attitude of those who were best equipped to handle the heretics and who would be the least influenced by them. He says, "Such was the horror which the apostles and their disciples had against holding even verbal communication with any corrupters of truth." Irenaeus holds Polycarp up as an example to other believers here, but it must be remembered that Irenaeus himself held verbal communication with them in order to discern their teaching.

Most interesting is Irenaeus' discussion of the attitude of the barbarians of the empire. In 3. 4. 2 they are cited as an example of those who have no Scriptures yet do not err in doctrine and practice. This is because of the rootedness of the faith of the barbarians in the apostolic tradition of the Church, which Irenaeus is defending at this point. With regard to their response to the heretics, he says:

If any one were to preach to these men the inventions of the heretics, speaking to them in their own language, they would at once stop their ears, and flee as far off as possible...

¹⁸ Lebreton and Zeiller, p. 50, translate Marcion's comment as an imperative--"recognize me." This translation makes it appear as though Marcion were asking for ecclesiastical recognition from Polycarp, who answered, "I recognize the first-born of Satan."

Here is an example where the Scriptures cannot function against the heretics, for the barbarians cannot read. The reason why the efforts of the heretics to draw away the barbarians failed will be treated more extensively in the next chapter, but it must be noted that here in the attitude of the barbarians, we have an optimum example of the functioning of apostolic tradition. Irenaeus cites this anchoring of beliefs in tradition as the source of their steadfastness which provides them with as great a bulwark against the heretics as would the Scriptures.

But Irenaeus wishes the salvation of the heretics in his pastoral capacity. It is a matter of priority with him, for the protection of the Church is his primary concern. He will not risk that responsibility for a potential conversion. Yet the pastoral tenderness is not wholly absent:

We do indeed pray that these men may not remain in the pit which they themselves have dug...and that they, being converted to the Church of God, may be lawfully begotten, and that Christ may be formed in them...We pray for these things on their behalf, loving them better than they seem to love themselves... (3. 25. 7).

In addition to likening prayer for the heretics to love for them, he says that this love will be salutary for them "if it be true." As the Church is true, so must its adherents be if their ministry is to be honored by God with much bearing of fruit.

CHAPTER III

THE REACTION - REFUTATION

It is necessary to treat the subject of Irenaeus' refutation of the heretics in two main divisions. First of all, there are certain methods and criteria which relate to the controversy in the broadest sense. And then there are those which have a direct bearing on the meaning and message of the Church.

The Manner of Refutation

Irenaeus spends the first ten chapters of the second book presenting a discourse on the doctrine of God as Creator and the heretical attacks upon this doctrine. In 2. 11. 2, he notes the zeal of the heretics in attacking the Church on this point of doctrine and counters that these attacks are misdirected. In response, he wishes first of all to inquire of the heretical doctrines in order to make their fallacious nature manifest. He is quite willing to allow their doctrines to stand unaltered, which is more than they had done for the Church. Secondly, he wishes to bring forward the discourses of the Lord to refute them, which represents bringing one of their own tools against them as they were notorious for their perversion of the parables. As a result of this manner of refutation, the heretics can take either one of two courses. They may either pursue repentance unto salvation, or they may change the course and substance of their argument.

Perhaps Irenaeus is a little overly optimistic in this assessment, but he sees this plan to "fight fire with fire" as having the potential of throwing their systems into a state of confusion. Yet based on what he says elsewhere regarding their abilities at system-building and the unlikelihood of their repentance, Irenaeus would probably expect most of the heretics to take the latter course.

In 4. pref. 1, Irenaeus gives suggestions to his correspondent as to how he might proceed in utilizing the information contained in this work. The traditional uses of apologetics are embodied in these suggestions. He is first exhorted to confute the heretics by argumentation based on Irenaeus' work. Secondly, once they are beaten back by such arguments, the efforts against them are to assume the character of a containment, or a holding action, so that their doctrines might spread no further. But thirdly, it is desirable to use this information to turn the heretics unto salvation. It is notable that on the second point they are not only to be kept from spreading false teaching to others, but also to be kept themselves from descending further into ignorance of the truth. Perhaps it is too much to read an order into this discussion, but one notices the same order of priorities for the Church here as elsewhere. The protection of the Church comes first.

There are basically three instruments that Irenaeus commends and uses himself in the refutation of heresy. These are Scripture, reason, and parody. In 1. 9. 1, the use of Scripture by the heretics in support of their systems is noted. Through their use of Scripture, Irenaeus says, they deceive themselves, in this case with reference to the writings of John. For if their interpretation is true, then John would have elaborated the meanings which they assign to him. In

2. 2. 5, Irenaeus brings forward Jn. 1:3, Ps. 33:9, and Gen. 1:1 to prove that God is Creator. Yet one must distinguish two approaches to Scripture here. The Scriptures themselves as the divine recording of doctrine for the Church represent the source upon which it may draw. But there is also a traditional aspect within the biblical corpus, that of the objective existence of its authors at a point in time. They function for Irenaeus as a "great cloud of witnesses" (cf. Heb. 12:1, ref. Ch. 11) who have spoken for God in times past and who have stood the test of time in contrast to the novelties of the heretical teachers:

Whom, therefore, shall we believe as to the creation of the world-- those heretics who have been mentioned that prate so foolishly and inconsistently on the subject, or the disciples of the Lord, and Moses, who was both a faithful servant of God and a prophet? (2. 2. 5).

Here he enjoins the aspect of worthiness to the traditional aspect of Scripture. The character of the faithful of times past makes the true nature of the heretics obvious both doctrinally and morally.

It is not to be supposed, though, that newness alone has left the heretics without comparison to the heroes of faith in the scriptural tradition. It is not that the heretic can develop into one who is faithful by either successive alteration of his teaching or converting more people to his position. For he can never so develop; the sole answer for the heretic is repentance. The issue is quite simply that the worthiness and historical consistency in both doctrine and life of those in times past has provided Irenaeus with a standard other than a wooden-headed appeal to an arbitrary criterion. For the traditional aspect of Scripture records nothing esoteric or obscure, but rather the histories of the lives of those whom God approved.

Irenaeus also gives several interesting examples of the role that reason plays in refutation. In 2. 2. 3, there is the example of a man who makes tools, which is used to show that one does not speak of the tools doing the cutting but rather the man who formed the tools for his use:

With justice, therefore, according to an analogous process of reasoning, the Father of all will be declared the Former of the world, and not the angels...

It is notable in this example that the Scriptures are behind it, but revelation does not serve as the starting point of the argument. Nor is the argument particularly deductive. Irenaeus not only does not despise the use of reason, but to reason from a human situation to a divine conclusion is perfectly acceptable as well. The points of the Rule, in this case the article on God the Father and Creator, seem to be a sufficient guide by which to test a conclusion.

In 2. 6. 2, he gives another "parallel" argument, as he calls it, which is modelled on the contemporary Roman Empire. The peasant who dwells in a remote province has never seen the emperor, yet the peasant fully recognizes the emperor's rule. This argument would suffice as an analogy to establish the rule of God, but Irenaeus gives it a peculiar twist in order to advance it in refutation of the Gnostic angels and Demiurge who are more ignorant of the Almighty than man. For if man so recognizes his rule, and these intermediary beings of the heretics are by their own admission greater than man, then such beings must recognize God's rule all the more. Here we have a more deductive argument which is one step removed from a mere analogy, with the same proximate reference to the teaching of the Church as a guideline.

In 2. 14. 3, Irenaeus says of the Valentinians that they derive their principles from the heathens, in this case the Pythagoreans. In doing so, they advance certain notions whether or not contradictory, and they do so "although they have neither proof, nor testimony, nor probability, nor anything whatever of such a nature." This passage illustrates the wide berth that Irenaeus is willing to allow them in making their case. The latter phrase grants them much latitude in justifying their positions, and this may be read as exhibiting Irenaeus' confidence that they cannot do so.

But the heretics do, in some cases, advance some fairly "plausible" arguments, and Irenaeus seems compelled to treat these arguments seriously. One of them is found in 2. 8. 1, where the heretics reason by a subaltern-superaltern relationship. If that which is below is a shadow of that which is above, and the things below have bodies, then that which is above must have a body. This logic, of course, runs into all manner of spatial and material problems, especially when attributed to God. But Irenaeus allows the point to stand for a moment and poses the following objection. If that which is above is eternal, and so its shadow, then so are the things below. But if the things below are transitory, then that which is above, "of which these are the shadow," is transitory also.

Similarly, in 2. 13. 10, the heretics lie against God by plausibly lumping together things common to the nature of men in the form of human feelings, mental exercises, formation of intentions, and utterances of words. Irenaeus then says:

For while they ascribe the things which happen to men, and whatever they recognize themselves as experiencing, to the divine

reason, they seem to those who are ignorant of God to make statements suitable enough.

The heretics are transposing human psychological phenomena to be ascribed to the nature of God. At first glance, this is quite like their reasoning from earthly bodies to a superterrestrial body in 2. 8. 1, where Irenaeus refuted them with a subaltern-superaltern argument of his own. But he does no such thing here, although it is evident that he cares nothing for the practice noted above.

The problem for Irenaeus is that his own reasoning by analogy in 2. 2. 3 and the tone of his remarks on the attribution of "wholly seeing," "wholly thought," and so on to God by the pious bear affinities with what he condemns here in the heretics. He has reasoned from a human situation to a divine conclusion before, apparently testing his conclusions by the Rule. And his approval of the pious in 2. 13. 3 seems inconsistent with his own citation of God's indescribability. The solution is found in 2. 13. 4 where Irenaeus says, "And so, in all other particulars, the Father is in no degree similar to human weakness." The believer does not imply such as the terms that he uses are merely analogous to the highest of human attributes. He likewise recognizes their inadequacy. But the heretic endows God with "human affections and passions" (2. 13. 3-10).

In addition to Scripture and reason, Irenaeus has yet another instrument of refutation, one which was probably more effective among the simple and the neutral public than among the heretics. His parodies directed at their doctrines show the reader that, in spite of the problems attending second century Church life, he was yet able to maintain a sense of humor and also to put it to good use. We have al-

ready noted that in 1. 4. 3, the "lovers of falsehood" were spoken of with not a little derision. In 1. 4. 4, however, Irenaeus says that he himself feels an inclination to "contribute a few hints towards the development of their system." The system spoken of here is that which attributes the origin of the visible world from the disturbances of Achamoth, a feminine deity. The Valentinians are said to attribute the earth's waters to the tears of her suffering. Irenaeus notes the distinction between fresh and salt water, and that only the salt water could have come from her tears. "But it is probable that she, in her intense agony and perplexity, was covered with perspiration." He surmises that this addition of his might aid in accounting for bodies of fresh water. Then he delivers the final blow: "And since there are also in the world certain waters which are hot and acrid in their nature, thou must be left to guess their origin, how and whence. Such are some of the results of their hypothesis."

And in 1. 11. 4, after noting the heretic who manifested himself as originator of a system by virtue of having given it a terminology, Irenaeus assumes that all others are surely at liberty to do the same. So he begins with the same Proarche and continues:

But along with it there exists a power which I term a Gourd; and along with this Gourd there exists a power which again I term Utter-Emptiness. This Gourd and Emptiness, since they are one, produced...a fruit, everywhere visible, eatable, and delicious, which fruit-language calls a Cucumber. Along with this Cucumber exists a power of the same essence, which again I call a Melon. These powers, the Gourd, Utter-Emptiness, the Cucumber, and the Melon, brought forth the remaining multitude of the delirious melons of Valentinus.

Irenaeus concludes this thrashing by citing the fact that the advantage of his terminology over theirs is that at least his terms are credible, in general use, and understood by all.

Both of these examples, which are the most prominent, are directed against the Valentinians, so one might generalize that Irenaeus feels more at ease in dealing with them than with heretics on the order of Marcion. But the Valentinians actually play a crucial role in Irenaeus' thought, apart from the amount of time that he devotes to them. In 2. 31. 1, he claims that if they are overthrown, then "the whole multitude of heretics are...also subverted." One could easily assume that this text commends a Valentinian origin for all heresies. In the same text, he compares the teachings of Valentinus with the teachings of many of the prominent heresiarchs. One sees here that the Valentinians are not to be regarded as the origin, but as the key, because their system was so well developed that it encompassed the main points of the other teachings.

It may be assumed accordingly that, for Irenaeus, it is not necessary to discredit the heretics' systems by eliminating their source. It is only necessary to refute the fullest expression of heresies,¹⁹ namely the Valentinian system. Simon Magus was credited with the origin of "all sorts of heresies" (1. 23. 3); he was also the progenitor of Valentinianism. But it is not essential to deal with the origin of heresy to refute it. One can get as far using the doctrine of Valentinus for refutation. This notion gains further support in 4. pref. 2, where Irenaeus says that the reason that his predecessors could not overthrow Valentinus is because they had not understood his

¹⁹Schaff, p. 479, corroborates this opinion, saying that of all the forms of heresy, Valentinianism was by far the most popular, especially at Rome. He cites Tertullian (without giving a reference) as saying that his heresy "fashioned itself into as many shapes as a courtesan who usually changes and adjusts her dress every day."

system. He calls this system "a recapitulation of all the heretics." He adds to this, saying, "For they who oppose these men...oppose all who are of an evil mind; and they who overthrow them, do in fact overthrow every kind of heresy."

The heretics may also be refuted by an observation and exposure of their practice. In 2. 31. 3, the evil, magic, confusion, and immoralities of the heretics are countered by the Church, which is characterized by selfless service in a spirit of sympathy and compassion. This service is performed according to the dictates of truth without hope for earthly gain as a result. Often the Church benefited others by its own means, especially those who were saved and who lacked the things essential to live the new life. Irenaeus then says that this practical witness proves that the heretics were "aliens from the divine nature, the beneficence of God, and all spiritual excellence." It is to be remembered that according to Irenaeus the heretics took money, sex, and whatever else they could gain from their teaching, presenting a stark contrast to the Church. No evidence of benevolence on the part of the heretics is apparent in Irenaeus' work.

In 2. 32. 3, the comparison of practice progresses from that between the heretics and the Church to that between the heretics and Jesus. What prompted Irenaeus to make this comparison is the fact that the heretics dared to compare themselves with Jesus. But they did not bother to restrict themselves to matters of practice. They went beyond this to liken themselves to Jesus in terms of origin, similarity of being, or even superiority. Like Jesus, they claim to have been sent forth to perform works for the benefit of mankind, but Irenaeus naturally claims that nothing in their works bears comparison at all.

In summing up this discussion of refutation as it relates to the controversy in the broadest sense, one needs to take particular note of three criteria of refutation, each of which has had a part in some of the particulars already mentioned. The first of these criteria is that the faith is irreducible as it is expressed by the Church. In 1. 9. 5f., the teaching of the Church is seen as being immovable. It is also an a priori proof. These statements contrast with the notion that the heretics do not teach the same things among themselves. When one of them does not care for the teachings of his predecessor, he merely retains what he pleases from the former system, adds what he pleases for the sake of novelty, and repeats the process of adapting the Scriptures so as to justify the new system. But Irenaeus regards this as evidence favoring the Church, as its beliefs may not be altered without destroying the system and removing it to the sphere of heresy. With this in mind, one might well ask what the difference is between the Church belief and a heretic who might regard another heretic as having departed from him and thus destroying the original system which the heretic held to be irreducible, and so forth. In short, what gives the Church any privileged position with regard to the irreducibility of its teaching? Irenaeus' answer would be that its enemies do. He has characterized heresy by its ability to allow for many contradictory teachings among the heretics on the one hand, yet to be totally unable to allow for another contradictory teaching, that of the Church, on the other hand. So Irenaeus would say that heresy is being selective in its contradictions as it cannot accept the teaching of the Church, simple as it is, without performing fundamental alterations on what is already fundamental.

But why is the teaching of the Church so fundamental as to be irreducible when another teaching is not so? The answer to this question is connected with the Rule of Faith as Irenaeus records it in 1. 10. 1f. To abbreviate the three divisions of it apart from the functions of each, one finds three persons. There is "One God, the Father Almighty," "One Christ Jesus, the Son of God," and "the Holy Spirit," who proclaimed the things of God through the prophets. Thus, the heretics are compelled to accept the oneness of each person as taught by the Church, along with the distinction between these persons. As has been seen, the systems of the heretics are speculative and tend to novelty. The heretics can divide the persons further if they will not accept the oneness of each, but they cannot get behind oneness. On the other hand, anything beyond oneness is plurality and is the equivalent of destruction. The conclusion for the Church is that all mankind must either confess what the Church teaches on the oneness of the persons, or they must decide in favor of a pluralistic concept at variance with this teaching. But Irenaeus makes no mention of another possibility, that of making no decision at all.

Marcus is cited by Irenaeus as one who pries into him who is unknowable, names the unnameable, and, among other alterations, divides the indivisible (1. 15. 5). His divisions are grotesque as Irenaeus records them here, even differing at times. But Irenaeus has added the element of God's unsearchability here which seems to function as the guarantor of the irreducibility of his oneness. Marcus cannot alter God because God is not so knowable. But Irenaeus appears to be moving the object of the discussion farther than any investigation can discover, and he inadvertently raises the problem of how the Church

can know that God is truly one. However, Irenaeus is not concerned with making God non-falsifiable inasmuch as God has revealed many wonderful things of himself. It is here that the Church teaching unites with revelation as the Scriptures record that God is one and that God is unsearchable. It is not then a matter of the impossibility of investigation, but a matter of accepting what is revealed about God. This is precisely what the heretic is unwilling to do, as the distortion of the oneness of God is of the essence of the heretical systems.

In 2. 24. 4, with regard to the numerology of the Gnostics, Irenaeus shows that the sheer multiplicity of possible substitutions makes the practice useless and absurd. He has just completed a list of mistakes which the orthodox do not make, focusing on the absurdities which can result in taking inconsequential matters too seriously. This practice is to attempt to find meaning in anything and everything, a drive which usually results in fulfillment. And here is ample reason to keep to that faith which is irreducible.

The steadfastness of the illiterate barbarians who have the Rule but not the Scriptures has already been noted. But the teaching of the Church proved sufficient to cause them to "stop their ears" at the teachings of the heretic. But how did the Rule function among them to produce this effect? If the heretics could not twist the Scriptures to lure them away, then the only way that they could do so would have been to copy the teaching of the Church so closely that the barbarians might be induced to follow after them. As Irenaeus has described the heretics as those teachers among whom there has been neither established Church nor doctrine (3. 4. 2), he would probably doubt their ability to copy the Church that closely. To Irenaeus, the heretics

are identifiable by their lack of organization, presumably as a consequence of their contradictory doctrines. The irreducibility of the Rule would then function as the basis of belief which the heretics cannot pervert, thus assuring the steadfastness of the barbarians.

The second criterion is that the heretics' exegesis of Scripture is inconsistent. The problem here stems from their having come to the Scriptures after the construction of their systems, and then only for the purpose of adapting them in order to justify the results. This procedure naturally lends itself to a hodgepodge approach which Irenaeus likens in 1. 9. 4 to that of an unnamed group of pagans who do similarly with the Homeric poems. This example also shows us that the practice existed outside of Christianity before the Gnostic controversy and the heretics may well have learned it as pagans. By selecting texts from Homer to suit the need, they could usually prove their point, but only to the man who was ignorant of Homer or of the method itself. The simple man who had only a minimal acquaintance at best would recognize the texts as Homeric but not as inconsistent with the contextual subject of each. The heretics did the same with Scripture, and the results were just as inconsistent. But Irenaeus says that to place the Scriptures in their proper position destroys the inconsistency, and thus the perverted system. And the position that they should occupy is only that which they occupy as they were written in their respective books and by their respective authors. There is no corresponding system for the orthodox which must be known for a proper ordering of the Scriptures. In addition, as has been seen, the Rule functions against inconsistent interpretations due to its irreducibility as the believer holds to it steadfastly. So according

to Irenaeus the truth is and has a body. It is the biblical corpus as it stood that provided all the system that was required for identifying the inconsistencies of the heretics in their use of Scripture.

In 2. 10. 1, Irenaeus shows that inconsistencies result from the heretics' use of ambiguous and unclear parables to delineate their unknown God. He accuses them of "affixing a more important to a less important question." Moreover, no question can be settled by a less settled answer. If the Scriptures that they use are unclear, then so is the outcome of their argument. The more clear Scriptures interpret those that are less clear, and in this manner consistency is preserved. But given Irenaeus' view of the approach of the heretics to exegesis, consistency on their part is not a factor anyway.

A third criterion of refutation is that of the insufficiency of the heretical systems, particularly with reference to their notions of the Creator. Insufficiency and plurality seem to go together as some of Irenaeus' attacks are directed at the heretics' use of numerology and the alphabet. In 1. 15. 4, he says of the practice of compounding letters and numbers to obtain symbolisms referring to supposedly higher powers that the alphabet of the Greeks was assembled over a period of time in parcels. His authority for this is information from the Greeks themselves. A similar objection to this is the one regarding the giving of names to system components which Irenaeus satirized. The insufficiency is seen in his objection: "Was it so, then, that until these things took place among the Greeks, truth had no existence?" The truth, then, would represent a posterior body, that is, to each of the successive stages of the development of the alphabet, and to Marcus himself.

Related to this is Irenaeus' discussion of the thirty Aeons of the Valentinians. In 2. 7. 3, he regards them as wholly inadequate to account for the diversity of empirical phenomena. The Pleroma consists of thirty Aeons which do not disagree in nature or properties. But they must do so in order to account for the common diversity of phenomena.

But the epitome of insufficiency in their systems centers on God as Creator. In 2. 5. 1-4, the insufficiency is in terms of the limitations which the heretics impose on the knowledge possessed by the angels and the Demiurge. It is also the case with subordinate creators, which notion concludes in the Father permitting things brought into being by another creator, things which the Father himself does not want to exist.

In 2. 1. 1, Irenaeus claims that God as Creator is the "first and most important head" of theology. This statement relates to his purpose as expressed in the preface to Book 2, that is, to put an end to Bythus by demonstrating "that he never existed at any previous time, nor now does he have any existence." In 2. 1. 1 again, Irenaeus brings forward the first article of the Rule to answer this heretical speculation that God is the product of a defect, that he may be influenced by any other thing, and that there may be others equal to him either before or after him. The operative principle which Irenaeus uses to manifest this insufficiency is "that which contains is greater than that which is contained" (2. 1. 2). In 2. 1. 3, God's position as Creator is brought to bear upon the speculation that there is something beyond the Pleroma, for the Pleroma either contains or is contained itself. Or, the Pleroma and that which is beyond it must be infinitely

separate from each other, a notion which would encounter the objections posed to universal ideas as successively greater realities are required ad infinitum. The refutation of all this centers around the fact that there is never any one god who qualifies as God. Therefore, the simplicity of the Rule is maintained by Irenaeus against the insufficiency of a contrary god who bears no such unique relationship to the created order and is thus continually dependent upon exterior considerations.

In 2. 16. 3, God as the one Creator is seen as entirely sufficient in contrast to the Basilidean problem with an infinite regress. This problem is stated in 2. 16. 2 as each of the three hundred and sixty-five heavens is said to have been formed from the one that preceded it. Irenaeus says that to posit a being above the highest heaven encounters a similar difficulty as the origin of that being is brought into question. He then says that it is easier to "confess" the Maker of all things at the outset and to avoid all such problems. As the problems associated with infinite regress are thus avoided, faith has a point upon which it may be safely fixed.

But there is another factor which must be added, and that is that the insufficiency of the heretics' systems stands out all the more because of their claims to superior knowledge. In 2. 28. 9, Irenaeus caps the discussion of necessary modesty in knowledge with a frank challenge to those teachers who claim a universal knowledge, or who claim to have found out God. In 2. 27, the notion of perceivable reality is presented as a hermeneutical limiter for the parables and as a guarantor of interpretative unity. Here, in 2. 28, Irenaeus challenges the heretics to explain the causes of the operations of this perceivable world. He has already said that the believer must let some things rest

that are not clear, even though seen. Now he asks the heretics to bring forward such explanations as will clarify the mysteries for the believer. For if those who are perfect do not understand the mundane phenomena, then how do they understand spiritual things?²⁰ Thus the world functions also as a testing model for those who pretend to a knowledge above it. The heretics must interpret the baser things first; then they may be heard on the higher things.

Moreover, Irenaeus hints as to what a heretic might believe after he has been successfully refuted. In 2. 2. 1, he who has tried to impose an arbitrary order upon natural phenomena and has failed now wonders whether there is any order at all. Are such things as one sees simply random? Irenaeus criticizes as to their "uncertain mode of proceeding" or inquiring too deeply into God by such means as have already been seen. His answer is for the heretic to take heed of the tremendous diversity that exists among possible interpretations and to cease from forcing a harmony with a priori speculative notions. Creation is indeed harmonious, but the reason for this is that One has created it. Yet he has done so, ordering its constituents into a whole comprising many subtle shades of meaning across a wide range of possibilities. Unity and meaning are found in the one Creator.

This being realized, the true problem becomes apparent in that man does not have the knowledge of the Creator, nor will he. Man's

²⁰This reminds of Plato Lesser Hippias 376c where Hippias, the Sophist, is finally brought to a reluctant and unfounded disagreement at the hands of Socrates, who confesses to not a little human ignorance. Then he says, "...and that I, or any other ordinary man, go astray is not surprising; but if you wise men likewise go astray, that is a terrible thing for us also, if even when we have come to you we are not to cease from our straying."

createdness necessarily limits him; he is necessarily inferior in knowledge and must "gradually learn" from his own beginning and through the continuum of his own existence. The finitudes of mankind, then, are temporal and qualitative, in that man has received only a portion of grace (2. 25. 3). One neither comprehends whole nor parts of one's existence completely. But people in varying degrees learn to relate to both, reason being the best guide for man unless and until he has the benefit of the Church.

Humility, then, is the answer to the heretic who seeks understanding, for understanding begins with a recognition of two things. First, God is sovereign by virtue of his position as Creator of all things. Secondly, man can possess only a little knowledge at best. So Irenaeus exhorts in 2. 25. 4 for man to preserve the proper order of his knowledge, to abstain from trying to raise himself above God, and to abstain from a search for anyone above God. Then the problems of insufficiency will be resolved.

Refutation and the Church

In this section, it will be necessary to treat refutation as it relates properly to the various ways in which the Church of the second century conceived of itself according to Irenaeus. This self-image is reflected by Irenaeus in four basic categories, the unity and universality of the Church, its concept of authority, the apostolic transmission of truth, and the nature of truth itself.

The preservation of the unity of the orthodox teaching has been seen to be partly due to the simplicity and irreducibility of the Rule of Faith. That discussion will not be repeated here, although

its overall importance should be kept in mind. The present discussion of the unity and universality of the Church is taken from 1. 10. 1-3, the same location where the major citation of the Rule is found. Irenaeus first of all says (1. 10. 1) that the Church is spread throughout the whole world. Yet in spite of this broad distribution, all portions thereof have received "this faith," signifying the common teaching. The manner of its reception was "from the apostles and their disciples," or from the constituents of the Church that preceded temporally. It is not that now there is a Church where once there were only apostles. The Church is transtemporal and is thus contiguous with Jesus himself through his followers. The notion that the heretics could not alter the teaching of the Church because of its uniqueness and basic nature, although Irenaeus consistently presents them as desirous of doing so, entails the notion that the apostles could not have altered that teaching. For the apostles are presented as exactly the opposite of the heretics in desiring to propagate it, and not to alter it.

In 1. 10. 2, Irenaeus reemphasizes the universal character of the Church which has received this teaching. The Church preserves it, both in content and in unity, speaking as if from one mouth. In order to support this assertion, he brings forward several dissimilarities which arise as a result of the Church's teaching, proclaiming, and preserving ministries, and of its universality. The first of these is language. He notes a number of countries in both East and West from Spain to Egypt and Palestine to show that the languages of each express the import of the teaching. The second dissimilarity is in the abilities of those who teach. There are those teachers with

great gifts and those with lesser gifts, but the former cannot alter it and the latter cannot damage it. This is probably as much due to lack of intent as much as it is due to the Rule itself. Thirdly, the diversity in geographical regions also involves dissimilar cultural traits, mores, and so forth. Yet this also is insufficient to alter anything of the true faith as expressed in the Rule. This is not because alteration does not result in heresy, but because such divergences are not sufficient to produce alteration. In saying this, Irenaeus expresses his basic conception of the universality of the truth, not as enforced by a particular bishopric, but as in itself indomitable no matter where it is taken, in what language, or with what abilities.

Irenaeus continues in 1. 10. 3 on the subject of the more well endowed teacher in relation to the true and universal faith. He says that the level of intelligence in any man has no correspondence with a change in the content of the faith within him. One so gifted is merely enabled to expound more accurately the meaning of the more obscure portions of Scripture and to bring them into the scheme of the faith. But in no case does the gifted teacher of the Church feel obligated to go beyond the Scriptures to produce the speculative enormities of the heretics. This teacher exceeds the heretic in kind, but the other believers only in degree.

On the issue of Church authority, the passage identifying the primacy of Rome as the great, ancient, and universally known Church of Peter and Paul is well known (3. 3. 2). There is, however, a difficulty in whether one is to read the rest of the passage as confirming Rome's preeminent authority to compel agreement, or as confirming that all must resort to Rome in order to try parvenu doctrines. It is not

necessary to elaborate except to say that the latter seems to fit Irenaeus' thought best.²¹ Moreover, when Rome's position is understood as the repository of doctrine, it seems to fit traditional Roman concepts of authority deriving from prior function and character of service (auctoritas).

Irenaeus uses the metaphor of a bank in 3. 4. 1, where the apostles are the rich men making deposits and anyone wishing to do so may withdraw from them. Disputes are settled by recourse to the Church. The parties to a dispute must look to the most ancient Churches for "what is certain and clear in regard to the present question." Irenaeus makes his case for the reception of Church authority by asking what would be done if the apostles had left nothing in writing. This presumably implies that he regarded the Scriptures as being of equal, if not superior, authority for the Church. The course remains to follow the apostolic tradition through their successors, and then

²¹The editor of the Ante-Nicene Fathers has a footnote on 3. 3. 2 which cites the difficulties in translation from the Latin, along with a more complete discussion at the end of Book 3 (pp. 460-461). In the latter, he cites renderings from a "candid" Roman Catholic scholar (whom he does not name) which are in opposition to the traditional Roman Catholic view. His own interpretation holds Rome to be the repository of doctrine and is stated to be in opposition to the Roman Catholic view. A translator's note in Lebreton and Zeiller, pp. 88-89, gives a greater variety of renderings and says of Lebreton's translation ("For with this church, because of the authority of its origin, every church ought to agree...") that "A stronger translation could well be justified." Daniélou, pp. 148-149, brings out that what prompted the problem passage is the list of the bishops at Rome that follows, and he opts for a more mediatorial position. But Irenaeus gives the reason why he does not trace successions other than that of Rome at the beginning of 3. 2. 2. Such a labor would be tedious and out of place in his present work, and this presumes that he would have been willing to do so in other circumstances. So what follows with reference to the elevated position of Rome should be tempered by this realization. Also, 3. 4. 1 states plainly that recourse may be had to the "most ancient Churches" in time of controversy.

the arguments concerning the illiterate barbarian ensue. As has been said, illiterate barbarians lacked nothing because their faith was that of the Church

It is at this point that Church authority and apostolic tradition come together. In 5. 20. 1, Irenaeus identifies the heretics as being of later date than the first bishops in the apostolic line. He further says that this is the cause of their blindness to the truth. But if lateness of origin alone is sufficient reason for such blindness, then what of the later Christians? What Irenaeus means by this is that the heretics' date of origin is later than the beginning of the apostolic tradition. The Church has manifested continuity with its origin as the writings of the apostles attest. But the same written standard shows that even if the heretics show some sort of a succession, their origin is demonstrably different than that approved by the written standard of the apostles.²² Thus, one sees how the written revelation and the apostolic tradition go hand in hand.

As the Church is spread throughout the whole world, so is the apostolic tradition "manifested throughout the whole world" (3. 3. 1). They did not teach after the manner of the heretics. Seeing as they

²²Daniélou, 147. He recognizes that Gnostics had a succession, and cites Irenaeus (3. pref.) as recording it. Then he cites 3. 3. 2 where the Gnostics made themselves wiser than the apostles (146). On the term "succession," he says, "It serves to underline the essential nature of tradition, namely transmission from person to person. This is a more important feature than its oral character, for it highlights the fact that the Apostles passed on the teaching of the Lord to persons whom they chose for this specific purpose. It is thus a matter of an institutional continuity within which the deposit of faith entrusted to the Apostles is preserved, thus underlining the fact that the Apostles did not rely for the safeguarding of their message on the Scriptures alone, but also on living people. A new feature of the Tradition now emerges: handed down by the Apostles, it is preserved as a deposit by the chain of succession."

were desirous of a perfect succession, if the apostles were possessors of such esoteric mysteries as the heretics claim, then why did they fail to pass those mysteries also along to their successors? The necessity of altering the writings of the apostles in order to produce justification for the heretical systems is also attested by the lack of such teachings handed down through the succession.

The presbyters partake of the succession, along with the episcopate (4. 26. 2). It is necessary to obey them as it is necessary to "hold in suspicion" others of them who depart from the succession and assemble in another place. This seems to convey the idea of a physical schism more than one that is doctrinal, and it is strange that it is found parallel to the idea of succession. Those who so separate are either heretics of perverse minds or puffed-up schismatics. They have fallen from the truth, implying perhaps that they once held it. They bring strange doctrines to the altar of God, rise up against truth, and exhort others against the Church. Those who cleave asunder will meet with punishment.

But in 4. 26. 5, the Church is where good presbyters have been placed by God, and the Church nourishes them. Irenaeus then draws the natural conclusion: "Where, therefore, the gifts of the Lord have been placed, there it behoves us to learn the truth..." from those who possess the succession and exhibit proper conduct. If the false presbyters were once in the Church, Irenaeus has the problem, of course, of why God placed them there, and in 4. 26. 3, he says that they were "believed to be presbyters by many." Then he says that they really are not, but the question remains as to their official status. In 4. 26. 2, he begins with the apparently superfluous notion of "pres-

byters who are in the Church." It is superfluous, though, unless it relates to the false presbyters in 4. 26. 3. And in 4. 26. 4, the believers are exhorted to keep aloof from these false presbyters. They must furthermore attach themselves to the true presbyters who hold to the apostles' doctrine and provide a proper example. It appears that Irenaeus is giving views of their relationship to the Church that are complementary at best and conflicting at worst. Such problems have been seen elsewhere in other connections, but as in those places, the basic concept of apostolic transmission of the truth is not affected materially.

But what is this truth which is so transmitted? It is questionable whether or not one may restrict the concept of truth entirely to either the Rule or to consistency with the succession. Truth is a much richer concept for Irenaeus than just that, although it cannot exist apart from the Church. In 2. 28. 2, he says that the Scriptures are "indeed perfect, since they were spoken by the Word of God and His Spirit." In 3. 15. 2, he says that the truth is fully manifested in contradistinction to error: "For error is plausible, and bears a resemblance to the truth, but requires to be disguised; while truth is without disguise, and therefore has been entrusted to children." And in 3. 12. 6, Irenaeus says that the true gospel is hard to be preached due to the fact that it cannot be so bent to accommodate the conception of the ignorant.

Moreover, truth is never a static concept for Irenaeus. In 2. 28. 1, he says that the truth of God is clear, and man is to direct his inquiries after it. This is performed by exercising oneself "in the investigation of the mystery and administration of the living God,

and should increase in the love of Him who has done, and still does, so great things for us." So, for Irenaeus, truth is not merely a body of doctrine which possesses no motivating influence over its adherents. It is, rather, progress in the knowledge of God, who "fashioned man, and bestowed the faculty of increase on His own creation, and called him upwards from lesser things to those greater ones which are in His own presence."

In 2. 15. 3, Irenaeus says, "The account which we give of creation is one harmonious with that regular order..., for this scheme of ours is adapted to the things which have...been made." Said against the speculators, the truth of the orthodox doctrines of creation is confirmed simply by its empirical fit. That which is open to observation corresponds to what is written in the Scriptures and does no violence to them. But to Irenaeus, the speculative systems are just the reverse on both points, not to mention being internally contradictory and a little imaginative.

Irenaeus expands upon this empirical conception of truth in 2. 27. 1. From the fact that man can have knowledge at all, it is presumed that God has placed certain types of knowledge within man's reach. His duties with respect to this gift are to meditate eagerly upon such things and to "make advancement" in them by means of daily study. These things upon which man may meditate are identified as "such as fall...under our observation, and are clearly and unambiguously in express terms set forth in the Sacred Scriptures." The empiricist point of view expressed here and elsewhere seems to stem from Irenaeus' oft-repeated view in Book 2 of God as Creator. It is excessive to assert from such bare expressions that a natural theology is

therein implied. But the almost casual manner of stating this criterion does imply that Irenaeus regards the perceiving faculty of man as an instrument providing him with accurate knowledge of the world in which he lives. This is true because God has created it for him to perceive. What one sees is what there is to see; therefore, it requires no contrived system as an interpreter. And what lies beyond it is God alone, who is sufficient for its source of meaning.

What is set forth in Scripture is for the most part clear and unambiguous (2. 27. 1). The noted exception is that of the parables, which had provided the heretics with such a fertile field for perversion in the process of adaptation. While the bulk of Scripture is to be taken in its plainest sense, the parables are "not to be adapted to ambiguous expressions" (2. 27. 1). Comparing this use of "adapt" to former uses, his meaning could be that the ambiguity lay with the systems of the heretics in that they went beyond such things as are observable in applying the parables. Thus, a different system that took nothing from empirical phenomena was required to accommodate the results. The definition of ambiguity is then seen to be the refusal to match the parables with the world around them. The content of the parables is most empirical, being metaphors on everyday circumstances of life for the purpose of conveying a spiritual truth. So observable reality functions as a criterion of truth.

Irenaeus' conception of truth becomes plainly seen in what follows in 2. 27. 1. To match the parables with reality is to insure a common understanding of them. Great importance is placed upon the common interpretation in that "the body of truth remains entire" because of it. If adaptation to any unclear expression were allowable,

then everyone might discover his own expression "as inclination leads him." In modern terms, this is expressed as "the right of every man to interpret the Scriptures for himself." Irenaeus holds to no such right, "For in this way no one will possess the rule of truth..." The conclusion is that antagonistic systems will result as free course is given for private interpretation of parables or other unclear texts. Reality is the safeguard against this danger. One world created by one God results in unified truth as the Scriptures are brought to bear upon it. This is that faith which was delivered to the Church by the apostles and faithfully transmitted by their chosen successors throughout the world, against which the knowledge falsely so-called cannot stand.

CONCLUSION

The discussion of Irenaeus' views on the origins of heresy in Chapter I reveals that there was no single origin to which he attributes all false doctrine. At first glance, it seems that the amount of attention that he gives to heresy as originating from paganism and philosophy would seem to indicate that this element is the most significant for his understanding. But even though demonic influence as an origin of heresy receives less attention, it embodies an aspect of personal animosity on the part of the powers of darkness that provoked him to respond with fierce invective (2. 31. 3). Paganism and philosophy have no intrinsic intention to destroy the Church in Irenaeus' view; the heretics who borrow from the pagan world are said to supply the evil intentions. But it is otherwise with Satan, for Irenaeus never speaks of Satan or the wicked spirits as neutral factors which the heretics must place in opposition to the Church. For when Irenaeus speaks of satanic influence, it is Satan who is utilizing the heretics against the Church.

If Irenaeus ever speaks of a single origin for heresy, the prime example would have to be Simon Magus. For he speaks of Simon as the origin of a succession of heretics (1. 27. 4). But the discussion concerning Simon as the patriarch of heretics is perhaps the least satisfying of any theme in Against Heresies. First of all, Irenaeus spends six chapters (1. 23 to 1. 28) in describing the heretics who succeeded

Simon. As he deals with the heretics, he brings forward the peculiar doctrines taught by each of them. But nowhere in all of this discussion does Irenaeus compare the teachings of these heretics to the teachings of Simon in order to prove his point. The reader is left entirely to infer such comparisons for himself, for in these six chapters, Simon is mentioned only twice (1. 27. 1, 4) after he is presented in 1. 23. In neither instance are any of his teachings presented. Secondly, the fact that Simon is seen in Acts 8:9-24 as the contemporary of Peter and John poses a considerable problem for Irenaeus' refutation of the heretics as being later than the first bishops in the succession (5. 20. 1). Thirdly, Irenaeus does not do full justice to the information concerning Simon in Acts 8. Luke says that Simon believed and was baptized (8:13), but Irenaeus says only that he "feigned faith" (1. 23. 1). Luke gives the impression that Simon was overcome by the superiority of Phillip's miracles and continued with him for a time (8:13). But Irenaeus omits this aspect entirely although he was careful to include a similar period of coexistence between Tatian and Justin (1. 28. 1). These three points are largely concerned with silence on the part of Irenaeus that is strange when his purpose in presenting Simon is considered.

With regard to the individual heretics apart from the question of their origin, Irenaeus notes that they have problems with unity and plurality among themselves. His comments on the reasons for the diversity in their teaching indicate that he is primarily concerned with the combination of borrowed principles and adaptation of Scripture that worked together to produce a variety of systems. He sees the personal attitudes of the heretics as being behind their system-building

in that their claims to possess superior wisdom left them with no checks upon the possible number of expressions that could be constructed. Their moral character is regarded by Irenaeus as a disclosure of the nature of their teachings and of the intent of their mission. As for the destiny of the heretics, it is surprising to find Irenaeus, the heresiologist, holding out the same possibility and conditions of repentance to them that he holds out to their victims. Considerable ambiguity, if not inconsistency, exists in Irenaeus' statements regarding whether the heretics were being restored or initially saved. Part of the answer may lie in the centrality and nature of Irenaeus' recapitulation theory, wherein all men are in some sense being restored to the Church, whether once there or not. Yet the precise nature of the relationship of the heretic to the Church is probably the most perplexing issue in Against Heresies.

Irenaeus cites no one particular criterion by which false teaching is to be identified and refuted. He employs many criteria such as Scripture, reason, and perhaps the most dreaded of all, the practice of making the heretics face themselves by the use of parody. His citation of the Valentinians as the key to refuting all other heresies is interesting in that the Valentinians are not also given as an origin for heresy. But Irenaeus places the overriding importance upon the simplicity of the Rule of Faith, and the inconsistency and insufficiency of heretical exegesis and application when measured by it. In his view, the heretics were coming short of the work that could not be altered.

Unity and universality function for Irenaeus in enabling the Church to stand against the heretics as each notion serves to comple-

ment the other. He bases arguments upon each, and he attributes his concept of authority to that which he believes will preserve these characteristics best. But he encounters difficulties again in placing so much emphasis on deriving that authority from apostolic succession. His argument to the effect that the heretics are later than the first bishops in the succession (5. 20. 1) does not match his account of Simon Magus, as has been seen, nor does it match his recognition of John as a contemporary of the Nicolaitanes (1. 26. 3) and of Cerinthus (3. 3. 4). Moreover, his use of the succession encounters problems with the notion of false presbyters in 4. 26. 2-5, and whether or not God placed them in the Church and thus in the succession. But for Irenaeus, the concept of authority is not based on apostolic succession in and of itself. On the contrary, it is intertwined with other concepts of authority based on Scripture, tradition, and the Rule of Faith. So just as he recognizes no single origin for heresy nor a single criterion for refutation of heretical teaching, he likewise recognizes no single concept of authority for the Church.

It may indeed be questioned whether Irenaeus has a particular emphasis of overarching importance at all. The manner in which he blends his concepts in assaulting the heretics presents difficulties in isolating one concept that is significant above the others. Yet in looking at his work as a whole, the status of the heretics as being in fundamental opposition to the Church permeates every part of Against Heresies. Irenaeus may feel at liberty to satirize the foolishness of the Valentinians while he gives the Marcionites only the most severe rebuffs. He may expose the heretics either on the basis of their origins or by showing their commonality with Valentinus. But no matter

what method he chooses to use, it is plain that, for Irenaeus, the heretics and the Church are at opposing poles as a matter of present reality which constitutes a danger to the flock of God.

It is at this level where the most apparent quality of Irenaeus' work is seen, and that is its pastoral quality. He does not function as an abstract theologian surveying a potential problem with detachment. As Turner says:

His method of argument was paratactic rather than systematic, and, though he can offer a shrewd criticism of some aspects of Gnosticism and expound the orthodox Rule of Faith with insight and clarity, his conclusion is a challenge rather than a refutation, a 'Choose ye this day whom ye will serve' rather than a Quod est absurdum.²³

Against Heresies is a very human work, in spite of the tedious explication of the heretical teachings. For the material itself shows the intensity with which Irenaeus regarded his task. His flock is in danger of suffering corruption and dissolution by means of opposing influences, and he intends to oppose those influences himself with whatever is required. Thus he puts his anti-heretical concepts together not in accordance with a preconceived system but rather according to the needs of his people for protection and of his correspondent for information. He is a pastor performing a pastor's task, and in realizing this, one also recognizes the true personal motivation behind his work as that of a loving concern for the people of God.

²³Turner, p. 411.

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