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The Doctrine of the Recapitulation in the Theology of Irenaeus of Lyons

Andritsopoulos

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THE DOCTRINE OF THE RECAPITULATION
IN
THE THEOLOGY OF IRENAEUS OF LYONS

by

Apostolos N. Andritsopoulos

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate College
in partial fulfillment
of the
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Apostolos N. Andritsopoulos
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INTRODUCTION

The Primitive Church did not engage in philosophical theology. It lived on its traditions and the revelations of the spirit expressed through prophets and teachers. Theological teachers with a background of scholarly training who strove to defend, establish and develop Christian truth, appeared only in the course of the second century. This development is inseparable from the concept of Hellenistic culture, in particular the Greek concept of Logos.

The Greek influence on the Church, was very great both in the area of Church beliefs and practices, since the Church had become detached from its native soil, spread to the Roman Empire, and become part of its worldwide civilization. The acceptance of the Greek philosophical legacy was a vital factor in the creation of what we now call theology.

Jean Danielou in his *Theology of Jewish Christianity* opens with the statement that "Three worlds went to the making of the Christian Church, three visions, and expressions of truth—the Jewish, the Hellenistic and the Latin;
and each of them produced its own distinctive theology.¹

Christian thought was largely shaped and formed by the theological works of fathers who were inevitably influenced by the cultural matrix of their times.

The conflict between Christianity and Classical Culture was a conflict of world views; thus, as the conflict intensified and Christian thought was challenged, apologists emerged to defend Christianity. "Apologists" is the term that describes those fathers of the church who emerged as defenders of the "correct faith" whenever it was attacked. Their authority was accepted as valid by the church and by the end of the second century was added to the earlier and more evident authority of the scripture. They considered themselves the exponents of divine truth, which they felt was their duty to preserve in the local churches and preach to the world at large. They also thought of themselves as the authorized teachers of the Church, as Christian philosophers, and enlightened interpreters of the Scriptures, which they thought contained God's saving

One of these teachers of the Church was Irenaeus of Lyons. The specific purpose of this study is to examine the doctrine of Recapitulation in his work Against Heresies. First, I shall present a summary presentation of the influence of Judaic, Greek and Christian theology on the formation of Christian thought. Next follows an exposition of the life and works of St. Irenaeus demonstrating his conception of the meaning of Recapitulation in the life of Christ. Then I shall discuss Irenaeus' analogy between Christ and Adam in the light of the Scripture. Finally, I shall show Justin Martyr's influence on Irenaeus, specifically considering the originality of Irenaeus' conception of the Theory of Recapitulation.
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CHAPTER I

JUDAISM, HELLENISM - CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY
AND IRENAEUS

Judaism's Contribution to Christian Thought

In order to better understand Irenaeus and his Recapitulation theory, it is appropriate to examine briefly the historical background of the early Church, especially the development of its thought. Without any doubt Christianity is indebted to Judaism from which it sprang and out of which it began to grow. It is generally agreed that Judaism influenced all aspects of the growing church, including its liturgy, its ministry and above all its teaching. Kelly states that "Judaism was the cradle in which Christianity was nurtured, the source to which it was uniquely indebted."\(^2\)

To evaluate this influence we must consider the Hellenistic version of Judaism or Alexandrian Judaism, for it

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introduced Hellenistic culture into the early church.

Greek ideas had always attracted
the Jews of that cosmopolitan city,
set at the frontiers between East and
West, and it was here that the most
thoroughgoing attempt was made to
interpret Jewish theology in terms
of Hellenistic philosophy.³

Jewish Hellenism supplied the method of allegorization
and the concept of Logos. The Old Testament's image of
God being surrounded by clouds and darkness, translated in-
to philosophical concepts refers to a Being that human
sight cannot see and human thought cannot perceive. The
conception of God's transcendence became stronger for it
affirmed the concept of His unity; as well as the concept
of His silence. This created the need of a mediator be-
tween man and God and this is achieved by the philosophical
explanation of the concept of Logos. Christian writers
and thinkers before the Apologists were Jewish and through
them Jewish-Hellenistic thought takes an important place
in early Christianity.

Judaism - Hellenism and Irenaeus

This thought of Jewish-Hellenistic Christianity pene-

³Danielou, p. 19.
trates into the minds of the early fathers of the Church and therefore this same influence is also reflected in the thought of Irenaeus.

For example, the concept of the one God, the need for a mediator and the identity of Jesus with God's Logos can be seen clearly in Irenaeus' following passages:

It is proper, then, that I should begin with the first and most important head, that is, God the Creator...since He is the only God, the only Lord, the only Creator, the only Father, alone containing all things, and Himself commanding all things into existence.4

and

For in no other way could we have learned the things of God, unless our Master, existing as the Word, had become Man.5

It is this need for a mediator who is to reveal God's will to man and the affirmation that Christ is the mediator through whom alone man can find the Truth and his salvation, which for Irenaeus constitutes the basis of the Recapitulation Theory.


5Irenaeus, 5, 1, p. 526.
Irenaeus of Lyons is by far the most important of the theologians of the second century. The exact year of his birth is not known, but it was probably between the years 140 and 160. His native city was in Asia Minor, and most probably it was Smyrna because in his letter to the Roman presbyter, Florinus, he tells us that in his early youth he had listened to the sermons of Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna. His letter reveals such an accurate knowledge of this martyr and bishop that it would not have been gained except through personal acquaintance:

I remember the events of those times much better than those of more recent occurrence. As the studies of our youth, growing with our minds, unite with them so firmly, that I can tell the very place where the blessed Polycarp was accustomed to sit and discourse; and also his entrances, his walks, the complexion of his life, and the form of his body, and his conversations with the people,...as also his familiarity with those that had seen the Lord... These things, by the mercy of God, and the opportunity then afforded me, I attentively heard, noting them down, not on paper, but in my heart; and these same facts I am always in the habit, by
the Grace of God, to recall faithfully to mind.®

From the content of this letter, it is evident that through Polycarp of Smyrna, Irenaeus was in touch with the Apostolic Age. It is not known why Irenaeus left Asia Minor and went to Gaul. In the year 177, Irenaeus, who by now was a presbyter of the Church of Lyons, was sent to Pope Eleutherius in Rome to mediate in a dispute that had risen in the Church. He carried with him a letter of excellent recommendation to the Pope from the Church of Lyons.7 During the controversy concerning the celebration of Easter between Rome and Constantinople, Irenaeus pleaded with the Bishops for peace. For this Eusebius states that "he lived up to his name as a true peacemaker."8

The date of Irenaeus' death is not recorded. It is certain that he was Bishop of Lyons, in France, during the last quarter of the second century.9

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7Irenaeus, p. 309.

8Eusebius, 5, 24, p. 199.

9Irenaeus, p. 312.
In addition to the administration of his diocese, Irenaeus dedicated himself to the task of refuting the Gnostic heresies by means of his extensive writings. The main work of Irenaeus has the title *The Detection and Overthrow of the* (Falsely Called) *Gnosis*, usually called *Against Heresies*.\(^1\)

In book one Irenaeus starts with a detailed description of the doctrine of the Valentiens, and only after he shatters them with polemic, does he take up the beginnings of Gnosticism. He speaks of Simon Magus and Menanter and the other leaders of Gnostic schools and sects, such as: Satornil, Basilides, Carpocrates, Cerinthus, the Ebionites, the Nicolaides, Cerdon, Marcion, Tatian and the Encratites. He also emphasizes that these names do not represent all those who in one way or other have departed from the truth.

In the second book Irenaeus refutes the gnosis of the Valentians and Marcionites by the means of reason. In his third book he refutes the gnostics by defending the doctrine of God and Christ. In his fourth book he bases his polemic on the sayings of the Lord. The fifth

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\(^1\)Irenaeus, p. 313.
book treats almost exclusively with the resurrection of the flesh, which was denied by all the Gnostics. In conclusion he speaks of the Millenium, and it is here that Irenaeus proves himself to be a chiliast. His whole work lacks a clear arrangement, and there is no unity of thought. This, plus the fact of frequent repetition, has led many to think that the author wrote the work intermittently.\textsuperscript{11}

The Latin version, in which the complete text is intact, is preserved in a number of manuscripts. Quite a number of fragments of the original, which was written in Greek are preserved in the works of Hippolytus, Eusebius and especially of Epiphanius.\textsuperscript{12} Additional fragments have been found on papyrs. From all these fragments, almost the whole of the complete text can be reconstructed. A literal translation in Armenian of the fourth and fifth books was discovered and edited by E. Ter-Minassiantz, in 1904 at Erevan Armenia, twenty-three fragments intact in Syriac translations.


\textsuperscript{12} Irenaeus, p. 311.
Besides this main work of Irenaeus, we possess another, The Demonstration of the Apostolic Teaching. For a long time no more than the title of this work was known. In 1904, the entire text was discovered in an Armenian version by Ter-Minassiantz, who edited it in 1907 in Erevan, Armenia, and it was republished in 1919 in Paris, edited by R. Graffin and F. Nau. In the Apostolic Teaching Irenaeus deals with the essential content of the Christian faith. In the first book of this work, Irenaeus describes the whole guidance accorded to mankind by God, from Adam to Christ. In his second book he adduces proofs for the truth of the Christian revelation from the prophesies of the Old Testament, and presents Jesus as the Son of David and the Messias. There is no polemic in the Apostolic Teaching, but rather an exhortation to his readers to live in accordance with the faith.

Irenaeus is credited for other works, but unfortunately they have survived only in fragments or we know of them only by their titles.

Meaning of the Word "Recapitulation"

The heart of Irenaeus entire theology is his theory
Recapitulation (ανακατασκευασία). Salvation is a matter of fundamental importance to Irenaeus; in his doctrine of Recapitulation, Irenaeus has a most unique exposition in which God intervened in this world to work out the salvation of men. Salvation is attained through Jesus, who, as a New Man, liberates us from death and attains for all men immortality. "But as He is one and the same who formed us at the beginning and sent His Son at the end, the Lord did perform His command, being made of a woman, by destroying our adversary and perfecting man after the image and likeness of God."¹³ Thus according to Irenaeus, God made man immortal, the distinguishing quality of the divine nature being its superiority to death.

Irenaeus was the first of the fathers to emphasize the fall of Adam, and he maintained that salvation is necessary because of it. The Apologists had spoken of the Incarnation as meeting the needs of the actual sins of the heathen, not of Original Sin. The contrast of Irenaeus with the Apologists at this point is particularly marked and reveals the vast difference between their understanding

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¹³Irenaeus, 5, 21, p. 549.
of human needs and of the meaning of Christianity. The fall, Irenaeus says in his Against Heresies,\textsuperscript{14} had two effects: it brought man under the control of Satan and it deprived him of the divine likeness or immortality with which he was originally endowed. If then man is to be saved, he must be released from the control of Satan and must regain his immortal nature.

Release from the control of Satan is made possible by the work of Christ, a work of perfect obedience. Going step by step up the ladder which Adam descended when he fell, Christ accomplished a work of Recapitulation, thus setting man free from the bondage into which he had been brought by sin.\textsuperscript{15}

The Latin word \textit{recapitulatio} comes from the translation of the Greek word contained in the original text, \textit{ἀνακεφαλαίωσις}. This term derives from the word \textit{κεφαλαίον} (\textit{capitulum}), meaning that in which is the whole of a thing: \textit{κεφαλαίον} is that in which the parts of a thing have unity, the whole containing the parts.

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[Irenaeus, 3, 23, p. 455.]
\item[Irenaeus, 3, 23, p. 456.]
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Καταγίζω expresses the action by which anything comes to its καταγίζω. In the verb ἀνακαταγίζω the preposition ἀνά has not the proper sense of sursum, "upwards" but the Latin re. ἀνακαταγίζω means to collect together again. It is then in the light of this, that we should briefly discuss the two New Testament occurrences of the verb ἀνακατάβαινα. Lawson\(^\text{17}\) cites Romans 13:9, "and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word" (ἐν τῷ ἔπαινῳ τούτῳ ἀνακατάβαινα), namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself", where Saint Paul teaches that that which before was separated and in parts in the law is now comprised in the commandment of love. This is an example of ἀνακατάβαινα.

In Ephesians 1:10 it is the intention that Christ is the κατάβαινα of the communion of God and man. Recapitulation is the repetition by Christ of the actions of Adam in the same manner or in reverse, that He may subject all things to Himself. Thus Recapitulation is to unite under


\(^{17}\) Lawson, p. 140.
a single head, or to restore to the original, or to make a new start, or to bring to a climax, or again to go over the ground a second time.

The Theory of Recapitulation in Irenaeus

The idea of Recapitulation combines the thoughts of evolution and of supernatural intervention. It contains the idea of a long course of development, but not in a straight line. It is a development which leads back to the beginning and which yet finishes at a higher life.¹⁸ The most comprehensive exposition of Irenaeus' Recapitulation Theory is given by Beuzart. To Beuzart Recapitulation appears to be "the restoration of humanity into the blessed state of collectivity by Christ, the Second Adam."¹⁹ To accomplish this, Christ went through experiences parallel to those of Adam, but with the opposite outcome in each case.

God rehabilitates the earlier divine plan for the salvation of mankind, which was interrupted by the fall of Adam, and gathers up his entire work from the beginning to

¹⁸Lawson, p. 142.

¹⁹Beuzart, Paul, Essai sur la Theologie d'Irene, Paris 1908, as quoted in Lawson, p. 143.
renew, to restore, to reorganize it, in his incarnate Son, who in this way becomes for us a second Adam. Since by the fall of man the whole human race was lost, the Son of God had to become man in order to effect as such the re-creation of mankind.

The things which had perished possessed flesh and blood. For the Lord, taking dust from the earth, molded man; and it was upon his behalf that all the dispensations of the Lord's advent took place. He had himself, therefore, flesh and blood, recapitulating in himself not a certain other, but that original handiwork of the Father, seeking out that thing which had perished. ²⁰

And again Irenaeus writes regarding the work of Christ:

He has therefore, in his work of recapitulation summed up all things by waging war against our enemy, and crushing him who at the beginning had led us away captive in Adam... in order that, as our species went down to death through a vanquished man, so we may accent to life again through a victorious one. ²¹

By this recapitulation of the original man, not only

Adam personally, but the whole human race was renovated

²⁰Irenaeus, 5, 14, p. 541.
²¹Irenaeus, 5, 21, p. 548, 549.
and restored:

But when He became incarnate, and was made man, He commenced afresh the long line of human beings, and furnished us in a brief comprehensive manner with salvation; so that what we had lost in Adam—namely to be according to the image and likeness of God—that we might recover in Christ Jesus.  

Everything is reversed and also the evil effects of the disobedience of the first Adam are destroyed.

God recapitulated in himself the ancient formation of man, that he might kill sin, deprive death of its power and vivify man.  

According to Irenaeus, the work of Christ is first and foremost a victory over the powers that hold mankind in bondage: sin, death and the devil. The victory of Christ creates a new situation, bringing their rule to an end, and setting men free from their dominion.

Irenaeus elaborates and describes in magnificent detail how this victory was won by Christ. Because he says Christ lived a life of sinless obedience to the calling of God and endured persecution and grievous suffering, His life had proved adequate to pioneer the way of salvation. St.

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\[22\] Irenaeus, 3, 18, p. 446.

\[23\] Irenaeus, 3, 18, p. 448.
Paul says it was the way of God "in bringing many sons to
| glory to make the Pioneer of their salvation perfect
| through suffering." In expounding his doctrine of Recapit­
| ulation Irenaeus follows Paul exactly. Christ was a
| victorious Champion of the human race through his obedience.

In detailing the career of the heavenly Champion of
| man, Irenaeus writes that Satan was conquered by means of
| human nature. "The word of God, however, the Maker of all
| things, conquering him (Satan) by means of human nature." Irenaeus also wrote that

....His Son was His word, by whom he
| founded all things, and that He in
| the last times was made a man among
| men, that he reformed the human race,
| but destroyed and conquered the enemy
| of men, and gave to His handiwork
| victory against the adversary.

Christ, Irenaeus adds, bound Satan, the strong man, and
| spoiled him of the human race, his ill-gotten gains. "He
| bound the strong men and spoiled his goods." Then he adds

\[24\] The Holy Bible, King James Version, Cleveland: The

\[25\] Irenaeus, 5, 24, p. 553.

\[26\] Irenaeus, 4, 24, p. 495.

\[27\] Irenaeus, 3, 23, p. 456.
that those who were in the power of Satan were in the power of death. "Wherefore, when the foe was conquered in his turn, Adam received new life."\textsuperscript{28}

Irenaeus says that Christ fasted "that His opponent might have an opportunity of attacking Him."\textsuperscript{29} He made himself one with man to the extent of laying Himself open to real temptation of the Devil, and under these conditions, Christ kept the commandments of the Law perfectly. Irenaeus states emphatically that this victory of Christ robbed Satan of his powers and saved man.

The foregoing constitutes the core of Irenaeus' thoughts--but to fully understand them they must be applied--which is what the next chapter offers by exposing what Irenaeus refers to as analogy.

\textsuperscript{28}Irenaeus, 3, 23, p. 457.

\textsuperscript{29}Irenaeus, 5, 21, p. 549.
CHAPTER II
THE ANALOGY

Comparison: Christ vs. Adam

The saving work of Christ by His championship through obedience is further illuminated in detail by a consideration of what Irenaeus calls the "analogy." Here the idea of ἀνακάτεργασία as "going over the ground again" comes to view.

Thus an analogy between the careers of Christ's obedience and Adam's disobedience may be drawn. Irenaeus shows that every circumstance in the career of Adam was duplicated in the career of Christ, and every point where the former made a wrong choice, the latter made the counter-balancing right choice.

Irenaeus states at the very beginning that in their birth in flesh they (Adam and Christ) were virgin born. For he writes "And as the protoplast himself, Adam, had his substance from untilled and as yet virgin soil."30 Here Irenaeus cites Genesis, "For God had not yet sent rain, and man had not tilled the ground," (Genesis 2:5) and

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30Irenaeus, 3, 21, p. 454.
Adam was formed by the hands of God, that is by the Word of God, for "All things were made by Him." (John 1:3). Thus referring to the creation of Adam and the birth of Christ Irenaeus states: "And the Hand took dust from the earth and formed man; so did He who is the Word, recapitulating Adam in Himself, rightly receive a birth, enabling Him to gather up Adam into Himself, from Mary who was as yet a virgin...the analogy having been preserved."31

Mary's and Christ's Obedience, Source of Redemption

This idea of recapitulation also strongly influenced Irenaeus' doctrine regarding Mary. In his parallelism of Eve and Mary he writes:

In accordance with this design, Mary the Virgin, is found obedient, saying "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to the Word." But Eve was disobedient; for she did not obey when as yet she was a virgin. And even as she, having indeed a husband, Adam, but being nevertheless as yet a virgin...having become disobedient was made the cause of death both to herself and the entire human race; so also did Mary, having a man betrothed (to her) and being nevertheless a virgin, by yielding obedience, become the cause of salvation, both to herself and

31 Ibid.
the whole human race. And on this account does the law term a woman betrothed to a man the wife of him who had betrothed her, although she was yet a virgin; thus indicating the back reference from Mary to Eve, because what is joined together could not otherwise be put asunder than by inversion of the process by which these hands of union had arisen, so that the former knots be cancelled by the latter, that the latter set the former again at liberty. And it has in fact happened, that the first compact looses from the second tie, but that the second tie takes the position of the first, which had been cancelled. For this reason did the Lord declare that the first should in truth be the last, and the last first. And the prophet, too, indicates the same, saying "Instead of fathers, children have been born unto thee. For the Lord, having been born the first-begotten of the dead" and receiving into the life of God, he having been made himself the beginning of those that live, as Adam became the beginning of those who die. Therefore also Luke commencing the geneology with the Lord, carried it back to Adam, indicating that it was he who regenerated them into the gospel of life, and not they him. And thus also it was that the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosened by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, this did the Virgin Mary set free through faith.\(^{32}\)

Thus, the disobedience of a woman provided the historical occasion of the Fall. In like manner, the obedience of a woman provided the occasion of the Incarnation of the One

\(^{32}\)Irenaeus, 3, 22, p. 455.
who recapitulated the action, exactly analogous to the obedience of Christ. She is the subsidiary Champion.

According to Irenaeus, the procedure of redemption follows exactly the course of events of the fall of man. For every faulty step which man took, having been seduced by Satan, God exacts from him a compensation in order to make his victory over the seducer complete. Mankind receives a new progenitor in place of the first Adam. But since the first woman was also implicated in the fall by her disobedience, the healing process starts also by the obedience of a woman. By giving life to the New Adam, she becomes the true Eve, the true mother of the living, and the causa salutis. In this way Mary becomes the advocata Evae:

And if the former (Eve) did disobey God, yet the latter (Mary) was persuaded to be obedient to God, in order that the Virgin Mary might become the patroness (advocate) of the Virgin Eve. And thus, as the human race fell into bondage to death by means of a virgin, so it is rescued by a virgin; virginal disobedience having been balanced in the opposite scale by virginal obedience.33

33Irenaeus, 5, 19, p. 547.
Moreover, Irenaeus extends the parallelism between Eve and Mary even further. He is so convinced that Mary is the new mother of mankind that he calls her the womb of mankind. Thus he teaches the universal motherhood of Mary. He speaks of the birth of Christ as "the pure one opening purely that pure womb which regenerates men unto God."\(^{34}\)

The analogy is further traced in Christ's own obedience. Regarding the temptations, Irenaeus writes:

For as at the beginning it was the means of food, the enemy, persuaded man, although not suffering hunger, to transgress God's commandments, so in the end he did not succeed in persuading Him that was hungered to take the food that proceeded from God... the corruption of man, therefore, which occurred in paradise by both our first parents eating was done away with by the Lord's want of food in this world.\(^{35}\)

So at the end, in doing away with that disobedience which had taken place at the beginning by the occasion of a tree, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; rectifying that disobedience which had occurred by reason of a fall through that obedience which was wrought out upon the tree.\(^{36}\)

\(^{34}\)Irenaeus, 4, 33, p. 509.

\(^{35}\)Irenaeus, 4, 21, p. 549.

\(^{36}\)Irenaeus, 5, 16, p. 544.
Another way of expounding Recapitulation, as "going over the ground again" was to show that Christ shared successively every part of human experience. So His birth "hallowed our birth" 37 "He passed through every stage of life, restoring to all communion with God." 38 For He came to save all by means of Himself—all, I say...infants, and children, and boys, and youths, and old men. He therefore passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, thus sanctifying infants; a child for children, thus sanctifying those who are of this age...So likewise He was an old man for old men, that He might be a perfect Master for all...Then at last He came on to death, itself. 39

The last human experience shared by Jesus was his burial. "It was for this reason, too, that the Lord descended into the regions beneath the earth, preaching His advent there also, and the remission of sins received by those who believe in Him." 40 His descent into hell was the salvation

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38 Irenaeus, 3, 18, p. 448.

39 Irenaeus, 2, 22, p. 391.

40 Irenaeus, 4, 27, p. 499.
of them that had passed away. 41

Plan of Salvation

Recapitulation provides Irenaeus a doctrinal system in which an adequate place is found for the whole human career and the human character of our hand. At times, perhaps, the analogy between Christ and Adam runs off into unprofitable details, but underlying these comparisons, however strained, there is a religious principle of paramount importance. The plan of salvation is to be seen working itself out not only in one or two great events like the Incarnation and the Cross, but also in the events of Christ's life in general. The Son of God became incarnate in order that He might persevere from childhood to manhood in a life of perfect moral obedience. He ran the whole gamut of human experience.

The value of this affirmation may be made plain by a comparison with the work of St. Athanasius on the incarnation. In this he stands for many others. Like Irenaeus,

41Irenaeus, 4, 22, p. 493.
Athanasius wrote to vindicate the Incarnation of God the Son as the necessary foundation for and central fact in a Gospel of Redemption.

For men's mind finally fallen to things of sense, the Word disguised Himself by appearing in a body, that He might, as Man transfer men to Himself and centre their senses on Himself, and, men seeing Him thenceforth as Man, persuade them by the works He did that He is not Man only, but also God, and the Word and Wisdom of The True God.42

However, the sole reason Athanasius could find for the continuance of the Incarnate One upon earth for the course of a complete human life was that, if He had become incarnate and died and risen and ascended to heaven all in a single moment, then the human race would not have known that the Incarnation had happened. The bare fact of the Incarnation was all that was necessary to work the salvation of man, presumably because the salvation of the world was conceived of as a semi-mechanical inoculation of humanity with the Divine.

For St. Irenaeus, on the other hand, there was a good

reason for the Savior's continuing and complete human life. Christ was much more than the bearer to earth of a mysterious heavenly substance. He was above all a Champion, who wrought out human salvation by a life of active moral travail.

Recapitulation Translated into Hellenistic Terms

Characteristic of St. Irenaeus is a powerful doctrine of the Saving Work of Christ as the Divine-human Champion of man. This is most essentially associated with the idea of Recapitulation. Irenaeus, however, finds it quite natural also to express the conception of the Deity and relate the same to the salvation of man in the Greek terms which are more associated with the secular culture of his time. In doing this he follows the Apologists in expounding Christ in terms of the Word. This is not as typical of Irenaeus as the drama of salvation, nor is it so central in his system, but an exposition of his doctrine of salvation would be incomplete without considering it. For even this Biblical and Hellenistic dogma of the word (Logos), Irenaeus expresses and translates through his

\[43\] Irenaeus, 3, 22, p. 454; 3, 8, p. 421; 3, 11, p. 426; 4, 24, p. 495; 4, 32, p. 506.

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Recapitulation theory.

The dominating conception here is that man is to be made God or a son of God.

For it was for this end that the Word of God was made man, and He who was the Son of God became the Son of man, that man, having been taken into the Word, and receiving the adoption, might become the Son of God. 44

This process of "divinization" may be represented in two ways. In the first place, St. Irenaeus may be found teaching that man is to be divinized by beholding the vision of God in the Incarnate Son. A Biblical motif was ready to hand as the medium of expression for this doctrine. The Genesis Creation story taught that man was made after the image and likeness of God. In some passages Irenaeus expresses the opinion that the "image of God" in man had been lost as the result of the Fall.

Secondly, the Incarnate Son was God made visible to man. It followed that the work of Christ could be represented as a restoration, from the original model, of the defaced or obliterated portrait of God in man. The beginn-

44Irenaeus, 3, 19, p. 448.
ing was used to re-portray the end. Here is Recapitulation translated into Greek Terms, and defined as showing the image after which man was made. So Irenaeus writes:

The Lord, summing up afresh this man, took the same dispensation of entry into flesh ...that He also should forth the likeness of Adam's entry into flesh, and that there should be that which was written in the beginning, man after the image and likeness of God.45

The sight of the Image of God restored to man the lost divine image.

For in times long past, it was said that man was created after the image of God, but it was not shown; for the Word was as yet invisible, after whose image man was created. Wherefore also he did easily lose the similitude. When, however, the Word of God became flesh, He confirmed both these: for He both showed forth the image... and He re-established the similitude after a sure manner, by assimilating man to the invisible Father through means of the visible Word.46

"Regeneration" and "Adoption" are for St. Irenaeus names for the union of God and Man.

Or how shall man pass into God, unless God has (first) passed into man?... or

45Irenaeus, 5, 12, p. 538.

46Irenaeus, 5, 16, p. 544.
how shall they receive adoption from God if they remain in this generation which is naturally possessed by man in this world? Irenaeus expounding his recapitulation theory uses as equivalent terms the words: regeneration, and adoption, which in turn represent for him divinization.

Those who are joined to God are also "the perfect" and the "spiritual." They possess the image and likeness of God. The most usual expressions to denote the effect of divinization are "incorruptibility" and "immortality" or "life." These words appear constantly. The following quotations from Irenaeus characteristically shows the way in which these various terms are used as parallels and interchangeable equivalents.

But, being ignorant of Him who from the Virgin is Emmanuel, they are deprived of His gift, which is eternal life; and not receiving the incorruptible Word, they remain in mortal flesh, and are debtors to death, not obtaining the antidote of life. To whom the Word says...He speaks undoubtedly these words to those who have not received the gift of adoption, but who

47 Irenaeus, 4, 33, p. 507.
48 Irenaeus, 4, 38, p. 521.
49 Irenaeus, 5, 1, p. 527.
50 Irenaeus, 4, 18, p. 446.
despise the incarnation of the pure generation of the Word of God, defraud human nature of promotion into God, and prove themselves ungrateful to the Word of God, who became flesh for them. For it was for this end that the Word of God was made man...that man, having been taken up into the Word, and receiving the adoption, might become the son of God. For by no other means could we have attained to incorruptibility and immortality, unless we had been united to incorruptibility and immortality.  

Irenaeus - Johannine Writings

Many scholars have emphasized the connection of this part of the theology of St. Irenaeus that is the names for divinization with the Johannine writings. Bousset supports the view that Irenaeus is distinctively Johannine. He writes that "consciously or unconsciously, Irenaeus walks in the path of Johannine mysticism." The chapter in which St. Irenaeus celebrates the self-revealing love of God is hailed by Bousset as one in which as nowhere else, Irenaeus shows his personal piety. Such phrases

51 Irenaeus, 3, 19, p. 448.


53 Ibid.

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For as those who see the light are within the light, and partake of its brilliancy; even so, those who see God are in God, and receive of His splendor...Fellowship with God is to know God.  

are taken as illustrative of the theme that the mystical piety of divinization through the vision of God, which is to be constructed from separate fragments in the Johannine literature, is here met in a vigorous and convincing form. This clear expression of the divinization ideal is influenced by the Hellenistic thought. When Irenaeus roundly says that men are to become gods one cannot deny the connection with a piety rooted in polytheistic ground.

The relation of St. Irenaeus to the Johannine expressions of the Gospel is surely correctly described by Brunner, who claims that in Irenaeus is united the whole New Testament witness, the Johannine and the Pauline.  

In his two-sided expression of the doctrine of God, and of the way

54Irenaeus, 4, 20, p. 489.

of salvation, St. Irenaeus treads in the same path as the Fourth Evangelist. In each, the two-sidedness is due to the employment of the terminology of Greek thought as the vehicle for Christian truth. The Fourth Gospel and Irenaeus are alike in that the Greek air blows through both. However, development has also taken place. The whole conception of "divinization by the vision of the Divine," with its allied notions, occurs in a far more emphatic and systematic form in the writings of Irenaeus. One might say that he is more avowedly part of the Gentile world than is any New Testament writer. To this extent Lawson says that Bousset is justified in his claim that that which is to be constructed from separate fragments in the Johannine literature is in Irenaeus to be met within a vigorous and convincing form. At the same time, this development is amply complemented by the doctrine of Christus Victor, which is so largely a development from Pauline origins and which has roots in the teachings of Christ. Thus, although St. Irenaeus moves with confidence in the Greek-speaking world, he is by no means prevented thereby from a full appreciation of those parts of the New Testament where the Greek wind does not blow (e.g., he is a Millenarian). This is a singular mark of the versatility
of his spirit, and of the value of the tradition for which he speaks.

Recapitulation in Relation to Old and New Testaments

The doctrine of the saving activity of God in Christ Jesus is a Biblical one in St. Irenaeus. As the conception of God is rooted in the Old Testament, so this is grounded firmly upon the New. The establishment of this proposition is of the greatest possible importance in coming to understanding and evaluation of Irenaeus, the more so as his work has been so widely represented as a stage in the departure of the Catholic Church and theology from primitive and Biblical Christianity. The investigation raises two questions, a wrong answer to either of which will confuse the issue. They are: what is the New Testament doctrine of the Saving Work of Christ?, and what is the teaching of St. Irenaeus? The Doctrine of Christ the Champion, the obedience, is not indeed the whole of the teaching of Irenaeus upon salvation, but it is the most vital and constructive element. In his doctrine of the Saving Work of Christ by Recapitulation, St. Irenaeus is a sound Biblicist. The Cross had not the significance for
Irenaeus that it had for Paul. Because, while the death of Christ is proved a necessary part of the Recapitulation, the forgiveness of sins is not particularly connected with the Cross. The death of Christ has no more connection with salvation than his resistance to temptation. We may safely affirm that Recapitulation is, in the light of Christ's sayings regarding the conquest of evil and the Evil One (Matthew 12:27, Mark 3:2, Luke 11:22-2) a legitimate interpretation of some very important elements in Christ's own attitude, to his Messianic career and the Kingdom of God. There is, furthermore, the closest parallel between the work of Christ as interpreted by St. Paul and by St. Irenaeus. The Apostle preached that the power of a manifold bondage to the Satanic powers and demons, to the Law with its curse, and to the Sin and Death, had been broken by the victorious Championship of the Incarnate Son of God, in His life of sinless obedience (Colossians 1:13, I Corinthians 15:25, Colossians 2:15).

The essence of the doctrine of Recapitulation is Irenaeus is just the same, with the significant exception that the Law with its curse no longer figures as part of the bondage. The reason for this is not far to seek. St. Irenaeus, and the Gentile Church for which he speaks, had not been through the bitter experience reflected in Romans 7:7-25. Unlike St. Paul, he had not been brought
up to accept as a cherished religious tradition that the way to God was to attempt "the righteousness of the Law." Irenaeus had never arrived at the desolating realization that this was for him the way of spiritual death. Irenaeus did not vehemently rebel against the Mosaic Law. On the contrary, his spiritual adversaries were Gnostics, who would cut the Church and her theology completely adrift from the Hebrew religion of the Old Testament. It was therefore a powerful polemic interest with him to assert the continuity of the law and the Gospel. It would therefore have been most surprising had we found St. Irenaeus sharing St. Paul's severe view of the Law.

Thus in conclusion, although there are different approaches and emphases between Paul and Irenaeus, each addressing himself to different problems as tempered by their contemporary times, the seeming disagreement between the two is because of the problems each is concerned with, yet, there is agreement between them in the saving work of Christ which through his Theory of Recapitulation Irenaeus presents.
Recapitulation Linked to Church and Apostolic Tradition

The doctrine of the conquest of Satan, and of the analogy of the New and Old Adam, has been described as mythological. For Bousset, it is the ancient song of the return of the primitive Golden Age, and a conception of the world-history as a drama played between the devil and man. The idea of the two acts of the race, in Adam and in Christ, certainly has a mythological color, as has the conquest of Satan. It must be borne in mind, however, that the mythology is Biblical and not classical. To St. Irenaeus the Golden Age was not the past one of the wistful Pagan. It was the Golden Age, always a future Golden Age, of the hopeful Hebrew prophets and apocalyptists.

Irenaeus' doctrine of the church is also linked to and expressed through his theory of recapitulation. God, according to him, sums up in Christ not only the past, but also the future. Therefore he made Him the Head of the entire Church in order to perpetuate through her His work of renovation until the end of the world. He writes:

56 Bousset, p. 439.
There is therefore, as I have pointed out, one God the Father, and one Christ Jesus, who came by means of the whole dispensational arrangements (connected with Him and gathered all things in Himself). But in every respect too, He is man, the formation of God; and thus visible, the incomprehensible being made comprehensible, the impassible becoming capable of suffering, and the Word being made man, thus summing up all things in Himself; so that as in super-celestial, spiritual, and invisible things, the Word of God is Supreme, so also in things visible and corporeal He might possess the supremacy, and taking to Himself the pre-eminence, as well as constituting Himself Head of the Church, He might draw all things to Himself at the proper time. 57

In addition, Irenaeus believes that the teaching of the Apostles continues to live unaltered. This tradition is the source and the form of the faith. It is the canon of truth. In his first book, Against Heresies, Chapter 10:12, he gives a description of the faith of the Church which follows closely the Apostolic Symbol. He further expresses his belief that only the Churches that were founded by the Apostles possess the charism of truth and that therefore, the heretics since they lack this qualification, do not have the truth in their teachings.

57Irenaeus, 3, 16, pp. 442-443.
Irenaeus saw that the redemption of the individual is affected by the Church and her sacraments in the name of Christ. "The sacrament is to nature what the new Adam is to the old."58 Perfection of the human being is attained in the sacraments, which are the climax of the recapitulation of creation in Christ. Baptism constitutes for man his rebirth to God. Irenaeus testifying to infant baptism says:

“For He came to save all through means of Himself—all, I say all, who through Him are born again to God—infants and children, and boys and youths, and old men.”59

Irenaeus believes in the literal—not allegorical—interpretation of scriptures. He says:

“If, however, any shall endeavor to allegorize (prophesies of this kind), they shall not be found consistent with themselves in all points, and shall be confused by the teaching of the very expressions (in question).”60


59 Irenaeus, 2, 22, p. 391.

60 Irenaeus, 5, 35, p. 565.
The literal interpretation is alone legitimate; no other part of Irenaeus' theology proves him directly more Biblical and Hebraic in inspiration, than when he deals with the apocalyptical scripture. He looks upon it with the firm belief that it must be taken Biblically literally and not allegorically. Irenaeus is attached to the hope of a terrestrial Millenial Kingdom. He believed that he was living in "last times."

But not, since the last times are (come upon us) 61 evil is spread abroad among men,...

He does not expect "the end" immediately but the last of the six days of creation each of one thousand years in progress. He writes:

The Lord, therefore recapitulating in Himself this day, underwent His sufferings upon the day preceding the Sabbath, that is, the sixth day of creation, on which day man was created; thus granting him a second creation by means of His passion, which is that (creation) out of death. And there are some, again, who relegate the death of Adam to the thousandth year, for since a day of the Lord is as a thousand years. 62

61 Irenaeus, 4, Pref., p. 462.

62 Irenaeus, 5, 23, 551.
With this in mind, Irenaeus declares:

> For in as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded. And for this reason the Scripture says: "Thus the heaven and the earth were finished, and all their adornment. And God brought to a conclusion upon the sixth day the works that He had made; and God rested upon the seventh day from all his works. (Genesis 2:2). This is an account of the things formerly created, as also it is a prophecy of what is to come. For the day of the Lord is as a thousand years (Peter 3:8). And in six days created things were completed; it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the six thousandth year.^[63]

As this end approaches, Irenaeus says that the anti-Christ will come to set up his kingdom. Here is a point that convinces him that he lives at the "last days" for he considers the Gnostics as part of the kingdom of the anti-Christ.

Therefore, the end is not far off. At that time, the Roman Empire will be dissolved into ten kingdoms, (the ten horns of Daniel 7:24). Satan then will supplant these, and rule at Jerusalem for his three and a half years in which days the Church will be persecuted. Irenaeus further states that the anti-Christ will aspire to displace all idols as

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^[63]Irenaeus, 5, 28, p. 557.
objects of worship "concentrating in himself (all) Satanic Apostacy." 64

And there is therefore in this beast, when he comes, a recapitulation made of all sorts of iniquity and of every deceit, in order that all apostate power, flowing into and being shut up in him, may be sent into the furnace of fire...in whom is concentrated the whole apostacy of six thousand years. 65

It is most interesting to observe that in this recapitulation there is something exactly parallel to the Recapitulation worked by Christ. Satan the representative head of the wicket, will constitute himself the champion of evil, and on being defeated all the power of evil will come to an end.

Irenaeus continues in saying that when Satan's allotted span is complete, the Lord will come to earth in power and glory, destroying Satan and casting him into the lake of fire. Then the resurrection of all will follow. By all he means the just and the sinners, but the latter will face judgment. 66

64Irenaeus, 5, 25, p. 553.
65Ibid.
66Irenaeus, 5, 28, pp. 556-557.
It is to be noticed that in this scheme the good and the evil rise together, and the Judgment takes place before the Millenial Reign of the Saints upon earth. This is derived from "it behoves the righteous first to receive the promise of the inheritance which God promised to the fathers, and to reign in it, when they rise again to behold God in this creation which is renovated, and that the judgment should take place afterwards."\(^{67}\)

Irenaeus, having stated the fate of the "wicked and heretics," in other words, their punishment, he exhibits his belief of a Millenial Kingdom, which is to be bodily and terrestrial. To him the Millenial Age is the seventh of the thousand-year "days of creation."

These are (to take place) in the times of the kingdom; that is, upon the seventh day...in which God rested from all the works which He created, which is the true Sabbath of the righteous, which they shall not be engaged in any earthly occupation.\(^{68}\)

Lawson cites that "Irenaeus views the history of the world as development from present imperfection to ultimate

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\(^{67}\)Irenaeus, 5, 32, p. 561.

\(^{68}\)Irenaeus, 5, 33, p. 562.
perfection. He passionately expressed his desire to see God's majesty and glory displayed to every creature.

In this chapter we have then examined Irenaeus' Recapitulation theory in which he parallels the life of Christ with the life of Adam the first man, and the life of Mary, Christ's mother, with the life of Eve, the first woman. We have also examined the aspect of Christ's obedience which made Christ the champion of men, bringing about the victory against evil; an exposition was then made of the plan of salvation as Irenaeus saw it. We then discussed the relation of the Recapitulation theory to Hellenistic thought and the Johannine writings as well as its relation to the Old and New Testaments and the Church's teachings and Apostolic Tradition. The above have shown that Irenaeus in his Recapitulation theory at no time divorces himself from the teachings of the Christian world. Irenaeus' originality, however, in his exposition of the Recapitulation theory where he expresses the meaning of Christ's birth and life may be challenged. The same

\[69\] Lawson, p. 285.
thought may be found in a work written by another Father of the Church who lived before Irenaeus, namely Justin the Martyr. It is the purpose of the next chapter to discuss whether the theme of the Recapitulation Theory originates with Irenaeus or with Justin.
CHAPTER III

JUSTIN MARTYR AND HIS INFLUENCE ON IRENAEUS

Justin's Life and Works

One of the premises of this study has been that Irenaeus was influenced in his concepts of theology by an earlier Father of the Church, Justin Martyr. Thus the following discourse is an examination of the degree of influence that Justin had on Irenaeus' Recapitulation Theory.

Justin Martyr was born in Flavia Neapolis, a city of Samaria, the modern Nablous. The date of his birth may be fixed about A.D. 114. His father and grandfather were probably of Roman origin. Before his conversion to Christianity he studied in the schools of the philosophers. After his conversion he travelled, proclaiming the gospel as the only safe and certain philosophy, the only way to salvation. He sealed his testimony to the truth by martyrdom. The day of his death is of A.D. 165.

The writings of Justin Martyr are among the most important that have come down to us from the second

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century. Many of Justin's writings have perished. Those works which have come down to us bearing his name have been divided into three classes. The first class embraces those which are unquestionably genuine; the two Apologies and the Dialogue with Trypho. The second class consists of those works which are regarded by some critics as Justin's, and by others as not his. They are: An Address to the Greeks; A Hortatory Address to the Greeks; On the Sole Government of God; An Epistle to Diognetus; Fragments from a work on the Resurrection; and other fragments. A third class consists of those that are unquestionably not the works of Justin. These are: An Exposition of the True Faith; Replies to the Orthodox; Christian Questions to Gentiles; Gentile Questions to Christians; Epistle to Zenas and Serenus; and A Refutation of Certain Doctrines of Aristotle.

Irenaeus' Thought and Similarity to Justin

St. Irenaeus was a generation younger than Justin and theologically influenced by him. Irenaeus had known or had read the works of Justin and knew him well, for as we will show in this chapter he even quotes Justin. As all
the early fathers, Irenaeus considered tradition as inseparable from the Bible; Apologists were representors of tradition and Justin Martyr was an Apologist. Referring to St. Irenaeus' respect toward Justin, John Lawson states: "The other factor at work is doubtless loyalty to the tradition of the Apologists."\textsuperscript{71} J. Armitage Robinson writes: "Undoubtedly the debt of Irenaeus to Justin is very great..."\textsuperscript{72}

The question that concerns us is how far reaching this influence of Justin on Irenaeus was concerning the Recapitulation Theory. As we discussed in the presentation of the Recapitulation Theory in the preceding chapters, Recapitulation means the accomplishment of God's plan of salvation; and the most important of all events that constitutes the basis of our whole salvation, for Irenaeus, is the event of the birth of Jesus when the Son of God becomes an actual man, following a virtuous course, contrast to the first man, Adam. Also, we discussed previously the role of

\textsuperscript{71}Lawson, p. 134.

the Virgin and her contribution to our salvation in contrast to the first-made virgin, Eve.

St. Irenaeus, referring to the incarnation of Christ and comparing it to Adam, writes:

...making a recapitulation in Himself, should be formed as man by God, to have an analogy with the former as respects His origin. Why then, did not God again take dust, but wrought so that the formation should be made of Mary? It was that there might not be another formation called into being, nor any other which should (require to) be saved, but that the very same formation should be summed up (in Christ as had existed in Adam). The analogy having been preserved. 73

The way St. Irenaeus sees man's salvation and the words he uses bear a striking resemblance to Justin's words, who in dealing with the salvation of man in his forty-fifth chapter of the Dialogue with Trypho writes:

This Christ, Son of God,...submitted to become incarnate, and be born of this virgin...in order that, by this dispensation, the serpent that sinned from the beginning, and the angels like him, may be destroyed. 74

73 Irenaeus, 3, 21, p. 454.

Again, the the 100th Chapter of the Dialogue, he says:

...For He is addressed in the writings of the prophets in one way or another as... the Day...He became man by the Virgin in order that the disobedience which proceeded from the serpent might receive its destruction in the same manner in which it derived its origin. For Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, having conceived the word of the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel announced the good tidings to her...and she replied...

"Be it unto me according to thy word."75

The similarity in the theories of Justin and Irenaeus suggests not only the influence of Justin on Irenaeus, but also brings about for our consideration the question of whether the entire Recapitulation Theory originates with Justin, rather than Irenaeus. This examination of thought becomes more necessary and demands an answer, especially after we consider the passage from Irenaeus' work, Against Heresies, where he quotes Justin, saying:

In his book against Marcion, Justin does well say: "I would not have believed the Lord Himself, if He had announced any other than He who is our framer, maker and nourisher. But because the only-begotten Son came to us from One God, who made this world and formed us, and contains and

75 Justin Martyr, p. 249.
administers all things, summing up His own handiwork in Himself, my faith towards Him is steadfast, and my love to the Father immoveable, God bestowing both upon us.\textsuperscript{76}

Justin - Recapitulation and what Scholars Have Said

Irenaeus quotes Justin Martyr's work, \textit{Against Marcion}, which has been lost and of which we know only from Irenaeus. J. Armitage Robinson\textsuperscript{77} goes into an extensive analysis of the phraseology of this particular passage and compares it to passages precedeing Irenaeus' quotation from Justin as well as to passages that follow, concluding that, this is Irenaeus own work and words. He considers that the answer lies with the wording of the passage. He says: "But here the question is primarily one of phraseology. Can we find in Justin's accredited works any such parallels as we have drawn from Irenaeus?" Robinson goes on to say that Justin's descriptions and frequent references to the One God are of a much limited type when compared with Irenaeus. He particularly refuses to accept that the word nourisher

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{76}Irenaeus, 4, 6, p. 468.
\item \textsuperscript{77}Robinson, J. Armitage, "On a Quotation from Justin Martyr in Irenaeus", pp. 374-378.
\end{itemize}
(Τροφεύς -nutritor)is Justin's and attributes it to Irenaeus. Referring to Justin's phraseology, he states: "But we miss the variety and superabundance of Irenaeus, and in particular we find no parallel to his Τροφεύς (nutritor)." Robinson believes that the words in this passage are Irenaeus' own.

Gustav Wingren, in his book Man and the Incarnation, dealing with the same question, also agrees that the initiator of this idea of recapitulation is Irenaeus' and not Justin's. "Even although the actual words ἀνακεφαλαίωσις or recapitulation, had been found in Justin, and, was quite likely, had been borrowed from Justin by Irenaeus, we are unable, with our present knowledge, to derive this far-reaching doctrine of recapitulation which we find Irenaeus from any source earlier than Irenaeus himself." Wingren feels that it would be fruitless to attempt to separate the recapitulation theory from Irenaeus' Against Heresies, and to single out

78 Robinson, p. 378.
79 Ibid.
an element of theology characteristic of Justin, such specific theology being unrelated to the rest of the contents of Against Heresies, and he concludes: "In point of fact it is recapitulation which creates unity in the theology of Irenaeus, whatever the concept may be."\textsuperscript{81}

John Lawson, in his book, The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus, also states that the doctrine of Recapitulation is not a distinct part of Justin's theological system and considers the word in the quotation of Justin to be no more than a quotation of Scripture, where the word appears frequently; he then disassociates Justin originality of the recapitulation theory. "Justin certainly sheds no light upon the doctrine found in Irenaeus."\textsuperscript{82}

Having then examined Justin's quotation in Irenaeus, Irenaeus' Recapitulation theory and the overwhelming support of the scholars quoted above who favor the originality of Irenaeus, we conclude that Irenaeus is indeed theologically related to Justin, but independent in his formation of his idea of the Recapitulation Theory.

\textsuperscript{81}Wingren, p. 81
\textsuperscript{82}Lawson, p. 144.
CONCLUSION

Irenaeus is the last representative of primitive Christianity. He never claimed nor ever wished to project himself as a philosopher but considered himself rather as a representative of the earlier thinkers of the Church, and he felt as his duty to be a guardian of the authentic apostolic tradition. He wrote to guide his flock within the church. Irenaeus' works reveal him as an experienced preacher and not as a philosopher.

The Recapitulation Theory of Irenaeus is a theology of the Saving Work of Christ whom Irenaeus presents as the Champion of men and who resolves the bondage of men. This theory develops out of the New Testament thought. The Recapitulation Theory of Irenaeus provides ground for an understanding of the concept of Christ the God; Christ for Irenaeus is the sovereignty of God, the absolute power of the creator.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the significance of Irenaeus. He read the past historically, and he interpreted Christ's work in such a way as to give saving value to all parts of his life. Irenaeus was influenced...
by Hellenistic thought, yet his strong belief in tradition made him a Scriptural oriented father of the Church.

Irenaeus' writings contributed greatly to the making of the theology of the Church. Irenaeus' Theory of Recapitulation is a milestone in the making of Christian theology for it is one of the first systematic attempts to interpret the saving work of Christ.


