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## **The Pneumatology of St Irenaeus of Lyons**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to construct a systematic Irenaean Pneumatology, making a contribution in the history of dogma. The aim of this thesis is to develop a theological system, based on the Irenaean writings, that demonstrates that the area of Pneumatology was one of the central constructs in Irenaeus' thought.

The methods employed in this thesis are: An evaluation of the data available in the context of Irenaeus' premise in the light of Scripture's presentation; a detailed analysis of literary contributions on the subject; and a research of the patristic thought and how other Church Fathers have identified and interpreted the Spirit's involvement in its development.

This thesis compares Irenaeus' pneumatological writings with biblical and patristic texts, and presents the opinions of various Irenaean scholars, offering either positive comments or academic disagreements on these opinions. Irenaeus' pneumatological thought is presented and evaluated in five particular chapters: The creation and spiritual destiny of humanity; the fall of humanity; the spiritual redemption of humanity; the Church and the Holy Spirit; and eschatology and the Holy Spirit.

The final conclusion of the thesis is that the person and the work of the Holy Spirit governed Irenaeus' understanding of most -if not all- other theological concepts.

**KEY WORDS:** Adam, Christ, Church, Creation, Eschatology, Fall, Gnosticism, Irenaeus, Pneumatology, Redemption.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AH: Irenaeus. 2004. 'Against Heresies.' *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1: 307-602.

ANF: Roberts, A. and J. Donaldson (editors). 2004. *Ante-Nicene Father*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers. Vols.10.

NPNF 1: Schaff, P. (editor). 2004. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers; First Series*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers. Vols.14.

NPNF 2: Schaff, P. and H. Wace (editors). 2004. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers; Second Series*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers. Vols.14.

PA: Irenaios. 1987. *The Preaching of the Apostles*. Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press. 101pp.

PG: Migne, J.B. (editor). 1876. *Patrologia Graeca*. Paris, France: Migne. Vols.162.

NRSV: *New Revised Standard Version*. New York, NY: American Bible Society. 257pp.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The theology of Irenaeus of Lyons (AD 130-202) has been discussed by many scholars, most of whom emphasize Irenaeus' apologetic thought and his interest in humanity, Christ and Scripture. Nielsen (1968), for example, examines the function of the Adam-Christ typology in Irenaeus' "Against Heresies" (*Adversus Hæreses*), written as an apology against the prevailing Gnosticism of his time. Nielsen believes that the core argument of Irenaeus is that the Word became flesh and dwelt among people, in complete antithesis to what was taught under Gnostic theological systems (cf. Bousset, 1970; Timothy, 1973).

Gustaf Wingren agrees with Nielsen that the central problem for Irenaeus seems to be the contrast between man and the 'becoming' man (that is, Adam and Christ). Wingren claims that, for Irenaeus, the incarnation of Christ would not have been necessary if humanity had progressed in its unfallen condition, in accordance with God's original intention (2004:100). Francois Altermath (1975:63), on the other hand, argues that, for Irenaeus, the incarnation was inevitable regardless of Adam's sin (cf. Lesniewki, 1991, Bushur, 1998; Prokopchuk, 2001; Presley, 2006). In a much more comprehensive way, John Lawson presents the biblical character of Irenaeus' theology. According to Lawson (2006:199) – and in stark contrast to Wingren – Irenaeus identified a distinction between the image of God and the likeness of God in Adam.

Whilst the value of the aforementioned scholars should not be underestimated, the fact that their opinions differ on such crucial areas of Irenaeus' thought surely invites further academic investigation into his writings. It is my intention, therefore, to consider Irenaeus' approach to certain theological concepts from what I consider to be an essentially pneumatological perspective. In so doing, I propose to construct a systematic Irenaeian Pneumatology, which will – at the same time – respond to current academic disagreements.

Despite the fact that Irenaeus' theology continues to influence Christian philosophical thinkers, it appears that no complete and systematic attempt has been made to produce a comprehensive appreciation of his Pneumatology, except Jacques Fantino's book "La theologie d ' Irenee" (Fantino, 1994).. Scholars have readily produced works that contrast Irenaeus' thought with Gnostic belief (e.g. Vallée, 1981; Olson, 1993), without necessarily conceding their common values. What Irenaeus and the Gnostics shared was the conviction that salvation belongs only to the Pneumatics. Whereas certain Gnostic groups emphasized the deification of the Pneumatics, Irenaeus posited that a man who is not in communion with the Spirit (i.e. *Pneuma*) cannot be saved. Where they differ, however, is in their respective definition(s). For Gnostics, 'pneumatic' is the person who is deified by nature and who differs from the 'psychic' and 'hylical' people. For Irenaeus, the 'pneumatic' person (who is in communion with the Holy Spirit) is similarly both 'psychic' and 'hylical'. A person is deified not by virtue of one's essential nature, but by divine grace. Notwithstanding, it remains that the salvation of the Pneumatics is a key concept in the thought of Irenaeus which has not been presented as such.

By taking this observation as a starting point, a detailed analysis of Irenaeus' writings reveals that the Holy Spirit is referred to constantly and consistently throughout his work. Thus, there is not a major theological theme in Irenaeus' thought (i.e. Creation, the Fall, Redemption, the Church and Eschatology) that does not involve the Holy Spirit. The central question of this work, therefore, is: "Can a pattern of systematic thought be identified in the writings of Irenaeus of Lyons, which demonstrate that the area of Pneumatology was one of the central constructs in his theological views?" The questions that naturally emerge from this problem are:

- What was the precise nature of the role of the Holy Spirit in the creation of Adam in the image and likeness of God?

- Is there any evidence to confirm – or otherwise – that the fall of Adam was a direct consequence of his inability to express full communion with the Holy Spirit (that is, to become Adam, the Christ)?
- What are the extent and implications of humanity’s redemption by the Pneumatic Christ?
- What are the role and nature of the Holy Spirit’s involvement in the life of the Christian Church?
- What is the relational link between Pneumatology and Eschatology in Irenaeus’ thought in the light of Scripture?

The aim of this thesis is to identify a pattern of systematic thought in the writings of Irenaeus of Lyons, which demonstrates that the area of Pneumatology was one of the central constructs in his theological views.

The objectives of this study must be seen in their relationship to the aim. In so doing, I intend to approach the subject from the following angles:

- To examine the role of the Holy Spirit in the creation of Adam in the image and likeness of God;
- To consider whether the Fall was a direct consequence of Adam’s inability to express full communion with the Spirit (that is, to become Adam, the Christ);
- To assess the extent and implications of humanity’s redemption by the Pneumatic Christ;
- To determine the role and nature of the Holy Spirit’s involvement in the life of the Christian Church; and
- To evaluate the relational link between Pneumatology and Eschatology, in Irenaeus’ thought in the light of Scripture.

The central theoretical argument of this study is that Irenaeus of Lyons' concept of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit and everything associated with it governed his understanding of most – if not all – other theological concepts.

My Christian background is one that finds most sympathy with the broad spectrum of the Greek Orthodox tradition. This being so, I acknowledge a responsibility to give due recognition to sources of information that are not written exclusively by those of that persuasion in order – as far as is practicable – to arrive at conclusions that might otherwise be subject to charges of inappropriate bias. Therefore, the methods I propose to employ in this thesis include:

- An evaluation of the data available in the context of Irenaeus' premise in the light of Scripture's presentation.
- A detailed analysis of literary contributions on the subject.
- A research of the patristic thought and how other Church Fathers have identified and interpreted the Holy Spirit's involvement in its development.

Of course, although I propose to employ the aforementioned methods, my study will be in the history of dogma (more particularly in patrology) and presented as such.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE CREATION AND SPIRITUAL DESTINY OF HUMANITY

### 2.1 Introduction

The second chapter of the present work will study the “Creation and Spiritual Destiny of Humanity” according to Irenaeus. A short over-view of Irenaeus’ life and work is appropriate in view of the subject matter of this thesis.

Irenaeus was born somewhere between AD 130 and 140 in Asia Minor. He was a student of Polycarp of Smyrna, and therefore was able to directly study, experience and appreciate the apostolic tradition of the Church. The influence of Polycarp in Irenaeus’ life was significant as we appreciate by reading a letter of Irenaeus, preserved by Eusebius in his Church History (V.20.4-8, NPNF 2, I):

When I was still a boy, I saw you in Lower Asia with Polycarp, when you were shining brilliant in the royal palace and trying to win favour from him. I remember the events of those days better than recent ones, for childhood learning grows with the soul and is united with it, so that I can speak of the place where blessed Polycarp sat and discussed, his entrances and his exits and the character of his life together with John and the others who had seen the Lord and how he remembered their words, and what he heard about the Lord from them, about his miracles and his teaching – how Polycarp received this from the eyewitnesses of the life of the Word and proclaimed it all in accordance with the Scriptures. Because of God’s mercy given me I heard these things eagerly even then. And I recorded them not on paper but in my heart, and I meditate on them accurately by God’s favour.

Irenaeus was inspired by Polycarp and imitated his missionary work. In AD 177, as we are informed by Eusebius, Irenaeus served the Church as presbyter in Lyon. In AD 178 he became the bishop of Lyon, replacing the previous bishop, Plothinius, who had been martyred during the persecution of the Roman authorities against the Christian communities in the area of Lyons (Eusebius, V.I.1-V.II.8, NPNF 2, I).

The work of Irenaeus in Lyons was not only to execute his episcopal obligations but also to protect the faith community from the various heretical groups, like the Montanists (Eusebius, V.16.19, NPNF 2, I), which placed the unity of the Church at risk. The greatest threat of all, for Irenaeus, was the Gnostic movement, which confused Christians with the claim that there is another truth beyond the scriptures and the tradition of the Church. This truth leads to salvation and it is supposedly known only to a select few (Timothy, 1973: 24 and 31).

Irenaeus responded to the Gnostic teachings by writing numerous works against them, defending the apostolic tradition (Eusebius, V.20, NPNF 2, I). Two of these works have been preserved. The first is a collection of five books, called "Against Heresies" (AH). The first of the five books is a detailed exposition of Gnostic teachings. The second book is a critical approach to Gnosticism, emphasizing its unchristian character. Books three to five present an analytical defence of the Christian faith. The "Preaching of the Apostles" (PA) is the second book of Irenaeus that has been preserved in its totality. It is a summary of the Christian faith and contains, as well, some anti-Gnostic elements.

Irenaeus probably died at the end of the second century, during another Roman persecution against the Christian Church of Lyons. Nevertheless, his writings were translated in many languages and became popular in many Christian communities. He is considered the first great theologian of the Church in the era after the Apostles (Grant, 1977: 1).

The creation of humanity is an important theological theme, presented in Irenaeus' work "Against Heresies" in contrast to Gnostic teachings. Irenaeus wrote against the following Gnostics: Simon the Magician, Menandros, Saturninos, Vasilides, Karpocratis, Kerinthos, Ebionites and Nicolaites, Kerdon, Marcion and Varvilei, Tatianos, Ofites and Kainites. Irenaeus is mainly

concerned with the Valentinian and Marcosian Gnostics, especially the disciples of Ptolemaeus (AH.i 1.pref).

These Gnostics established their own philosophical-religious systems, having received certain influences from previous philosophical systems and religious beliefs. They created a variety of new theories with some basic similarities, but also with different approaches.

In order to understand the Gnostic theological movement, we must first become aware of the general spiritual and intellectual atmosphere of the period comprised by various religious and philosophical influences.

Judaism was a major source of such an influence. The institution of “the Law”, Hebrew theological literature, and the rich heritage of Jewish traditions became widely known in Hellenistic times. Jewish beliefs and traditions were transmitted through Christianity in the larger world of the Roman Empire. In Alexandria, Philo made an effort to harmonize Greek philosophy with the Mosaic Law using allegorical interpretations; a method that was used later by the Christian theologians of Alexandria, such as Clement and Origen. Gnostic teachers used extensively Old Testament narratives to support their teachings. As Filiramo (1992: 44-48) observes, the Gnostic re-interpretation of the events in Genesis, the speculations on Adam in Paradise and the connections with the Jewish wisdom theology and apocalyptic literature, confirm the importance of Jewish influence in Gnosticism.

Philosophy was also of great influence in the intellectual atmosphere of the age. Plato taught that the human soul pre-existed in the world of ideas. The world was made in the image of ideas. Ideas are unapproachable, eternal, beyond the physical world, and represent the true being which is perfect and self-sufficient. The dualistic cosmology of Plato, manifested in his work *Timaeus*, has certainly influenced Gnostic theology (Baus, 1980: 185).

Aristotle, a student of Plato, viewed the world of ideas as the shape of things, existing therefore in the world, a pre-existing eternal reality. An erotic desire exists, according to Aristotle, between matter and the highest principle, the unmoved mover, who gives the shape to things without committing a creative act. The unmoved mover can coexist with other principles, some of which can be identified with the deities of the Greek pantheon. Aristotle held that a person becomes happy only when one lives according to reason.

The Stoics comprised another philosophical school, according to which there is a unity between gods, people and the world. There are two principles in the Universe, one passive and one active. The active gives shape to the passive. The mind of humanity is a part of the universal Logos or Reason (that is God), and those who will succeed in surpassing their passions (the elite) find freedom from passion and become godlike.

Greco-Roman and Oriental religious beliefs also contributed to the intellectual atmosphere of the age. Greeks developed the idea of tragedy, which presents the limitations of human beings, and the idea of ecstasies in the Eleusinian Mysteries, which was a desire to know God and establish a relation with him. Also, the Orphic Mysteries present the idea of soul's immortality and metempsychosis, and the human nostalgia for perfection.

Mysticism also existed in the Oriental religions. Persian Zoroastrianism, influenced the Gnostic view of creation, in which some humans are appreciated as spiritual beings in need of liberation from creation. Egyptian astrology and numerology also contributed to the Gnostic use of numbers in the structure of their *Pleroma* (divine realm) (Walker, 1918: 54). In Alexandria, and in other large cities, a religious syncretism developed.

Gnosticism was born in such a spiritual and intellectual atmosphere, a syncretistic atmosphere with mixed ideas about God, humanity and life. Gnostics were influenced by the allegorical method of interpreting the scriptures, through Plato's anti-material teaching and Aristotle's theory of the

erotic desire to approach God, through Stoic elitism, and through Greco-Roman and Oriental mysticism, which favoured secret knowledge revealed only to initiated persons. Gnostics expressed a diverse variety of theological opinions, scriptural explanations and teachings. This is evident, in particular, regarding the doctrine of creation.

Every scholar, who has written a major work on Irenaean theology, has included in his work a chapter about the doctrine of creation. The themes of “creation *ex nihilo*”, the “two hands of God”, the “*imago et similitudo*”, and the “development of the created man” have been analysed in many theological works, like Wingren (2004), Lawson (2006), and others.

This doctrinal analysis will be done in the present chapter with an emphasis on the divine person of the Holy Spirit and his importance in the creation event; an emphasis that has not been given in other academic works. Also, a new claim will be made: Irenaeus believes that the creation of the world is meaningful only if a person achieves one’s destiny, which is to be like God through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Adam and Eve, the first human couple, and their children having been influenced by the spirit of the “fallen angel” became corrupted. Only Noah was found righteous before God. Therefore, the world was destroyed with the flood, except the humans and the animals that were in Noah’s ark (Gen. 6:18ff). Humanity made a new beginning with Noah, striving to fight the influences of the fallen angel’s spirit and receive the blessings of God’s Spirit, towards a future fulfilment of humanity’s destiny (to be like God).

The creation of the world and Adam and the regeneration of the world after the flood are both described in the book of Genesis. Both of these biblical stories have to do with the acceptance or the rejection of the Holy Spirit, and with the spiritual development of the created humanity. We will make a reference to

both of them, in our discussion of Irenaeus' doctrine of creation, offering a new insight in Irenaeian thought.

## **2.1 The Logos and the Holy Spirit in the Doctrine of Creation**

### **2.2.1 Creation *ex nihilo***

According to Irenaeus, God is the one and only maker of the world. Many scholars who have studied Irenaeus emphasize that one of his major concerns was to defend this biblical doctrine (Meijening, 1975: 321; Brown, 1975: 23). In "Against Heresies" Irenaeus notes:

It is proper, then, that I should begin with the first and most important head, that is, God the Creator, who made the heaven and the earth, and all things that are therein (whom these men blasphemously style the fruit of a defect), and to demonstrate that there is nothing either above Him or after Him; nor that, influenced by any one, but of His own free will, He created all things, 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 (AH, II.I.1).

Irenaeus speaks not only of God the Father "containing all things" but also of the Logos (AH, III.XI.8; V.XVIII.3) and the Holy Spirit (AH, V.II.3).

This biblical doctrine is the faith of the Church, reflecting the ancient tradition believing in "one God, creator of heaven and earth, announced by the law and the prophets" (AH, III.I.1). Irenaeus observes that "neither the prophets, nor the apostles, nor the Lord Christ in His own person, did acknowledge any other Lord or God, but the God and Lord supreme... and confessing no other as Lord, who alone is Lord and ruler of all" (AH, III.IX.1).

The teaching of the prophets and the apostles regarding the doctrine of creation is actually the teaching of the Holy Spirit. This is what Irenaeus says in chapter 8 of the “Preaching of the Apostles”:

The Holy Spirit (in the Scriptures) calls the Father ‘Most High, ‘Almighty,’ and ‘Lord of Hosts,’ so that we may learn that God truly is the creator of heaven and earth. These names tell us not only that He made the whole world, but angels and humans as well, and that He is the Lord of all, who sustains all things.

The one God is omnipotent and therefore he does not need angels or other inferior deities to help him with the creation of the world. Irenaeus writes:

And God formed man, taking clay of the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life. It was not angels, therefore who made us, nor who formed us, neither had angels power to make an image of God, nor anyone else... For God did not stand in need of these [beings], in order to accomplish what He had himself determined with Himself beforehand should be done, as if He did not possess his own hands. For with Him were always present the Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit, by whom and in whom freely and spontaneously, He made all things, to whom also He speaks, saying, ‘Let us make man after Our image and likeness;’ He taking from Himself the substance of the creatures [formed], and the pattern of things made, and the type of all the adornments of the world (AH, IV.XX.1).

Creation is absolutely dependent upon God who existed before the making of the world<sup>1</sup>. Creation was conducted by God out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) and cannot exist separated from God. Irenaeus remarks:

For, to attribute the substance of created things to the power and will of Him who is God of all, is worthy both of credit and acceptance. It is also agreeable [to reason], and there may be well said regarding such a belief, that ‘the things which are impossible with men are possible with God’. While men, indeed, cannot make anything out of nothing, but only out of matter already existing, yet God is in this point preeminently superior to men, that He Himself called into being the substance of His creation, when previously it had no existence. But the assertion that matter was produced from the Enthymesis of an Aeon going astray, and that the Aeon [referred to] was far separated from his Enthymesis, and that again

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1 See also: First Apology of Justin, chapter X, ANF, I.

her passion and feeling, apart from herself, became matter – is incredible, infatuated, impossible and untenable. (AH, II. X.4).

In the “Preaching of the Apostles”, Irenaeus notes:

Created things necessarily have their source in some great source, and since this source was not made by anyone, but itself made everything, it must be God. First of all, then, we must believe that there is one God, the Father, Who made all things, bringing them into being out of nothing, and who holds all things without being Himself containable (cf. Hermas, Mandate 1). Further, ‘all things’ includes this world of ours and humanity too, for it was created by God (chapter 4).

God created the world free from every necessity or constraint. We read in “Against Heresies”: “God stands in need of nothing...but He Himself in Himself, after a fashion we can neither describe nor conceive, predestinating all things, formed them as He pleased, bestowing harmony on all things, and assigning them their own place, and the beginning of their creation” (AH, II.II.4).

God created the world out of pleasure, because he desires the world to exist.

The world’s existence depends on God. Irenaeus writes:

But that He [God] did Himself make all things freely, and as He pleased, again David says, “But our God is in the heavens above, and in the earth; He hath made all things whatsoever He pleased.’ But the things established are distinct from Him who has established them, and what have been made from Him who has made them. For He is Himself uncreated, both without beginning and end, and lacking nothing. He is Himself sufficient for Himself; and still further, He grants to all others this very thing, existence; but the things which have been made by Him have received a beginning. But whatever things had a beginning, and are liable to dissolution, and are subject to and stand in need of Him who made them, must necessarily in all respects have a different term [applied to them] (AH, III.VIII.3).

God is not only free to create out of pleasure, but also to destroy and regenerate his creation. In Gen. 6:18 ff., we read about the destruction of the world except those in Noah's ark. In the "Preaching of the Apostles", Irenaeus mentions the world's regeneration by God:

Finally, in the tenth generation from Adam, God sent judgement into the world by means of a flood. One man, Noah, was found righteous. Because of that righteousness, he was saved, along with his wife and his three sons and their wives. They were shut up in the ark, along with the animals God had ordered to be brought along. When destruction came upon everything on earth, both humans and animals, those who were in the ark were saved (Chapter 19).

The world's regeneration, in Irenaeus' thought, must be appreciated in connection with the doctrine of creation. The creator God is free to act according to his will. When creation is not fulfilling its destiny, God regenerates it. Humanity is of course God's agent who leads the created world to fulfil its destiny: "Noah's three sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. These were the new beginning of mankind after the flood, and the race once again multiplied." (PA, Chapter 19).

The doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is formulated in opposition to the philosophical background of Gnosticism (Platonic influences), which accepts a creation out of something; the creation of the world as an image of eternal prototypes, which are superior both to creator and the world. Such a view of creation makes God (and humanity), a slave of the eternal pre-existing matter, and creation just a decoration of this matter. Thus, God is limited. He is not the absolute being and he cannot change what already exists -maybe before him.

Scholars (Agouridis [1970: 35], Papadopoulos [1986: 305-306] and others) agree that the Gnostic world view considers God as completely other-worldly and the creation of the world as the evil product of an inferior deity. Gnostics claim that the creator god of the Old Testament is distinctly different from Abba the Father to whom Christ refers in the New Testament. Thus, the words of Gen.

1:26-27 "Let us make man in our image" are not the words of the Supreme God, according to Gnostic theology, but the words of the creator. Different Gnostic texts present the idea of an inferior deity who created the world, offering different revelations about him. Nevertheless, all of them distinguish him from the Highest and other-worldly God.

The inferior deity Yalthabaoth in the Gnostic text "The Apocryphon of John" (Ehrman, 2003: 297-306) is the creator of humanity. He invites the angels who surround him to "create a man according to the image of God and according to our likeness that his image may become a light for us". The angels respond positively to Yalthabaoth's invitation by contributing certain elements to the process of humanity's creation. The image of God was revealed to Yalthabaoth as a reflection in water. The creation of humanity, who mirrors the reflected image revealed to Yalthabaoth, aims to capture the Supreme God's image. However, the newly formed humanity remains lifeless until Yalthabaoth breathes life into it. This breath of life moves the body of a person which is deficient and corrupted.

The "Valentian Exposition" (AH, I.IV.2 -AH, I.VII.5), in a similar story, presents the inferior deity Demiurge creating the world and humanity, under the supervision of the deity Achamoth. According to the Valentinian story, a person's soul comes from the Demiurge, the body from the earth, and the spiritual part derives from Achamoth. The earthly part of a person decays, the spiritual part returns to its origin and the soul is held up on the way back.

The Gnostic texts reveal a degree of dualism; they separate the body and psychic parts of a person from the spiritual part. The true image of God can be found only in the spiritual part of a person, through redemptive knowledge (*gnosis*). In the eyes of the Gnostics the body is a prison in which the spiritual seed is incarcerated. As Nielsen (1968: 41) remarks: "[The] 'Pneumatic' man tears himself loose from his shackle, i.e. the soul, and travels to where he

belongs; the *Pleroma* or more generally 'the divine Sphere,' since it is not certain that all Gnostic groups made use of the technical term *Pleroma*".

The eschatological return of the image of God to the *Pleroma*, in the Gnostic "Gospel of Truth" (Ehrman, 2003: 45-51), can be found in the life of Christ who stripped off his corporeality and clothed himself in immortality. The resurrection of Christ is understood as the ascent out of the flesh to the fullness of God. Christ prepares people for redemption by revealing them the true knowledge (*gnosis*) of the divine. Presley (2006: 19) remarks: "For the Gnostics, the incarnation of the redemptive figure transpired by putting on perishability that was later removed at resurrection and for the purpose of restoring the image of God back to its heavenly home".

The Platonic anti-material influences are obvious in the Gnostic texts. The inferior God created the world and the people out of something material, and then condemned them to live in this material prison. People can be saved only through the knowledge (*gnosis*) of the spiritual reality.

Van Unik (1976: 203, 206) remarks that Irenaeus was aware of these Platonic influences in Gnosticism, this is why he calls Plato, in his writings, the teacher of Gnostics. However, Irenaeus uses the thought of Plato to humiliate the Gnostics by showing that they do not even understand the platonic concepts that they use. The observation of Irenaeus that particular Gnostic teachings are borrowed from philosophy aim to disqualify them, as Valley (1981: 15) observes correctly. For Irenaeus, the only authoritative reference is the Scriptures.

Irenaeus understands the problematic conclusions that the Platonic and Gnostic philosophical approaches to the creation event present, and emphasizes the teaching of creation out of nothing, which supports the principle of the freedom of God to create simply because he wants to do it. This divine freedom is mentioned in the aforementioned passage of AH, III.VIII.3.

The position of Irenaeus, regarding the creation *ex nihilo*, appears to be in agreement with the Scriptures. The Scriptures do not mention any pre-existing matter out of which the world was created. The world is not presented in the Scriptures as an emanation from God the creator or as identified with him. Therefore, by ignoring these theories, the Scriptures let us believe that God created the world *ex nihilo*. Furthermore, the Scriptures emphasize the dependence of all things on God, and that God is the ruler of the world.

In Nehemiah (9:6) we read: "You are the Lord, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all that is on it, the seas, and all that is in them." In Colossians (1:16-17) we read: "For in Him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or rulers, or powers - all things have been created through Him, and for Him. He Himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together". The role of the Holy Spirit in the creation event is mentioned more specifically in the following passages: Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13 and 33:4; Psalm 33:6 and Psalm 104:30.

Finally, the Scriptures teach that there is nothing eternal but God. The book of Psalms (90:2) notes that "Before the mountains were brought forth, or even you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God". In the Gospel of John (17:5), Jesus Christ refers to the glory which he had with the Father "before the world existed".

## 2.2.2 The Hands of God

The creation of the world and of humanity by God is described in the book of Genesis<sup>2</sup>. The creation of humanity is distinguished from the creation of other creatures. It is the result of the divine decree “Let us make man in our image and likeness” (Gen. 1:26-27).

The book of Genesis describes the creation of the world and the creation of humanity (Gen. 1:26-27) as the crown of creation. Irenaeus and the Gnostics are aware of the biblical text but they interpret it differently. Irenaeus makes an effort to present the false exegesis of the Gnostics and, at the same time, he develops the biblical teaching.

The Nag Hammadi Library, a collection of Gnostic texts, has fifty references to Genesis 1:26-27, while Irenaeus refers thirty times to this passage (Presley, 2006: 2). This statistical detail shows that both the Gnostics and Irenaeus use theologically the same text, although their understanding of the text is completely different. Gnostics interpret the text within the frame of their world view. Irenaeus, on the contrary, explains the text within the frame of the Christian apostolic tradition.

Irenaeus emphasizes that the phrase of Genesis 1:26-27 “Let us make” is a manifestation of the triune God “Father, Son and Holy Spirit”. According to Keil (2006: 38), “modern commentators... regard it either as *pluralis majestatis*; or as an address by God to himself, the subject and object being identical; or as *communicative*, an address to the spirits or angels who stand around the Deity and constitute His council”.

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2 The Scriptures also describes the creation of humans in the following passages: Exod. 4:11; Deut. 4:32; Job 34:19; Job 35:10; Ps. 8:4; Ps. 33:13; Ps. 95:6; Ps. 100:3; Ps. 102:8; Ps. 138:8; Prov. 22:2; Eccles. 7:29; Eccles. 12:1; Isa. 45:12; Isa 54:16; Isa. 64:8; Jer.27:5; Mal. 2:10; 1Pet. 4:19.

However, Irenaeus interprets the Old Testament through the lens of the New Testament. He has a holistic understanding of the Holy Scriptures, believing that there is a progressive character of divine revelation in the Bible. If, therefore, the New Testament reveals the Triune God, then the Old Testament passages must be re-interpreted based on this final revelation. The phrase “let us make man in our image and likeness” surely must be appreciated, according to Irenaeus, as a proto-revelation of the Holy Trinity: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Wilson (1957: 437) remarks that “The first full Trinitarian interpretation of the plural *poiesomen* [in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible] appears in Irenaeus and Theophilus, although steps in this direction had been taken by Barnabus and Justin”.

The Son of God and the Holy Spirit are metaphorically described by Irenaeus as “the hands of God” (AH, IV.XX.1). The phrase “the hand of God” derives from the Old Testament. The Old Testament makes references to the hand or the finger of God. God’s “hand” is active in the process of creation (Is. 48.13), the offering of the Divine Law (Ex. 31.18), people’s salvation (Ps. 98.1) and the prophetic ministry (Ez. 3. 14-16).

Irenaeus, however, changes the phrase from singular to plural; he talks about the “hands of God”, understanding again the Old Testament under a Christian progressive perspective. God is active in the world not only through the Son, but also through the Holy Spirit. This imagery of God’s “hands” is an important development in the history of dogma. Clement of Rome also uses the phrase “hands of God” in his “First Letter to the Corinthians” (1:33, ANF, IX). He writes: “And with his only and perfect hands [God] formed the one who was pre-eminent and superior in intelligence to all, the human, stamped with his own image. For as God says, ‘Let us make a human according to our own image and likeness”.

Also, it must be mentioned that Irenaeus applies to the Holy Spirit all the Old Testament references which personify the Wisdom of God. Therefore, the Holy Spirit, the Wisdom of God, is the second “hand of God” that creates the world with the Father and the Son. He writes in *Against Heresies*: “For with [God] were always present the Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit, by whom, and in whom, freely and spontaneously He made all things, to whom also He speaks, saying ‘let us make man after Our image and likeness” (AH, IV.XX.1).

It is worth pausing to consider that Irenaeus links the Son with the Word of God following the theology of John the Evangelist (that he learned from his teacher, Polycarp of Smyrna). He also links the Spirit with the Wisdom of God, based on the book of Proverbs (3:19 and 8:25f). Kelly (1977: 106) notes that Irenaeus and Theophilus follow this line, unlike Justin and Origen who identify the Son with the Wisdom of God.

Prokopchuk (2001: 46) rightly observes: “Irenaeus’ theology shows important progress in the Trinitarian theology of the early church. His theology makes many improvements to the Logos doctrine he received in the writings of Justin. Furthermore, Irenaeus and Theophilus are early writers who introduced a strong Pneumatology into the history of Christian doctrine”.

Prokopchuk’s remark (2001: 46) that Irenaeus “improved the Logos doctrine of Justin” is not accurate. Justin developed his Logos doctrine based on Platonic ideas. Irenaeus’ Trinitarian theology, on the other hand, is economic and not philosophical. There is not any speculation in Irenaeus’ theology about the function of Logos in Trinity’s inner life.

Bushur (1998: 55) notes correctly that “Irenaeus does not intend to define the precise nature of the essential unity and the personal distinctions of the Holy Trinity...The personal distinctions between the Father, Son, and Spirit are latent in the roles each accomplishes in the salvific economy”. He also notes (1998: 58): “The Holy Trinity is manifested in actual events, such as the baptism of

Christ... [Irenaeus] refuses to speculate concerning the transcendence of the divine essence”.

But, coming back to Irenaeus’s phrase “two hands of God”, what does he mean by that? Is Irenaeus implying that the Son and the Holy Spirit are inferior to God the Father<sup>3</sup>? Lawson (2006: 132) responds to this question by remarking that “the ‘hands’ serve God, but they are not thereby subordinate, for this service is God’s own activity in the world... So also the Spirit may be described as a gift, but that does not place the Gift below the Giver, for that which God gives is Himself”.

Bushur (1998: 56) agrees with Lawson. He writes:

Irenaeus interprets the Son and Spirit’s participation in creation as a coordinated effort. God needs no intermediaries to protect him from the world. The Word and Wisdom are perceived to be God himself at work. Irenaeus does not order the divine persons in an economy of subordination. No one person is independent of the others. One cannot grasp the Father without the Son and Spirit; nor one can grasp the Son without the Spirit and Father; nor can one grasp the Spirit without the Son and Father. Like the members of the body, The Father, Son, and Spirit share the same life, the same energy, and the same purpose.

Wingren (2004: 4) also remarks that “the hands of God are His Spirit and His Son who are thus uncreated; they belong to the Creator, and are active in all Creation. It is impossible for us to state how the Son and the Spirit originated as it is to penetrate into the mystery of God’s existence at all. God and his hands are inseparable”.

The Son of God, for Irenaeus, is the Logos of God who became man in Jesus Christ. The term “Logos of God”, meaning the manifested God, can be found in the Old Testament (Ps. 33:6; 107:20; 119:89; 147:18; Isa. 40:8), and in the Gospel according to John (1:1-14). John presents Christ as the image of God and

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<sup>3</sup> Justin (First Apology, chapter XIII, ANF, I) holds Jesus Christ in the second place (after God the Father), and the prophetic Spirit in the third place.

therefore his Logos. The Logos reveals God to his creatures which are unable to understand God without him. The incarnated Logos of God is in the bosom of the Father before all ages. He is not a creature, created by God: "Without Him was not anything made that was made". The Logos is self-existent: "In Him was life".

Other church fathers, like Justin and Origen, mention the Divine Logos in their discussion of Creation, but fail to mention the Holy Spirit (Kelly, 1978: 101-104). The Logos theory of the aforementioned fathers is influenced by Platonism and provides only a Divine Dyad and not a Triad. Irenaeus, on the contrary, does not base his Trinitarian theology on Platonism. For Irenaeus, God reveals himself as a Holy Trinity in the Holy Scriptures and in the soul of the believer. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, equal to the Father and the Son (PA, Chapter 10). The divinity of the Holy Spirit can be found in the books of the Old Testament (Ps. 139:7; Isa. 6:9; Jer. 31:31-34) and the New Testament (Acts 28:25, Heb. 10:15).

Wingren (2004: 4, 5) claims that, for Irenaeus, the Son and the Spirit are revealed to us in Jesus Christ. He also notes, that the Logos and Son of God, who was made man in Jesus "exists before man, and, indeed, when man is created he is created through the Son and for the Son, so as to reach his destiny in the Son his Saviour".

Wingren's observation that the Logos and Son of Man "exists before man" corresponds clearly to Irenaeus' thought. Humanity's coming into existence happens after the Son. However, the opinion that "man is created through the Son and for the Son" is not Irenaeus' thesis, at least in an accurate way. Irenaeus is clear that man is created by the Son of God and the Holy Spirit (the two "hands of God") for the purpose of being in communion with the Triune God; not only with the Son.

Also, the opinion that “the Spirit is also revealed to us in Jesus Christ” is not necessarily accurate. It reflects the Western creedal position that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father and the Son”. Wingren should write that -for Irenaeus- the Holy Spirit is revealed through Jesus Christ, not “in Jesus Christ”. The Holy Spirit is a distinct person of the Holy Trinity, with a distinct role in the creation event and in God’s plan for the salvation of humanity. We must not confuse the person or the work of the Holy Spirit with the person or the work of the Logos and Son of God.

The Logos, the one “hand of God” created man in God’s image<sup>4</sup> (and the image of God is the Son) while the Holy Spirit, the other “hand of God” created man in God’s likeness, according to Irenaeus. The problem of course with Wingren’s position is that he does not believe that there is a distinction in Irenaeus’ thought between the image and likeness of God. Is there a distinction?

### 2.3 Image and Likeness: The Destiny of Humanity

According to Wingren (2004: 158) there are only two small sections in the entire “Against Heresies” (AH, V.VI.1 and AH, V.XVI.2) where Irenaeus differentiates between the *imago* and *similitudo*. This is presented as an argument against the opinion that Irenaeus distinguishes the image of God from God’s likeness. Wingren considers these two references in AH as insignificant or accidental. After all, as Prokopchuk notes (2001: 73): “For Irenaeus only Christ is the true image and likeness of God”.

The downplay or dismissal of these two passages, in “Against Heresies”, alters essentially Irenaeus’ thought. Irenaeus emphasizes that there is a distinction between the concepts “image of God” and “likeness of God”. He writes:

But when the spirit here blended with the soul is united to God’s handiwork, the man is rendered spiritual and perfect because of the

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<sup>4</sup> The Scriptures declare that human beings were fashioned in God’s image in the following passages: Gen. 1:26-28; Gen. 5:1; Gen. 9:6; Col. 3:9 and James 3:9.

outpouring of the Spirit, and this is he who was made in the image and likeness of God. But if the Spirit be wanting to the soul, he who is such is indeed of an animal nature, and being left carnal, shall be an imperfect being, possessing indeed the image [of God] in his formation, but not receiving the similitude through the Spirit; and thus being imperfect (AH, V.VI.1).

Later on, in “Against Heresies”, he tells us:

And then, again, this Word was manifested when the Word of God was made man, and man to Himself, so that by means of his resemblance to the Son, man might become precious to the Father. For in times long past, it was said that man was created after the image of God, but it was not actually shown; for the Word was 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 truly; since He became Himself what was His image; and he re-established the similitude after a sure manner, by assimilating man to the invisible Father through the means of the visible Word (AH, V.XVI.2).

Also, in the “Preaching of the Apostles” Irenaeus writes: “Indeed, the Father is ‘over all,’ and the Word is ‘through all,’ since the Father made all things through Him; and ‘in us all’ is the Spirit, who cries ‘Abba, Father,’ and shapes us to the likeness of God (cf. Galatians 4:60)” (chapter 5).

Irenaeus’ discernment between the *imago* and the *similitudo* relates to the Gnostic belief that only one category of people is saved: the Pneumatics who are like God. Irenaeus agrees with the Gnostics that people belong in different categories. However, he gives his own definition of these categories. There are people who become “like God”, through the work of the Holy Spirit (the Pneumatics), and people who although are created in the image of the incarnated Logos of God, they fail to become “like God”.

However, the fulfilment of humanity's creation will be achieved at the end of times, when humanity becomes a Pneumatic being in the "likeness of God". Irenaeus, therefore, offers us a new understanding of the doctrine of humanity's creation. The created humanity has not been perfected yet; it will be perfect eschatologically. This new understanding of the creation event cannot be found in the Apologists or in other Christian writers of the first century AD and constitutes a development in the history of dogma (Papadopoulos, 1986: 298).

The only exception of course, in this Irenaeian distinction between *imago* and *similitudo*, can be found in Christ. The Logos and Son of God, who was incarnated uniquely by the Holy Spirit, is the only perfect human being. The man Jesus is Pneumatic by nature. The believers of Christ receive the Holy Spirit through him, and become Pneumatic by grace.

Irenaeus emphasizes that in the person of Christ there is no distinction between *imago* and *similitudo*. Also, in the lives of the Pneumatic Christians there is no distinction between *imago* and *similitudo*, which, certainly, may give the impression that either Irenaeus is unclear about these concepts or that he does not make any distinction between image and likeness.

It is true that, often times, Irenaeus fails to make the distinction of the two, probably because he addresses the community of believers who are in the "image of likeness of God" by grace. However, when he refers to the creation of Adam or to the predicament of non believers, he makes a distinction between image and likeness. As Theodorou (1989: 241) notes: "There are people who reject the Holy Spirit, preferring to satisfy their carnal desires, and who fail to become like God". These people are filled with the spirit of the "fallen angel" who caused Adam to be expelled from the "Garden of Eden" and Cain to kill his brother Abel (PA, Chapter 17).

Adam was created in the image of God with the potentiality to become like God, although he failed to achieve his destiny. Adam was not created perfect but had the ability to achieve perfection gradually. Irenaeus presents Adam as a young child, immature by nature, with the ability to mature spiritually and become like God.

## 2.4 Man as a Child

Irenaeus understands the first man, Adam, as a child who must grow spiritually and become perfect. The Holy Spirit does not abandon humanity after creating it. However, humanity can only receive the Spirit by stages of development. For Irenaeus growth and development are the stages of a created being. In AH, IV. XXXVIII.2, he writes: "God had the power at the beginning to grant perfection to man; but as the latter was only recently created, he could not possibly have received it, could he have contained it, or containing could he have retained it".

For Irenaeus, humanity was created imperfect towards perfection. He writes in the "Preaching of the Apostles":

Having made man the lord of the earth and everything in it, God also secretly made him lord of those angels who were in it. They already had their full maturity, but the man was, in effect, like a small child who had to grow to perfection. In order that he might be nourished and grow in a plentiful environment, God prepared for him a place which was much better than this world. That place is called the Garden (Genesis 2:8), perfect in climate, beauty, light, food, plants, fruit water, and all other necessities of life (Chapter 12).

God did not want to create a robot. He wanted to create a free being with all the gifts (*imago*) to become a godlike person (*similitudo*). According to Brown (1975: 23) the imperfection of humanity was necessary for his own good, since this imperfection is not permanent, but the starting point towards maturity.

Brown's observation is validated by the following passage from "Against Heresies" where Irenaeus describes how God took care of infant humanity:

For as it certainly is in the power of a mother to give strong food to her infant [but she does not do so], as the child is not yet able to receive more substantial nourishment; so also it was possible for God Himself to have made man perfect from the first, but man could not receive this [perfection], being as yet an infant. And for this cause our Lord, in these last times, when He was summed up (recapitulated) all things into Himself, came to us not as He might have come, but as we were capable of beholding Him. He might easily have come to us in His immortal glory, but in that case we could never have endured the greatness of the glory; and therefore it was that He, who was the perfect bread of the Father, offered Himself to us as milk [because we were] as infants. He did this when He appeared as a man, that we being nourished, as it were, from the breast of His flesh, and having, by such a course of milk nourishment, become accustomed to eat and drink the Word of God, may be able also to contain in ourselves the Bread of Immortality, which is the Spirit of the Father (AH, IV.XXXVIII.1).

The above passage clearly indicates that God asks from the immature humanity, which He created, only what it can bear. The idea of God giving "milk" to the infant humans reminds us of St. Paul's words to the Christian converts that he offered them "milk and not meat" because they were still young in the faith, unable to understand the depth of the Christian teachings (1 Cor. 3:2). It appears that Irenaeus liked Paul's paradigm and used it in a different way, having God offering "milk" to the infants Adam and Eve.

Irenaeus emphasizes the importance of the Logos' incarnation for the perfection and salvation of humanity. This emphasis has been appreciated by many scholars who have studied his work (Wingren, 2004: 83; Altermath, 1975: 63). However, there is something more important in the above passage, namely that humans' final goal is "to contain in [themselves] the Bread of Immortality, which is the Spirit of the Father". In other words, people will become like God by becoming Pneumatics (being in communion with the Spirit of the Father).

The union of the Pneumatic humanity with God will be a reality at the end of times. Simonson (1973: 60) remarks that humanity and the world could not be perfect, at the time of creation, because they were still becoming. God's plan was to lead humanity little by little to perfection through a developmental process. Irenaeus writes in "Against Heresies" IV.XXVIII.2:

It was for this reason that the Son of God, although He was perfect, passed through the state of infancy in common with the rest of mankind, partaking of it thus not for His own benefit, but for that of the infantile stage of man's existence, in order that man might be able to receive Him. There was nothing, therefore, impossible to and deficient in God, [implied in the fact] that man was not an uncreated being; but this merely applied to him who was lately created, [namely] man.

He goes on to describe how

[It was] the Father planning everything well and giving His commands, the Son carrying these into execution and performing the work of creating and the Spirit nourishing and increasing [what is made], but man making progress day by day, and ascending towards the perfect, that is approximating to the uncreated One. For the Uncreated is perfect, that is, God. Now it was necessary that man should in the first instance be created; and having been created, should receive growth; and having received growth, should be strengthened; and having been strengthened should abound; and having abounded, should recover [from the disease of sin]; and having recovered should be glorified; and being glorified, should see his Lord. For God is He who is yet to be seen, and the beholding of God is productive of immortality, but immortality renders one nigh unto God (AH, IV.XXXVIII.3).

Again, the above passages present the Holy Spirit as the particular person of the Holy Trinity who leads humanity gradually into perfection<sup>5</sup>. This is the vital message here delivered by Irenaeus. The Pneumatic human, the human being who has been nourished by the Holy Spirit, is approximating to the uncreated God.

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<sup>5</sup> Ambrose (Of the Holy Spirit, I. 13ff., NPNF 2, X) notes that the Spirit is a divine person. He also writes (Of the Holy Spirit, I. V. 37, NPNF 2, X) that "there can be nothing which the Spirit can be said not to have made". The deity of the Holy Spirit is also confessed by Basil (On the Spirit, I. 9-12 and I. 21-23, NPNF 2, VIII) and Gregory Nazianzen (On the Holy Spirit: Orat. XXXI.6, NPNF 2, VII).

## 2.5 Summary

According to Irenaeus, the teaching of the Church regarding the doctrine of creation is actually the teaching of the Holy Spirit (PA, chapter 8). The Church (through the teaching of the Holy Spirit) recognizes only one Creator God who creates the world out of nothing, and free from all necessities or constraints. The world cannot exist separate from God, but God himself stands in need of nothing. The Irenaean doctrine of Creation *ex nihilo* is formulated in opposition to the philosophical background of Gnosticism that accepts a creation out of something. Irenaeus' position appears to be in agreement with the Scriptures. The creation of humanity by God has a special place in the doctrine of creation. The human being, contrary to the other creatures, is made in the image and likeness of God. The phrase of the book of Genesis "Let us make man in our image and likeness" (Gen. 1:26-27) is, for Irenaeus, a manifestation and pro-revelation of the Holy Trinity. The second and the third persons of the Holy Trinity (the Son, and the Holy Spirit) are metaphorically described by Irenaeus as the hands of God. This imagery of God's hands (and not God's hand) is an important development in the history of dogma. God is active in the world not only through the Son but also through the Holy Spirit.

People are created in the image of the Logos of God and become like God (Pneumatics) eschatologically, through the work of the Holy Spirit. Irenaeus makes a distinction between the concepts "image" and "likeness" of God. Every human person is made in the image of God, but not everyone is godlike. The only exception in this distinction can be found in the person of Christ, who is Pneumatic by nature. The faithful Christians also become Pneumatics, by grace, overcoming the distinction between the image and likeness of God. The biblical story of Noah, and the world's regeneration after the flood, prove that creation is meaningless for God, if humanity fails to become godlike.

The first man, Adam, could only become Pneumatic by stages of development. The human being, for Irenaeus, was created imperfect towards perfection. The final goal of humans is “to contain in [themselves] the Bread of Immortality, which is the Spirit of the Father” (AH, IV.XXXVIII.1). The people that were destroyed at the flood were destroyed because they had received the Spirit of the “fallen angel” (PA, Chapters 17-18). The world was regenerated after the flood and was recapitulated by the incarnated Logos of God. The union of the Pneumatic Christian humans with God will be a reality at the end of times, when creation will finally achieve its destiny.

## CHAPTER THREE: THE FALL OF HUMANITY

### 3.1 Introduction

The third chapter of the present work will study “The Fall of Humanity” according to Irenaeus. Irenaeus and the Gnostics agree that the origin of all evil is humanity’s inability to become Pneumatic. However, they give a completely different interpretation to this human predicament.

A Pneumatic being, for the Gnostics, is a being who is able to escape from the influence of the evil Creator God and return to the heavenly *Pleroma* by obtaining salvific knowledge (*gnosis*). This thesis is maintained in every Gnostic system. Marcion identifies the God of the Old Testament as the author of evils. In “Against Heresies”, Irenaeus writes: “Marcion of Pontus... advanced the most daring blasphemy against Him who is proclaimed as God by the law and the prophets, declaring Him to be the author of all evils, to take delight in war, to be infirm of purpose, and even to be contrary to Himself” (AH, I.XXVII. 2). The Valentinians (Agouridis, 1959: 18-19) also distinguish between the substance of knowledge (the divine substance) and the substance of ignorance (the substance of this world). Humanity’s fall, for the Valentinians, is the inability to contemplate the divine substance of knowledge.

For Irenaeus, the divine substance cannot be contemplated by the human being. God cannot be understood as he is in himself. Actually the Gnostic desire for *gnosis* is like Adam’s desire to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge. Humanity’s separation from the Creator God (who is the one and only God) makes humanity unable to become Pneumatic, that is to achieve being like God through communion with the Holy Spirit. This inability becomes a burden not only for Adam but also for his descendants who are influenced by the “spirit of the fallen angel” and increase the negative consequences of the Fall. The

destruction of humanity's spiritual growth and its disobedience to God's will is accompanied by misery and death.

### 3.2 The Role and Involvement of the Devil

Adam, acting like an immature child, disobeyed God and failed to become Godlike (Pneumatic).<sup>6</sup> He "lost the robe of sanctity that he had from the Spirit" (AH, III.XXIII.5).<sup>7</sup> Although he was created pure, he was not created perfect; this perfection could be accomplished only through union with God. As Prokopchuk (2001: 84) remarks "for creatures who are temporal, communion [with God] must take place in time". Adam failed<sup>8</sup> -historically- to become perfect, but humans (after Adam) maintained the potential to become perfect in time because they have preserved the *imago* in their existence. The Fall of Adam does not imply that "man [for Irenaeus] was created a fallen being", as Hick suggests (Hick, 1981: 54). On the contrary, Irenaeus denounces the Gnostic views (and Hick's as well) that evil exists in the creation event.

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Prokopchuk (2001: 90-104) criticizes Hick's opinion at length, noting that [Hick] "has managed to extract and isolate smaller parts of Irenaeus' work, only to use them to pursue ends which run in a completely different direction to those found in Irenaeus" (2001: 94). Prokopchuk believes that Irenaeus stands in agreement with the traditional Christian view of an original historical Fall and with Augustine, contrary to Hick's belief that the Irenaeian view of the Fall stands over against the Augustinian view (2001: 92-93).

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<sup>6</sup> The presentation of Adam as a child is also made by Theophilus of Antioch (*ad Autolyicum* II. 25, ANF, II).

<sup>7</sup> The indwelling Spirit in the human soul is not part of the human nature, but a supernatural gift of God that was taken away after Adam's fall. Lawson (2006: 209) remarks that "in the Christian, the Spirit and the body are united in that each has communion with the animal soul". In other words, through Christ's salvific work (that will be described in the following chapter) the Holy Spirit dwelt again in the faithful person's soul.

<sup>8</sup> The following biblical passages refer to the original sin of Adam: Gen. 2:16; Gen. 3:1-6; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1Tim. 2:14; James 1:13-15.

Prokopchuk presents successfully the mistakes in the hyperbolic statement of Hick that Adam (for Irenaeus) was created a fallen being. The immaturity of Adam was not an *a priori* guarantee that the Fall was inevitable, as Hick states. Adam, although an immature child in the Garden of Eden, was capable to resist the temptation of disobedience to God's will. He failed to do that.

On the other hand, Hick's thesis that there is an important difference between the Irenaean and the Augustinian view of the Fall is valid and important for the History of Dogma. In one of his other writings, Hick presents more accurately this important difference. He writes:

Instead of the doctrine that man was created finitely perfect and then incomprehensibly destroyed his own perfection and plunged into sin and misery, Irenaeus suggests that man was created as an imperfect immature creature who was to undergo moral development and growth and finally be brought to the perfection intended for him by his Maker. Instead of the fall of Adam being presented as in the Augustinian tradition, as an utterly malignant and catastrophic event, completely disrupting God's plan, Irenaeus pictures it as something that occurred in the childhood of the race, and understandable lapse due to weakness and immaturity rather than an adult crime full of malice and pregnant with perpetual guilt (Hick, 1981: 220-221).

Hick, in the aforementioned passage, does not say that Adam was created a fallen being. He characterizes Adam's Fall as an "understandable lapse". Understandable lapse of course does not mean inevitable. Hick also highlights the differences between Irenaeus and Augustine; that remind us of the Irenaean distinction between *imago* and *similitudo*. For Irenaeus, contrary to Augustine, the results of the Fall are not catastrophic because the *imago* was maintained by Adam who only lost the opportunity to become Godlike.

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Irenaeus blames for Adam's Fall a fallen angel (Satan) who deceived man and led him astray<sup>9</sup>. Satan is a creature of God. He is not evil by nature, since God does not create evil creatures, but by choice (AH, IV.XLI.1). The expressions, the Devil, Satan, and the Serpent refer to the same evil reality in Irenaeus'

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<sup>9</sup> The following biblical passages support Irenaeus' thesis: Isa. 14:12; Ezek 28:15; John 8:44; 2 Pet. 2:4; 1 John 3:8 and Jude 6.

writings. These expressions refer to an angelic being who is the chief enemy of God. Satan is the original source of evil, an enemy not only of God but also of man. The devil, according to Irenaeus, “first became the cause of apostasy to himself and afterward to others” (AH, IV.XLI.3). Many angels became apostates along with him (AH, III.XXIII.3). This apostasy started with Satan, continued with the apostate angels and with the fallen humanity: “the ungodly, and unrighteous, and wicked, and profane among men” (AH, I.X.1).

The “ungodly men” fail to grow into the likeness of God; they fail in their potential to remain faithful to God, receiving supportive grace and eternal life from the Holy Spirit. This failure is not predestined -as Gnostics would say. Humans, under the influence of the devil, decide freely to disobey God. According to Irenaeus (AH, IV.XXXVII.4), human beings possessed free will from the beginning. This free will -which is a characteristic of the *similitudo*-differentiates humanity from other creatures of God. Humanity’s lost of the *similitudo*, after the Fall, made humanity captive to the devil’s will. Humanity’s redemption by Christ makes people Godlike again (Pneumatics). The Pneumatics -by Christ’s grace- rediscover their will to be in communion with God.

Regarding the devil and Adam’s Fall, in “Against Heresies”, Irenaeus writes that although Adam and Eve were guilty of disobeying God, nevertheless, God curses the devil.

[God] interrogates [Adam and Eve], that the blame might light upon the woman; and again, He interrogates her, that she may convey the blame to the serpent. For she related what had occurred. ‘The serpent,’ says she, ‘beguiled me, and I did eat.’ But He put no question to the serpent; for He knew that he had been the prime mover in the guilty deed; but He pronounced the curse upon Him in the first instance, that it might fall upon man with a mitigated rebuke. For God detested him who had led man astray, but by degrees, and little by little, He showed compassion to him who had been beguiled (AH, III.XXIII.5).

It should be noted that the devil causes Adam and Eve to sin disguised as a serpent. Serpent (the animal) was an instrument in the hands of the devil. The identification of the devil and the serpent derives from the Jewish pseudepigraphical literature as Schultz (1978: 185) remarks<sup>10</sup>. The book “The Apocalypse of Moses” explains how Eve was deceived by the devil through the serpent:

And the devil spoke to the serpent... Fear not, only be my vessel and I shall speak through thy mouth words to deceive him. And instantly he hung himself from the wall of paradise... then Satan appeared in the form of an angel... and I (Eve) bent over the wall and saw him like an angel. But he said to me... and I said to him... the devil answered through the mouth of the serpent... and I took of the fruit and I ate... and forthwith I knew that I was bare of the righteousness with which I had been clothed... I cried out in that very hour, “Adam, Adam, where art thou”... when he came I opened my mouth and the devil was speaking... and speedily I persuaded him and he ate... (cc.16-26).

Schultz (1978:186) notes the following:

When Irenaeus says that ‘God rebuked the serpent, the bearer of slander’ and that ‘the curse fell upon the animal and Satan hidden within’ [Preaching of the Apostles, ch.16], he is probably echoing the account found in the *Apocalypse of Moses*, where God is said to have cursed the serpent for having served as the instrument of Satan (‘a thankless vessel’) (26,1). The term ‘vessel’ for Satan in the *Apocalypse of Moses* seems to have been applied by Irenaeus to Adam, who ‘became a vessel in (Satan’s) possession’, since Satan held him ‘under his power’ and thus made use of him (AH III. XXIII. 1 and AH III. XXIII. 3), just as he did of the serpent.<sup>11</sup>

Schultz (1978: 173-175) notes that Irenaeus’ blaming of the devil as the cause of the Fall reveals the Irenaeian dependence on the Jewish pseudepigraphical book of “Enoch”. The book of “Enoch” refers that “the whole earth has been corrupted through the works that were taught by Azazel (Satan); to him ascribe

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10 Ignatius (Letter to the Philippians, chapter XI, ANF, I) also characterizes Satan as “an apostate, crooked serpent, rebel against God, outcast from Christ, alien from the Holy Spirit”. Mathetes (letter to Diognetus, chapter XII, ANF, I) notes that “the Serpent deceived Adam and Eve in Paradise”.

11 In “The Preaching of the Apostles” (chapter 16), Irenaeus also writes the following about the devil’s role in Adam’s fall: “This angel, having become by falsehood the author and originator of sin, was struck down for his offence against God, and at the same time caused man to be cast forth out of Paradise. Because under the influence of his disposition, he rebelled and left God, he was called Satan, meaning ‘apostate’ in Hebrew. He is the same one who is called the ‘slanderer’ or the devil”.

all sin.” (1 Enoch 10:8). It is also written that “they shall be evil spirits upon the earth... and the spirits of giants afflicted, oppress, destroy, attack, do battle, and work destruction upon the earth.” (1 Enoch 15:10-11). Irenaeus (PA, chapters 18-20) also attributes to devil the evil teachings, the unlawful unions, and all the human misfortunes that the Old Testament describes.

The devil does not have the power to create, like God, but only to destroy God’s good creation. The devil’s destiny is to be destroyed at the last days (AH, III. XVIII.3). In the meantime, however, there is a struggle between God and the devil; the devil wants to destroy humanity and God wants to redeem humanity from the devil’s influence.

Wingren (2004: 52) emphasizes this struggle between the devil and God with the hyperbolic statement that “in Irenaeus every page, and almost every sentence, conveys the idea of a struggle, a never ending contest, between the two active powers, God and Satan”. It is true, however (and not a hyperbole) that there are many passages in “Against Heresies” (III.XIX; III.XXXVI; V.XXI-XXIV) that describe the continuous battle between the devil and God. Also, in the “Preaching of the Apostles” (chapter 30), Irenaeus writes the following: “Our Lord became incarnate... so that He could fight on behalf of the race of Adam -and through Adam overcome that which had struck us down through Adam (cf. Romans 6:6)”.

The catastrophic work of the devil started with the Fall of Adam. Irenaeus’ understanding of Adam’s Fall depends on the Jewish pseudepigraphical literature. Contrary to other Church Fathers, like Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, who emphasize Adam’s responsibility for the fall (Xintaras, 1954: 61), Irenaeus views Satan as the protagonist in the cosmic drama that caused humanity’s exodus from Paradise, the world’s destruction by the flood, and all the human misery until the coming of Christ (PA, chapters 18-20).

What was the motive behind Satan's action? Irenaeus believes that it was envy for humanity's spiritual destiny:

Likewise, also, the devil, being among those angels, who are placed over the spirit of air... becoming envious of man, was rendered an apostate from the divine law... and his (the devil's) apostasy was exposed to man ... he (the devil) set himself with greater and greater determination in opposition to man, envying his life, and wishing to involve him (man) in his (the devil's) own apostate power (AH, V. XXIV.4).

Irenaeus interpretation of Satan's motive derives from the Jewish pseudepigraphical book "Life of Adam and Eve" (Schultz 1978: 188) where the devil says: "O Adam. All my hostility, envy and sorrow is for thee... and we were grieved when we saw thee in such glory and luxury and with guile I cheated thy wife" (cc.12-17).

Wingren (2004: 197) remarks that people will understand Satan's motives at the "last days". Bousset (1970: 442) makes the bold claim that "the fall [of humanity] appears not only as something permitted by God, but directly willed, as something requisite for the development of man". This claim is hypothetical and it is not grounded in Irenaeus' writings. It is also problematic because it shows God as wanting the suffering of humanity and the tragic consequences of the Fall. Hick (1981: 44) modifies this opinion (without mentioning Bousset), stating that the struggle of man for perfection has value only in a tempting environment in which the decisions are not easy or without cost.

In short then, the tempter corrupted man (AH, III.XXIII.1). Satan, for Irenaeus, is primarily responsible for the original Fall of Adam and for every evil act in human history. Adam is also responsible for his Fall, although he immediately repented for his sin (AH, III.XVIII.5). He chose freely to disobey God's will and become devil's associate. The association with the devil makes man captive to evil. It is interesting how Irenaeus compares the sin of Adam with the sin of Cain (Adam's son).

He writes in AH, III.XXIII.4-5:

And he (Cain) was not softened even by this, nor did he stop short with that evil deed; but being asked where his brother was, he said 'I know not; am I my brother's keeper?' extending and aggravating (his) wickedness by his answer. For if it is wicked to slay a brother, much worse is it thus insolently and irreverently to reply to the omniscient God as if he could baffle Him. And for this he did himself bear a curse about with him, because he gratuitously brought an offering of sin, having had no reverence for God, nor being put to confusion by the act of fratricide...

The case of Adam, however, had no analogy with this, but was altogether different. For having been beguiled by another under the pretext of immortality, he is immediately seized with terror and hides himself; nor as if he were able to escape from God; but, in a state of confusion at having transgressed His command, he feels unworthy to appear before and to hold converse with God.

This comparison between Cain and Adam observes the way they reacted after committing their sin. Adam was deceived, confused and afraid of God. He was a victim of Satan. Cain, on the contrary, committed an intentional crime; he was aware of his action and he was not afraid of God. That means that the children of Adam, having lost the *similitudo* (the opportunity to become like God, by becoming Pneumatics) became worse than their father, following willingly Satan's way and not by ignorance as Adam did.

The following of Satan's way by Cain is also described in the "Preaching of the Apostles": "But the fallen angel who had led man into disobedience, making him a sinner and causing him to be expelled from the Garden, was not content with his first evil. Now he caused a second one to happen to the brothers. Filling Cain with his own spirit, he led him into killing his own brother" (chapter 17). Cain not only did not receive the Holy Spirit but he was possessed by the spirit of the fallen angel.

Irenaeus continues on Chapter 18 of the "Preaching of the Apostles" to present the works of the fallen angel and how these works "caused wickedness to grow to overflowing, while righteousness dwindled". For Irenaeus, the Fall is not

only an event that concerns Adam. The Fall under the influence of the “spirit of the fallen angel” becomes an existential problem for every human being. In other words, Adam’s sin lives in all humanity because all humanity is under the influence of the “spirit of the fallen angel”.

### **3.3 The Destruction of Humanity's Spiritual Growth**

The Irenaean view of the Fall sees it as a termination of spiritual growth for all human beings. There cannot be growth apart from God because God’s power is the source of spiritual growth. Adam failed to become Pneumatic (the Adam Christ), and all humans failed in Adam, according to Irenaeus (AH, V.XVII.1; V. XVI.3).

Irenaeus’ reference to Adam’s Fall reflects the Pauline theology of the New Testament. According to Paul: “By man came death... [and] in Adam all die” (1 Cor. 15: 21f) and “By the transgressions of the One, death reigned through that One” (Rom. 5: 17). Other Church Fathers, like Tertullian, Origen and Augustine also emphasize the doctrine of Adam’s “original sin” (McGrath, 2001: 386, 390, 398). Tertullian’s remark that “when [the devil] met the woman... as a result of their conversation she was filled with a spirit infected with discontent” (McGrath, 2001: 386) is in agreement with Irenaeus’ thought. In modern times, Reinhold Niebuhr emphasized the importance of the doctrine (McGrath, 2001: 450).

Lawson (2006: 216-220) devotes many pages in his book, contrary to Duncker’s opinion, claiming that Irenaeus does not believe in the doctrine of the original sin. However, Lawson (2006: 224) contradicts himself by admitting that Irenaeus was not a philosopher to see the “difficulties” of the doctrine, and by noting elsewhere (225) that Irenaeus “never tried to explain why the defeat of Adam brought bondage to all... but he followed the theology of S. Paul (Rom. 5: 16)”. If we add to these contradictions the words of Irenaeus in AH, V.XVII.1,

that transgressing God's commandments made us all his enemies, then we conclude that Dunker's thesis [as it appears in Lawson, 2006: 217] that "S. Irenaeus laid the foundation for S. Augustine, in what he wrote of original sin" is valid. Nevertheless, Irenaeus and Augustine have a different view of the Fall regarding the loss of *imago* and *similitudo*.

The rejection of the Spirit by humanity made it captive to the devil's lordship. Every human being who chooses evil (and therefore rejects the Spirit) destroys the inner being (AH, IV.IXIV.1). Adam was capable to succeed and become Godlike. He was not created as a fallen being (a *hylic* man, in Gnostic terminology, destined to Fall by nature). He freely decided to disobey God and misuse his freedom that was a gift of God to humanity.

The essence of the Fall is found in Adam's disobedience to God but it is not simply the act of disobedience. It is an existential problem with an ethical dimension. Adam and Eve, tempted by the devil, attempted to receive for themselves -without God's permission- the "fruit of knowledge." Irenaeus finds "similarities between the disobedience of Adam and Eve and the spirituality of his Gnostic opponents", Prokopchuk (2001: 99) observes.<sup>12</sup>

Adam and Eve refuse to accept God's gifts in God's spiritual way. They attempt to grasp them in their own terms. This human mentality becomes an obstacle in humanity's communion with God and leads to a denaturing of humanity. Humans cannot grow in the Spirit and become Godlike. On the contrary they are filled with the "spirit of the fallen angel".

Humanity's problem therefore becomes not simply an ethical problem of disobedience to a divine commandment (a problem that could be possibly fixed by cognitive-behavioural therapy). It is the destruction of any possibility for growth in the Spirit, because humans are filled with another kind of spirit (that is the demonic spirit). It is an existential problem because, as Meyendorff (1992:

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<sup>12</sup> In AH, I. IX.5, Irenaeus mentions that the Gnostics "seem to be inspired by a multitude of evil spirits".

60-61) remarks, the fallen humanity is no longer 'complete' humanity because the rejected Spirit was part of humanity itself. In Irenaeus words: "The complete man is a mixture and union of a soul which takes to itself the Spirit of the Father, to which is united the fleshly nature which was fashioned in the image of God" (AH, V.VI.1). It is an existential problem that only the creator God can solve out of love for his creatures.

### 3.4 The Direct and Indirect Consequences of the Fall

The consequences of the Fall are dramatic for humanity<sup>13</sup>. Humanity suffers many misfortunes. Human beings are deprived of blessings which they received from God and experience the reality of suffering and death. We read in the "Preaching of the Apostles":

[God] sent the man away from His presence, sending him to dwell outside the Garden, for no sinner can live there. Expelled from the Garden, Adam and Eve began to experience great despondency and mental torment, going about this world with toil, sorrow and regret. They tilled the earth under the rays of our sun, and thorns and thistles, and the punishment of sin, sprang up (chapters 16-17).

However, because the devil is responsible for the Fall, the devil is the one cursed by God and not Adam. Irenaeus notes in "Against Heresies":

And God,' it is declared, 'said to the serpent: Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou above all cattle, and above all the beasts of the earth.' And this same thing does the Lord also say in the Gospel, to those who are found upon the left hand: 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which my Father hath prepared for the devil and his angels;' indicating that eternal fire was not originally prepared for man, but for him who beguiled man, and caused him to offend-for him, I say, who is chief of the apostasy, and for those angels who became apostates along with him; which [fire], indeed, they too shall justly feel, who, like him, persevere in works of wickedness, without repentance, and without retracing their steps (AH, III.XVIII.3).

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<sup>13</sup> The consequences of the Fall are presented in the following biblical passages: Gen. 3:7-24 and Rom. 8:19-21.

Adam is not cursed but simply punished because he disobeyed God. This punishment has a pedagogical character because it is imposed on an immature child for his benefit. Adam, receiving God's punishment, understands the importance of the *similitudo* that was lost by him and given back to him and to all faithful humans by the redeemer. In the words of Lawson (2006: 203) "God's purpose in punishing Adam was the beneficent one of turning evil to greater good".

The human suffering, being away from God's presence, had also consequences for creation as a whole (AH, V.XXIX.1), since Adam and Eve were the "crown of creation". (It must be noted that the source of sin is not in God's good creation but in Satan's envy of humanity). The greatest consequence for humans was the reality of death. Mortality was the result of Adam's inability to become Pneumatic. Adam lost the garment of righteousness which he had been given by the Spirit (AH, III. XXXV. I). As Wingren (2004: 55) remarks "to lose the Spirit as a result of yielding to the Devil is the same thing as to die". Death, therefore, is the final result of humanity's association with the devil<sup>14</sup>. Brown's (1975: 21) claim that death is "the natural end of imperfect creatures" ignores the role of the devil in Adam's Fall.

The Fall of Adam is only the beginning of the devil's catastrophic work. Every human being feels the pain of the devil's lordship over humanity. Irenaeus presents the paralytic man who was healed by Christ as an example of human suffering. The man's paralysis was a result of sin (AH, V.XVII.2). Sin and death are interrelated. The life of sin makes humanity to "flee from the hands of God" (AH, IV. LXIV.2). Aghiorgoussis (1992: 38-39) links sin not only with physical death but also with various forms of spiritual death (pride, disobedience, lust)".

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14 According to Justin (Second Apology, chapter XI, ANF, I) "death is a debt that we have to pay".

Irenaeus, however, believes that there are also good consequences deriving from humanity's Fall. In AH, III.XXI.1, he makes a reference to Jonah who was swallowed by the fish in order not to be destroyed, but that he might become a better instrument of God. God likewise allows evil to "swallow" humanity in order that it would be redeemed by Christ (in the future) and appreciate God's grace.

The Fall helped humanity to experience the good of obedience and the evil of disobedience to God. Humanity failed to become Pneumatic (due to the Fall) but has experienced, before the Fall, the "good fruits" of the Spirit. The same Spirit, after the Fall does not abandon humanity. He blesses Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the twelve tribes of Israel (PA, chapter 24). He also gives the law to people through Moses. Irenaeus writes in the "Preaching of the Apostles", chapter 26:

While in the desert Moses received the Law from God, the ten statements 'on tablets of stone, written with the finger of God' (Exodus 31:18; 34:28). The 'finger of God' is He who proceeds from the Father, the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 11:20; Matthew 12:28). He also delivered the other commandments and laws which he delivered to the children of Israel.

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit finally reveals God's will and identity, through the prophets<sup>15</sup>, in order to prepare the faithful for the future redemption in Christ (see AH, IV.XX.8 and PA, chapter 29).

Wingren's (2004: 70) remarks are important:

The Spirit 'accustoms' itself to dwelling in the human race by working in the prophets and patriarchs who also have faith since they trust in God's promise. Grace (which is connected with the Spirit and with faith) is not therefore to be understood as being non-existent between the Fall and the Incarnation, but grace can also increase and 'become greater': God is gracious in the old covenant, although grace does not for that reason abound as it does in the new covenant.

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15 See also: Ignatius (Letter to the Philadelphians, chapter V, and Letter to the Magnecians, chapter IX, ANF, I); Justin (First Apology, chapter XXXIX, ANF, I) and Basil (On the Holy Spirit, Chapter I.14, NPNF 2, VII).

According to Irenaeus the Fall of Adam and his spiritual redemption in Christ are historical events. This is why he makes references to other historical events -from Adam's Fall until the incarnation of Christ- that reveal the Holy Spirit's action in history. On the contrary, Gnostics do not view the doctrines of Fall and Redemption in the same way. According to the Gnostic Gospel of St. Thomas, Jesus dismisses as irrelevant the prophets' predictions (Pagels, 1989: 132).

The righteous of the old covenant understand through the work of the Spirit, that "by means of repentance... [they] can preserve what is good" (AH, IV.XXXVIII.1). Those who repent cease to be the children of the devil and become children of God (AH, IV.XXXI.3, ii 52-3). But what is the meaning of repentance? It is nothing less than the way back to God: a second chance to become Pneumatic. It is only possible in the new covenant through the work of Jesus Christ (the new Adam).<sup>16</sup> The *similitudo* that was lost in Adam emerges again in Christ (AH, V.XVI.2, ii 99). The incarnated Logos of God, who is also a Pneumatic being, is the only redeemer of humanity (PA, chapter 30). The redemption of humanity by the Pneumatic Christ has been manifested historically, but it will be fulfilled eschatologically (as we will show in the following chapters).

### 3.5 Summary

According to Irenaeus, the Fall of humanity was not inevitable. Humanity was not created a fallen being. Humanity is not the *hylic* being of Gnosticism. Humanity chose to Fall by becoming associate with the devil. The Fall of humanity is a spiritual Fall. What is the meaning of this expression? It means that humanity fell because it rejected the Holy Spirit and became influenced by the spirit of the devil. The scholars who have studied Irenaeus approach the

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<sup>16</sup> Gregory of Nyssa (The Great Catechism, chapters II and III, NPNF 2, IV) remarks that the fallen humanity is remade by God's Logos through the Spirit as if breathing new life into sinners. See also: Justin (Fragments from the Lost writings, chapter XI, ANF, I).

doctrine of Fall focusing on humanity's free will. They emphasize how humanity freely decided to reject God and disobey his commandment. Humanity's Fall is presented as ethical (an act of disobedience). They mention of course the role of the devil, but they focus on humanity's behaviour.

The approach of the present thesis to the same doctrine is somewhat different. It considers of central importance the Irenaean comparison between the Spirit of God and the spirit of the fallen angel (the devil). The Spirit of God gives life to humanity and leads it to growth. The spirit of the devil, on the other hand, gives death to humanity and leads it to destruction. There is a battle between God and the devil for the human soul, unprovoked by the humans. The devil succeeded in filling the human soul with his spirit; Adam was not forced to reject the Holy Spirit, but he was deceived by the devil as an immature child. God punished Adam for the Fall, pedagogically, but he cursed the devil.

After Adam, humans continue to be under the spiritual influence of the devil. However, the battle is not over. The Holy Spirit, through the Law and the Prophets, educates people about this battle and prepares humanity for the coming of the Pneumatic God-man (Jesus Christ) who will redeem them from the bondage of the enemy. Through the work of Christ, people will have the chance to reject the spirit of the devil and receive the Holy Spirit, finding salvation eschatologically.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE SPIRITUAL REDEMPTION OF HUMANITY

### 4.1 Introduction

The problem of humanity's redemption is not only "the center of the Gnostic outlook" as Nygren (1953: 294) remarks, but also the central theme in Irenaeus' theology. The term that Irenaeus uses to describe the doctrine of salvation is the Pauline term Recapitulation/ *Anakephaleosis* (Eph. 1:10). A term that can also be found in the writings of Justin the Martyr (AH, IV.XI.2).

Recapitulation, for Irenaeus (AH, III.XXI.10), is the fulfilment of the divine plan for human salvation that started in the creation of the world and was not abandoned when Adam fell into sin but came to completion through the work of God's "two hands"; The Word and the Spirit (AH, IV.XX.1). Lawson (2006: 140-142) discusses extensively the term Recapitulation, offering the positions of various Scholars, such as, Harnack, Wendt, Seeberg, Vernet, Loofs, Werner and Bousset. He is more comfortable with Bousset's view that the "idea of Recapitulation combines the thought of evolution and of supernatural intervention" (Lawson, 2006: 142). This is a valid statement, but Werner's opinion (Lawson, 2006: 142) that Recapitulation expresses a Pauline idea is also important for the history of dogma, and presents Irenaeus as a truly Pauline theologian. Werner's opinion is adopted in the present study, and references to Pauline Epistles will accompany the analysis of Irenaeus' thought.

Irenaeus and the Gnostics agree that humanity is in need of salvation. This much is common ground. However, a brief summary of Gnostic teaching shows crucial differences. Gnostic salvation derives out of the divine knowledge that is revealed to the elect. The elect are only the Pneumatic persons, created by Achamoth before her withdraw to the *Pleroma*. Achamoth also created two other classes of people: the *psychic* and the *hylic*. The *hylic* are destined to be destroyed, and the *psychic* can escape destruction through faith and good works. This possible escape will not lead the *psychic* to salvation but

will grant them access to a realm bordering the *Pleroma*, the fullness of divine life. Achamoth's spouse, the Saviour, was generated by the Aeons in order to help the Pneumatics return to the *Pleroma*, revealing to them what is necessary to know (*gnosis*) in order to understand themselves (AH, I.IV.1- VII.5).

In other words, salvation for the Gnostics is the inner illumination that leads the Pneumatics back to the *Pleroma*. Faith and good works are not necessary for the elect who redeem themselves by nature (Markus, 1954: 210). Jesus Christ is considered a revealer of truth who provides the Pneumatics with self understanding necessary for their return to the *Pleroma*. Jesus at his baptism, received the illumination of the Saviour (Achamoth's spouse) who descended onto him in the form of a dove (AH, III.X.3). According to Gnostic Christology, the baptism of Jesus is more important than his birth or death on the cross, because he received Pneumatic substance by the Saviour (AH, I.VII.2). The birth of Christ gives him the necessary *psychic* and *hylic* substance (soul and body) to manifest himself to the world and communicate *gnosis*. Nevertheless, Christ's soul and body do not belong to the *Pleroma*. The Saviour abandons Jesus on the Cross and returns to the *Pleroma*. The *hylic* substance of Jesus was thus annihilated by his death (AH, II.XI.3).

The Gnostic denial of the doctrine of Incarnation (the refusal that Jesus is a God-man born by the Virgin Mary) as well as their denial of Christ's suffering on the cross (docetic Christology)<sup>17</sup> and of his resurrection from the dead, reveal their despise of the created world and the created material substance (AH, III.XVI). Redemption -for the Gnostics- is the liberation of spirit from matter. Gnostic Soteriology disconnects the doctrines of creation and salvation.

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17 The reality of Christ's suffering on the cross is defended by Ignatius (Letter to the Trallians, chapter X, ANF, I). Ignatius (Letter to the Smyrneans, chapter III, ANF, I) emphasizes that Jesus "possessed a body after the resurrection".

Irenaeus, on the contrary, through the theological scheme of recapitulation connects the two doctrines, emphasizing that salvation is possible only through the incarnate, crucified and resurrected Christ<sup>18</sup>. The incarnation of Christ involves the Logos of God who becomes man and the Spirit of God who overshadows the Virgin Mary making her the Mother of God. The “two hands of God” (AH, IV.XX.1) are also manifested at the baptism of Christ to reveal Jesus identity: he is the incarnated Logos of God and the true Pneumatic man. Irenaeus compares the old Adam who lost “the robe of the Spirit” (AH, III.XXIII.5) with Christ (the new Adam) who possesses the Spirit and offers him to the faithful by grace (AH, III.XXIV.1).

The recapitulation in Christ is a spiritual recapitulation.<sup>19</sup> People become Pneumatics -by grace- obtaining the *similitudo* and fulfilling the divine plan for the salvation of the whole world. In this thesis we claim that the work and importance of the Holy Spirit in the recapitulation event is not emphasized enough by the Irenaeian scholars. It is mentioned of course but as a secondary subject or a worthy reference in the study of Christ’s redemptive work (See: Prokopchuck, 2001: 107).

The aim of the present chapter is to approach the Irenaeian teaching of recapitulation in a different way, claiming that the “two hands of God” are equally important in the salvific work of Christ. The Holy Spirit has a central and not a peripheral place in the doctrine of humanity’s redemption.<sup>20</sup>

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18 The world’s salvation in Christ is manifested in the following biblical passages: Isa. 63:8-9; Jer. 23:5-6; Matt. 1:212; Luke 1:76-77; Luke 2:11; Luke 4:14-21; Luke 19:10; John 4:42; John 12:44-47; Acts 4:10-12; Acts 5:30-31; Rom. 5:1-2; Rom. 5:9-10; Eph. 5:23; Phil. 3:20-21; 1Tim. 1:15; 2 Tim. 1:9-10; Titus 3:6; Heb. 2:3; Heb. 2:9-10; Heb. 5:7-9; Heb. 7:24-25; Heb. 9:28 and 1 John 4:14.

19 The following biblical passages connect Pneumatology and Soteriology: John 3:5-8; John 6:63; Rom. 1:4; Gal. 3:3; 1Thess. 1:5; 2Thess.2:13; Titus 3: 5-6; 1Pet. 1:2 and 1 Pet.3:18.

20 Tertullian (Against Praxeas, 27-30, ANF, III) observes that the Spirit, after the incarnation, makes the redemptive work of Christ effective in history. Ambrose (Of the Holy Spirit, III. XXII. 167, NPNF 2, X), emphasizes that no one can say that Christ is Lord; except by the Holy Spirit.

#### 4.2 The Two “Hands of God” at the Birth and Baptism of Christ

Prokopchuck (2001: 107) is an Irenaean scholar who understands and admits that “the doctrine of recapitulation explains salvation in terms of the Word and the Spirit, and the means through which they restore fellowship between creator and creation by overcoming sin and death”. Recapitulation therefore, must be understood in a broader biblical context considering the salvific plan of God before the birth of Christ. The various covenants between God and people (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses), the work of the patriarchs and the prophets, are appreciated by Irenaeus as the work of the Holy Spirit, preparing people to accept the coming of Christ (“Preaching of the Apostles”, Chapter 29; AH, III.XI.8). In AH, IV.XIV. 2, Irenaeus remarks that: “[God] raised up prophets upon earth, accustoming man to bear His Spirit [within him], and to hold communion with God”.

Christ in Irenaean theology is the link that unites the Old and the New Testaments. Irenaeus’ Christological interpretation of the Old Testament defends the unity of the Bible as the revelation of God’s redemptive plan in the creation event, both before and after the Fall (AH, IV.XIV.2). In this way it links Christology with the work of the “two hands of God” (AH, IV.XX.1). In AH, IV.XX.10-11, Irenaeus explains how the Spirit reveals the Word through the prophetic visions in Daniel 3 and Ezekiel 1.

Christology and Pneumatology in Irenaean theology cannot be separated. This in itself constitutes a development in the history of dogma. The Word and the Spirit of God co-operate not only in the book of Genesis, to create humanity, but also throughout history in order to bring redemption to humans. The Spirit’s involvement at the birth of Jesus is emphasized by Irenaeus in AH, III.XXI.4. Jesus’ birth by the Spirit of God and the Virgin Mary is a new beginning in human history. God himself dwelt among humanity in Jesus Christ or, in other words, the Adamic flesh was taken by God. God saves humanity from sin and death as a human being (PA, chapters 30 and 37). The first man who was of an

animal nature is “saved by the spiritual one,” in the words of Irenaeus (AH, III.XXII.3). In this way it expands Paul in 1 Corinthians 15.

The incarnation of the Logos of God means that the Spirit of God dwells in the human body and soul. This is why Jesus is called the Anointed one- Christ (PA, chapter 47). Jesus Christ is anointed with the Spirit as a king who rules over his people. The kingdom of Christ is a spiritual kingdom. Wingren (2004: 88) remarks that according to Irenaeus “the Spirit is incarnate (in Jesus) in the same way as the body will be made a spiritual body in the resurrection... The man Jesus possesses the Spirit, and gives the Spirit, i.e. Life, to men”.

The baptism of Christ is also important in Irenaeus’ thought. He was familiar with the Gnostic claim that the Saviour from the *Pleroma* descended upon the man Jesus to give him spiritual substance without being one with him (AH, III.XVII.1). This claim is rejected by Irenaeus. Christ, in Irenaeus’ Christology, is already a God-man at the time of his baptism. He was baptised in order to identify himself with repentant humans who desire to be once more in communion with God through fellowship with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit’s presence at the baptism of Jesus is emphasized by Irenaeus, as a manifestation of Jesus’ *Theanthropic* identity<sup>21</sup> (AH, III.XVII.1-4). Thus, Christ, as a truly Pneumatic man is able to bring people back to communion with God (AH, III. XVII.3). This communion of course requires a battle, that Christ is waging on our behalf, against the devil.<sup>22</sup> “[Christ] in His work of recapitulation summed up all things, both waging war against our enemy, crushing him who had at the beginning led us away captives in Adam” (AH, V.XXI.1).

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21 Justin (Dialogue with Trypho, chapter LXXXVIII, ANF, I) writes that “[Christ] did not go to the river because He stood in need of baptism or of the descent of the Spirit like a dove... [The Holy Spirit] for man’s sake... lighted on Him in the form of a dove”. Ignatius (Letter to the Ephesians, chapter XIII, ANF, I) remarks that Jesus Christ was conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit. “He was born and baptised, that by His passion He might purify the water” (See also similar remarks in chapter VII, ANF, I).

22 Cyril of Jerusalem (Catech. Lect. XXI. 4, NPNF 2, VII) remarks that “Christ after His baptism and the visitation of the Holy Ghost went forth and vanquished the adversary;” Christians likewise, “after Holy Baptism and the Mystical Chrism, having put on the whole armour of the Holy Ghost, are to stand against the power of the adversary”.

Irenaeus, following the biblical narrative, examines the temptations of Jesus by the devil after his baptism. The devil reacts to the Spirit's descent upon Christ and tempts Christ in order to lead him to fall, like he did with Adam (AH, V.XXIf.). Christ and Adam faced the same temptations. However, Christ was able to overcome these temptations bringing his Adamic humanity closer to perfection and destroying the devil's ability to lead humans astray. Humanity is able to become Godlike again (that is Pneumatic).<sup>23</sup>

Irenaeus writes:

[Christ], vanquishing [Satan] for the third time, He spurned him from Him as being conquered out of the law; and there was done away with that infringement of God's commandment which had occurred in Adam, by means of the precept of the law, which the Son of man observed, who did not transgress the commandment of God (AH, V.XXI.2).

The work of God's "two hands" (AH, IV.XX.1) is not limited to the birth and baptism of Christ but it is evident throughout Christ's ministry. As Prokopchuk (2001: 138-139) remarks the Spirit is present in Christ's healing ministry. A ministry that is not limited to teaching an abstract truth of God (as the Gnostics understand it) but revealing that Christ himself is the truth of God. Christ's salvific death on the cross, and his resurrection from the dead, is also the work of the "two hands of God". The Son of God, anointed by the Spirit, "redeems [humans] by the curse of the law being made a curse for us; for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree" (AH, III.XVIII.3).

The birth, baptism, work, death and resurrection of Christ is viewed by Irenaeus as a second creation (AH, XV.1). The Word and the Spirit create a new humanity in the person of Christ. The redemption of this new humanity is validated by Christ's incarnation. It will be achieved with Christ's death and resurrection, and will come to fulfilment eschatologically (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24-28). Thus recapitulation starts before the birth of Christ, manifests its character through the redemptive work of Christ, but it will be fulfilled at the *eschaton*.

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<sup>23</sup> Ignatius (Letter to the Ephesians, chapter IX, ANF, I) remarks that the Pneumatic Christ delivers people from "the spirit of deceit".

### 4.3 The Old Adam and the Pneumatic Adam Compared and Contrasted

Christians believe that Adam was created in the image and likeness of God. God's plan for him was that he should mature spiritually, finding perfection and eternal communion with Holy Trinity. Adam, under the influence of the devil's spirit rebelled against God, fell from God's grace and returned to the dust from which he came. Decay and death were the result of humanity's disobedience to God (AH, V.XXIII.1). According to Irenaeus, the original sin of Adam exists in all humans. The Old Testament describes the punishment given to "the ancients" by God "in regards to what they did without the Spirit's guidance" (AH, IV.XXVII.1). This belief is in agreement with Paul's theology of original sin (Rom. 5:18f.; 1 Cor. 15: 21-56).

The failure of Adam to become Pneumatic, that is God-like, is a tragic event in human history. However, God did not abandon humanity. Irenaeus remains faithful again to the Pauline theological position that views Adam as a figure of the coming Messiah (Rom. 5:14). The incarnation of the Logos of God by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary was the creation of a "new Adam". The first Adam was created "out of dust" and received from the Spirit the "breath of life". The second Adam also was not created by a man's sperm but by the Spirit of God. (AH, III.XXI.10). God allowed Christ to be born by a woman (the Virgin Mary) to restore Adam back to life. Christ assumes the Adamic substance, remaining however free of sin and undefeated by the devil (PA, chapter 31). Again the message of Paul is put into context by Irenaeus.

Irenaeus' comparison and contrast between Adam and Christ are based on the first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians and more specifically on the idea that "as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor.15:21f.). The verses of Irenaeus in AH, V. XII.2-3 are almost identical with the writings in 1 Corinthians 15:45-49. Irenaeus remarks that Adam is the beginning of those who die and Christ the beginning of those who live. He writes:

For the Lord, having been born 'the first-begotten of the dead,' and receiving into His bosom the ancient fathers, has regenerated them

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 (AH, III.XXII.4).

Jesus' conception by the Holy Spirit separates him from Adam and other humans (PA, chapters 51, 53, and 57). The birth of Jesus is truly a second creation (AH, V.XV.1). What was the purpose of this second creation? Irenaeus writes: "God recapitulated in himself the ancient formation of man, that he might kill, deprive death of its power and vivify man" (AH, III.XVIII.7). This purpose was accomplished through a spiritual battle that Christ gave successfully against the devil, leading mankind back into communion with God. In AH, V.XXI. 1 we read: "Our species went down to death through a vanquished man, so we may ascend to life again through a victorious one". Adam was redeemed by the Spiritual Man, Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 15:45-49). This redemption does not mean that human becomes divine. Christ is the only member of humanity who is God. It means that humans become fully mature and developed according to God's original plan. They also receive power from God to overcome evil (cf. Luke 10:19).

The life of Jesus illustrates the progressive struggle against evil. The first fight between Christ and the devil starts in Bethlehem where Christ was born. The angels not only declare the divinity of Jesus, but they also protect the child from Herod who wishes to destroy him (AH, III.XXI.3). Herod is perceived by Irenaeus as an instrument of the devil. The belief that the devil uses instruments to achieve his goals is also emphasized by Irenaeus in his discussion of Adam's Fall through the work of the serpent.

Next, the boy Jesus is taken to Egypt and returns to the Promised Land as a new Moses (PA, chapters 25, 29 and 45). Here Irenaeus makes again a connection between the Old and the New Testaments, showing that the New Testament is a fulfilment of the Old. The holy persons of the Hebrew Bible are guided and inspired by the Spirit to prepare people for the coming of Christ. Christ, however, is not simply inspired by the Spirit. He is born of the Spirit (PA,

chapter 39). He is a Pneumatic man, able to fight on behalf of the human race for its redemption. Like Moses, he saves his people from the spiritual “land of Egypt,” that is the land of sin and death.

The baptism of Jesus in Jordan, by John the Baptist, is a clear revelation of Christ’s *Theanthropic* identity. The voice of God the Father, and the manifestation of the Spirit “like a dove” reveal that the one who was baptized by John is the Incarnated Logos and Son of God. The Spirit of God anoints Jesus to preach the Gospel to the lowly and to liberate the captives (cf. Isa. 16:1). In the words of Irenaeus: “the Spirit of God descends upon Him. [The Spirit] of Him who had promised by the prophets that he would anoint Him, so that we receiving from the abundance of His unction, might be saved” (AH, III. IX.3).

After his baptism, Jesus withdraws himself to the desert where he faces the devil’s temptations (AH, V.XXI.2-3 -XXIV.4). For Irenaeus, these temptations are exactly the same temptations that Adam faced in the Garden of Eden. Christ, contrary to Adam, rejected the lies of the tempter remaining faithful and obedient to God. The tempter, however, continued his effort to tempt Christ. Using one of Jesus’ own disciples, Peter, he tried to stop Christ from entering Jerusalem to offer himself to God as a sacrifice for the sins of the people. Christ, responded to Peter with the words “Away from me, you Satan,” revealing that it was the devil behind Peter’s tempting words (AH, III.XVIII.4 and PA, chapter 34).

Not only does Irenaeus present Christ as a new Adam rejecting the devil’s temptations, but Christ is also a teacher of men and women, revealing to them the will of God (AH, II. XXII.5 and XXXII.1). While the old Adam was in need of spiritual development, the new Adam is Pneumatic and able to teach his fellow human beings the divine truth. Loewe (1985: 4) mentions -correctly in our opinion- that the knowledge of the Father through Christ’s teaching is a practical knowledge. Knowledge of the Father by humans means that they receive an increase, “acting as Christ acts and doing what he bids”. Loewe,

however, fails to attribute to the work of the Spirit the power of human transformation. He proposes the term “Noetic Soteriology” (Loewe, 1985: 4, 6, 8, 9), describing the emphasis of Irenaeus on people’s ethical response to Christ as teacher. “Noetic Soteriology,” nevertheless is a Pneumatic Soteriology: people act and behave differently because they become Pneumatics by grace, belonging to the “body of Christ” (as we will analyse in the next chapter,) and not because they make better ethical decisions.

For Irenaeus, the teaching ministry of Christ, accompanied by miracles, healings, and exorcisms of demonic spirits, lasted for ten years. This is contrary to the prevailing patristic and theological view, which requires Christ to teach for only three years. Christ, according to Irenaeus, was fifty years old when he was crucified (and not thirty three). This is significant, for Irenaeus, because Christ lived through all the stages of human life. He was an infant, a child, a young man, and an old man. Everyone therefore can be identified with his humanity (AH, II.XXII.1-6).

He writes:

He came to save all through means of Himself- all, I say, who through Him are born again to God- 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, being at the same time made to them an example of piety, righteousness and submission; a youth for youths, becoming an example to youths, and thus sanctifying them for the Lord. 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, that He might be 'the first-born from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence,' the Prince of life, existing before all, and going before all (AH, II.XXII.4).

The death of Christ on the cross is a crucial battle against the devil. Christ dies on the cross on behalf of the human race. He dies on the sixth day of the week, the day that Adam sinned, as Irenaeus claims (AH, V.XXIII.2). The power of Satan is destroyed with Christ’s death on the cross. God, of course, could find another way to destroy Satan. Nevertheless, humanity would not have been

redeemed; death would have remained undefeated in the world (AH, III.XXI.10 and XXIII.1).

Christ remains faithful and obedient to God until his death, honouring the Spirit who anointed him (AH, III.XVIII.3). The death of Christ and his presence in Hades for three days is important for the old Adam's redemption. When Christ finds Adam, in Hades, he raises him from the dead presenting him to God the Father. By recapitulating Adam in himself, Christ recapitulates humanity in its entirety (AH, III.XXIII.8).

The resurrection of Christ from the dead, three days after his crucifixion, is the first victory in the battle against the devil; the final victory will be at the *eschaton*. Christ (the new Adam) becomes the firstborn in a new life with God where there is no suffering and death (cf. Heb. 2:10). The man Christ is risen from the dead because the Spirit is possessed by him - the same Spirit who will redeem, by grace, those who believe in Christ, protecting them from harm (AH, III.XVII.2-3). The resurrection life is not unnatural for humans; on the contrary, it is the uncorrupted life of God's original creation, working through Holy Spirit.

The latter is vital for the argument in this thesis. Bushur (1998: 118) claims that the "battle" between Christ and the devil is on the battleground of the human will. He also refers to the "divine energy of the incarnate Word" that reverses the "rebellious energy of Adam". In his own words "the energy of Christ's obedience reverses the corrupting energy of sin" (Bushur, 1998: 68-69). Although his remarks are valid, he fails to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit in this battle. For Irenaeus, the battle against the devil is won by Christ because he is a Pneumatic man, and not spiritually immature like the old Adam: the devil tries to destroy humanity's *similitudo*; he succeeds in the case of Adam but he is defeated by the Pneumatic Christ.

#### 4.4 Spiritual Recapitulation in Christ

Adam's humanity is not merely restored or strengthened in Christ; it is matured. Christ is not simply a new human child in need for development like the old Adam before the fall. Christ is the perfect human because he is Pneumatic. The recapitulation of human beings in Christ becomes possible through their identification with him. Faithful people become Pneumatics by grace through their union with Christ. Christ gives the faithful people the gift of the Spirit that makes salvation possible (AH, V.XII.2-3). This is Irenaeus' gospel.

Irenaeus emphasizes that those who are joined to God are the perfect and spiritual. They possess not only the *imago* but also the *similitudo*, by receiving the Spirit (AH, V.VI.1 and V.I.3). In AH, V.I.1 he writes: "The Lord redeemed us through His own blood... He poured out the Spirit of the Father for the union and communion of God and man, imparting indeed God to men by means of the Spirit".

Salvation does not become possible to humans simply by imitating the life of Christ and following his ethical example. Christ is not simply an illumined teacher who saves people by his teaching. The Gnostics perceive him of course as one among many Pneumatics; he helps the elect people understand that they are saved by nature. As we have seen, Irenaeus rejects this Gnostic Christology. For Irenaeus, Christ is the only God-man who saves people by making them Pneumatics by grace. Pneumatics by grace are the faithful humans who strive to grow towards Christ's humanity and receive -as a gift by God- the maturity that allows them to be united with the divine. The union of humans with God means of course that sin has been expelled from human life (AH, V.VIII.1).

The Gnostic view of Christ as an illumined teacher can be found in the history of dogma in many theologians who offer us similar Christologies. Nestorius, for example, agrees with the Gnostics that Jesus was a man who received the illumination of the Spirit at his baptism. He was not the pre-existent Logos of God who became man (Grenz, 1994: 386-388). Schleiermacher, in modern times, considers Jesus as a teacher whose work is to arouse in us the consciousness of God. The consciousness of God in humans is obscured, but in Christ it was perfect in every moment. For Schleiermacher, the doctrines of Christ's resurrection, ascension into heaven and second coming are superfluous and unnecessary to be believed (Lane, 1996: 183-185). The Christology of Schleiermacher can be characterized as a neo-Gnostic Christology. Ritschl also understands Christ as God in the sense that he had a perfect knowledge of God and was united to him in moral obedience. Such interpretation falls short of the Christian revelation. Christians give to Jesus the value of God because they experience in him the love of God. The difference between Christ and other humans is one of degree rather than kind (Lane, 1996: 185-186).

Such Gnostic and neo-Gnostic views of Christ limit his work in communicating both divine and ethical understanding. His life, death, resurrection, ascension to heaven, and second coming are not considered important for human salvation as real events. On the contrary, Irenaeus emphasizes that the life and work of Christ recapitulates the history of salvation. Adam's spiritual loss was regained by the new Adam (Christ) who defeated the devil by his death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead. The death of Christ is not only an act of obedience to God the Father, which is rewarded with Jesus' resurrection, but also a second creation. Christ himself is the firstborn of a new creation, the one who brings faithful humans into spiritual communion with God (AH, V.XXIII).

The point to be stressed here is that the death of Christ on the cross is not only ethically but also existentially important. Christ is completely identified with Adam by experiencing death. Christ is tortured, tempted, and taken violently to death. His suffering brings him in solidarity with every human who faces

suffering and death. However, there are two differences between Christ and the other humans. First, Christ is not born by a man's sperm and therefore he does not share the original sin. Second, Christ is born of the Spirit and where the Spirit is present there is no real death (AH, V. IX).

Christ's death redeems Adam who was captive in Hades; through Adam, Christ saved all those in Hades who believed in him.<sup>24</sup> The Spirit raised Jesus from the dead three days after his crucifixion (AH, V.XIII.4), when the ransom for humanity's redemption was paid. The resurrection of Christ has radical consequences for humanity and the world.<sup>25</sup> It is a new creation. A creation which is infused with the Spirit of God.

Prokopchuk (2001: 144) claims that Irenaeus did not accept the "ransom theory". If this is true, why was Christ present in Hades -for three days- with the other dead people? How do we interpret the Irenaean statement in AH, V.I.1 that "the Lord has redeemed us through His own blood giving His soul for our souls, and His flesh for our flesh", and the statement in AH, III.XVIII.3 that "[Christ] was made a curse for us"? And how do we appreciate the Irenaean emphasis that the devil has infused fallen mankind with his spirit? (PA, chapter 17). It appears that Irenaeus, contrary to what Prokopchuk claims, accepts the "ransom theory" which is later adopted by Gregory of Nyssa (Prokopchuk, 2001: 144).

Irenaeus believes that the redemptive work of Christ on the cross was necessary for the reversal of the consequences of the Fall. In AH, V.XIX.1, he compares the tree of life in Paradise with the cross of Christ. The atoning work of Christ eliminates the obstacles that stand between God and fallen human beings. Humanity is restored by Christ's sacrifice to its original condition and beyond that to spiritual maturity. But what is the meaning of spiritual maturity? Here

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24 In Farrow's words (Prokopchuk, 2001: 160): "[The Son] who by nature is the man of the Spirit posits himself for our sake as a man in need of the Spirit. Invading 'the land of the sepulchre,' he passes through every phase of human life and through every stage of our own backwards career, placing all within the redemptive remit of the Spirit".

25 See: Justin (On the Resurrection, chapters IX and X, ANF, I).

Prokopchuk (2001: 148) is right in making the following observation: “In Irenaeus, Christ’s death on the cross initiates and draws towards a conclusion a decisive battle wherein manhood is being re-oriented and purified so that the Spirit of God, within Christ, might dwell freely in us and secure a place for believing human beings within the divine community”.

The spiritual maturity of humans, in other words, means that not only the consequences of sin have been overcome by Christ but sin itself. Humanity has been preserved and the enemy (the devil) has been vanquished. Irenaeus writes:

Unless man had overcome the enemy of man, the enemy would not have been legitimately vanquished... For as the law was spiritual, it merely made sin to stand out in relief, but did not destroy it. For sin had no dominion over the spirit but over man. For it behoved Him who was to destroy sin, and redeem man under the power of death, that He should himself be made that very same thing which he was, that is man; who had been drawn by sin into bondage, but was held by death, so that sin should be destroyed by man, and man should go forth from death. For as by the disobedience of the one man who was originally moulded from virgin soil, the many were made sinners, and forfeited life; so it was necessary that, by the obedience of one man, who was originally born from a virgin, many should be justified and receive salvation (AH, III.XVIII.7).

People finally become sanctified (AH, III.V.3). A new creation “out of death” (AH, V. XXIII) is given to humanity. This new creation is not a return to the innocence of Adam in Eden. It is the bestowal of the Spirit to the faithful people. Imbelli (1998: 246) uses the term “Spirit Christology” to describe the contribution of Irenaeus in the doctrine of redemption. Truly, the Irenaean recapitulation theory holds Pneumatology and Christology together: Christ, the new Adam, gives new life and communion with God to people through the gift of the Spirit.

This new life, that is pre-tasted in the Church of Christ (as it will be analyzed in the next chapter of the present study,) will be fully experienced at the *eschaton*.

#### 4.5 Summary

The redemption of humanity is a central theme in Irenaean theology. Irenaeus uses the Pauline term Recapitulation (*Anakephaleosis*) to describe the divine plan for the salvation of the world. A plan that started with the creation of the world, postponed when Adam fell into sin, and comes to fulfilment through the life and work of Christ.

Christ is the new Adam. Contrary to Gnostic Christology, he is a real man, who was identified completely with Adam. He was born of the Virgin Mary, passed through every phase of human life and died on the cross, remaining obedient to God's will. However, Christ is also the incarnated Logos of God, born of the Spirit of God; which means that he is a unique human person who has not inherited the original sin (like the others) and who cannot remain in Hades, because "where the Spirit is present there is no real death" (AH, V.IX).

Christ's resurrection means humanity's redemption from sin and death. Through Christ, the faithful people become Pneumatics by grace, gain communion with God and eternal life. Irenaeus remains faithful to Paul's theological position that "Christ fought on behalf of the race of Adam and through Adam overcome that which had struck us down through Adam" (PA, Chapter 30; cf. Rom. 6:6).

An effort was made in the present chapter to approach the doctrine of redemption in Christ from a pneumatological perspective. A careful reading of Irenaeus' writings reveals that "the two hands of God" (AH, IV.XX.1), the Logos and the Spirit are always present in the life and work of Christ. The Holy Spirit, in particular, even before the birth of Christ, prepares humanity to accept the "new Adam" (the Messiah) through the ministry of the prophets and the

religious leaders of Israel. The Holy Spirit overshadows the Virgin Mary and gives life to Christ (the Anointed one) through her. The man Jesus possesses the Spirit and gives the Spirit to those who believe in him (PA, chapter 53). The Spirit is present at Jesus' baptism and throughout his ministry.

Jesus, the "new Adam", is a Pneumatic man who achieves the correction of the errors of the old Adam. He overcomes the temptations of the devil by remaining obedient to God until his last breath, destroying the power of the devil and liberating people from the "shadow of death". This liberation will be fulfilled at the *eschaton*. Christ is also a teacher of humanity. He makes possible for people to increase and mature spiritually in order to be in communion with God.

The Irenaean doctrine of recapitulation can be called a spiritual recapitulation because it refers to the spiritual transformation of human life. People's redemption in Christ is not understood by Irenaeus as a return to the Adamic conditions of life before the Fall. Much more than that, it means that faithful human beings become Pneumatics as, by grace, they obtain the *similitudo*.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE CHURCH AND THE SPIRIT

### 5.1 Introduction

The Irenaean and the Gnostic approach to Ecclesiology present an agreement and many differences. Irenaeus and the Gnostics agree that there are two elements in the Church: the spiritual and the unspiritual. They disagree on the nature, the life and the mission of the Church.

For the Gnostics, the “spiritual element” are those who possess a secret “spiritual knowledge” unknown to others. Valentinus claimed that he learned Paul's secret teaching from one of his disciples. The “unspiritual element,” on the other hand, are the Church members who are not Gnostics and do not have access to salvation (Pagels, 1989: 15, 115). The secret knowledge of the Gnostics is characterized, by them, as superior to the apostolic knowledge. The apostles, in their teaching, present the resurrection of Christ as an actual event. However, the Gnostic faith has adopted a docetic Christology: Christ had only a phantom body on earth which he abandoned again before the crucifixion (Nielsen, 1968: 41-42). Christ did not die on the cross and therefore he was not risen from the dead. The Gnostics “accept” the notion of a “risen” Christ as a spiritual vision of Christ - who escaped from this world to the *Pleroma*. This vision is received only by the Gnostic Pneumatics, revealing them as like Christ, and therefore saved by nature (“The Gospel of Mary”, See: Ehrman, 2003: 36).

For the Gnostics, the Church has nothing to do with the Hebrew Synagogue. The prophetic predictions of the Old Testament are irrelevant and not connected with Christ (“The Gospel of Thomas”, See: Ehrman, 2003: 24). Gnostics accuse the Church bishops (like Irenaeus) that they have created an “imitation Church” in place of the true Christian brotherhood. The bishops' Gospels (offering a positive view of the Old Testament) misinterpret the teaching of Christ (contrary to the Gnostic Gospels). Bishops are servants of the

inferior God of the Old Testament (“The Father of their error”). This is why they are against the Gnostic Pneumatics who have found salvation, being redeemed from the evil God of the Old Testament. (“The Apocalypse of Peter”, See: Ehrman, 2003: 78-79).

Gnostic Ecclesiology considers the Church rituals as irrelevant for people's redemption. The real “baptism” of truth is the renunciation of the evil world of the Inferior God (“Testimony of Truth”, See: Pagels, 1989: 111) or a second spiritual baptism (Pagels, 2002: 348). In the Gnostic worship services there is no standard hierarchy. All are equals and perform different duties, in every single worship service, by drawing lots (AH, I. XIII.4). Finally, the Gnostics consider themselves as released from ethical restraints, being Pneumatics and redeemed (AH, III.XV.2).

Irenaeus, contrary to the Gnostic views on Ecclesiology, develops his own understanding of the Church, based on the publicly known apostolic tradition and not on a secret tradition (AH, III.III.1). For Irenaeus, the “spiritual element” of the Church are the baptised Christians (*ekklesiastikoi*) who have accepted the apostolic and episcopal *Kerygma*, receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the opportunity to grow towards salvation (AH, V.VIII.1).

He holds that the Church *Kerygma* is the work of the Holy Spirit. It reveals the unity of the Old and New Covenants which are validated by the saving work of the risen Christ. Christ's resurrection is not a spiritual vision received by the faithful, but the work of the Spirit in the flesh of Jesus. The faithful participate in Christ's resurrection and receive the Spirit through the ordinances of Baptism and Eucharist (Kim, 1976: 84). These ordinances cannot be separated in Irenaeus' thought: they complement each other (AH, III.XVII.2).

The apostles and their successors (the bishops) are the guardians of the Holy Tradition against the heretics who do not really participate in the “body of Christ” despite their claim<sup>26</sup>; they are the “unspiritual element” of the Church (AH, IV.XXVI.2). The Holy Spirit, through ordination, has appointed the apostles and bishops as Church leaders. This does not mean that the other members of the “body of Christ” (that is the other Church members) do not have a special place in the faith community. It simply means that Christians are equal but different in their *ecclesial* duties (AH, III.XXIV. 1 and AH, IV.XX.6). According to Irenaeus, Christians must live an ethical life otherwise the Holy Spirit will not abide with them and they will not find salvation (PA, chapter 41).

The present chapter aims to demonstrate that Pneumatology and Ecclesiology are connected in Irenaeus thought. The “body of Christ,” the Church ordinances and the Christian ethical responsibilities cannot be understood, according to Irenaeus, apart from the Holy Spirit's presence and work in the life of the Church.

## 5.2 The Spiritual “Body of Christ”

The Church is not only an international institution founded by the apostles of Christ (AH, I.X.1). It is also a gathering of faithful people who constitute the “body of Christ”, having received their faith by the Spirit (AH, III.XXIV.1). The “body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12-31) is a Pauline term<sup>27</sup> adopted by Irenaeus to describe the Church's nature. Irenaeus follows the Pauline thought about the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church (1 Cor. 12). Christ is the “Head of the body”<sup>28</sup> (Eph. 1:22-23) as a Pneumatic man by nature (AH, III.XII.7).

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26 Norris (1994: 286, 292) remarks that the Valentinians regarded themselves as Christians. However, Irenaeus maintains that their teaching stems not from the Apostles, but from Simon Magus (AH I. XXVII. 4).

27 See also: Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 6:15-17; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 1 Cor. 11:29; Eph. 1:22-23; Eph. 4:12 and Col. 1:24.

28 See also: Ps. 118:22-23; Matt. 12:6-8; Matt. 16:18-19; Matt. 18:19-20; Matt. 21:42-44; Matt. 23:8-10; John 13:13-16; John 15:1-16; Acts 2:36; Rom. 8:29; Rom. 9:5; 1 Cor. 3:11; 1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Cor. 12:5; Eph. 1:9-10; Eph. 2:19-22; Eph. 4:15; Eph. 5:22-32; Col. 1:18; Col. 2:10; Col. 2:19; Col. 3:11;

Members of the body (faithful men and women) are Pneumatics by grace, in the sense that the Holy Spirit abides in them helping them to grow spiritually towards perfection and salvation (AH, III.XVII.1).<sup>29</sup> In the words of Irenaeus: “where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church” (AH, III.XXIV.1). The Church, throughout the world, believes the same doctrines (AH, I.X.2) which cannot be changed by people (AH, I.X.3).

The Holy Spirit is in the Church because it works in the flesh of Jesus, who is the “Head of the body”. The Spirit has been assimilated and embodied in the risen Christ, becoming accustomed to dwell in the human race. After the resurrection of Christ, and before his second *Parousia*, the Spirit works in the Church as a power of regeneration.<sup>30</sup> It helps faithful people to be united with Christ and grow in God's likeness (AH, III.XVII.1). People are unable to obtain *similitudo* by their own efforts. They need the Spirit.<sup>31</sup> The Spirit, contrary to the Gnostic theory, is not part of the human nature. Men and women are constituted by body and soul; the Spirit does not belong to human beings. It is received by them through union with the Pneumatic Saviour (Jesus Christ) in the life of the Church (AH, V.VI.1). The Spirit gives gifts to the faithful, helping them to understand and live the Gospel of Christ who has ascended to the Father, after his resurrection, as the triumphant redeemer of humanity. The “two hands of God” -actively and energetically- help people to move from *imago* to *similitudo*, through their union with Christ in his “body” (AH, V.VI.1).

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Heb. 3:3-6; 1 Pet. 2:4-8; Rev. 1:12-13; Rev. 2:1-2; Rev. 2: 8-9; Rev. 2:12-13; Rev. 2:18-19; Rev. 3:1; Rev. 3:7-8; Rev. 3:14-15; Rev. 5:6-10; Rev. 21:22-23 and Rev. 22:16.

<sup>29</sup> See also: Cyril of Jerusalem (Catech. Lect., chapters II-V and XIV-XVIII, NPNF 2, VII); Augustine (On the Grace of Christ, I. 50-51, NPNF 1, V); and John of Damaskus (OF. IV. 17, NPNF 2, IX).

<sup>30</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem (Catech. Lect. XVII.13, NPNF 2, VII) also observes that the Holy Spirit works from Pentecost to Parousia as “Guardian and Sanctifier of the Church”.

<sup>31</sup> See Donovan's (1988:295) analysis of this Irenaean thesis.

The four Church Gospels are bound together by one Spirit, presenting one and the same Christ. Christ, acting on behalf of the human race, makes with God the last covenant, a covenant that recapitulates and fulfils the previous three covenants that God made with Adam, Noah and the nation of Israel. The representatives of these three old covenants are mystically included in the “body of Christ”. Irenaeus writes:

[Being] made man for us, He sent the gift of the celestial spirit over all the earth, protecting us with His wings. Such, then, as was the course followed by the Son of God, so was also the form of the living creatures; and such as was the form of the living creatures, so was also the character of the Gospel. For the living creatures are quadriform, and the Gospel is quadriform, as is also the course followed by the Lord. For this reason were four principal covenants given to the human race: one, prior to the deluge, under Adam; the second, that after the deluge, under Noah; the third, the giving of the law, under Moses; the fourth, that which renovates man, and sums up all things in itself by means of the Gospel, raising and bearing men upon its wings into the heavenly kingdom (AH, III.XI.8).

The Spirit guided the righteous and the prophets of the Old Testament, resting on them and preparing -through them- the way for the Logos' incarnation (AH, IV.XXXIII.10). The Synagogue finds its fulfilment in the Church (AH, IV.XXXI.2).<sup>32</sup> Irenaeus presents the Church, allegorically, as the harlot who became Hosea's wife (Hos. 10:2-3; AH, IV.XX-12).

The Church (the gathering of the faithful Christians) is a “harlot” who became holy because she is loved by Christ. The holiness of the Church, in other words, derives from the “Head of the body” (who is Pneumatic by nature) and not from any worthiness of its members (who become Pneumatics by grace).<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the Church unites the old covenants (in the Old Testament) with the last covenant (in Christ). The apostolic *Kerygma* of the Church recapitulates

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32 Barnabas (Chapter XI, ANF, I) observes that even the holy baptism is prefigured in the Old Testament. See also: John Chrysostom (Hom. on 1 Cor. XXIII, NPNF 1, XII).

33 See also John Chrysostom (Hom. on 2 Cor., chapter XI, NPNF 1, XII) and Cyprian (On the unity of the Church, 6, ANF, V).

God's past revelation and preaches the four Christian Gospels which have been inspired by the Spirit (AH, III.XI.8).

The Spirit, Christ, the apostles and the *Kerygma* of the Gospel are organically united in Irenaeus' thought. He writes:

[This] is sure and steadfast that no other God or Lord was announced by the Spirit, except Him who, as God, rules over all, together with His Word, and those who receive the Spirit of adoption, that is, those who believe in the one and true God, and in Jesus Christ the Son of God; and likewise that the apostles did of themselves term no one else as God, or name [no other] as Lord; and, what is much more important, [since it is true] that our Lord [acted likewise], who did also command us to confess no one as Father, except Him who is in the heavens, who is the one God and the one Father (AH, IV.I.1).

This union is evident at the event of Pentecost<sup>34</sup>, when Christ gave the Spirit to the apostles, sending them to proclaim the Gospel to all the nations. The Spirit, at Pentecost, gives perfect knowledge to the apostles, empowering them to lead the “body of Christ” under his directions (AH, III.I.1). The apostles themselves, through the sacrament of ordination (“laying of hands”), give the Spirit to the bishops who, having received and accepted the apostolic *Kerygma*, continue their ministry (AH, III.II.2 and AH, III.III.1).<sup>35</sup>

The apostolic *Kerygma* is also referred to as the Church tradition (written and oral) which is given and entrusted from one generation of bishops to another. This transmission of the Church tradition will continue until the *eschaton*. The preservation of the authentic tradition is guarded and guaranteed by the Spirit (AH, IV.XXVI.5). The Church tradition is a living experience of the “body of Christ”; a collective and not an individualistic experience.<sup>36</sup> Individuals may

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34 Gregory Nazianzen (Orat. XLI.11, NPNF 2, VII) remarks that “the Spirit came in the form of tongues because of His close relation to the Word”. Cyril of Jerusalem (Catech. Lect. XVII.18, 19, NPNF 2, VII) mentions that at Pentecost the faithful were baptized completely in the Spirit.

35 Ignatius (Letter to the Philadelphians, chapter VII, ANF, I) claims that “the Spirit proclaimed these words [to me]. Do nothing without the bishop”. Also in his Letter to the Trallians (chapter II, ANF, I) he urges them to be subjects to the bishops and presbyters. See also: Cyprian (Treatises, I, ANF, V); and Tertullian (Against Marcion, IV. 3-5, ANF, III).

36 John Chrysostom (Hom. On the Statues, NPNF 1, IX) writes that the words of the apostles are savoured and enjoyed by the remembering Church as music.

misunderstand the tradition (AH, IV.XXXIII.1). Nevertheless, the one “body of Christ,” knows, protects and preserves the correct doctrines of faith, under the illumination of the Spirit. Irenaeus remarks that if there is a dispute among Christians, they must resource to the most ancient Churches and learn from them the apostolic truth (AH, III.IV.1).

Lawson (2006: 89) disagrees with Irenaeus' statement that the apostolic truth is given to the bishops without any alterations. According to Lawson “no teacher can 'certify' his pupil on the ground that he has been properly taught, for learning depends also on the taught”. Lawson's remark fails to understand the Irenaeian concept that the “lessons” of truth are not offered by an individual “teacher” to an individual “student”, but by a group of disciples, who have received the Spirit at Pentecost, to a group of new disciples who are ready to receive the Spirit through ordination. The faith community preserves the truth in what is called Church tradition.

Irenaeus emphasizes that the Church tradition can be either written or oral. Nevertheless, it has the same value. He brings as an example the barbarians who became Christians without knowing how to read. According to Irenaeus, the Holy Spirit writes in their hearts the *Kerygma* of the apostles, that is the Gospel of Christ (AH, III.IV.1-2). The concept of *Kerygma* is more important in Irenaeus' thought than the concept of the Scriptures. The *Kerygma* is the correct presentation and interpretation of the Scriptures, as a spiritual and ecclesiastic act. Outside the *kerygmatic* ministry there is a danger, for an individual, to misunderstand the Scriptures (AH, III.XXI.3). Also, the gifts of the Spirit (like the speaking of tongues) exist in the Church contrary to the Gnostic propaganda that their ministry is the only charismatic.<sup>37</sup> However, they are valid only within the life of the Church (AH, III. XI.9 and AH, V. VI.1).<sup>38</sup>

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37 See also: Justin (Dialogue with Trypho, chapter LXXXVIII, ANF, I).

38 John Chrysostom (Hom. on Ephesians, chapters X, XI, NPNF 1, XIII) remarks that the Spirit distributes gifts to the body of Christ not for personal aggrandizement, but rather for the health and up building of the body. Basil (On the Spirit, I. 14, NPNF 2, VIII) observes that we receive gifts “in accordance with the gradual progress of our [spiritual] education”.

In every theological theme, presented by Irenaeus, there is a conflict between the Holy Spirit and the devil. The devil harms God's creation by causing Adam's fall. He continues to influence people, after the Fall, causing the world's destruction by the flood. The Holy Spirit prepares humanity's salvation through the prophetic ministry. The Pneumatic man and Logos of God (Jesus Christ) defeats the devil. People can become Pneumatic by grace in Christ's Church and find redemption at the end of times.

The Spirit in the "body of Christ" helps humanity to grow in God's likeness, eliminating sin in people's lives (AH, V. IX- V.XII.5). There is a conflict between sin and the Spirit in the Church. The Spirit dwelling in the believer's soul helps to fight sin and accept the Spirit as governor (AH, IV. XXXI.2 and IV. XIV. 1-2). The Spirit will have dominion over mankind at the *eschaton*, when sin and death will be destroyed (AH, III.XXI; III.XXXV.2-XXXVI). The "body of Christ", at the end of times, will be constituted by immortal and incorruptible people who possess the Spirit (AH, V.IX.2-3).<sup>39</sup>

### 5.3 The Holy Spirit and the Church Ordinances

The Spirit is given to the apostles by Christ, at Pentecost, (AH, III.XVII.1) and to the Christian bishops by the apostles through the laying of hands (Ordination). Ordination guarantees the continuation of the apostolic ministry and manifests the Spirit's presence in the work and life of the Church leaders (AH, III.II.1). Irenaeus accuses the Gnostics that they are not Spiritual because they are not obedient to the bishops and do not accept the apostolic tradition of the Church (AH, IV.XXVI.2). Again, for Irenaeus, "where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God" (AH, III.XXIV.1.) If the Gnostics remain outside the Church they remain unspiritual persons unable to find salvation.

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<sup>39</sup> Cyril of Alexandria (Thesaurus, 34, PG 75.958) remarks that the Holy Spirit makes us sharers in the divine nature, "beautifying human nature with the splendour of the divinity".

To recapitulate, with reference to the different status bestowed by the Holy Spirit, the apostles and the bishops are Pneumatic Church leaders. They are Pneumatics by grace, but Christ is Pneumatic by nature. He is born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary (AH, III.XII.7). The Holy Spirit manifested this truth by descending upon Jesus at his baptism. The baptism of Christ is connected with the post-resurrection and pentecostal events, because the risen Jesus commanded the Pneumatic (by grace) apostles to baptise all nations “in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19), regenerating them into God; offering them, in other words, the opportunity to become Pneumatics as well (AH, III.XVII.1).

In the “Preaching of the Apostles”, Irenaeus emphasizes that the ordinance of Baptism is required for a person joining the faith community (the “body of Christ”) and receiving the Holy Spirit (PA, chapters 7 and 41).<sup>40</sup> The baptised faithful open themselves to the Spirit who becomes Lord in them. The person baptised, confesses the “rule of the truth” (AH, I.IX.4) and receives remission of sins by the Spirit (AH, III. XII.7). Forgiveness of sins is the first gift that a human being receives from the Spirit. There are other gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to the faithful (wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, piety, fear of God) as he prepares them to struggle against the devil and grow towards perfection (AH, III.XVII. 3). The Holy Spirit unites all human tribes at Pentecost (AH, III.XVII.1) and embraces all faithful (Jews and Gentiles) through the ordinance of Baptism<sup>41</sup> (AH, III.XII.15).

In Irenaeus' words the Church members are “adopted by the Spirit” (AH, III.VI.1). This act of adoption makes a man or a woman Pneumatic by grace. Christ, on the other hand, is not adopted but born by the Spirit; he is Pneumatic by nature (AH, III.XVII.1). The ordinance of Baptism is the union of the

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40 Cyprian (Epistles, 72, ANF, V) notes that where no one is baptised, there is no Church.

41 The New Testament declares that baptism is from Heaven: Matt. 21:25-26; Luke 7:29-30; John 1:24-34. Baptism signifies repentance and remission of sins: Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:4-5; Acts 2:38; Acts 13:24; Acts 22:16 and Heb. 6:1-2. Baptism identifies believers with Christ: Mark 10:38-39; Rom. 6:3-8; 1 Cor. 1:13; Gal. 3:26-27; Eph. 4: 4-6; Col. 2:11-12 and 1 Pet. 3:21. Baptism manifests the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit: Matt. 3:11; Acts 1:15; Acts 2:38 and 1 Cor. 12:13.

Pneumatics, meaning that the baptised Christians are renewed in Christ. Irenaeus observes that the unity of Spirit and water, at the ordinance of Baptism, preserves the unity of the human soul and body (AH, III. XVII. 2).<sup>42</sup>

The renewal of the believer in Christ is also validated with the ordinance of Eucharist<sup>43</sup> where Christians receive the bread and wine that “consists of two realities, earthly and heavenly” (AH, IV.XVIII.5). Baptism and Eucharist in Irenaeus' thought are interconnected and inseparable. Irenaeus emphasizes the unity of the two ordinances by observing that as wheat cannot be made into one loaf without water, in the same way the nations cannot be joined to one “body of Christ” in the Eucharist without the spiritual water of Baptism.<sup>44</sup> Irenaeus writes:

The Spirit [brings] distant tribes to unity and [offers] to the Father the first fruits of all nations. Wherefore also the Lord promised to send the Comforter, who should join us to God. For as a compacted lump of dough cannot be formed of dry wheat without fluid matter, nor can a loaf possess unity, so, in like manner, neither could we, being many, be made one in Jesus Christ without the water from heaven (AH, III.XVII.2).

The Eucharist, like the Baptism, offers the Spirit to the faithful. Irenaeus calls the bread of the Eucharist the “bread of immortality,” communicating the Spirit of the Father (AH, III.XXXVIII.1).

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42 Justin (First Apology, chapter LXI, ANF, I) also mentions that baptism in the name of the Trinity gives new life to the faithful. He also remarks (chapter LXII, ANF, I) that the devil imitates the washing (of regeneration) in the pagan [demonic] rituals. Basil (On the Spirit, I.15, NPNF 2, VIII) notes that “if there is any grace in the water, it is not of the nature of the water, but of the presence of the Spirit”. See also: Ambrose (Of the Holy Spirit, II. II. 21, NPNF 2, X); Gregory Nazianzen (Orat. XL, NPNF 2, VII).

43 The following New Testament passages refer to the Eucharist: Matt. 26:17-30; Mark 14:17-26; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Acts 2:42; Acts 2:46 and Acts 20:7.

44 Justin (First Apology, chapter LXVI, ANF, I) mentions that no one is allowed to partake of the Eucharist if he/she is not baptised. He also mentions that “the wicked devils have imitated the Eucharist in the mysteries of Mithras”.

The “rule of truth” (AH, I.IX.4) that the believers accept at their Baptism is also manifested in the Eucharist.<sup>45</sup> The Eucharist presents: God the Creator who restores creation in the body of Christ (AH, IV.XVII.5); the Logos of God who became flesh in the person of Jesus (AH, IV.XVIII.4); the redemptive work of Christ; (AH, III.XVI.7) and the Spiritual unity of the Old and the New Covenants. This last presentation recapitulates all the worshipping sacrifices described in the Scriptures, starting with Abel's sacrifices to God (AH, IV.18.2).

Eucharist is a sacrifice offered to God the Father by Christ himself. This is why it is accepted by God, since Jesus is the only pure man who achieved the *similitudo* by himself. The faith community participates in this sacrifice - liturgically and ethically- but Christ is the actual celebrant of the Eucharist. He offers himself to the Father, on behalf of the Church (AH, IV.XVIII. 3-4).

For Irenaeus, the Eucharist is a continuation of the worship offerings to God in the Old Testament.<sup>46</sup> Christians obey Moses' commandment “not to appear empty in the presence of God” (AH, IV.XVIII.1). Thus, they offer to God the first fruit of his own created things (bread and wine) in order to be neither unfruitful nor ungrateful. This offering was made, first, by Christ who declared the Eucharistic bread as his body and the Eucharistic wine as his blood. The apostolic Church continues to conduct the Eucharist throughout the world, following Christ's command and offering to God the “first fruits of His own gifts” (AH, IV.XVII.5).

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45 Ignatius (Letter to Romans, chapter VII, ANF, I) expresses his desire for “the heavenly bread” and “the drink [Christ's blood] which is incorruptible love and eternal life”. In his Letter to the Smyrnaeans (chapter VIII, ANF, I) emphasizes that a proper Eucharist is administered “either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it”. Finally, in his Letter to the Ephesians (chapter XIII, ANF, I) remarks that the liturgical gathering of the faithful destroys the power of Satan and brings to an end the war against the evil “aerial and terrestrial spirits”. Justin (First Apology, chapters LXV, ANF, I) refers to the Eucharist, describing the offering to “the Father of the Universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost”.

46 This is also the view of Justin (First Apology, chapters LXV-LXVI, ANF, I).

God is not in need of human offerings. However, he accepts them “that He may grant us a recompense of His own good things” (AH, IV.XVIII.6). This “recompense” is the nourishment of people by the Spirit through the consumption of the Eucharistic gifts, in order to die knowing that the Spirit will raise them from the dead at the appointed time (AH, V.II.2). According to Irenaeus, the purpose of the Eucharist, like Ordination and Baptism, is to make people Pneumatics by grace. This common purpose of the Church ordinances<sup>47</sup> is not clearly presented in other Irenaeian studies. In Irenaeus' words: “the Eucharist is consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity” (AH, IV.XVIII.5). Of course, in order to appreciate the aforementioned Irenaeian statement we have to remember that for Irenaeus, “earthly is that which was fashioned and heavenly is the Spirit” (AH, V.IX.3).

The Eucharistic theology -elements of which can be found in Irenaeus- was developed by later Church Fathers and theologians who approached the Eucharist as a sacrament, focusing on liturgical aspects that are beyond Irenaeus' interest, for example the theory of transubstantiation of the liturgical bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.<sup>48</sup> (That does not imply, however, that Irenaeus disagrees with the teaching of the later Church Fathers). Lawson's (2006: 266) reference to the sacramental theology of Irenaeus must be considered as an interpretation of Irenaeian thought based on later theological developments. This particular interpretation of Irenaeus' thought is not adopted in the present thesis.

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47 Cyril of Jerusalem (Cath. Lect. XVIII.7, NPNF 2, VII) also refers to the common purpose of Baptism and Eucharist.

48 If we accept the authenticity of Irenaeus' “Fragments of Lost Writings” (ANF, I), it seems that Irenaeus did not believe in the theory of transubstantiation (Fragment XIII). Regarding the theory of transubstantiation and the development of this liturgical doctrine, see: Enns (1989: 360.)

## 5.4 Spiritual Life and Ethical Responsibility

Hick (1981: 43 and 46) understands humanity's redemption -in Irenaean thought- as a synergy between God and people. People are free either to accept or reject Christ. The proper ethical choice, of accepting Christ, helps them develop their personality. This development comes only through obedience to Christ; an obedience that requires a specific approach towards daily life. Irenaeus himself emphasizes that the Spirit abides in the baptized believer only when one continues living a righteous life. Although God is humanity's Saviour, obedience in him is necessary as a proof of human faith. When a person obeys God, then the gifts of the Spirit increase in that person's life (PA, chapter 41).

Irenaeus remarks that when the apostles gave ethical guidelines to the faithful, they used the phrase "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and us" to give them these commandments in order for them "to walk in the Holy Spirit" (AH, III.XII.14). Thus, Christian ethical responsibilities are required by the Holy Spirit. The above remark in "Against Heresies" has not been appreciated in other Irenaean studies; it does not appear as an academic reference. However, it is important because it connects directly Pneumatology with Christian ethics.

The Spirit is also directly involved in the life of the Church by placing bishops to rule the Church (AH, III.XIV. 2) and presbyters<sup>49</sup> who must be obeyed. The presbyters possess succession from the apostles and the bishops "and have received the certain gift of truth" (AH, IV.XXVI.2). Obedience to the gift of truth makes us "Sons of God," and disobedience "angels of the devil" (AH, IV.XLI.2).

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<sup>49</sup> Sobosan (1974: 142-143) notes that Irenaeus' "presbyterii ordio" could possibly be the group of priests who serve the bishops.

For Irenaeus, the object of a person's ethical life (and the meaning of obedience to the teaching of the Church) is his/her brothers and sisters (PA, chapter 95). Contrary to the Gnostic ethics of isolation or asceticism, Irenaeian ethics are social. The spiritual development of a person requires that he/she cares not only about himself/herself but also about the needs of the others. This is why Irenaeus also maintains that the gifts of the Spirit increase in the fellowship of the believers (AH, V. X.2 and V.IX.2).

Obedience to God<sup>50</sup> is identified with life as the possession of the Spirit while disobedience is identified with sin and death.<sup>51</sup> Death is both a physical and an ethical phenomenon (Kim, 1976: 323). Because of this people have to strive ethically in order to avoid spiritual death that will take from them the hope of physical immortality. Irenaeus writes:

[When] we were destitute of the celestial Spirit, we walked in former times in the oldness of the flesh, not obeying God; so now let us, receiving the Spirit, walk in newness of life, obeying God. Inasmuch, therefore, as without the Spirit of God we cannot be saved, the apostle exhorts us through faith and chaste conversation to preserve the Spirit of God, lest, having become non-participators of the Divine Spirit, we lose the kingdom of heaven (AH, V.IX.3).

Theodorou (1989: 277), like Hick, also comments that God respects the free will of His creatures and does not make them obedient through force but through persuasion (AH, IV.XXXVII.1). People must decide for themselves if they will accept or reject the *Kerygma* of the Church. This decision is of course a serious one, and people are responsible for the consequences of their choices. Moral choice makes the decisive difference between those who are saved because of their obedience to the *Ecclesial Kerygma* and those who are not saved because of their disobedience (see also Rivera, 298-299). Irenaeus writes in the "Preaching of the Apostles" (chapter 98), that the heretics who do not admit the existence of

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50 The following biblical passages refer to humanity's obedience to God: Deut. 6:24; Josh. 24:14; 1 Sam. 12:14; Ps. 111:10; Eccles. 12:13; Hag. 1:12; 2 Cor. 7:15 and Phil. 2:12.

51 Augustine (Hom. on Epistle of John, IV, V, NPNF 1,VII) remarks that those who walk in the way of holiness refract the Spirit of holiness. On the contrary, those who persist in sin indicate their alienation from the body of Christ. See also: Jerome (Ag. Jovinian, II.29, NPNF 2, IV).

the gifts of the Holy Spirit “are of no use to God because they cannot bear any fruit” and he remarks that “We must keep (the preaching of the truth) with all certainty, maintaining a sound will, pleasing God, practising good works, and aiming always to do what is right” (PA, chapter 97).<sup>52</sup>

The word “aiming,” that Irenaeus uses, means that Christians are struggling to obey the *Kerygma*. They are not sinless, but they have the opportunity to struggle and grow ethically, because Christ and the Spirit are in them (AH, III.XVIII.1). The bearing of the “fruits of the Spirit” requires an effort for obedience to the “preaching of the truth” (PA, chapters 97-98). The mission of the Church is to imitate the life of Christ by having its members “taking up” their “cross” (Matthew, 16:24). The Christian martyrs follow the footprints of the Lord becoming an ethical example for all the faithful (AH, III.XVIII.5). They participate in Christ's suffering and death and they are risen with him at His Kingdom (AH, V.XXXII.1).<sup>53</sup> Irenaeus writes in AH, V.X.1 that “if men progress by faith, and receive the Spirit of God, and bring forth the fruit thereof, shall be spiritual, as being planted in the paradise of God. But if they cast out the Spirit... (and bring forth for fruits the lusts of the flesh) then they do not inherit the kingdom”.

## 5.5 Summary

Irenaeus Ecclesiology is clearly connected with Pneumatology. Irenaeus appreciates the presence and work of the Spirit in the life of the Church, following the Pauline thought. Irenaeus Ecclesiology is a rejection of the Gnostic view of the Christian Church as an “imitation Church” which ignores the secret, Gnostic, spiritual knowledge, bothering people with irrelevant rituals and unnecessary ethical rules, imposed on them by despotic bishops.

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52 Tertullian (Prescription Ag. Her. 4-6, ANF, III) also defines heresy as an alternative choice different from the prevailing apostolic tradition.

53 See also: Polycarp (Letter to the Philippians, chapter II, ANF, I); Ignatius (Letter to the Trallians, chapter IX, ANF, I) ; and Cyprian (Treatises, XI, ANF, V).

Irenaeus defends the apostolic tradition that has established the Church. He emphasizes that the Spiritual truth of the Church is not a secret; it is possessed by all the baptised Christians (*ekklesiastikoi*) who receive the Holy Spirit and grow towards the *similitudo*. It is maintained only in the Church and explained by its *Kerygma*.

Baptism, Ordination and the Eucharist, make people Pneumatic by grace, and are necessary ordinances (sacraments) for mankind's salvation. Ministry is exercised by the bishops and the presbyters who have received the Holy Spirit by the apostles through the "laying of hands," as the apostles themselves received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Eucharist is an ordinance performed by the presbyters of the Church, obeying the commandment of Christ to offer God the first fruit of His creation and to the faithful people the Eucharistic bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ. Eucharist is a continuation of the worship offerings to God in the Old Testament. For Irenaeus, the Hebrew Synagogue finds its fulfilment in the Christian Church.

Church ordinances give to people the gifts of the Spirit: forgiveness of sins and ethical qualities necessary for spiritual growth and salvation at the *eschaton*. People must receive these gifts, remaining obedient to the ethical commandments of the Spirit and fighting against the works of the devil. Although Church members are not sinless they can be victorious over the devil, because Christ and the Spirit are in them.

## CHAPTER 6: ESCHATOLOGY AND THE SPIRIT

### 6.1 Introduction

The Gnostic eschatology expects a return of the Pneumatics to the *Pleroma*. The *Pleroma* is the home of the saved (by nature) Pneumatics in another world (Lohr, 1992: 381). Earth, for the Gnostics, is an evil world ruled by the inferior God of the Old Testament. The Gnostic “*nostalgia*” for “another world”, as Markus (1954: 215) remarks, is not shared by Irenaeus. On the contrary, Irenaeus believes that the earth is a sacred place, created by God, that will be renewed in Christ’s kingdom and will be finally transformed in the Kingdom of Heaven ; the final kingdom of God (AH, V. XXXIII.1-4).

The Kingdom of Christ will be established on earth after the second coming of the Lord (AH, V.XXX.4). However, before its establishment, the Antichrist will recapitulate all evil powers from the beginning of the world until Christ’s *Parousia* (AH, V.XXIX.27). The Lord’s *Parousia* will destroy the power of the devil and the righteous will rule with Christ on earth, having been raised from the dead and possessing the Spirit (AH, V.XXX.4). Christ is the Anointed King of the earthly Kingdom. He will deliver His kingdom to the Father at the end of days (AH, V.XXXVI.2).

Irenaeus’ reference to the earthly Kingdom of Christ, which follows in a way the teaching of Justin the Martyr (Dial.c.Trypho, chapters LXXX, ANF, I) has been evaluated with scepticism by Church theologians and academicians as an agreement with the heresy of Chiliasm. As Wingren (2004: 188-189) remarks, some scholars claim that the Irenaeian references to the earthly Kingdom are not authentic; they were added to the text by believers of Chiliasm. Smith (1994: 313) observes that scholars either ignore or excuse Irenaeian Chiliasm. Karathanasis (1969: 70-71) claims that Irenaeus simply follows the theology of the Bible, about the destruction of evil and the reign of Christ with the just, before the beginning of “the new earth and the new heaven”.

The present thesis accepts Karathanasis' approach, agreeing also with Torrance (1992: 110) that "Irenaeus is not concerned with *dogmata* but with *kerygmata*". It seems that Irenaeus makes theological reflections, in "Against Heresies", on the Church *kerygmata* regarding the books of Daniel and Revelation. He avoids developing a Chiliastic doctrine, although two Chiliastic theories were known to him deriving from the Asian Christian and the Alexandrian Christian tradition (Smith, 1994: 317-318). As a matter of fact, Irenaeus does not even mention the words "thousand years" to describe Christ's Kingdom on earth.

Christ's Kingdom gives the opportunity to the Pneumatics to continue growing towards the *similitudo* (AH, V.XII.2). It is very interesting that non-Pneumatics participate in Christ's Kingdom, awaiting the last judgment, before the deliverance of the Kingdom to God the Father (AH, IV.XXII.2). Is there any possibility for them to receive salvation? Irenaeus does not give us a clear answer to this question, leaving room for theological speculation. However, he emphasizes that some people who have rejected God, by their own free choice, will be condemned to eternal punishment along with the devil and his fallen angels.

According to Irenaeus, the last judgement will be conducted before the deliverance of the Kingdom to the Father (AH, V.XXXII.1). This is contrary to Lawson's (2006: 282) opinion which misinterprets him by placing the last judgment before the establishment of Christ's Kingdom on earth. At the end of Christ's Kingdom, and after the final judgement, God becomes "all in all" (AH, V.XXXVI.2). The Pneumatics are united with spiritual beings and rejoice in the Kingdom of Heaven, partaking of the divine nature (AH, V. XXXII.1). In eternity, people are free from their enemies (sin and death,) and they are in fellowship with God because they possess the Spirit. Their communion with God "cannot break because Christ cannot be destroyed by any power" (Wingren, 2004: 213). Their destiny is to receive constantly from God his eternal life and glory (AH, V. XXXV.1).

## 6.2 The Recapitulation of Evil

The Church of Christ transforms the lives of the believers, through the work of the Spirit, and destroys the power of the devil in the world (AH, III.XXXV.2). The ministry of the Church is destined to come to an end at the second *Parousia* of Christ. Before the second *Parousia*, the devil will make a last effort to recapitulate all evil forces through the work of the Antichrist (AH, V.XXIX.2). The Antichrist<sup>54</sup>, a human person (AH, V.XXX.4) totally possessed by the devil's spirit, will make a hopeless effort to separate again human beings from God, by lying to them that all kingdoms are delivered to him (AH, V.XXIV.1); by becoming the only idol of worship; and by persecuting the Church<sup>55</sup> (AH, V.XXV.1). Irenaeus characterizes the Antichrist as a robber, apostate, iniquitous and murderous, "concentrating in himself all satanic apostasy" (AH, V.XXV.1).

The Irenaeian interpretation of the book of Daniel sees the Roman Empire to be divided in ten kingdoms. Antichrist will rule all of them, uniting them into a single Kingdom, in Jerusalem.<sup>56</sup> He is destined to rule on earth for three and a half years. Irenaeus writes:

Ten Kings [shall arise]; and after them shall arise another, who shall surpass in evil deeds all that were before him, and shall overthrow the kings; and he shall speak words against the most high God, and wear out the saints of the most high God, and shall purpose to change times and laws; and everything shall be given into his hand until 'a time of times and a half time', that is, for three years and six months, during which time, when he comes, he shall reign over the earth (AH, V. XXV.3).

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<sup>54</sup> The New Testament makes the following references to the appearance of the Antichrist: Matt. 24:25; Matt. 24:23-26; Luke 21:28; 2 Thess. 2:1-10; 1 John 2:18-23; 1 John 4:3; 2 John 7; Rev. 13:1-8 and Rev. 19:20. Cyprian (Letter 51, AVF, V) also remarks that Antichrist concentrates in himself the whole history of apostasy.

<sup>55</sup> See: Matt. 24:8-9; Mark 13:9-13; Luke 21:12-19; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Tim. 3:10-13; Rev. 6:9-11; Rev. 12:17 and Rev. 20:14.

<sup>56</sup> See also: Barnabas, chapter IV, ANF, I. Polycarp (chapter VII, ANF, I) also mentions that "whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is antichrist; and whoever does not confess the testimony of the cross is of the devil".

Irenaeus asserts that the recapitulation of evil is necessary so that “all apostate power will be sent into the furnace of hell;” that includes the devil, his fallen angels and all evil men possessed by him (AH, V.XXIX.2).

When the three and a half years of the Antichrist’s reign are completed, then the power of evil will come to an end. Christ will come to the earth in power and glory, in the same flesh in which he suffered. He will destroy the kingdom of the Antichrist<sup>57</sup> and cast him into the lake of fire (AH, V.XXX.4). Irenaeus mentions Paul’s (2 Thess. 2:8) words that the Lord will slay the Antichrist with the “spirit of His mouth” (AH, V.XXV.3). After that the dead people will come back to life joining the faithful Christians and the unfaithful who did not experience death (AH, V.XXVI.2). The righteous will rise with glorious bodies and souls, receiving the gifts of the Spirit and life eternal (AH, V.VII.2), while the evil will rise (temporarily, until the day of judgment) without receiving the gifts of the Spirit and no eternal life. The resurrection of evil<sup>58</sup> happens by the will of God, however, it is temporary because there is not eternal life apart from the Spirit (AH, IV.XXII.2).

### 6.3 The Kingdom of Christ

After the bodily resurrection of people<sup>59</sup> and the abolishment of death<sup>60</sup>, Christ will establish his Kingdom on earth<sup>61</sup>. The just will rule with Christ<sup>62</sup> receiving rewards<sup>63</sup> for their faith (AH, V.XXXIV.2). Irenaeus imagines that a “Great Banquet” will really take place on earth, and that Christ will drink wine with his disciples as he promised them (AH, V.XXXIII.1-4). He writes:

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57 See: Rev. 19:17-21 and Justin (First Apology, chapter XXVIII, ANF, I).

58 See: Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:14-15 and Rev. 20:11-15.

59 See: Rom. 8:23 and Phil. 3:21. Cyprian (Letter 51, ANF, V) observes that those who die in Christ are buried and raised anew to glory. John Chrysostom (Hom. On the Statues, IX, NPNF 1, IX) remarks that grace transforms temporal death into a spiritual blessing.

60 See: 1 Cor. 15:51-57 and 1 Thess. 4:15-17.

61 The reign of Christ is manifested in the following biblical passages: Job 19:25; Isa. 24:23; Dan. 7:13-14 and Rev. 11:15. See also: Justin (Dialogue with Trypho, chapter CXXXV, ANF, I).

62 See: Dan. 7:27; 2 Tim. 2:12 and Rev. 5:9-10.

63 See: 2 Tim. 4:8 and 1 Pet. 5:4.

[The blessing] belongs unquestionably to the times of the kingdom, when the righteous shall bear rule upon their rising from the dead; when also the creation, having been renovated and set free, shall fructify with an abundance of all kinds of food, from the dew of heaven, and from the fertility of the earth: as the elders who saw John, the disciple of the Lord, related that they had heard from him how the Lord used to teach in regard to these times (AH, V.XXXIII.3).

Irenaeus claims that John agrees with his views, based on Papias' testimony (AH, V. XXXIII.3-4). Irenaeus imagines "a table prepared for the just... with all sorts of dishes" (AH, V.XXXIII.2). For Irenaeus, the Kingdom of Christ does not have only a catastrophic character (against the forces of evil), but also a neo-paradisiacal character: it gives men and women the opportunity to develop, to grow towards perfection. Irenaeus writes that the mystery of the resurrection of the just and of Christ's Kingdom on earth is that "those who shall be worthy are accustomed gradually to partake of the divine nature" (AH, V.XXXII.1).

Irenaeus' Eschatology is a spiritualized Eschatology. The Spirit, along with Christ, continues his ministry pervading human beings "within and without" (AH, V.XII.2). The Spirit is present in Christ's Kingdom giving life and increasing mankind spiritually (Lawson, 2006: 284). Irenaeus fulfils in his writings the need for spiritual development even beyond the grave. The question however is whether Irenaeus hopes that the non-faithful who participate in Christ's kingdom will be changed by the Spirit towards purification and deification or not.

Contrary to what Lawson (2006: 282) thinks, perhaps because he overlooked Irenaeus' reference in AH, IV.XXII.2, the non-faithful are citizens of Christ's kingdom awaiting for the last judgment. They have been risen from the dead, although, they did not receive the Spirit. Can such a thing possibly take place? Yes, because in Irenaeus' words "the breath of life, which rendered man an animated being, is one thing, and the vivifying Spirit another, which also caused him to become spiritual" (AH, V.XII.2). One can ask two further questions: Why are they waiting for their punishment at the end of Christ's

Kingdom? Why they do not follow the Antichrist instantly to the lake of fire? Irenaeus does not give us a clear answer, and although it is tempting to conclude that even the non-faithful will eventually be transformed by the Spirit, this can only be a personal speculation and not Irenaeus' written position.

On the other hand, the history of dogma (Matsoukas, 1988: 550) informs us that Gregory of Nyssa (PG 46, 100A) and Maximos the Confessor (PG 90, 796AC) developed a theory about evil's restoration (*Apokatastasis*). Gregory Nazianzen (Orat. XXXIX.19, NPNF 2, VII) also mentions that those who have freely chosen to go their way “will be baptized with fire in that last baptism which is more painful and longer”. Is there any connection between the thought of the aforementioned fathers and Irenaeus'? The question is interesting and invites further research by the academic community.

The restoration of evil people in the Kingdom of Heaven (the final kingdom) is not promised by Irenaeus. Nevertheless, the restoration of the Pneumatics causes also the restoration of the created world because God's “curse on the ground” has ended<sup>64</sup>. Creation does not groan anymore. The restored paradise is not the end of God's plan for mankind but the beginning of a new plan (Smith, 1994: 319).

A final important note about Christ's Kingdom is that Irenaeus does not follow the Christian Chiliastic belief by assigning a thousand years duration to the Kingdom of Christ. He avoids a reference to Chiliasm despite his knowledge of the Asiatic and Alexandrian Chiliastic theology, as well as the writings of Justin the Martyr<sup>65</sup> (Smith, 1994: 318-319). It appears that Irenaeus develops his theology as a hermeneutical reflection on the books of Daniel and Revelation

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64 See: Acts 3:19-21 and Rom. 8:18-22.

65 Justin (Dialogue with Trypho, chapter LXXX, ANF, I) writes: “I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem”. He also claims (chapter LXXXI, ANF, I) that: “John, one of the apostles of Christ... prophesied... that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and, in short the eternal resurrection and judgement of all men would likewise take place”. On the other hand, Augustine (Enchiridion, 111, NPNF 1, II) claims that the millennium is not to be awaited but has already begun in the life of the Church.

and their apocalyptic images. Irenaeus is not interested as the Chiliasts in the rewards given to the just in Christ's Kingdom. He focuses on how people grow in the Spirit in order to participate in the final Kingdom (of Heaven) which will follow the end of Christ's Kingdom on earth. Irenaeus writes that the righteous, in Christ's Kingdom, "shall become accustomed to the glory of God the Father and shall enjoy in the Kingdom intercourse and communion with the holy angels and union with spiritual beings" (AH, V.XXXV.1). On the other hand, the Pneumatic person is not rejecting the somatic qualities (Constantellos, 1989: 361) and as Behr (1989: 309) remarks -more specifically- "Man's [Woman's] sexuality will not cease in Christ's Kingdom;" (AH, III.XXII. 4 and AH, II.XXXIII.5).

#### 6.4 The Pneumatics and Their Final Destiny

Irenaeus notes that it is appropriate for the righteous to enjoy the promise of the inheritance and to rule in Christ's Kingdom in a renewed earth, before the last judgment. At the end of Christ's Kingdom on earth, when creation returns in its original state of innocence, the righteous and the evil people will be judged<sup>66</sup>. They will receive their reward in the same earth in which they toiled and suffered (AH, V.XXXII.1). At the last judgment the righteous will receive their rewards, and those who do not believe Christ will receive damnation.<sup>67</sup> Irenaeus writes:

Has the Word came for the ruin and for the resurrection of many? For the ruin, certainly, of those who do not believe Him, to whom also He has threatened a greater damnation in the judgement-day than that of Sodom and Gomorrah; but for the resurrection of believers, and those who do the will of His Father in heaven (AH, V.XXVII.1).

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<sup>66</sup> The last judgment is mentioned in the following biblical passages: Ps. 9:7-8; Ps. 96:10-13; Eccles. 3:17; Eccles. 11:9; Eccles. 12:14; Heb. 9:27 and Heb. 10:26-27. The righteous will receive eternal life and God's blessings: Matt. 25:31; Matt. 25:46 and John 5:28-29. The lost will receive eternal punishment, and separation from God: Matt. 25:46 and 2 Thess. 1:6-9.

<sup>67</sup> According to Cyprian (Treatise VI, ANF, V) the Spirit points to God's final judgment. Cyril of Jerusalem (Catech. Lect. Chapter XVII, 4, NPNF 2, VII) remarks that "you must charge God with lack of justice, if there be not judgment and recompense after this world". See also: Basil (Comm. on John I.18, PG 31) and Hippolytus (Ag. Plato I, ANF, V).

The Lord will render to every person according to his/her works and his judgment will be both just and final. Evil persons will be separated from God, destroying their own manhood by resisting God and being filled with a satanic spirit (AH, V.XXVI.2). Irenaeus defends God's plan of recapitulation, emphasizing that evil people judge themselves. He mentions that God deals with people equally (according to his nature) but they receive him differently, exercising their freedom (AH, V.XXVII.1). The faithful absorb his goodness, the Spirit of life (AH, V.XXVI.2), being redeemed from sin and death and the evil absorb judgement and wrath.<sup>68</sup> Irenaeus writes that God is not responsible for the predicament of evil people: "Those who have blinded themselves are forever deprived of the enjoyment of light. It is not [however] that the light has inflicted upon them the penalty of blindness" (AH, V.XXVII.2).<sup>69</sup>

After the judgment, the Son of God will deliver his Kingdom to the Father and God will become "all in all" (AH, V.XXXVI.2).<sup>70</sup> A new heaven and a new earth will be created then, which is beyond our present knowledge, as Irenaeus admits. Irenaeus makes references to the books of Isaiah (Isa. 65:17-18) and John's Revelation (Rev. 20:11) about the new heaven and the new earth<sup>71</sup> (AH, V.XXXV.2). He also believes that the holy city (of Jerusalem) will be rebuilt after the pattern of the heavenly Jerusalem (AH, V. XXXV.2). The Son (like the Spirit) will remain what he is for all eternity. But the work that he started when he became man will come to an end at the deliverance of the Kingdom. The mission of the "two hands of God" will be accomplished (Wingren, 2004: 200). Humanity will not find only the lost Paradise; they will receive the *similitudo* in the Kingdom of Heaven (the final Kingdom<sup>72</sup>). The Pneumatics will be ascended to God-likeness, finding the ultimate perfection, being wholly

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68 Barnabas (chapter VI, ANF, I) writes that "[the Lord] has created us anew by His Spirit".

69 Gregory Nazianzen (Orat. XXXI, NPNF 2, VII) remarks that it remains "shrouded in the mystery of the Spirit's movement why some are brought to life and other resist".

70 Irenaeus text probably derives from Papias ( Fragments, chapter V, ANF, I).

71 See also: Isa. 66:22; Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:18-22; 1 Cor. 15:22-28; Eph. 1:9-10 and Rev. 21:1-8.

72 According to 1 John 3:2, believers will be transformed to the likeness of God.

possessed by the Spirit (AH, V. XII.2.) They will be united with spiritual beings and they will rejoice eternally in the presence of God (AH, V.XXXV.1).<sup>73</sup>

This eternal joy is a gift from God. A person is not eternal by itself.<sup>74</sup> People receive what is eternal constantly from God in the Kingdom of Heaven (AH, V. XXXVI.1); finding perfection and becoming like Christ. However, Christ is perfect because he is divine and a Pneumatic man by nature. On the other hand the faithful who live in communion with God are Pneumatic by grace. (In Irenaeus' words: "The grace of the Spirit will make man after the image and likeness of God" AH, V.VIII.1). Pneumatics are dominated eternally by the Spirit being in fellowship with God and partaking of the divine nature (AH, V.XXXII.1). Separation from the Spirit means that a person loses the *similitudo* and his/her humanity. Irenaeus emphasizes that a person that has continued "in the works of the flesh," because he/she did not receive the Spirit, shall not have power to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven (AH, V.XI.1).

Irenaeus remarks that the communion of humanity with God cannot break because Christ cannot be destroyed by any power in the world. And Christ means that God is man (Wingren, 2004: 213). He also emphasizes that people will continue to grow from glory to glory in the Kingdom of Heaven. Irenaeus mentions future blessings in the Kingdom of Heaven that "neither the eye has seen, nor the ear has heard". People will pass beyond the angels and be made after "the image and likeness of God" (AH, V.XXXVI.3). Smith (1994: 329) notes that the Irenaean theology is "creation based" because God the creator continues to create and offer his glory to humanity. Although this is a correct

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73 Ambrose (Of the Holy Spirit, I. XI. 122, NPNF 2, X) notes that The Spirit moves "from the grace of giving life to that of sanctification, to translate us from earth to heaven, from wretchedness to glory, from slavery to a kingdom"; Basil (Of the Holy Spirit, 15.36, NPNF 2, VIII) writes: "Through the Holy Spirit comes out restoration to paradise, our ascension into the kingdom of heaven, our return to the adoption of sons, our liberty to call God our Father, our being made partakers of the grace of Christ, our being called children of light, our sharing in eternal glory, and, in a word, our being brought into a state of all fullness of blessings"; Cyril of Jerusalem (Catech. Lect. XVII. 28-32, NPNF 2, VII) remarks that "eternal life is the consummation of the spiritual life begun in baptism, imparted in regeneration, which grows by sanctifying grace. This life is transmuted into a future life of glory that does not reach full expression until the general resurrection, final judgement and final destiny"; See also: John of Damascus (OF, IV. 27, NPNF 2, IX).

74 Ambrose (Belief in the Resurrection, II.22ff., NPNF 2, X) notes as well that immortality is a gift from God and not an "autonomous natural quality".

statement, we can say that Irenaean theology is also “growth based,” because Irenaeus makes reference throughout his work (and especially in his references to eschatology) in a person's spiritual growth. This is also evident by Irenaeus' references to grades of salvation. Some of the saved people will be in Heaven, some in Paradise, and some will inhabit the Holy City (AH, V.XXXVI.1-2). This is how he interprets Christ's saying that “in my Father's house there are many mansions” (John 14:2).<sup>75</sup>

## 6.5 Summary

Irenaeus' eschatology can be characterized as a spiritualized eschatology. The Holy Spirit is present in the fight of Christ against Antichrist, in the Lord's earthly Kingdom, at the last judgment and in God's Kingdom of Heaven.

Irenaeus, following the Holy Scriptures (mainly the books of Daniel and Revelation) makes a reference to the recapitulation of all evil forces in the person of the Antichrist (a human being totally possessed by the devil). The Antichrist will rule on earth for three and a half years, at a time appointed by God, declaring himself as divine and persecuting the Church. The “recapitulation of evil” is necessary so that all evil forces will be condemned by God in the person of the Antichrist.

After the three and a half years of Antichrist's rule on earth, Christ will come again to earth with glory, “slaying Antichrist with the spirit of His mouth” (AH, V.XXV.3), raising people from the dead and establishing his Kingdom on earth. Irenaeus' view of Christ's earthly Kingdom does not follow the Chiliastic beliefs of his time. The Kingdom of Christ on earth is a reward offered to the righteous and an opportunity given to them for further spiritual development. Non faithful also participate in Christ's Kingdom, waiting for the last judgment.

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<sup>75</sup> Irenaeus text probably derives from Papias (Fragments, chapter IV, ANF, I). See also: John Chrysostom (Hom. On John, LXXII, NPNF 1, XIV).

They come to life again, receiving God's breath of life, but not the vivifying Spirit that makes people Pneumatics.

At the end of Christ's Kingdom, Christ will conduct the last judgment. Evil people, being filled with a satanic spirit (AH, V.XXVI.2), will be permanently separated from God. The Pneumatics, on the other hand, will absorb the Spirit of life (AH, V.XXVI.2) and enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, experiencing a new heaven and a new earth. Some of the Pneumatics will be in Heaven, some in paradise and some will inhabit the restored holy city (Jerusalem), according to the level of each person's spiritual development.

God in the Kingdom of Heaven will be "all in all". The mission of God's two hands (the Son and the Spirit) will be accomplished because the Pneumatics, by grace, will become after the image and likeness of God, finding eternal life with him and partaking of his divine nature.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

In the present thesis, an effort was made to produce a comprehensive examination of Irenaeus' Pneumatological thought in a systematic way. The construction of a systematic Irenaeian Pneumatology followed the methods described in the thesis' introduction: an evaluation of the data available in the context of Irenaeus' premise in the light of Scripture's presentation; a detailed analysis of literary contributions on the subject; a research of the patristic thought and how other Church Fathers have identified and interpreted the Holy Spirit's involvement in its development. Irenaeus' Pneumatology was presented systematically in order to satisfy our academic concerns. However, Irenaeus was not a systematic theologian, in the modern sense of the word, as the academic community has observed (Lawson, 2006: 225; Torrance, 1992: 110).

Irenaeus was an early Church Father who based his theology on the Scriptures and the writings of the Church Fathers who wrote before him: Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius, Polycarp, Papias, Barnabas and Theophilus of Antioch. He was not aware of contemporary theological discoveries (e.g. the division of the Pauline Corpus in canonical and deuterocanonical letters) or contemporary engagements of biblical hermeneutics (e.g. the method of demythologizing the texts). His theology is not philosophical but *economic* and *kerygmatic*. He does not offer us, in his writings, an analysis of the inner life of the Holy Trinity, the characteristics of the Holy Spirit or an opinion about the *filioque* debate. He proclaims the divinity of the Holy Spirit (whom he also calls Spirit, Spirit of God, or Spirit of Christ), but he is more interested in the salvific work of the Spirit, as it is understood in the *ecclesial* tradition.

Irenaeus has included in his work many biblical references and his writings also reflect ideas existing in Jewish pseudepigraphical books ("Apocalypse of Moses", "Enoch", "Life of Adam and Eve"). Many of his key theological concepts derive from the Scriptures, and more specifically from the Pauline Epistles: The Adam-Christ typology (Rom. 5:15), the concept of Recapitulation

(Eph. 1:10) and the imagery of the Church as “the body of Christ” (Eph. 1:22), as well as from the Church Fathers who wrote before him: “The two Hands of God” (Clement of Rome, “First Letter to the Corinthians”, I.33), and “Man as a Child” (Theophilus of Antioch, ad Autolyicum, II.25). Irenaeus incorporated in his work, the Pauline and patristic teachings he knew about the creation, the fall and the redemption of humanity, as well as the Church and the *eschaton*. Nevertheless, he developed these teachings in his own special way.

More specifically:

- He presents creation as meaningless if people fail to become godlike (Pneumatics), pointing to the world's destruction by the flood at Noah's times.
- He uses the imagery of God's “two Hands” (AH, IV.XX.1), the Logos and the Spirit, throughout his work.
- He compares the Spirit of God who saves with the spirit of the devil who leads people to destruction.
- He spiritualizes the concept of Recapitulation (*Anakephaleosis*).
- He presents the Church ordinances/sacraments as a continuation of the worship rituals in the Old Testament, connecting them all with the work of the Spirit.
- He develops his own theory about the Kingdom of Christ, where even non-faithful participate, and where the *ekklestastikoi* receive the opportunity for further spiritual development.

It must be noted that Irenaeus differentiates himself from Justin by considering the Word and the Spirit equal persons of the Holy Trinity and by avoiding a reference to the thousand years of Christ's reign on earth. Many of Irenaeus' pneumatological views are repeated in the writings of later Church Fathers; in the present thesis, an effort was made to present these patristic views as comparative footnotes.

However, the thesis' aim was not simply to systematize Irenaeus' Pneumatology, providing biblical and patristic text comparisons. The thesis also presented various opinions of scholars, offering either positive comments or academic disagreements on these opinions. The academic disagreements, based on an evaluation of Irenaeus' writings, are the following:

- with Prokopchuck's (2001: 46) remark that Irenaeus improved the Logos doctrine of Justin;
- with Wingren's (2004: 158) opinion that Irenaeus does not distinguish between the image and likeness of God;
- with Hick's (1981: 54) opinion that "man [for Irenaeus] was created a fallen being";
- with Bousset's (1970: 442) remark that "the fall [of man] appears not only as something permitted by God, but directly willed";
- with Lawson's (2006: 216-220) claim that Irenaeus does not believe in the doctrine of the original sin;
- with Brown's (1975: 21) remark that "death is the natural death of imperfect creatures";
- with Prokopchuck's (2001: 144) claim that Irenaeus did not accept the ransom theory;
- with Lawson's (2006: 89) interpretation of Irenaeus' opinion regarding the transmission of the apostolic truth to the bishops;
- with Lawson's (2006: 266) interpretation of Irenaeus' "sacramental theology";
- with Lawson's (2006: 282) opinion that Irenaeus' places the last judgment before the establishment of Christ's Kingdom on earth.

The thesis divided Irenaeus' pneumatological thought into five particular chapters: The creation and spiritual destiny of humanity; the fall of humanity; the spiritual redemption of humanity; the Church and the Holy Spirit; eschatology and the Holy Spirit.

A synopsis of these chapters' summaries provides the following Irenaeus's pneumatological points:

- People's creation has a special place in the creation of the world *ex nihilo*, by the one and only God (contrary to the Gnostic view of the evil *Demiurge*). People are created in the image and likeness of God. They become godlike by grace through the work of the Holy Spirit. The first man (Adam) received by God the opportunity to become a spiritual (Pneumatic) man by stages of development.
- Adam failed to become Pneumatic, rejecting the Holy Spirit and becoming influenced by the devil's spirit. The result was his separation from God and his physical death. All people share his predicament, because we all sinned in Adam (AH, V.XXI.1). Nevertheless, Adam's Fall was not inevitable (contrary to the Gnostic claim that some people are separated from God because their nature is alien to him). The Holy Spirit did not abandon humanity after Adam's Fall.
- The Holy Spirit prepared the fallen humanity to receive the Redeemer. He accomplished that through the Law and the prophets of the Old Testament (contrary to the Gnostic rejection of the prophetic ministry and the value of the Hebrew Bible). The Redeemer is the Pneumatic Christ who liberates people from the bondage of sin and death, offering them forgiveness, re-union with God and eternal life. Christ is the new Adam, born of the Virgin Mary and the Spirit of God; being therefore a Pneumatic man by nature. Christ possesses the Spirit and gives the Spirit to those who believe in him, making them Pneumatics by grace.
- The Pneumatics by grace are the *ekklesiastikoi*. They belong to the "body of Christ" (Eph. 1:22), the Church. The Church does not have a secret teaching (as the Gnostics claim for their faith communities). *Ekklesiastikoi* grow in the Spirit through participation in the Church's ordinances of Baptism and Eucharist,

administered by the successors of the apostles (ordained bishops and presbyters). The Church ordinances offer to people the gifts of the Spirit: remission of sins and moral principles they need for spiritual development as they move to the *eschaton*.

- Church members are not sinless. However, they can be victorious over the devil because the “two Hands of God” AH, IV.XX.1) are in them. The devil, at a time appointed by God, will recapitulate all evil in the person of the Antichrist. After three and a half years of Antichrist's rule on earth, Christ will come again to earth “slaying Antichrist with the spirit of His mouth” (AH, V.XXVI.2). He will establish an earthly Kingdom (a belief rejected by the Gnostics), offering rewards to righteous people and an opportunity for further spiritual development. At the end of Christ's earthly Kingdom, evil people “filled with a satanic spirit” (AH, V.XXVI.2) will be destroyed and the Pneumatics (by grace) will “absorb the Spirit of life” (AH, V.XXVI.2). A new heaven and a new earth will appear. God, in the final Kingdom of Heaven will be “all in all” (AH, V.XXVI.2). The saving mission of God's “two Hands” (AH, IV.XX.1) will be accomplished because people will become godlike, partaking of God's divine nature.

The final conclusion that derives from the aforementioned paragraphs is that the Person and work of the Holy Spirit governed Irenaeus' understanding of most - if not all- other theological concepts. This final conclusion validates and justifies the academic need for composing the present thesis on Irenaeus' Pneumatology. A further topic of research, that we recommend to the academic community on chapter 6 (and more specifically 6.3), is the connection between Irenaeus' spiritualized eschatology and the theory of evil's restoration in the thought of Gregory of Nyssa, Maximos the Confessor, and others.

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